Decolonizing Educational Relationships

This book is not only a courageous text, but one of the premium texts that approaches decoloniality on a global scale, considering the perspectives of once-colonized nations. It is critical that when we discuss decoloniality that we do not erase the discourses and materialities of multiple nations in the world when engaging in pluriversal, democratic knowledge construction, and dissemination. This text does that work while engaging in theory, relationalities, spirituality, and expanded possibilities. This is a must-read book of our generation and will be a foundational text for current and future scholars of anti-oppressive and anti-colonial work.

Kakali Bhattacharya, Ph.D, Professor, Research Evaluation and Methodologies, School of Human Development and Organizational Studies in Education, University of Florida

This insightful book delves into the critical importance of transforming educational relationships as a means to challenge coloniality within education. Rather than shying away from the intricate complexities and inevitable dissonances that arise in collective change efforts, this book treats them as catalysts for deepened learning and expanded accountability. It refrains from offering simplistic solutions or universal remedies, and instead equips educators with valuable frameworks, tools, and thought-provoking questions to identify and interrupt ongoing colonial dynamics within mainstream educational institutions. By doing so, it offers an important gesture toward how we might learn to live together differently.

Sharon Stein, Ph.D, Professor Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia, xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Territory

Relationships go to the heart of education. As the authors point out, however, our relationships are deeply entangled in coloniality. Drawing on a wealth of evidence and personal lived experience, this book asks the crucial question as to how we as educators can go about de/colonizing our relationships. It is vital reading for all those interested in decolonizing education in the interests of more socially, economically and epistemically just futures.

Professor Leon Tikly FAcSS, University of Bristol

This book is a must read for anyone wanting to better understand and practice de/colonizing education. Through a new focus on relationships, fatima, Fran and Shauneen offer caring, accessible and critically-honed insights into process, grounded in extensive experience and practical exercises. In showing how to decentre from dominant Euro-centric models through their actionable de/colonial imaginary, they offer powerful means to contribute to working for a more socially-just world.

Kerry Chappell , MA Oxon, PhD, SFHEA, Associate Professor of Education, University of Exeter, MA Creative Arts in Education Programme Co-ordinator and Dance Lecturer, Leader for Creativity and Emergent Educational-futures Network.

The decolonization of knowledge is now a key concern for many social scientists across the world. In this book, the authors eloquently spell out what decolonization of knowledge might look like, and how decolonization might take on specific meanings in terms of methodological, disciplinary, and geopolitical context. It is a welcome addition to the rapidly growing scholarship on decolonization.

Ali Meghji, Associate Professor in Social Inequalities, Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge.

Decolonizing Educational Relationships is essential reading for everyone working in educational environments. The authors use beautifully crafted prose, imagery, and lyricism to illuminate how we are both affected by and complicit in coloniality. fatima, Fran, and Shauneen then model self-reflexive dialogue to help the reader imagine how their own de/colonizing journeys might look. They offer practical activities that move beyond supplementing the writing, which enables readers to engage in de/colonial action while simultaneously doing the cognitive labour to interrogate colonial systems and practices. Although the authors explore the seemingly impenetrable colonial reality within educational systems, their book is characterized by an invitation to hope. They enable the reader to believe in the potential for educational practices that are fundamentally relational, pluriversal, emergent, and just; that is, educational practices that serve everyone well. The book is both a work of art and call to action—every reader will emerge the better for having experienced it.

Robin Alison Mueller, Associate Professor, School of Education and Technology, Royal Roads University, Canada.

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Decolonizing Educational Relationships: Practical Approaches for Higher and Teacher Education

BY

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Emerald Publishing Limited
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL

First edition 2024

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80071-530-1 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-80071-529-5 (Online)
ISBN: 978-1-80071-531-8 (Epub)

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Shauneen Pete is nehiyaw from Little Pine First Nation (Treaty 6 territory) and Dakota, Saulteaux and Cree from Cowessess First Nation (Treaty 4 territory). She is a storyteller and interdisciplinary scholar who focusses on both the Indigenization and decolonization of higher education. She is the Chair of Emerging Indigenous Scholars Circle at Royal Roads University.

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Foreword

I want to begin by congratulating Drs fatima Pirbhai-Illich, Fran Martin, and Shauneen Pete on the significant accomplishment of completing this book. It requires hard work, ambitious optimism, and intense discipline to complete a book. "Decolonizing Educational Relationships" represents the sacrifices these scholars made to see it through from ideation to completion. And, what the authors offer in "Decolonizing Educational Relationships" is long overdue and much needed.

If you take the time to read and spend time thoughtfully in considering what "Decolonizing Educational Relationships" has to offer, you will begin to understand that although the idea of writing "a book" may have started in 2019, in some ways, the ideas contained between the covers have been in the works for much longer than the short time mentioned above suggests. Given the authors' expertise, positionality, and sincere honesty that rises to the surfaces of the pages, it becomes quite clear that the fabric of their ideas has been considered and shaped over the course of each one of their lives and, perhaps, more fully as they each drew on each other for strength while enduring lives marked by the COVID-19 global pandemic. A pandemic that re-exposed the existing scourges of unfettered capitalism and the inequities it creates for all of those who are systematically marginalized.

Many co-authored books begin with the work based on congenial, and, perhaps, collegial, relationships. Better offerings transition from a surface kind of transactional writing to become more fully collaborative. It is a rare case, and such is the case with "Decolonizing Educational Relationships," when a reader is invited to become immersed in the world of written words and visual symbols that reflect a transformative form of relationality. Importantly, as you will experience, the provocations fatima, Fran, and Shauneen provide exist as both rigorous scholarship and reflect an affective bond of kinship.

The nine chapters contained in the book – with a style that is conceptually dense and also very personal – I urge you to think carefully about and engage with the history and legacy of colonization, colonialism, race, racialization, and racism. fatima, Fran, and Shauneen expose the banal lies of colonialism and racism, that is, untruths that were weaponized in order to subordinate and control Indigenous, black, and brown communities through the theft of lands, knowledges, and lives. As you read, view, and engage with the interactive learning activities, you will be encouraged and, at times, pushed to become involved in the work that is required to de/colonize higher and teacher education and the relationships

entangled in each. You will be provided an opportunity to consider implications that are related to your life and the lives of others as you come to terms with what is required if we are to dismantle the colonial substructure and an oppressive architecture that still remains intact.

In the end, as the authors note themselves, rather than conclude the book they have chosen to offer readers a choice; and not an easy one. Either you can more fully engage in the hard work of racial and radical justice to design a better future, or you can simply "walk away" from it and leave it as is. It is my sincere hope that once you finish working through "Decolonizing Educational Relationships" you will steadfastly choose the former as it is our only chance of creating a world in which every life matters and one in which each of us can flourish.

Jerome Cranston, Ph.D.
Professor and Dean, Faculty of Education
University of Regina

Located on the homeland of the Métis/Michif Nation: Saskatchewan and on the lands stewarded for millennia by the nehiyawak, anihsinapek, dakota, lakota, nakota, and what is now known as Treaty 4 territory.

Acknowledgements

Our sincere thanks go to all the researchers and educators, community elders, and knowledge keepers inside and outside of the academy for paving the path before us and for both providing us with guidance in our attempt to reimagine the education project otherwise and to start re-imagining how to live together in a good way in this pluriversal world that we inhabit. We would also like to acknowledge the support and give heartfelt thanks to Professor Jerome Cranston, the Dean of Education, and the Center for Educational Research, Collaboration and Development at the University of Regina, the Centre for Creativity and Emergent Education Futures Network at the University of Exeter, and Robert Bowden and Rosie Wilson from Lifeworlds for their unstinting support and commitment on all our projects. Finally, this work would never have been accomplished without the opportunities provided to us to learn alongside and with the pre- and in-service teachers and graduate students we have taught, scholars we have engaged with along the way, and the students and educational assistants at Ranch Ehrlo Society without whom, this project would never have been started.

At a personal level, Shauneen Pete gives thanks to her father, Jacob Pete, for the teachings of wahkohtowin.

fatima gives thanks to her parents and in particular her brother, Nasir Mohamed, for his steadfast support in all matters of life.

Fran gives thanks to all her family for their unstinting support, and especially to her Dad, John Martin.

Finally, we would also like to acknowledge that this book would not have been possible without a commitment to truth-telling, vulnerability, trust, and love shared among the three of us.

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Section 1

Introduction

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This is a book about de/colonizing[1] educational relationships. We had been talking about writing it for some time. It is founded, first and foremost, on our experiences as teacher educators working with pre- and in-service teachers over the last 15 years and actively collaborating on different projects since 2014. Since 2007, fatima[2] and Shauneen were colleagues and became friends at the University of Regina when fatima started working there as an Assistant Professor in 2006. fatima believes that communities should be active civic members of the society they live in, and so soon after taking up a post at the University of Regina, she began to investigate why adolescent young people of Indigenous descent were being failed by the educational institutions in Saskatchewan, Canada. It was therefore a natural progression to also begin to develop a working relationship with Shauneen that, over time, developed into a trusting, open friendship in which they were able to have honest, non-judgmental, critical conversations about issues affecting people of Indigenous descent in Canada – the sorts of conversations that at that time were not possible with white-settler colleagues. In 2013, Fran and fatima met in a professional context and following many conversations about their respective projects and the connections between

[1]As we explain in more detail in Chapter 2, inspired by Bhattacharya (2018a, 2018b), we write de/colonizing with an oblique symbol between de and colonizing to indicate that there is no pure decolonizing space because any project to decolonize is always in relationship with colonizing forces.

[2]Fatima uses a lowercase "f" because of the influence of coloniality on her name and identity. Her given name is Fatmakhanu. When she started working in academia, she felt compelled to use Fatima as the academics she worked with couldn't pronounce her name accurately. To avoid the constant butchering of her name, she chose Fatima for English speakers as an alternative to the diminutive "Fatma" which she uses with her family and community. In academia and the academic publishing world, she is therefore known as Fatima Pirbhai-Illich. For political de/colonial reasons, she has now chosen to honor her given name in her professional work and so uses "Fatmakhanu (fatima) Pirbhai-Illich" – fatima with the lower-case "f" to indicate it is not her given name, but one that she is known by within academia.

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Practical Approaches for Higher and Teacher Education, 3–24

doi:10.1108/978-1-80071-529-520231001

them, started a formal research collaboration in 2014. In 2015–2016, fatima and Fran had a proposal for a co-edited book accepted by Palgrave Macmillan. Some of the chapter authors were of Indigenous descent so it seemed a natural progression to invite Shauneen to join the editorial team. Since then, the three of us have collaborated on a number of occasions including a two-day seminar on decolonizing teacher education at the University of Exeter, where we also launched our previous book (Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2017); and more recently in 2021, on a virtual weekend retreat on de/colonizing educational relationships at the University of Regina. It was at this point, fatima and Fran invited Shauneen to join them as a co-author of this book.

However, the story of this book doesn't start with when we began our professional, research collaborations. Each of us has our own trajectories – our own particular sets of experiences in different times and places – that have brought us to why we began to collaborate in the first place, and central to those experiences have been our relationships with plural ways of being, knowing, and viewing the world. In this chapter, we therefore introduce ourselves in relation to the socio-cultural, historical, and geo-political influences on our identities. We see this as essential to locating ourselves (described by Mignolo, 2007 as our locus of enunciation) with regard to the critical interrelational focus of our work in order to be explicit about our positionalities and subjectivities. One of the key aspects of de/colonial work is to understand the importance of revealing the [often hidden or silenced] histories that lie behind how the world works today, a world that is comprised of a complex web of interconnections and interrelations. In this opening section, we situate ourselves within that web by outlining some of the relationships that have formed our identities and been central to our arrival in this place and time. In doing so, we are cognizant of Maria Lugones' (2003) critique of writers who situate themselves as a means of providing a disclaimer about the problem of universality with regard to their theoretical claims. She notes that for some writers, after "the disclaimer, nothing indicates that difference has been recognized. The logic of the discourse emphasizes ignoring difference and acknowledging a singularity of practice, discipline, or construction" (Lugones, 2003, p. 68). Lugones (2003) describes such disclaimers as missing "a clear emphasis on interactive acknowledgement" (p. 68), which we take to mean that there is no acknowledgment after such a disclaimer that interrogates the ways in which one's subjectivities interact with the subject of the text.

In our case, it is precisely the interaction between our subject positions vis-á-vis de/colonizing educational relationships that informs what, how, and why we have come together to co-author this book. As Mignolo (2000) states, "The colonial difference is the space where coloniality of power is enacted" (p. ix), and it is the differentials in power that have created the colonial/modern world system. Within this colonial matrix, we each come from very different locations in time and space (Fig. 1).

As well as differences between country locations, there will also be differences within each country location between those involved in low-intensity struggles

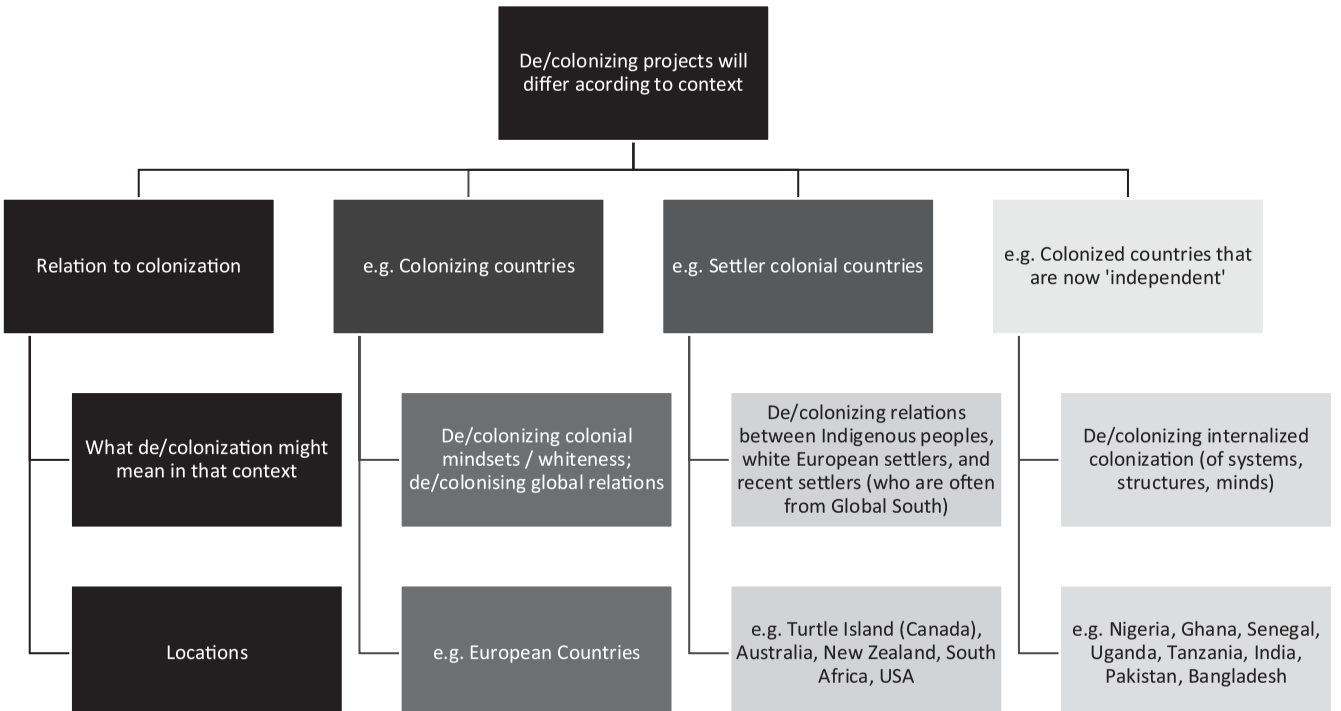

Fig. 1. The Importance of Place in De/Colonization at the Nation Scale. (Machado de Oliveira, 2021).

and those involved in high-intensity struggles[3] (Machado de Oliveira, 2021). For example, fatima, a settler Canadian, was born in a formerly colonized country that gained political independence in the 1970s, but post-independence her family immigrated to Canada for fear of their safety; Shauneen, an Indigenous Canadian, was born in, and remains a citizen of, Turtle Island (Canada); and Fran, a white British citizen, was born in England, the center of colonialism. We therefore each have our own experiences and histories in relation to colonialism and coloniality, and we have each taken different approaches as educators to our de/colonizing praxis. It is these that we go on to describe in the next section, after which we will put forward our case for why this book is needed, why we focus on educational relations, what issues in education we are responding to, why we have identified these particular issues, and how the ideas and practical examples contained in the book might begin to address these issues.

Our Loci of Enunciation (The Places From Which We Speak)

fatima

> Tun kinji chokri anyen? (Whose daughter, are you?)

There are many possible points of entry and stories that I could start with to situate our work, but for now, I start with writing myself in a narrative that persistently affects those who live among and are categorized as different from mainstream communities. I am visiting my brother in Calgary, Alberta and it is Friday evening and as is my practice, I have arrived early at the mosque for the evening prayers so that I can find a place to sit against a wall on the ruby-colored carpeted floor. These are prized spots for women who are elderly or have ailments – I need it because I have osteoarthritis in my lumbar spine. As there is time before the first prayers begin, I take out my amber-colored tasbih (prayer beads) and silently start reciting a prayer. Within a few minutes of my arrival, an elderly woman comes and sits beside me. I can see from the corner of my eye that she is settling herself into place and when she's stopped fidgeting, she starts rummaging through her purse to look for her tasbih. While she's looking for her tasbih, she also turns her head toward me, smiles, and greets me in Kutchi (my first language).

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[3]"The term low-intensity refers to those who have benefited the most and still enjoy the protections that modernity offers, as they fight to change things within or beyond modernity. Those in low-intensity struggles have a choice to show up or not, to become visible or not, to be arrested or not, to take risks or not. … In contrast, those involved in high-intensity struggles are communities whose lives subsidize the comforts and securities that those who have benefited the most enjoy. Some people in high-intensity (and high-risk, high-stakes) struggles are fighting to be part of modernity. Others are fighting for the possibility of a different existence" (Machado de Oliveira, 2021, p. 52).

Woman:	Ya Ali madad (salutation used by Ismaili Muslims – May Prophet Ali help you).
fatima:	Mowla Ali madad (May Mawla Ali help you, too).
Woman:	I haven't seen you here before.
fatima (with reluctance):	Ah huh, I'm visiting my brother.
Woman:	Tojo naam kuro ai? (What is your name?)
fatima:	Fatma.
Woman:	Fatma keva? (What's your last name?).
fatima:	I don't respond.
Woman:	Tun kinji chokri anye? (Whose daughter, are you?)

I really don't want to engage in conversation, so I didn't respond but instead turned toward her, smiled, and slowly turned my face away from her.

Woman:	Alaa! (Expression of exasperation), tun kinji ghar ji chokri anye? (You are the daughter of which house/family?)
fatima:	I am Pirbhai-Sunderji's granddaughter – Shully Pirbhai Sunderji and Zarina Janu's, sorry – Zarina Janmohamed Saleh Kanji's daughter.
Woman:	Ooh! Now I know you. You look like your father. I knew your family, your aunts, and uncles in Dar-es-Salaam. Your youngest fui aunt (paternal aunty) Zubeida and I went to school together, and we used to also go for picnics together. Your Zubeida fui was not my friend because she was a year older than me, but we used to go out in groups together.
fatima:	ah huh.
Woman:	I hope you have a good time with your brother. I know you now … you're from a good family.

This type of encounter is not unusual in my faith-based community, especially with the elderly members of the community. When I am asked the question "tun kinji chokri anye?" or "tun kinji ghar ji chokri anye?," I instantaneously understand that the people I meet for the first time want to know my lineage and ancestry, socio-economic status, and want to see if they can establish a familial connection and/or relationship. This line of questioning possibly emanates from my cultural and faith-based heritage from the time of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when we were Hindus and were part of the Lohanas within the Hindu caste system before we converted to Islam where caste and socio-economic status were signifiers for engaging in particular types of relationships.

On the other hand, when I first meet people from outside my ethnic community, within the first few minutes after the introduction, they want to know where I'm from. It never seems enough to say that I am from Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada because they then ask, where am I really from? Like the previous vignette, I understand that what they want to know is, where is my difference from? In the

following, I tell you my story and how I came to be who I am in the world, where I am today, and how my and family's experiences have influenced the ways in which I view and do in the world, the type of academic work I engage in.

I am Fatmakhanu (fatima) Shamshudin Pirbhai Sunderji Samji Ladha Kurji Thoba Jessani-Illich. Each of the names after my first name is the first names of my father, my paternal grandfather, great grandfather, and so on reminding me always of my direct links to my paternal ancestors, that is to who my "tribe" is. Among my many other social identities that are complex, fluid, and constantly in flux depending on the context, I am a racialized, a cis-female, transnational, Shia Nizari Ismaili Muslim who was born and brought up in Tanganyika (Tanzania, after independence). I was born in a country which no longer exists. In the global north, even though I am a member of a faith-based community that believes in pluralism, peace, and sister/brotherhood, as a result of 9/11, anti-Muslim sentiment, and islamophobia, my identity has already been constructed by majoritarian populations as being part of a community of terrorists, being uncivilized, oppressed, passive, and uneducated.

I have lived in many parts of the world but mostly in Canada, the place that I return to, the land where I hold a naturalized citizenship. Family oral narratives inform me, and I offer you a truncated version, that my family originates from an area called Kutch and Kathiawar, situated in the northwest of Gujarat, India. During both the time of the German colonial rule in Tanganyika and during the period of the Busaidi Sultanate of Zanzibar, my forefathers migrated to the East Coast of Africa to escape British colonial rule, famine, and for a better way of life. My father's family settled in Dar-es-Salaam and my mother's initially in Bagamoyo, both in Tanganyika. Just prior to the Abushiri uprising against the German East Africa Company, Abushiri ibn Salim al-Harthi, warned the South Asian population in Bagamoyo of the impending retaliation and advised them to take their portable belongings and move to the island of Zanzibar. My maternal great, great grandfather Kanji Hansaraj moved to Zanzibar where he was a wares merchant who later moved into the wholesale business. In 1900, Kanji Hansaraj donated 50,000/- shillings to have a home built for destitute Ismaili widows which his son later completed.[4] This home was known as the Janmohamed Hansraj Khoja Dharam Shala. Kanji Hansaraj was also known for helping all the newcomers who arrived from India to settle in Africa and was considered to be a prominent member of the faith-based community that he was affiliated with, the Shia Nizari Ismaili Muslims. The values of generosity and service and the tenets of the Ismaili faith that are part of my family history have been integral to my ways of being since birth. The stories of generosity and service and the tenets of the Ismaili faith were already in practice.

My mother's family eventually moved from Zanzibar to Dar-es-Salaam where she met and married my father. I was born into a country that had already been subject to colonial violences by the Arabs from the Persian Gulf, the Portuguese, the Germans from the 1880s (German East Africa) to 1919, and the British in

[4]Khoja Wiki (n.d.).