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Editorial

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Editorial, July 2021

Colonial Violence and Racism

A few days before the annual conference of this journal's parent association, the Comparative and International Education Society of Canada, the grim news announcing the discovery of the remains of 215 children on Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, the site of the former Kamloops Indian residential school in British Columbia, was announced. We would hear similar announcements about other sites of former residential schools across the country.

We honour the memory of those 215 children and all of the other children, numbering in the thousands, whose remains have been discovered or lie undiscovered. This is not news for Indigenous Peoples—the losses were known but have not been acknowledged all these years. We stand with our Indigenous colleagues and community members, survivors, and their families.

Beyond the solidarity statements we must commit to action. It is our collective responsibility to educate ourselves about the violence enacted through the Indian residential school system, the genocide, and the multiple losses that continue to be experienced by Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island, and to take up the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, especially those related to education. This includes the education about, prevention of, and direct action on anti-Indigenous racism that is deeply embedded in our structures and systems.

Barely a week after this news, a Muslim family in London, Ontario, was killed in a violent hit-and-run truck attack, targeted for no other reason than their Islamic faith. What is our responsibility to combat such hatred and the many forms of racism that are pervasive in these times?

At the conference, the executive of the CIESC, deeply concerned about anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Asian racism, had convened a forum on the topic to discuss our role in combatting racism in our work as international and comparative education scholars.

In that discussion, I brought attention to George Sefa Dei, a prominent anti-racism educator, scholar, and member of the CIESC, who has long argued that “[s]ilence around race is far from neutral—anti-racist discourse, despite those who blame it for bringing race to the table, is a necessary strategic perspective for addressing that which by all means already exists” (Dei, 2012, p. 53). Anti-racist discourse, in our case then, is about first interrogating how our field may be silent on race. We are embedded in a higher education system that is Eurocentric and colonial in its culture and structure, and we need to interrogate the histories, roots and very foundations of our disciplines to understand, for example, what the field excludes and includes. In what ways are we silent in terms of what research is valued and how ways of being and knowing are not recognized.

Continuing along that line of thought, Dei argues that “[w]e must critically evaluate our perceptions and understandings of our personal and collective lived experiences to see how we are constantly compelled to think racially and to use racial codes, categories, meaning systems and signifiers” (2012, p. 54). What are the ways in which we continue the traditions of our discipline, and what are the racial codes and systems that we may unconsciously reproduce? As a scholarly association associated with an international identity, the CIESC is often described as one of the

most diverse as there is a high percentage of IBPOC¹ scholars in the membership. Much like the discourse of multiculturalism erases race, the presence of diverse bodies may lead to complacency or worse, a move to innocence regarding how we might be complicit in maintaining a status quo: there needs to be a willingness to do the work that brings our discipline and practices under scrutiny. This is a responsibility for all scholars associated with the field of comparative and international education

Another somewhat controversial aspect of bringing in anti-racist discourse into our work is that of interrogating Whiteness. “When we fail to acknowledge the power of white racial identity, whiteness, white supremacy, and their critical linkages, we also fail to uncover how race plays out beyond racism” (Dei, 2012, p. 56). I speak of Whiteness here not simply as an attribute of identity and identified with individual culpability (associated with colour blindness, political correctness, etc.), but as a structure of power relations and practices that are usually invisible and unmarked. What then are the ways in which the Whiteness discourse, in the form of Eurocentrism and coloniality, linger in our discipline and among our everyday practices as scholars of comparative and international education?

Returning to the task at hand, we cannot turn to addressing societal issues without examining our own practices and disciplinary culture. There’s work to be done and *Comparative and International Education* can play a role in inviting scholarship on race, racialization, and efforts to address multiple forms of racism through education. To this end, there will be a special issue on the experiences of Asian International students (see the call for submissions posted on our website (<https://ojs.lib.uwo.ca/index.php/cie-eci/announcement/view/153>) with guest editors Elizabeth Buckner (OISE), Ann H. Kim (York) and Jean-Michel Montsion (York) due for publication early in 2022.

We hope that we can continue to make space for and seek the funding that’s needed to feature such special issues that can advance our understanding and contribute to our collective efforts to prevent racism and hatred. This editorial team is committed to that work.

Kumari Beck, on behalf of the editorial team.

In this issue we feature five research articles and two book reviews.

In light of the murdered family in London, Ontario, Hassina Alizai’s article, “Young Canadian Muslims: Islamophobia and Higher Education,” is an important qualitative study of lived experiences of Islamophobia and racial exclusion in Canadian universities. Informed by theories on racialization and Islamophobia, the author provides a compelling analysis of the data gathered from eight Muslim students on how they are perceived by faculty, peers, and student service providers. Among the key findings was the difficulty students had for getting religious accommodation. Although faculty were the most accommodating, students had to work hard to prepare for and establish their needs, and the accommodation was still grounded in norms of Whiteness. Faculty unconsciously promoted bias in the classroom displaying prejudice and stereotypical attitudes towards students of Muslim backgrounds, resulting in lower expectations from, and microaggressions towards these students from peers. Other findings included the misrepresentation of Islam, and the burden on Muslim students to defend against anti-Muslim sentiment. Most concerning was the validation from these student experiences of the public

¹ Indigenous, Black, people of colour

emboldening of Islamophobia, resulting in racist comments and overt acts of hate. As Alizai concludes, “Islamophobia has had a significant impact on these Muslim students’ experiences in higher education.”

In the article, “International Recruitment in Canadian Higher Education: Factors Influencing Students’ Perceptions and Experiences with Education Agents,” authors Han Xu and Tess Miller investigated a little-known aspect of international student recruitment practices, namely, that of education agents who are used by higher education institutions to recruit international students. The authors surveyed 385 international students from 59 countries about their experiences with and perceptions of these agents. The findings may not be surprising, those who used agents were less than satisfied with their experience. Among the range of responses, students reported absence of professionalism, high fees charged by agents, and the lack of fit between student backgrounds and interests and the institution that was chosen for them by the agents. Through international student voice, the study provides insights about agent practices in international student recruitment in the Canadian context and recommends a regulatory framework to balance out the power dynamics among students, agents, and HEIs.

With the increase of global mobilities and the high numbers of immigrant families in industrialized countries of the Global North, the education of immigrant children and youth has become a pressing concern. In their article, “Confronting the Challenge of Immigrant Student Underachievement: A Comparative Analysis of Education Policies and Programs in Canada, New Zealand, and England,” authors Louis Volante, Don A. Klinger, and Melissa Siegel identify key features of these systems that support the success of immigrant children. They describe challenges faced by immigrant students in elementary and secondary schools and provide an analysis of PISA scores to illustrate immigrant student outcomes. A discussion of educational policies related to immigrant students in each country follows, leading the authors to conclude that “targeted policies that focus on immigration, transition and community support, language acquisition, and educational integration can provide effective supports for migrant children and their families,” although, they caution, inequities still exist in each jurisdiction. Cautioning against uncritical policy borrowing, they recommend that policy makers need to make greater use of research findings, adapted to local contexts, in their work to improve achievement outcomes for immigrant students.

On a completely different topic, in the article, “Grading in a Dilemmatic Space: An Exploratory Cross-cultural Analysis of Mathematics and Language Secondary Teachers,” Raphaël Pasquini and Christopher DeLuca turn our attention to a task dreaded by teachers, namely, grading. Their fascinating cross-cultural exploratory study analyzes how culture and teaching subject influence teachers’ grading dilemmas. Applying the notion of “dilemmatic space” as a framework to interpret teachers’ grading work, the authors make an argument for the complex practice of grading as “an always negotiable practice.” Data from semi-structured interviews were gathered from teachers of mathematics and language from Ontario, Canada, and the State of Vaud, Switzerland. In the analysis, five dilemmatic spaces were identified across cultural contexts and teaching subjects, highlighting among others, the ways in which multicultural and multilingual contexts factor into grading. Following a detailed discussion of the complexities to be found in these dilemmatic spaces, the authors further asserted that “while culture does lead to unique practices, there may be underlying connections and similarities in complex assessment processes when cultures operate from similar education frameworks and principles,” and they recommended that future studies on grading are needed.

Our article in French, “21st-Century Challenges for Doctoral Studies: A Look at the Quebec Context,” by Marcelline Bangali and Annie Guillemette of Laval University, analyzes differences in perception between the competencies developed by doctoral students and recent doctoral graduates, on the one hand, and, on the other, the competencies sought by the organizations capable of hiring them. It highlights a certain reductive perception of the objectives of doctoral studies that is present in different disciplines and that represents a “major hindrance to the strategic role that these highly qualified graduates could otherwise play in society given the increasingly complex and unpredictable socioeconomic challenges of the new millennium.” Referring to the current context in France and comparing that to the Quebec context, the authors indicate certain key elements for the redefinition of the doctorate's objectives, the wider diffusion of information concerning the competencies that the credential tends to develop and the enhanced recognition of the value of these competencies. In this way, the article invites us to re-examine our conceptions of the knowledge economy and the forms that it takes in different sectors, disciplines, and countries.

We also feature two book reviews: Blair Stonechild's *Loss of Indigenous Eden and the Fall of Spirituality* reviewed by W.Y. Alice Chan, and George J. Sefa Dei and Mairi McDermott's *Centering African Proverbs, Indigenous Folktales, and Cultural Stories in Curriculum: Units and Lesson Plans for Inclusive Education* reviewed by Shamiga Shamy Arumuhathas.

We hope you are all keeping as well as can be expected in these difficult times.

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