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# Introduction Unsettling the Colonial Places and Spaces of Early Childhood Education in Settler Colonial Societies

Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw  
Western University, [vpacini@uwo.ca](mailto:vpacini@uwo.ca)

Affrica Taylor  
Canberra University

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## **Unsettling the Colonial Places and Spaces of Early Childhood Education in Settler Colonial Societies**

Affrica Taylor, Canberra University<sup>i</sup>

Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, University of Victoria

### **Unsettling Early Childhood Education**

No matter how familiar and commonsensical things seem, they never just are and they are never finally settled. This includes the everyday business-as-usual of early childhood education in settler colonial societies. To do unsettling work requires preparedness to be unsettled or disconcerted. It is risky business. It involves asking hard and provocative questions, disturbing complacency, troubling norms and interrogating conventional truths. It involves interrupting the business-as-usual of everyday life and practice.

The underlying premise of this edited collection is that in settler colonial societies, the seemingly unremarkable, everyday business-as-usual of early childhood education remains inadvertently (albeit often unknowingly) entangled in the social and ecological legacies of colonialism. The contributors to this book attempt to unravel some of these entanglements in order to expose and respond to these legacies. Their intention is to unsettle the things we take for granted. They do this by applying what Carter refers to as “a postcolonial and reflexive contemporaneity” (2006, p. 684) to everyday educational practices, issues and events that they themselves have

experienced, and which ultimately affect young children growing up in settler colonized countries.

The collection opens up a fertile space in which postdevelopmental perspectives (Blaise, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2011) can begin to address ongoing power relations in settler colonial early childhood education settings. As a relative newcomer to the academy, early childhood education is firmly situated within the disciplinary field of child (human) developmental science. Positioned thus, its historical and epistemological trajectory is entwined with the suite of colonialist developmental theories (cultural, economic, technological) that posit western scientific knowledge and society as bringing “progress” to the world (Burman, 2008; Castaneda, 2002). Knowingly or not, early childhood education’s stock-in-trade scientific theories about the “natural” development of the assumed-to-be universal child are part of a much larger western epistemological project to “lead the world forward”. With this bigger picture in mind, our efforts to unsettle early childhood education begin with the understanding that the field of early childhood education is neither culturally neutral nor politically innocent.

There is a growing body of critical early childhood scholarship that calls for a rethinking of childhood and pedagogy beyond developmental theory and practice (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Lenz-Taguchi, 2010), and as a site for engaging in complicities with and potential ruptures to colonizing pedagogical practices (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Viruru, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2012; Taylor, 2013). This edited collection builds upon these practices. Most of the existing literature takes a deconstructive approach, focusing upon the ways in which early

childhood education, as a strategy for the colonization of language, epistemology, ontology, and axiology, has been instrumental in the process of colonizing young minds and bodies (for instance Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Castañeda, 2002). The contributors to this collection take a very situated approach, in which place matters and figures, both discursively and materially. Even though there are discernable patterns and similarities in the colonialist legacies felt across all of the early childhood settler colonial contexts represented in this collection, the authors nevertheless focus upon how these legacies work themselves out in quite distinctive ways within their own geographically, historically and politically distinctive settings, in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. They use a variety of deconstructive, decolonizing and reconstructive strategies to explore the complexities, tensions and possibilities that both emerge and materialize on the surface of their own local early childhood environs.

Although these inquiries are grounded in early childhood education settings, and often draw directly upon the authors' own experiences in these settings, this book offers interdisciplinary interpretations of unsettling. The authors deploy ideas and methods from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives to do their unsettling work, including settler colonial critiques, critical place pedagogies, post-structural and materialist feminist philosophies, the ecological humanities and Indigenous onto-epistemologies. The articulation of these multiple perspectives ensures that the collection offers richly layered insights into the manifestations, implications and effects of colonialist tensions and possibilities in early childhood education. After introducing the chapters, we further elaborate upon the framing concepts – settler colonial societies, colonialist discursive spaces and colonialist place matters – that are taken from these

interdisciplinary perspectives. We offer these elaborations in order to provide additional context to the unsettling work that is being done within early childhood education and continues to grow.

## **The Sections**

The book is organized into three sections: *Unsettling Places*, *Unsettling Spaces* and *Unsettling Indigenous/Settler Relations*. Across these three sections, the contributors search out, uncover and interrogate some of the colonialist tensions that variously inhere in the *physical places*, the *epistemological spaces* and in the *Indigenous/settler relations* of early childhood education. Although always lurking somewhere within these places, spaces and relations, such tensions are rarely acknowledged and often unwittingly rehearsed in early childhood education. By politicizing the silences around these specifically settler colonial tensions and exposing their assimilationist assumptions and relations, the authors also contribute to challenging the innocence presumptions that pervade the early childhood field. They firmly position early childhood within the imperfect, messy, “warts and all” (post)colonial<sup>ii</sup> world in which we all live.

### *Unsettling Places*

The first section contains three chapters, two from Canada and one from Australia. All of the chapters in the book consider the specificities of place in their accountings of the colonialist legacies in early childhood education. However, the contributors to this section bring a keen appreciation of the ways in which the physical landscapes of (post)colonial places and the lives of those that reside in them (human and more-than-

human) are inscribed, marked and shaped by intersecting or colliding discursive and material forces. They work to unsettle the places of early childhood through an attunement to the pedagogical significance of postcolonial place (Somerville, 2013) as well as through an appreciation of the situated entanglement of material and discursive forces in actual places that they have gained from feminist and more-than-human scholars (for example Haraway, 2008; van Dooren & Rose 2012; Instone 2004; Tsing, 2013). Each of the chapters in this section sets out to unravel these discursive and material entanglements – or what Haraway refers to as the “sticky threads” of “material-semiotic practices” (1997, p.68). Within the various places in which they write, the authors tease these “sticky threads” apart and trace them from the colonialist past into their local (post)colonial presents. As they do this, they reflect upon how such tracing methods might both unsettle and reshape early childhood pedagogies in these same places.

In chapter one, “Forest Stories: Restorying Encounters with ‘Natural’ Places in Early Childhood Education”, Nxumalo traces the colonialist legacies inscribed in the place where she lives and works in British Columbia. She adopts the anti-colonial practice of “refiguring presences”, including Indigenous and early colonists’ presences, which are usually rendered invisible by the normative de-politicization of place. Walking through mountain forests trails on unceded Musqueam, Squamish, Stó:lo, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations territories with children from a nearby early childhood centre, Nxumalo puts her “refiguring presences” method to work in describing the encounters the children have with forest tree stumps and tree hollows. These encounters allow her to re-story the colonial histories that reside in these forest tree stumps and tree hollows, but are rarely noted in the business-as-usual of early childhood practices.

She offers a critical commentary on the ways in which colonization has clearly and irrevocably marked these forests in very material ways and yet neo-colonialist discourses continue to render them as innocent spaces of pure nature.

Chapter two, “Unsettling Pedagogies Through Common World Encounters: Grappling with (Post)Colonial Legacies in Canadian Forests and Australian Bushlands” is written by us (Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor). Our material/discursive tracings in this chapter highlight the flows and disjunctures between (post)colonial narratives of belonging to “settled” places and the lived, embodied and emplaced experiences of settler colonialism’s violent histories. By teasing apart some of the “sticky threads” (Haraway, 1997, p.68) of settler/native animal relations, we emphasize colonialism’s disconnects and ruptures. We move from (post)colonial narratives of national belonging in Canadian and Australian children’s literature that feature children’s fond identification with bears and kangaroos (respectively), to reflections upon some of the violent lived histories of settlers and native animals, to observational accounts of young children’s tentative embodied encounters with bear habitats (in British Columbia) and kangaroos (in the Australian Capital Territory). As well as noting the paradoxical differences between the benign children’s narratives, the violent colonial histories, and the fraught realities of contemporary (post)colonial settler child-native animal encounters, we explore the hopeful possibilities for a “common worlds” pedagogy that is based upon a multispecies “ethics of conviviality” (van Dooren & Rose, 2012) within children’s local environments.

“The Fence as a Technology of (Post)colonial Childhood in Contemporary Australia” is the third chapter in this first section. Authors Power and Somerville reflect on the



ways in which the fence, as both a metaphor of division and a physical barrier demarcating settler territory, has historically structured settler/colonized power relations of Self and Other. They argue that the fence, as both a literal and a symbolic technology of power, can also be read onto (post)colonial early childhood settings, where it supports the constitution of childhood as another form of Otherness. Like the other authors in this section, their historical tracings highlight the interconnections between past and present power-laden place events in settler colonial societies. They trace the history of the fence from the early colonial days, when it was first used to demarcate white settler territory and exclude Aboriginal people, into the contemporary barricaded architectures of present-day early childhood settings in an outer-metropolitan Australian township.

### *Unsettling Spaces*

This section has four chapters: two from New Zealand, one from the USA and one from Canada. In this section, the authors also use tracing methodologies to do their unsettling work, but their focus is upon following the intersections between colonialist and other kinds of dominant discourses within the epistemological spaces of early years education. The ongoing effects of colonialist discourses are a key legacy of settler colonial societies. However, these colonialist discourses are neither frozen in time nor unaffected by the emergence of new discourses. The authors in this section consider the ways that more recent dominant discourses shift the ways in which colonialism is enacted in early childhood settings. For instance, some highlight how the recent predominance of neoliberalist discourses can make it difficult to ascertain how old forms of colonization are being sedimented, even as new forms of colonial relations, or neocolonialisms, are being mobilized. Others consider the ways

in which counter-colonial discourses, or discourses that self-consciously resist colonialism, exist in tension with prevailing cultural diversity and inclusion policies. They argue that the neocolonialisms of early childhood education are often obscured by the inclusion-affirming rhetoric of the prevailing diversity discourses. In a similar manner, complexly ambiguous and hybrid emergences of cultural differences can be obfuscated by colonialist and diversity discourses that reinforce fixed Self and Other categorical notions of cultural identity. This section attends to these discursive tensions, sedimentations, mobilizations and obfuscations. An important goal of this section's chapters is to make visible the occluding effects of intersecting discourses in settler colonial early childhood education settings, and to create the space for new kinds of ethical responses.

In chapter four, "Troubling Settleness in Early Childhood Curriculum Development", Ashton interrogates the logics of (neo)liberal multiculturalism, and notes that its catch cries of "inclusion" and "diversity" can in fact work to assimilate Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges. In this sense (neo)liberal multiculturalism can have neocolonial effects. She notes that there are a number of ways in which this can happen. One is through "the settler colonial habit of making sense of the Other within frameworks of the Same" often under the catch-cry of "treating all children the same". Another way it happens is when those who feel authorized to articulate a discourse of diversity inadvertently position those who appear to embody it as Other. As an alternative to inclusion-as-assimilation, or inclusion-as-Othering, she explores the possibilities afforded by acknowledging and staying with incommensurability, and of reconceptualizing difference in ways that do not measure it against the "unarticulated norms" of settlerism.

In the fifth chapter, “Te Whāriki in Aotearoa New Zealand: Witnessing and Resisting Neoliberal and Neo-colonial Discourses in Early Childhood Education”, Tesar reflects upon the different ways in which Te Whāriki, the national bicultural early childhood curriculum framework, has both challenged and accommodated the rise of neoliberalist and neo-colonialist discourses and interventions over the last twenty years. He reviews the colonial history of deteriorating Māori/Pakeha relations and considers the ways in which *Te Whāriki* has provided a counter-colonial focus in the field of early childhood by interweaving Western epistemologies with Māori worldviews and philosophies. His chapter analyses the extent to which this interweaving of Māori and Pakeha discourses about childhood and early years learning has been able to weather the hegemonic effects of neoliberalism’s own liaison with neo-colonialist thinking.

In chapter six, “Mapping Settler Colonialism and Early Childhood Art”, Clark traces the shifting themes of settler colonialist discourses in the visual representations produced by early Canadian artists and their easel painting practices. She looks at the earliest colonial traditions of portrait paintings of “Indians” as a “dying race” and then notes the disappearance of native peoples from the “wilderness paintings” of the early Canadian settler art movement. Artists in this movement depicted a pristine landscape, devoid of any human traces. Onto such images of sublime, untouched or virginal nature, Canadian settlers could project their fantasies of “discovery”, a key motif of colonialist discourse. By situating and implicating seemingly-innocent contemporary early childhood easel art practices within the politics of these settler colonialist traditions, Clark questions to what extent they are simply reenacting colonialism.

Persky and Viruru, the authors of chapter seven, provide great insight into the role of normative white discourses in positioning children of color as “perpetual ‘others’” in the colonized borderland regions of southern USA. In “Teaching in the Borderlands: Stories from Texas”, they show how these dominant discourses reinforce systemic inequities and perpetuate social injustices in a predominantly Hispanic and African-American Texan school. They make visible how the contingent, contextual and ambiguous emergence of differences remain obscured by dominant, static and essentialized representations. Persky and Viruru offer alternative stories of these children’s rich life-experiences in order to take their lives seriously, and to take a stance against the exclusionary identity politics that secures their emotional and economic exploitation.

### *Unsettling Indigenous-Settler Relations*

This third section contains four chapters, two from Australia, one from Canada and one from Aotearoa New Zealand. Although the previous themes of unsettling the material/discursive entanglements in place and the epistemological spaces of colonialist discourses are still very evident in these chapters, the authors in this final section are primarily concerned with the ways in which (post)colonial Indigenous/settler relations are enacted in early childhood education. Each of the chapters showcases the specific geo-historical and demographic challenges and possibilities of these relations. From their vastly different geographical and cultural contexts, the authors set out to unsettle the deeply entrenched patterns of unequal power relations between Indigenous and settler peoples and to turn around the radically differential valuing of Indigenous and settler knowledges and beliefs that

flow from these unequal colonialist relations. They are particularly interested in how (post)colonial Indigenous/settler relations might be reconfigured through the introduction of new forms of Indigenous-attuned pedagogies.

In chapter eight, “Dis-entangling? Re-entanglement? Tackling the Pervasiveness of Colonialism in Early Childhood (Teacher) Education in Aotearoa”, Ritchie focuses upon ways of addressing the politics and effects of intergenerational collective trauma amongst Māori communities. She argues that the trauma of colonization can be clearly witnessed in the shocking statistics that align Māori children and their predicted futures with the full suite of negative social indicators. Ritchie speaks of the “unrealized rhetoric” of true partnership in the *Te Whāriki* bicultural early childhood curriculum framework and offers some strategies for disentangling the gap between bicultural promises and monocultural practices that were set down in the colonial past. She identifies a re-engagement with Māori conceptualizations of “deep relationality” within early childhood pedagogies, as the key to moving forward for all Aotearoa New Zealand children.

Chapter nine, “Unsettling Both-ways Approaches to Learning in Remote Australian Aboriginal Early Childhood Workforce Training” is set in Wadeye, a remote Aboriginal community in the far north of Australia’s Northern Territory. Prompted by an Aboriginal Elder’s insistence that she can only learn with her “shoes off” and in contact with her own country, authors Fasoli and Farmer reflect on the assumptions they have made in their delivery of a supposedly bi-culturally sensitive “both ways” training program designed for Aboriginal early childhood educators. The idea of learning coming directly from the land, rather than from a “culturally appropriate”

curriculum, provides a radical challenge to the mainstream western human-centric notions of pedagogy. This realization leads them to question further western-centric assumptions that underpin the “close the gap” policy, which drives the implementation of mainstream early childhood training programs in remote Australian Aboriginal communities.

“Unsettling Yarns: Reinscribing Indigenous Architectures, Contemporary Dreamings and Newcomer Belongings on Ngunnawal country, Australia” is the tenth chapter.

Authors Duncan, Dawning and Taylor reflect upon limits and possibilities of offering Indigenous perspectives, cultures and histories in an urban early childhood education context, where most of the teachers and children are non-Indigenous. They pick up on the idea of place as a palimpsest – a layered surface that is inscribed, erased and re-inscribed by subsequent generations of human activities, and can thus be “read” in many different ways. With the palimpsest in mind, they “yarn” about their strategies for re-inscribing new forms of Indigenous presences as well as newcomer belongings on the surface of Ngunnawal country, where they all live and work. They discuss ways of materially re-inscribing the country with new Indigenous architectures and of discursively re-inscribing it, through the telling of contemporary Aboriginal Dreaming stories.

In the final chapter, “Thinking with Land, Water, Ice, and Snow: A Proposal for Inuit Nunangat Pedagogy in the Canadian Arctic”, Rowan reflects on the possibilities of adopting a land-responsive Nunangat early childhood pedagogy as a way of redressing the colonialist legacies and ongoing challenges facing northern Inuit communities. She recounts a documented pedagogical event, in which an Inuit Elder

teaches the children how to carve snow, as an example of Nunangat pedagogy. The Elder explains to the children that snow carving is not just a matter of the carver deciding how to carve the snow; it is the snow itself that ultimately determines what forms the carvings will take. This implies that it is the land itself, including all of its elemental components and life-forms, that has pedagogical agency. Rowan proposes thinking *with* the elemental components of the land as the way to frame Nunangat pedagogy.

### **Settler Colonial Societies**

It is evident that all of the contributors to this collection are writing about early childhood education in western settler colonial societies. Therefore, it is pertinent to ask what distinguishes these colonized white settler societies from non-colonized western societies? How do settler colonial societies differ from imperial-centre societies, such as Britain, France, Portugal and Spain? What are the broader implications of living in colonized countries with majority settler/immigrant and minority Indigenous populations? What are the common heritages, legacies and challenges of such societies? To answer these questions, we turn to some of the theorizations of settler colonial societies that have emerged from other disciplines, and spend some time unpacking their distinctive characteristics and histories as well as their regional/geographical variations.

Settler colonial societies are those whose histories of European colonization of Indigenous lands and peoples were characterized by the colonists staying on, assuming the status of ‘settlers’ and establishing ‘territorialized sovereign political

orders' (Veracini, 2007, para. 2). In the four settler colonial societies discussed in this collection - Canada, Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the USA - the settlers quickly outnumbered the Indigenous inhabitants and the colonies they established were eventually transformed into modern sovereign nation states.

The fact that settler colonial societies share some enduring common characteristics is well noted by comparative historians. For instance, in his theorization of the distinctive characteristics of all settler colonial societies, Veracini (2010) points out that although settler sovereignty is quite easy to conceptualize, it is notoriously difficult to fully execute. He describes the common project of settler colonialism, world-wide, as a *never-completed* endeavor to secure land and to legitimize settler sovereignty. Hence our opening comment that things (in settler colonial societies) are never finally settled.

According to Veracini (2010), in all settler societies this securement and legitimization is predicated upon the initial dispossession of Indigenous people and the continuing disavowal of their presence. He also refers to this continuing disavowal as the "vanishing" of the original inhabitants by various violent physical and symbolic means. In addition to noting these shared historical patterns, we also want to emphasise the geographical variability of settler colonialism. The chapters in this collection demonstrate that the means, modes and effectiveness of Indigenous dispossession, disavowal and disappearing was and still is executed quite differently in different places.



In Australia, for instance, the doctrine of “terra nullius” (an empty land belonging to no one) that provided the legal foundation for claiming “terra Australis” as British crown land, executed the dispossessing and vanishing of Australian Aboriginal people in one single act. This legal fiction was not officially recinded for over two centuries and provided the grounds for a swathe of policies that denied Aboriginal people any basic human, let alone citizenship, rights. For instance, in some jurisdictions “native affairs”, meaning those of Indigenous *people*, were administered under the “native flora and fauna” acts. Another strategy for “vanishing” Aboriginal people was enacted through the enactment of assimilation policies. Under the auspices of these assimilation policies, generations of Aboriginal children with mixed descent were stolen from their Aboriginal families. The official narratives of the time were that they were “rescued” in order to be “civilized”. Over many decades and across multiple generations, Aboriginal children were taken away as part of a systemic plan to “breed out the Aboriginal race” (Johnson, 2000).

By contrast, in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, the *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* - the Treaty of Waitangi – established a partnership between Māori (the Indigenous people) and Pākehā’ (the white settlers). The treaty was signed in 1840, quite early in the settlement period. This Treaty explicitly asserted the rights of Māori to retain authority over their lands, language and culture and provided the foundations for the country’s later bicultural policies. Although the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand fared relatively well compared to those in Australia, and were neither entirely dispossessed nor completely vanished, subsequent settlement practices betrayed the partnership assurances established in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* . Māori rights

were subsequently eroded through the taking of lands, and the disrespecting of Māori language, culture and spiritual beliefs.

In a similar way to Australia, North American government policies were designed to sever Aboriginal peoples from their communities through forced removal from their lands and termination of tribal status. Colonization took place through land-based settlement (Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014). Yet, distinctive settlement histories and colonialization took place in Canada and the United States given their unique relation to Britain's imperial power (Lawrence, 2004). In Canada, in addition to dispossession and murder through nation-building strategies, the government created the Indian Act exerting a legal status system; a highly divisive and patriarchal form of controlling Aboriginal peoples through identity legislation. The United States pursued the extinction of Aboriginal peoples through "the deployment of settler violence and warfare", and later on legislation and policies that removed communities from their lands (Lawrence, 2004, p. 7). In both countries, however, Aboriginal ways of being and doing have been (continue to be) erased and assaulted through a vast range of destructive processes, such as deliberate introduction of diseases, land expropriation, use of starvation practices, organized and military violence, attacks on Aboriginal spirituality and ceremonies, and the theft of Aboriginal children initially through residential schooling, later through adoption and now through the foster care system (Lawrence, 2004).

Within settler-colonized territories, particularly the large ones such as Canada, the USA and Australia, there is also some internal variation to the patterns of dispossession and vanishing. Because of dispossession and mass relocations, most

Indigenous people no longer live on their traditional homelands. Those who do remain are typically still there simply because the remoteness and in some cases the harshness of their homeland environments made them impractical and/or undesirable for white settlement. Indigenous people in these places did not need to be sent far away as they were already out of sight and mind of the main centres of colonial settlement.

Despite, and in some ways because of, their remoteness from mainstream settlement, these Indigenous communities have experienced their own forms of dispossession and disenfranchisement. Although they are more likely to have retained a fair amount of their language and culture, the communities in which they now live are nevertheless administrative centres, established by missionaries or government and modeled on Western notions of settlement. They often bring together different language/clan groups who would not have lived in such close proximity pre-colonization. Because these communities are neither functionally traditional nor western they experience their own sets of complex “interworld” power and exclusion issues (Christie & Grotorex, 2004). Even when Indigenous people live on the margins of settler colonial societies, and even when they actively resist colonialist discourses, they cannot escape the fact that they “always operate within settler-colonial orders” (Veracini, 2013, p.328).

The final shared feature of settler colonial societies that Verancini (2010) identifies, and which is concomitant with the task of vanishing Indigenous peoples, is the task of establishing the settlers’ sense of attachment to and identification with the new (at least to them) colonized lands. The significance of the discursive aspects of vanishing

Indigenous people and securing settler identification with colonized lands should not be underestimated. Myths and narratives of “discovering”, “conquering” and “civilizing” the land, and then of naturalising settler belonging to it, are an essential component of all settler colonial projects. As Said points out, and the chapters in this collection testify, the colonial “struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings” (1993, p.6).

Once again, geographies diffract the kinds of historical settler narratives or “imaginings” that either secured, or thwarted, settler identification with the land. In North America, the heroic white settler frontier narratives that pitted the iconic good “cowboys” against bad “Indians” on their epic civilizing journey into the “wild west” not only reconfirmed natural white settler superiority over Indigenous people (Yellow Bird, 2004), but provided the foundations for settler identification with the land. Emerging from a very different North American discursive tradition, reverential “wilderness” discourses cemented this identification by producing a highly romanticized and aestheticized imagining of a pristine and virginal landscape, devoid of any human traces (Cronin, 1995). By emptying the land of its original people, these highly romantic wilderness discourses allowed North American settlers to identify themselves as the white stewards of the land (Braun, 2002).

However, romantic attachment to land was not the only kind of settler imagining. In Australia, for instance, the sublime wilderness imaginaries came much later. Without any of the familiar referents of northern hemisphere natures, the original images of the Australian ‘bush’ landscape were of a harsh, inhospitable and somewhat

threatening place, full of bizarre and “primitive” animals. One of the early settlers’ first tasks was to “Europeanize” this seemingly “un-natural” nature. Much energy was put into clearing the bush scrub, planting European pastures and filling it with grazing European animals, in order to transform it into the pastoral idyll that was much more familiar and comforting to the northern hemisphere “colonial gaze”. This dis-identification with the un-homely Australian “bush” complicated the project of establishing settler attachment to the colonized lands. It was not a seamless process (Taylor, 2013). Without an easy early colonial settler identification with the Australian “bush” landscape, the securement of subsequent generations of Australian settler children’s affections for the land and its animals became particularly important, especially during the period of transformation from British colonies into one federated settler nation (Taylor, 2014).

Despite settler best efforts to dispossess, conquer and vanish Indigenous people and at the same time to depoliticize the violent colonialist project, in all of settler colonial societies represented in this book, Indigenous people have survived. However, so have the scars and legacies of colonization. Although these are experienced in radically different ways by Indigenous people and settler/immigrants, no-one escapes them. We bequeath these complex, messy legacies to Indigenous and non-Indigenous children alike. One of the major challenges that early childhood scholars and educators in (post)colonial settler societies now face is the question of how best to confront and respond to these colonialist legacies and challenges in their work with young children.

As each of the chapters in this book demonstrate, understanding the nature, complexities, scope and scale of the inheritance in the settler colonial contexts is a necessary first step.

### **Colonialist Discursive Spaces**

In addition to understanding the complex histories and legacies of settler colonial societies, it is also important for early childhood educators and scholars to have strong grasp on the ways in which colonialist discourses, and other manifestations of them in the current neoliberal era, still structure our thinking, influence the ways in which we understand ourselves, and affect our practices and relations. In this section, we overview some of the important scholarship coming out of critical postcolonial studies and critiques of neoliberalism that elucidates these connections and provides additional general context to situated discussions in the chapters in this book.

In the early days of colonization, discourses of racial hierarchy were explicitly used to justify the acts of Indigenous dispossession and white settlement as an inevitable and “natural” (social evolutionary) process. The assumed “natural” superiority of the civilized and civilizing white colonizers was dependent upon the stated “primitiveness” and “backwardness” of the colonized Indigenous people. Although these days such theories are rarely explicitly promoted, the colonial binary positioning of the colonizing Self and the colonized Other still persists and these theories still have very insidious and enduring hegemonic effects. They can mutate into new forms of colonialist discourse, or what we are calling neocolonialist discourses.

In his famous treatise on *Orientalism*, Said (1978) explains why colonialist discourses have hegemonic effects and construct the ways in which we understand ourselves in relation to each other - Indigenous and settler/immigrant alike. Said describes that it is through the plethora of western representational practices (such as art, travel stories, mapping, historical accounts, text books, museum displays etc.), that colonialist discourses have established normative power relations between the colonists as the “knowing subjects” and the colonized people as those who are only ever “known about”. These relations ensure that Indigenous knowledges, if recognized at all, are positioned as ‘Other’ to dominant cultural knowledges. This, in turn, ensures the ongoing discursive subjugation of Indigenous people.

Picking up on Said’s ideas, Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) points to the ways in which academic discourses, including educational academic discourses, have played a major role in disrespecting, undermining and Othering Indigenous knowledges. (Post)colonial or anti-colonial discursive analysis is extremely relevant to early childhood education scholars and educators, as it reveals the modes by which colonialism has morphed into neocolonialism and it explains why, despite many people’s best efforts to include Indigenous perspectives, colonialism’s hegemonic effects can be extremely difficult to escape. It helps to understand how even though mainstream educational discourse might acknowledge that Indigenous people have their own ways of knowing and doing things, which are typically framed as “traditional culture”, the main game remains one of inducting Indigenous people into assumed-to-be-universal western knowledges about “the child” and “their development”.

In settler colonial societies such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the USA, Indigenous populations are a minority, and the majoritarian settler/immigrant populations are amongst the most culturally diverse in the world. In such societies, popular discourses that espouse social inclusion, diversity and multiculturalism abound, and unsurprisingly, are stock and standard in early childhood education settings (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo & Rowan, 2014). However, in settler colonial societies, the ubiquitous rhetoric of diversity and inclusion can play a paradoxical role in assimilating and/or appropriating Indigenous cultures and knowledges into the dominant settler cultural discourses.

The politics of recognition embedded in the diversity and inclusion discourses of settler colonial societies, not only assimilates/appropriates Indigenous ways of knowing, but strengthens the force of the highly individualistic western neoliberal assemblage by foregrounding the liberal rhetoric of freedom and equality. This liberal rhetoric obfuscates the neocolonial inequities produced and required by neoliberalism, and shifts discussions of the everyday socioeconomics of racism and neocoloniality out of the political discourse (Lee, 2010). When viewed within their entanglements with neoliberal regimes, discourses of tolerance of diversity can be seen as a form of governmentality. They have the effect of “managing” Indigenous people, along with all the other “ethnic Others” in multicultural (white) settler colonial societies, through bestowing them rights to have their own culture recognized, but at the same time, still subjecting them to the normalizing expectations of the dominant settler culture (Hage, 1998; Anderson & Taylor, 2005).



Another analysis of neoliberalism in settler colonial societies is oriented toward understanding the mobile assemblage of everyday acts or encounters and their interrelationships with objects, practices, discourses, and policies. Rather than viewing neoliberalism solely as a dominant “molar configuration”, this “molecular” form of analysis traces the hybrid formations of neoliberal assemblages, for instance its mergings with neocolonialist acts and policies (Clarke 2008; Michelsen 2009). Michelsen (2009) writes that “a ‘molecular politics’ offers avenues for productively engaging the complex dynamics of embodied desire that drive specific mobilizations” of neoliberal forces (p. 454). Through a focus on the molecular spread of discourses, it is possible to see why entangled neocolonialist and neoliberalist discourses have such traction and such far-reaching effects. Together they appropriate bodies and shape practices, through capturing desires and redirecting flows. This kind of molecular analysis highlights the ways that entangled neoliberal and neocolonial assemblages continually capture and recapture early childhood places and spaces.

### **Conclusion: Colonialist Place Matters**

In this edited collection, all of the chapters are situated in specific settler colonial places. Place matters. The kind of place matters. Even the matter (the material components) of places matter. The collection as whole reinforces the fact that place matters because each chapter within it illustrates how the historical legacies of colonialism have turned out slightly differently in different places.

The collection also testifies to the fact that place matters in early childhood education, because it is inherently pedagogical (Greenwood, 2012). All of the chapters attend to the pedagogical possibilities of thinking with place and its constituent elements or

relations. They do this in manifold ways, including: thinking with fences (Power & Somerville); thinking with land, water, ice, and snow (Rowan); thinking with forest trails, tree stumps and tree hollows (Nxumalo), thinking with bears and kangaroos (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor), thinking with country through ‘shoes off’ and bare feet on the ground (Fasoli & Farmer); thinking with Indigenous architectures (Duncan, Dawning, & Taylor); thinking with landscape paintings (Clark); thinking with borderlands (Persky & Viruru), and thinking with curricula that are shaped by place-relations (Ashton; Ritchie; Tesar). By thinking with such enlivened notions of place, the collection as a whole implicitly works to disrupt the authority of the colonialist view, that places - including the places and spaces of early childhood education - are nothing more than mute spaces over which control can be exerted.

All of the authors recount what is happening in their own places, but some (Rowan, Nxumalo; Power & Somerville; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor; Fasoli & Farmer; Duncan, Dawning & Taylor) also engage with the materiality of place. They see the materiality of place as mattering because it is a part of the human and nonhuman assemblage that makes things happen (Duhn, 2012). There is an emerging scholarship in early childhood education that highlights the possibilities of place-learning by focussing upon children’s relations with other living beings and things in their local “common world” environments (Blaise et al., 2013; Common World Childhoods Research Collective, 2014; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2013; Taylor, 2011, 2013; Taylor & Giugni, 2012; Taylor, Pacini-Ketchabaw, & Blaise, 2012).

Unsettling early childhood education’s commitment to individually focused child-centred learning, this body of work resists the inclination to situate early childhood education exclusively within a socio-cultural (or exclusively human) context and

resituates childhoods and pedagogies within heterogeneous more than human worlds. A number of the chapters address this shift (Clark; Nxumalo; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor; Power & Somerville; Duncan, Dawning & Taylor) as they disrupt the idealized natural worlds usually associated with romantic Euro-Western traditions of childhood, and highlight the actual, messy, unequal, and imperfect worlds real children inherit and co-inhabit along with other human and nonhuman beings and entities (Taylor, 2013). These chapters reinforce the point that place matters and place is pedagogical, without resorting to romanticizing colonized places.

Some chapters draw attention to the central and agentic significance of place - “Land” or “Country” - in Indigenous onto-epistemologies (Fasoli & Farmer; Rowan; Duncan, Dawning & Taylor). They describe how in Indigenous pedagogies, the land itself is the primary teacher. It has agency. This is completely the opposite to western developmentalist pedagogies, in which knowledge-making and agency are seen as exclusively human capabilities, and, in fact, as the markers of human exceptionalism. In mainstream western pedagogies, place is nothing more than an inert stage or backdrop for/to the all-important human teaching and learning activities.

Because of Indigenous dispossession, all places in settle colonial societies are necessarily contested places. As such, they have the potential to function as contact zones of transformative pedagogical possibilities (Somerville, 2010; Somerville, 2013). If we are willing to explore these contestations, rather than smooth them over, we stand to learn from and be changed by the tensions inherent in colonized places. Although they do not necessarily refer to it as such, a number of the chapters perform the transformative pedagogical possibilities of colonized places (Ashton; Persky &

Viruru; Ritchie; Tesar; Nxumalo; Fasoli & Farmer; Duncan, Dawning & Taylor; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor).

All of the contributions to this collection set out to trouble the business-as-usual of early childhood education in settler colonial places. However, we firmly believe that such troubling is not just gratuitous disturbance. It leads to *productive unsettlement*. The authors in this collection not only expose and challenge the colonialisms that permeate the field, but they also offer some constructive and productive alternative perspectives and approaches that contribute to the important ongoing process of decolonizing thought and practice.

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<sup>ii</sup> We insert the brackets around the post of (post)colonial in order to problematize a simplistic chronological ‘during’ and ‘after’ colonization reading of this terminology. This entire collection is predicated on the understanding that colonialization is a never complete project. It is never finally ‘settled’. So although the countries that we refer to in this chapter (and in this collection) are now all sovereign nations and no longer hold the legal status of ‘colonies’, they nevertheless retain the legacies of their colonialist pasts within their (post)colonial presents.