



Decolonizing Educational Relationships

Practical Approaches for
Higher and Teacher Education

Fatmakhanu (fatima) Pirbhai-Illich,
Fran Martin & Shauneen Pete

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

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

First edition 2024

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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)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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About the Authors

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Foreword

I want to begin by congratulating Drs fatima Pirbhai-Ilich, 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, anihshinapek, 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.