Critical Studies of Education 16

George J. Sefa Dei
Wambui Karanja
Grace Erger

Elders' Cultural Knowledges and the Question of Black/African Indigeneity in Education

Springer

Critical Studies of Education

We live in an era where forms of education designed to win the consent of students, teachers, and the public to the inevitability of a neo-liberal, market-driven process of globalization are being developed around the world. In these hegemonic modes of pedagogy questions about issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, colonialism, religion, and other social dynamics are simply not asked. Indeed, questions about the social spaces where pedagogy takes place—in schools, media, corporate think tanks, etc.—are not raised. When these concerns are connected with queries such as the following, we begin to move into a serious study of pedagogy: What knowledge is of the most worth? Whose knowledge should be taught? What role does power play in the educational process? How are new media re-shaping as well as perpetuating what happens in education? How is knowledge produced in a corporatized politics of knowledge? What socio-political role do schools play in the twenty-first century? What is an educated person? What is intelligence? How important are socio-cultural contextual factors in shaping what goes on in education? Can schools be more than a tool of the new American (and its Western allies') twenty-first century empire? How do we educate well-informed, creative teachers? What roles should schools play in a democratic society? What roles should media play in a democratic society? Is education in a democratic society different than in a totalitarian society? What is a democratic society? How is globalization affecting education? How does our view of mind shape the way we think of education? How does affect and emotion shape the educational process? What are the forces that shape educational purpose in different societies? These, of course, are just a few examples of the questions that need to be asked in relation to our exploration of educational purpose. This series of books can help establish a renewed interest in such questions and their centrality in the larger study of education and the preparation of teachers and other educational professionals.

More information about this series at http://www.springer.com/series/13431

George J. Sefa Dei • Wambui Karanja
Grace Erger

Elders' Cultural Knowledges and the Question of Black/ African Indigeneity in Education

Springer

George J. Sefa Dei
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
Toronto, ON, Canada

Wambui Karanja
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
Toronto, ON, Canada

Grace Erger
University of Toronto
Toronto, ON, Canada

Critical Studies of Education

ISSN 2543-0467 ISSN 2543-0475 (electronic)
ISBN 978-3-030-84200-0 ISBN 978-3-030-84201-7 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84201-7

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To all our African Elders and Ancestors on the Motherland and in the Black Diaspora.

Acknowledgments

George Dei wants to thank in particular the Elders, parents, teachers, educational practitioners, and university lecturers and students in Ghana, South Africa, and Canada who have been part of the SSHRC Insight Grant study **"The Potential for Elders Cultural Knowledge to Contribute to a New Educational Futurity.**" He offers deep appreciation for your volunteering time, expertise, and energies to sharing knowledge.

He gives special thanks to the University of South Africa [UNISA] professors – Soul Shavas, TA Mapotse, Kofi Quan-Baffour, Akwasi Arko-Achemfour, and Phasha Nareadi; Ghanaian research assistants and helpers – Daniel Ampaw, the late Dickson Darko, Nana Abrase, Kwasi Clement, Paa Nii, Alfred Agyarko, Isaac Odume, Nana Adwo Oku-Ampofo, Regina Ampadu, and Eric Kojo of UDS; University of Education, Winneba , Ghana, colleagues and consultants – Professor Kolawole Raheem and Professor Jophus Anamuah-Mensah; Canadian educators – Dr. Suleman Demi, Dr. Marie Green, Dr. Charis Newton, Kirk Mark, Ms. Phiona Lyodd Henry, Slyvia Parris, Maria Garrick, George Frempong, and Audreylittle John; and finally University of Toronto student researchers – Grace Erger, Jinepher Koduah, Jessica Vassiliou , Ernest Obeng, Wambui Karanja, Asna Adhami, Julie Usih, and all others unnamed, including the many OISE graduate students who has been his teacher over the past three and half decades.

Wambui Karanja would like to thank all Elders, past and present, whose cultural knowledge continues to inform our understandings of ourselves and our identities and how those identities are informed and shaped by our relationships to and understandings of the Land and its epistemologies. She would like to thank her parents for imparting in her a deep interest in knowledge and learning and teaching her to always question and resist oppression and for her early upbringing on the Land. She conveys a special thank you to Professors George Sefa Dei and Njoki Wane for guiding her in her studies and scholarship at OISE and particularly thanks Professor Dei for inviting her to work on this book, his invaluable feedback on the manuscript, and for his current supervisory role in her scholarship. She also thanks Grace Erger for her deep knowledge of the subject matter of this book and particularly for her invaluable skills in editing the manuscript. She could not have wished for a better

working partner. Wambui would also like to thank her family, Susan, Liz, Miriam, Marigold, Ivan, and Desmond for their constant support, love, and motivation, with a special thank you to Susan for staying up late with her when she was working on the manuscript. Without their encouragement and inspiration, her contribution to this work would not have been possible.

Grace Erger would like to thank all the professors at the University of Toronto's Women and Gender Studies Department and Critical Studies in Equity and Solidarity Department for helping her develop the critical foundation that allowed her to contribute to this book. In particular, she would like to thank George Dei who deeply affected the way that she understands the world and who gave her the opportunity to engage in this work. She would also like to thank Wambui Karanja for her generosity in sharing her vast knowledge and resources. Further, she would like to thank Paul Morrison for his constant love, encouragement, and patient help with her writing. She would also like to thank Michael Sheahan and Pemasal Banigan for their love and (mostly) unwavering willingness to listen to her talk about this book and everything else. She also wants to thank her sister, Georgia Erger, who has been her role model for as long as she can remember, and whose brilliance, both academic and personal, continues to grow every day. Finally, she would like to thank her mother, Catherine Morrison, who has always shown her unconditional love, support, and guidance, and without whom none of this would have been possible.

Contents

1 Introduction 1
1.1 Land Acknowledgement 1
1.2 Situating Ourselves 6
1.3 An Introduction to Colonial Education in Canada and a Proposal for Decolonization 9
1.4 A Note on Methodology 29
References 30

2 Articulating the Epistemic Challenge 37
References 46

3 Colonial Education in the Canadian Context 51
3.1 The Coloniality of School and Schooling 59
3.2 Eurocentric Curriculum in Education 62
3.3 Eurocentric Pedagogy and Praxis 64
3.4 English Language and Colonial Education 65
3.5 The Spatial Geography of the School as a Site of Colonial Education 67
3.6 Racism and the Culture of Whiteness in Educational Policy and Delivery 70
References 71

4 Responding to the Epistemic Challenge – A Decolonial Project 79
4.1 Anti-Colonialism and Decolonization – Oppositional, Subversive and Resistant Frameworks 79
4.2 The Question of Indigeneity 87
4.3 Indigenous Definitions of Self-Indigeneity 91
4.4 Indigeneity: Diasporic and Transnational Contexts 93
4.5 Indigeneity and the African Worldview 97

4.6 African Indigeneity and Subjectivity – The Discursive Subject . . . 99
4.7 Indigenous African Cultural Knowledges . . . 103
4.8 Indigenous African Pedagogy . . . 105
References . . . 105

5 Land as Indigenous Epistemology . . . 113
5.1 The Interplay of Land, Indigenous Knowledges and Epistemologies . . . 114
5.2 Land as Indigenous Pedagogy . . . 116
5.3 Land, Indigenous Spirituality and Healing . . . 118
5.4 Land, Indigenous Culture, Language and Identity . . . 119
5.5 Indigenous Education as Decolonial Praxis . . . 121
References . . . 123

6 The Role of Elders and Their Cultural Knowledges in Schools . . . 127
6.1 Conceptions of Indigenous Eldership . . . 127
6.2 Eldership in the African Context . . . 128
6.3 Elders' Cultural Knowledges . . . 130
6.4 Community Perspectives on the Role of Elders . . . 131
6.5 Situating Elders' Cultural Knowledges in Schools . . . 137
6.6 Learning, Schooling and Education – Some Definitional Issues . . . 142
6.7 Entrenching Indigenous Curriculums and Pedagogies . . . 143
6.8 Land as Pedagogy in Indigenous Education . . . 144
6.9 Incorporating and Integrating Elders' Cultural Knowledges into Schools . . . 146
References . . . 147

7 Making the Case for the Incorporation of African Indigenous Elders and their Cultural Knowledges into Schools . . . 153
7.1 Community Perspectives on the Incorporation of Elders into Schools . . . 159
References . . . 171

8 Some Best Practices on Incorporating Elders into Schools . . . 175
8.1 Community Perspectives on How to Integrate Elders into Schools . . . 179
References . . . 185

9 The Challenges of Incorporating Elders into Schools . . . 189
9.1 The Role of Indigenous Languages in Schools – Challenges and Opportunities . . . 197
9.2 Implications for Education and Educational Policies . . . 199
9.3 Community Perspectives on the Challenges of Integrating Elders into Schools . . . 201
References . . . 206

10 Conclusion: Imagining New Indigenous Educational Futurities 209
10.1 Recommendations for Moving Forward 209
10.2 Conclusion 214
References 216

Index 219

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Land Acknowledgement

We would like to start this book by offering a Land acknowledgement. Although a book by its very nature transcends boundaries and borders, this book was written on the Land that is currently known as Toronto by three authors who live and work here. As we think through, write about, and try to challenge the colonial nature of education in Canada and in colonial locations around the world, we are cognizant of the fact that while we believe that a decolonization of the mind and Indigenization of the school curriculum through the implementation of African Elders and their Indigenous knowledges is of great importance, decolonization is also primarily about the Land, and the repatriation of Land to those Indigenous peoples who have cared for it long before our arrival here. As Tuck and Yang (2012) remind us, "decolonization is not a metaphor," and when we treat it as if it were "it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future" (p.3). The colonial nature of education in Canada, and in settler colonial states around the world, cannot be understood, addressed, or reckoned with unless the question of Land is considered and addressed simultaneously.

The urgency of these questions has become exceedingly clear in Canada. In May of 2021, as we were preparing to send this book to print, the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation uncovered a mass grave near the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential school that held the bodies of 215 Indigenous children, including children as young as three-years-old (Austen, 2021). The Kamloops Indian Residential School operated from 1890 until the late 1970s and was once the largest residential school in Canada. For years, Indigenous communities have been saying that when their children were stolen from them and put into residential schools, many of them did not return and their absences were never explained. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) found that at least 4100 children died at these schools. It is

G. J. S. Dei et al., *Elders' Cultural Knowledges and the Question of Black/African Indigeneity in Education*, Critical Studies of Education 16,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84201-7_1

likely that the uncovering of the grave at Kamloops Indian Residential School will lead to the discovery of more mass graves at the sites of the over 130 other residential schools that operated throughout Canada (Austen, 2021). These children, who were stolen from their Land, homes, family, communities, and culture would never return. They were stolen for the purpose of violently assimilating them into white settler culture, in order that white settlers could try to lay legitimate claim to stolen Land. If there were no Indigenous people left in Canada, if they were fully erased and assimilated, as was the explicit goal of these schools, the Land would be truly "empty" and could be appropriated by white settlers without resistance. While the residential schools were unsuccessful in their ultimate goals, and Indigenous people continue to resist settler colonialism, in the process thousands of Indigenous children died in the name of settler colonialism and white settlers' efforts to steal and establish a Land base.

Throughout this book, we have outlined the importance of the Land to Indigenous peoples globally. The Land is first teacher and is the basis for Indigenous cultures and knowledges. The Land is also witness. It holds the secrets, the memories, and the violence embedded in the history of settler colonialism. Settler colonial societies are invested in erasing their histories of violence and dispossession and replacing them with an idealized history that allows them to claim legitimate ownership of the Land. As Franz Fanon (1963) told us long ago in *Wretched of the Earth:*

> The claim to a national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture… colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not merely satisfied with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverse logic, it turns to the past of an oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. (p.210)

Colonial states attempt to both completely erase the history of the native inhabitants of a Land, and to rewrite their own history of settlement as peaceful and nonviolent. While to a great extent the state can rewrite history through books and discourse, the Land as witness means that this history can never be fully erased. The Land held the bodies of the 215 children found at the Kamloops Indian Residential School, just as it holds all truths. Indigenous peoples' relationship and connection to and with the Land means that they have access to a history and to a truth that is intentionally covered up by settler colonialism.

Because of the importance of the Land, and because of the inextricability of efforts to decolonize the education system with efforts to decolonize the Land and the Canadian state, we feel that we would be remiss if we did not start by acknowledging the Land on which we currently live and work. This is not to say that Land acknowledgements are without issue. Land acknowledgements have become common practice across Canada: most official events, whether they be a governmental address, an art exhibition, or a university lecture, start with a Land acknowledgement. They have become so commonplace that they are often formulaic. They generally start by "acknowledging that we are on the traditional Lands of [insert name of Indigenous nation/s here]" and end by thanking said Indigenous nation/s "for sharing the Land with us." In such phrasing, a practice which was originally meant

to bring attention to the ongoing violence of settler colonialism and the ongoing resistance of Indigenous peoples and nations to those practices, has come to sound almost like a eulogy. Indigenous nations that still live and thrive on their Lands are relegated to a "traditional" past, and it is implied that they willingly shared/gave their Lands to the white settlers who are the "modern-day" inhabitants of said Land. These types of Land acknowledgements, rather than being acts of decolonization, can instead be understood as what Tuck and Yang (2012) call "settler moves to innocence." By spending thirty seconds at the beginning of an event "recognizing" Indigenous peoples, white settlers can feel absolved of the guilt of settler colonialism and ongoing acts of violence, can feel as though they have done their due diligence, and can move on with their activities and lives without having to further consider their implications and complicities with ongoing colonialism. A speech act that is supposed to make visible the lives and histories of Indigenous peoples instead becomes an act of further erasure.

In 2016, the Toronto District School Board implemented daily Land acknowledgements across all of its 588 schools. Ironically, these statements are given right after students have been asked to stand for the Canadian national anthem (Vowel, 2016). What does it mean to acknowledge that these schools are on Indigenous Land immediately following forced displays of patriotism to the Canadian state that is the perpetrator of the Land theft that is being acknowledged? What does it mean to give a Land acknowledgement recognizing the rights of Indigenous people to their Land in schools where there is a persisting educational achievement gap between Indigenous, Black, Latinx, and other racialized students and their white counterparts? Do these Land acknowledgements undermine a colonizing school experience that disproportionately punishes Indigenous, Black, Latinx, and other racialized students or does they obscure the racism that underpins schooling in colonial states? Does the Land acknowledgement represent an effort to decolonize or is it merely lip service that allows the white institution to claim due diligence and innocence?

Territorial acknowledgements are a long-standing practice utilized between Indigenous nations. Indigenous nations and peoples engage in practices of recognizing each other on the basis of clan, language, and nation, and it is both a political and cultural process (Alfred, 1999; Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Snelgrove et al., 2014; Wilkes et al., 2017). Territorial acknowledgements within and between Indigenous nations are specific to the person giving the acknowledgement. There is no standard or routinized format. Rather, the speaker generally identifies themselves and their relationship to the Land and the community which they are visiting (Hunt, 2016; Simpson, 2015; Vowel, 2016). The question can then be asked: by taking away the specificity of person and personal location out of Land acknowledgements and by standardizing them and therefore taking away the need to think through one's own relationship to the Land when writing or giving a Land acknowledgement, has white settler society colonized Land acknowledgements themselves (Asher et al., 2018)?

It is thus with caution that we made the decision to start this book with a Land acknowledgement. However, we believe that despite the legitimate critiques of

Land acknowledgements, they are an opportunity to combat the logics of settler colonialism, particularly the erasure of Indigenous people and the doctrine of discovery and *terra nullius*—the idea that the Land was legally empty when white settlers arrived because it was not being properly "used" by its Indigenous inhabitants. It is also a chance for us giving the Land acknowledgement, as people who live our lives on this Land but are not Indigenous to it, to think through our complicities, implications, and responsibilities with and for the ongoing colonization of this Land and its peoples. As scholars and students who have embarked on anti-racist and decolonial scholarship, we believe that there is no neutral ground from which to conduct such an inquiry. As such, we welcome the opportunity to examine our own relationship to the Land while recognizing that such an inquiry does not free or absolve us from our complicities with settler colonialism and will not be able to fully encapsulate our relationship to the Land or the Indigenous peoples that inhabit and care for it. Further, this Land acknowledgement is not an end point but rather a starting point. Anti-racist or decolonial theory cannot exist without praxis. This book is our offering toward an imagined decolonial future; however, we recognize that decolonization fundamentally demands that the Land be given back. As such, while we argue that the implementation of African Indigenous Elders into classrooms is a fundamentally decolonizing endeavor, it is only one step in the larger process of decolonization.

George Sefa Dei came to Turtle Island from Ghana in 1979 in order to continue his studies. Similarly, Wambui Karanja arrived from Kenya in 1988 as a student. While both George and Wambui are visitors on this Land, they are both Indigenous to Africa and as such have deeply rooted relationships to Land. George has spent decades studying and writing on Indigenous culture and has always asserted the importance of Land to Indigenous cultures and peoples. He feels that the Land has always been with him, and he has carried that relationship with him throughout his career. Wambui has also centered the Land and its importance to Indigenous peoples globally in her work and has continually asserted the right of Indigenous peoples to their Land. Grace Erger was born in Turtle Island as a citizen of the Canadian state. Her family have been settlers in Canada and the United States going back numerous generations. As such, her relationship to the Land is fraught by virtue of her presence on this Land which was stolen by her ancestors and which she continues to live on. In doing this work, both in contributing to this Land acknowledgement and this book, she is cognizant of the fact that her very existence on this Land continually implicates her in the very processes that we are trying to address.

All three authors live and work in what is now known as Toronto, Ontario. This Land has been inhabited by different peoples for over 15,000 years. Lake Ontario, on the shores of which Toronto is located, has historically been used as a meeting place, as it was an important source of fish as well as a central point for transportation and thus served as a junction for several important trade routes. Indeed, many important historical trading routes, originally used by animals, then by Indigenous peoples, and eventually by settlers, are now major roadways in Toronto, for example, Davenport Avenue and Dupont Avenue (Fiddes, 2014). Tkaranto is a Mohawk word which means "the place in the water where the trees are standing" and refers

to the wooden stakes that were used as fishing weirs by the Haudenosaunee and Huron-Wendat (Mills & Roque). The Land that is now Toronto has been home to the Huron-Wendat, the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, and the Mississaugas of the Credit, among others. The abundance of food in the region, as well as the temperate climate, made it an ideal place to fish, hunt, grow food, and gather medicines and seeds. The city of Toronto falls under the 1701 Dish with One Spoon wampum agreement made between the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe nations. The dish with one spoon represents the Land as shared hunting ground, where each person is able to use the spoon but must only take what they need and leave the rest for the others that will come after them. The spoon represents sharing and responsibility, but also promotes peace, in that a spoon rather than a knife is used (Simpson, 2008). While many Land acknowledgements in Toronto imply that settlers have been invited into this treaty and to also share the Land, we do not purport to be able to extend this treaty beyond its original purposes. We do however believe that the Dish with One Spoon treaty provides us with a model for how we can responsibly relate to the Land on which we currently live.

Toronto was a desirable place not only for the Indigenous nations who enjoyed its bountiful resources but also for the British colonists who saw it as an important military post, because its placement on the water protected it on one side and made it a strategically ideal location given fears of attack from the United States colonists to the south. In 1787, Sir John Johnson, then head of the Indian department, called a council of the Mississaugas and distributed "presents" such as blankets, kettles, and gunpowder valuing $1700 to thank the Mississaugas for their loyalty to the Crown during the American Revolution. He used the opportunity to discuss the purchase of the area surrounding Lake Ontario, including Toronto (Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation). These discussions were later characterized as the "sale" of Toronto. The deed to the Land was later found to be blank, with no details of what area would constitute the purchase, and with the signatures of the three Indigenous Chiefs of the Area found on separate scraps of papers which were wafered onto the blank deed (Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation). From the very start of what would come to be known as the Toronto Purchase, the Mississaugas contested what the British said they had purchased versus the area they had agreed to sell.

The Crown itself recognized that the original Toronto Purchase was too vague and did not constitute a valid surrender of Land. As such, the Crown entered into a second Toronto Purchase agreement with the Mississaugas in 1805 (Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation). For the formal Toronto Purchase the Mississaugas were given a cash payment of 10 shillings (approximately $60 in 2021), 2000 Gun flints, 24 brass kettles, 120 mirrors, 24 laced hats, 96 gallons of rum, and a bale of flowered flannel. It also included the sole use of the fishery at the mouth of the Etobicoke River (Boileau, 2021). However, the limits of this Purchase were also contested, and in 1916 the federal government became involved and appointed Robert V. Sinclair to investigate. Sinclair found that there were problems with the purchase and not all the Land in question had been fully ceded (Boileau, 2021). Although there were many issues with the purchase, of particular significance to the Mississaugas is what is now known as the Toronto Islands, which the Mississaugas insist they would have

never sold given its crucial spiritual and religious significance to their nation. In 1986 the Mississaugas initiated a claim against the government of Canada over the 1805 Toronto Purchase that resulted in a cash payment of $145 million to the Mississaugas of the Credit (Boileau, 2021).

It is with these histories in mind that we enter into this book. We hope that the reader will also consider these histories, the larger history of settler colonialism in Turtle Island, as well as the different colonialisms that exist across the world, including those that stole Black people from the shores of Africa and brought them to this Land, as well as the neocolonial forces that structure contemporary globalization and migration. We all have a relationship to the Land, and a responsibility to those from whom this Land was taken and who continue to be oppressed under colonial forces. We, as scholars and students who believe in decolonization, have a responsibility to support efforts by the original inhabitants of the Land in which we work and live to decolonize and to protect their Land from environmental, political, and cultural destruction by the Canadian state. We offer this book as one step toward right relations with the original inhabitants of this Land, as well as the Land itself.

1.2 Situating Ourselves

As co-authors of this book, and as scholars and students who believe in the politics of critical anti-racism, we believe that it is important to situate ourselves personally and politically. We believe that there is no unimplicated or uninvolved subject position from which a researcher can objectively analyze the work that they do. Each of us is affected by our social location and from the histories that we bring to the work. Our race, ethnicity, gender, class, culture, and history inform the way that we look at and understand the world in front of us. As such we would like to each offer a brief description of our own subject locations and how we came to this work. This will allow the reader to understand the context from which we understand and present the knowledge that we have gained in the writing of this book.

George J. Sefa Dei

As a traditional chief in Ghana my stool name is nana Adusei Sefa Tweneboah. I belong to the Asakyiri clan, among the Akan peoples of Ghana. Our spirit animal is the vulture, and the Elder's teachings associated with this spirit include appreciating the worth of everything, everybody, and every soul. We are taught to particularly strive to make us of that which has been discarded. We are also taught that if we are prepared to learn we will know and that such knowing is only relevant if it allows us to change our living conditions. I am a Ghanaian-born, Canadian anti-racist educator who has been working on inclusive, decolonial schooling and education from the standpoint of African Indigeneity for the last couple of decades. In my work on

African Indigeneity I have been highlighting the need to simultaneously investigate the nature of colonialist and anti-colonialist philosophy and practice as developed to advance scholarship and politics. I center African Indigeneity in my work asking questions such as: How do we re-envision schooling and education to subvert the incorporation of the logic of Western science thay fails to fully engage with a more global consideration of Indigenous knowledges/sciences and political practice, and the interface between multiple worldviews/world senses/world sensations? I utilize the conceptual grammar of the Empire as subversive language and practice to articulate the power of embodied Indigenous knowledge highlighting the urgency for mainstream knowledge to begin to authentically reconcile with Indigenous cultural knowledges and Indigenous peoples. There is power in the Indigenous intellectualism conveyed in African cultural knowledges whose utility goes beyond "repairing" the colonial relationship. African cultural knowledges affirm the body, mind, spirit, and soul as complex ontologies, eschewing the moral-ethical sensibilities of love and we can engage this in our classrooms/schools. The sacredness of Land-based education and the importance of heart knowledge are upheld to disrupt the ongoing legacies of colonial thinking. But such affirmation is also to help respond to the requirement that we view decolonization as a violent and yet dynamic process. Indigenous peoples' relations to the Land differ. However, all such relations evoke spiritual, psychic, and emotional connections and attachments beyond exploitative relations. In Toronto, for example, we have African Elders who go to the sea to pour libations and get connected to the water. There are social, political, and theoretical implications and underpinnings of African Indigeneity for Western schooling. Our rich intellectual traditions of Black life and histories, for which our Elders are custodians offer learning moments to think through educational possibilities for our youth.

Wambui Karanja

I am a PhD Candidate in the Social Justice Education Department of the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. My research interests are in decolonizing theories, Indigeneity and Indigenous Land rights, anti-colonialism, modernization, globalization, feminist, and anti-colonial theories. My interest in this anthology is inspired by the scholarship I have received at OISE and particularly by my role as a student of Professor Dei and others who introduced me to Indigenous knowledge theories and Land-based epistemologies and how they are implicated in informing counter-hegemonic decolonial theorizations of education. As a diasporic scholar with ancestral roots in Africa, I was aware of the history of colonialism and its enduring legacies on Land and schooled education in Kenya, but it was not until I came to OISE that I was exposed to theories of knowledge production and how colonialism and contemporary neocolonial formations operate to corrupt Indigenous conceptions of Land and, as well, subjugate Indigenous knowledges and epistemologies. I learned about anti-colonial and decolonial theories and how

as resistant theories, they resist, subvert, and challenge hegemonic colonial theories of education and Land relationships. As such, the invitation to engage in the production of this anthology closely aligned with my education and research interests and to this end, I am grateful to Professor Dei for the invitation and guidance in the research that has produced this anthology and to Grace Erger, for her role in co-writing and producing this anthology. Growing up steeped in African culture, I always knew I had to respect and listen to my Elders and that their words carried knowledge and wisdom. In my former education, I was schooled within a Eurocentric curriculum that taught me that the knowledge of my Elders, my mother-tongue language, and my culture were backward and outdated. Through my scholarship, I have come to learn how colonialism and Eurocentric logics worked to inform my schooled education that treated my culture as inferior and uncivilized and how they have worked in Africa and in other colonial destinations to subvert, deny, erase, and discredit other knowledge systems by creating binaries of knowledge systems that place Western knowledge at the top of all other knowledges. Despite the violence of the colonial encounter, the knowledge of my Elders has withstood attempted colonial erasures and is resurging to inform pathways for decolonizing education and dreaming new epistemological and educational futurities that honor, resurge, and nurture the culture, identity, and spiritual well-being of the student/learner. African Elders' cultural knowledges as Indigenous knowledges are reclaimed and asserted in this anthology as legitimate knowledge systems that have a critical role to play in informing decolonized educational reform initiatives not just in Canada and Africa but in other colonial destinations.

Grace Erger

I have recently graduated from the University of Toronto with a Bachelor's Degree in Critical Studies in Equity and Solidarity and Women and Gender Studies and will be continuing my education at Berkeley Law School in the fall of 2021. I came to this work through a series of fortunate events. I took Dr. George Dei's undergraduate class in Critical Race and Anti-racism Studies, and was able to continue working with him over the summer and the fall of the following year, researching and providing analysis for his work on African Indigeneity and African Elders. Through that work, I was introduced to Wambui Karanja and was generously brought into this book writing project. As a white woman, and a settler in the Canadian colonial state, I am implicated in the processes that this book endeavors to address and challenge. As such I am grateful to George and Wambui for involving me in this work and affording me the opportunity to learn, research, and write about the integration of African Indigenous Elders and their knowledges into schools. It is from this perspective that I entered into this work and believe that what I have learned about Indigeneity, Indigenous epistemologies, colonial schooling, as well as myself will continue to inform my future work.

1.3 An Introduction to Colonial Education in Canada and a Proposal for Decolonization

The idea that the education of children and youth is of the utmost importance is perhaps one of the closest things that we as humans could consider to be universal truth, if such a thing exists. Every culture across time and space has educated their children in one way or another (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003; Darko, 2014; Fafunwa, 1974). The process of doing so, while often contested, is generally considered to be of fundamental importance to the future of a community or society (Anderson, 1970; Bogonko, 1978; Rodney, 1982; Sifuna, 1990). We recognize that children are the future, and as such, how they are educated—by who, where, about what, and through which methods—will greatly impact how a community or culture develops over time. That being said, schools do not exist in a vacuum. Those factors—who teachers are, what they teach about, where they teach, and their pedagogical practices—do not play out separately from the society in which education or schooling takes place (Bloome, 2012). Rather society and schooling exist in a co-constitutive process, where both reflect and shape the other. Teachers (like all members of a given society or community) have their knowledges, beliefs, and worldviews shaped by the society in which they live (Dei, 1996; hooks, 1992). They are constricted by what they have been taught and by the values, norms, and mores of their given environment. They pass these beliefs onto their students, who are brought into schools from extremely young ages when their minds are at their most impressionable. Students then become indoctrinated in the value systems and worldviews of their teachers and go on into society as adults and continue to structure society within the norms that they were taught in their childhood and school career. There is nothing inherently wrong with this process. The transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next is the transmission of culture, spirituality, and worldview, and imparts onto the learner a sense of self in an identity-forming process (Kenyatta, 1938). In fact, for Indigenous African Elders, about whom this book is centered on, their role as knowledge holders and teachers is their primary and most sacred role, and their biggest responsibility is the transmission of their community's knowledge to the next generation. The role that Indigenous Elders have played as teachers and educators of youth is perhaps the primary reason that Indigenous cultures have survived in the face of the onslaught of colonialism and deliberate and consistent efforts to erase them (Dei, 2002). However, when one lives in a society that is structured by white supremacy, racism, and colonialism, that values whiteness above all, and that hierarchizes bodies, knowledges, and worldviews based on their proximity to whiteness and Eurocentrism, schooling and education becomes problematic (Shizha, 2005). Indeed, schools become dangerous places for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other racialized bodies. Instead of having their bodies and minds nurtured and cared for, they are instead exposed to structures, teachers, and worldviews that devalue and dehumanize them and teach them that they will not amount to much (Rahman, 2013).

One need only look to the history of education in Canada to understand the issues with education in a society that is premised on settler colonialism, white supremacy, and racial capitalism. The first residential school in Canada, the Mohawk Institute in Brantford, Ontario, was opened in 1831 by the Anglican Church. Like the facilities that would follow it, the Mohawk Institute was designed to "educate" Indigenous children, or more accurately assimilate them into European society, convert them to Christianity, turn them into capitalist workers, and erase their Indigeneity (Royal Canadian Geographical Society, 2018). After Canadian Confederation in 1867, the Canadian government was quick to federalize and expand the residential school system starting in the early 1880s. The last residential school would not close its doors until 1996, meaning Canada has a history of over a century of racist, assimilatory, and abusive schooling practices to contend with (Fournier & Crey, 1998; Haig-Brown et al., 2012). The residential schools were explicitly intended to eradicate Indigenous cultures. John A. Macdonald, the first Prime Minister of Canada, commissioned a politician named Nicholas Flood Davin to investigate the industrial schools built for Indigenous children in the United States and provide a recommendation for their implementation in Canada. In his 1879 *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds*, Davin wrote "if anything is to be done with the Indian, we must catch him very young. The children must be kept constantly within the circle of civilized conditions" (quoted in Hanson, 2009). It was based on this recommendation that federal funding for the residential schools was secured. The goal of residential schools is encapsulated in the well-known phrase "kill the Indian, save the man" (Miller, 1996; Pratt, 1973; Wolfe, 2006).

Children who attended these schools were not allowed to speak their own languages, wear their own clothes, or observe cultural, spiritual, or religious practices (Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003). The schools themselves were poorly funded and therefore not well maintained, had poor sanitation, and there was generally not enough food, resulting in malnourishment and sometimes starvation. Students spent much of their time working to maintain the schools rather than learning any useful skills or knowledge. Emotional and psychological abuse were constant features of the schools, along with physical and sexual abuse for many of the children (Haig-Brown et al., 2012; Hanson, 2009; Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999). Many children died from neglect, starvation, physical abuse, or when trying to run away from the schools (Hanson, 2009). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, whose mandate was to hear first-hand reports of the schools from survivors, record the history of the schools, and provide recommendations for steps toward reconciliation between settlers and Indigenous people in Canada, found that the history of residential schools in Canada amounts to a form of cultural genocide (TRC, 2015). That is, the schools "set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group" in order to destroy "those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group" (TRC, 2015, p.1). Canada is a settler colonial state—its very existence is premised on its ability to lay legitimate claim to illegitimate, stolen Land. If Canada had been successful in its goal of completely eliminating Indigenous people as a cultural group through residential schools, there would have been no one left to challenge settlers' claims to the Land that we as a nation stole

and continue to steal. It was not until 2008, over a decade after the closure of the last school, that then Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized on behalf of the Canadian state for residential schools. It is notable that a year after his apology, at the 2009 G20 summit, Harper publicly stated that "Canada has no history of colonialism," a clear signal that the Canadian state still has a vested interest in hiding and erasing its colonial past and present, and that the apology Harper gave a year previous was nothing more than empty words (Shrubb, 2014).

Schools in Canada were clearly established and run with the goal of maintaining and buttressing the settler-colonial, white supremacist foundations of the country. White children were educated separately from Indigenous children (Battiste, 2011; Pratt et al., 2018). Indigenous children were taught that their families, communities, cultures, and worldviews were wrong, uncivilized, savage, and had no place in "modern society" (Dei & Calliste, 2000). White children on the other hand were taught that Canada belongs to them, that their hardy pioneer ancestors "built" the nation, and that they embodied the future of the country. This indoctrination of children in the norms and values of settler colonialism and a Eurocentric worldview did not end with the closure of the last residential school. Instead it continues on in modern day educational practices. While Canada is considered, primarily by itself, but also by other countries, as a multicultural haven where all different cultures, peoples, and races are valued, the results of our educational practices belie that myth. Many scholars, including but not limited to Battiste (1995), Cheng (1995), Croizet (2012), Dei (1995, 2007, 2010, 2017), Dei et al. (1997), Howe (2013), James (2017), Ladson-Billings (2006, 2007), Livingstone (2010), Mah (2016), Maynard (2017), Pratt and Danyluk (2017), Riddle and Sinclair (2019), Salole and Abdulle (2015), Solomon et al. (2005), and Yau et al. (1993), have documented an educational achievement gap between Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other racialized students and their white counterparts. For example, Pratt and Danyluk maintain that there exists a distinct difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians in educational attainment. In the province of Alberta, for instance, the high school completion rates for non-Indigenous students in 2014–2015 was 76.5% while for Indigenous students the completion rate was 50.2% (Mah, 2016). Previously, Howe (2013) had found that in 2006 51.1% of Indigenous students in Alberta dropped out of high school, while only 20.3% of non-Indigenous students dropped out. Clearly there were no drastic changes over the course of eight years. Black students do not fare much better in the Canadian education system. For example, Carl James (2017) found that while 84% of white students graduate from high school in Toronto, the largest city in Canada, only 69% of Black students graduate. Significantly, the educational achievement rates of Black students in Toronto decreases the longer their families have been in Canada. Twenty-one percent of first-generation Black Canadians will not graduate high school. For third-generation Black Canadians this percentage increases to 28%. This points to the fact that the Canadian educational system is actively interfering with the success of non-white students.

The educational achievement gap experienced by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other racialized students is part of the legacy of residential schools, as well as a

society that devalues non-white bodies. While Canada tends to gloss over its history of Indigenous erasure and has yet to acknowledge the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's assertion that Canada engaged in cultural genocide, it more or less completely erases its own history of slavery and racism. Canada portrays itself as a haven for Black folks escaping slavery in the American South and loves to publish romanticized stories of escaped Black slaves following the North Star until they reach the safety of Canada. While these stories are true, they hide the fact that Canada has its own history of the slavery of Black people, and the only reason slavery ended here was because we were still a British colony, and Britain abolished slavery before the United States did (Cooper, 2011; Trudel & D'Allaire, 2013). Canada also has a history of engaging Asian people in conditions that amount to indentured servitude, including the Chinese laborers who built the majority of Canadian railroads (Razack, 2002). These are the values that are being passed onto children in Canadian schools. There is an explicit curriculum in which the histories, cultures, worldviews, and knowledges of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other racialized communities are completely ignored and left out. The explicit curriculum is accompanied by a hidden curriculum which according to Rahman (2013) is made up of the unwritten rules, regulations, standards, and expectations that form part of the learning process in schools and classrooms, and in Canada are implemented through the colonizer's worldviews beliefs and value systems that devalue Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other racialized students. Both the official curriculum and the hidden curriculum are implicated in the educational achievement gap experienced by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other racialized students, where these students face disproportionately high rates of suspension, expulsions, push-outs (drop-outs), and streaming into non-academic programs. These practices, while fundamental to Canadian educational practice, are not limited to Canada, but exist in colonial destinations around the world.

Despite the documented failures of education in Canada for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other racialized learners, Canada generally prides itself on its education system, and particularly on its "acceptance" of racial minorities. Canada has an official policy of multiculturalism, which was enshrined in the Canadian Multicultural Act of 1971 and was formalized in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1988. According to the official policy of multiculturalism, when people immigrate to Canada, they integrate into Canadian society, but are encouraged to retain and celebrate their identities, cultures, histories, and experiences (Campbell, 2020). However, despite this official policy, immigrants and Indigenous peoples continue to be constituted as "others" in relation to white Canadians, whom has called the "exalted subjects." White people as "exalted subjects" are constructed as law-abiding citizens committed to equality, multiculturalism, and diversity, while non-white "others" are constructed as posing a serious threat to the survival of the "exalted subjects" and to Canada itself (Thobani, 2007; Walcott, 2016). As part of their official multicultural stance, the Canadian government has undertaken many different reforms to education in order to make it more equitable. Education in Canada is divided provincially, where each provincial government has the responsibility for education in its own jurisdiction. The recent history of education in the

province of Ontario provides an example of reforms that have been undertaken by Canadian governments to improve education.

In 2004 the Ontario Ministry of Education undertook what they called a Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for elementary schools and a Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategy for secondary schools to try to improve equity in literacy and numeracy outcomes for students. This included trying to provide support to those students who were most at risk of underachievement in reading, writing, and math, particularly for English as a second language learners, Indigenous students, and students who were identified as having special educational needs (Campbell, 2020). While this strategy was successful in closing achievement gaps between different schools, between male and female students, and between French speakers and English speakers, there still exists a gap between the academic success of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other racialized students and their white counterparts, particularly at the intersection of race, class, and ethnicity (Campbell, 2020). Additionally, the plan was criticized for failing to address systemic and ongoing inequities in Ontario schools, such as the failure to address cultural bias and relevance, the disproportionate rates of non-academic streaming, suspensions and expulsions of racialized students, and the failure to include Indigenous knowledges and ways of learning (Campbell, 2020). In 2009, the Ontario Ministry of Education again released a new policy to improve equity in Ontario's schools based on a report called *Realizing the promise of diversity: Ontario's equity and inclusive education strategy*, this time with a plan to implement "a system-wide approach to identifying and removing discriminatory biases and systemic barriers" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p.3). Again in 2017, the Ontario Ministry released an Equity Action Plan, noting that inequity persists in our school systems, stating that "as we have grown to better understand these issues, it has become clear that further action is required" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017, p.5). This was an acknowledgement that racialized students, as well as low-income, disabled, and LGBTQ2S students, were facing persistent inequities in educational achievement outcomes in the Ontario school system. These inequities still exist.

The question then becomes: Why when so much attention has been focused on improving educational outcomes for racialized and minoritized students do these large gaps in educational achievement still exist? The answer to this question, in our opinion, is quite simple. We are continually attempting to build on top of a cracked foundation. We keep adding more and more floors to a building that is already condemned and will never have a sound structure. The existing system is the source of the problem, and doing diversity "add-ons" or "tweaks" is not going to fix a problem which is inherent to the way that we educate our children. We are trying to train Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other racialized students to succeed in a system that by its very design ensures their failure, and then we wonder why our solutions are not working. The Canadian school system is based on the values of Canadian society, which at its roots, despite its multicultural varnish, is a white supremacist, settler-colonial society that hierarchizes bodies based on their skin color. Schools replicate these values over and over again. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other racialized children are not succeeding to