



Examining Anti-Blackness and Orientalism in Quebec and Manitoba Ancient History Curricula

*Ehaab Dyaa Abdou
Wilfrid Laurier University*

*Adrienna Joyce
McGill University*

Abstract:

Although Canada is often portrayed as a multicultural, benevolent, liberal society, the experiences of Black peoples, Indigenous peoples and Peoples of Colour living in Canada point to the problematic of ongoing anti-Black racism, Indigenous erasures and anti-immigrant sentiments, while perpetuating White Eurocentric dominance. Research demonstrates that schools and school curricula play an important role in perpetuating these problems (e.g., Abdou, 2017; Calderon, 2014; Poole, 2012). But how might curricula and available teaching resources specifically be contributing to Canada's underlying narratives of White Eurocentric dominance? There is a growing body of literature that demonstrates problematic discourses in the curriculum for Indigenous peoples (e.g., Battiste, 2013; Calderon, 2014; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). In this paper, we specifically interrogate anti-Blackness and Orientalism. We outline the various findings of critical discourse analyses that we conducted on secondary school textbooks used in Quebec and Manitoba to teach world history and ancient civilizations. By comparing these two contexts, we offer new perspectives on the ways that Canadian curricula are

constructed as dominant White-centric narratives by depending on the logics of Orientalism and anti-Blackness. Building on previous textbook analyses, we attempt to bring critical perspectives to problematize dominant norms that contribute to the oppressions of Black peoples and Peoples of Colour in the Canadian context and to provide insights on a potential way forward for more inclusive and balanced representations. While our textual analyses do not directly address representations of Indigenous peoples in curricula, we hope this contribution will help draw attention to some common exclusionary approaches and representations that need to be questioned and challenged.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; anti-Blackness; Orientalism; ancient history; textbooks

References

- Abdou, E. D. (2017). Toward embracing multiple perspectives in world history curricula: Interrogating representations of intercultural exchanges between ancient civilizations in Quebec textbooks. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 45*(3), 378–412. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2016.1276500>
- Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit*. Purich.
- Calderon, D. (2014). Uncovering settler grammars in curriculum. *Educational Studies, 50*(4), 313–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2014.926904>
- Poole, C. (2012). "Not of the Nation": Canadian history textbooks and the impossibility of an African-Canadian identity. *Southern Journal of Canadian Studies, 5*(1), 81–102.
- Tuck, E., & Gaztambide-Fernandez, R. A. (2013). Curriculum, replacement, and settler futurity. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, 29*(1), 72–90.

Biographical Notes

Ehaab D. Abdou is an assistant professor in the Department of Global Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario. Within education and curriculum studies, his research focuses on the critical analysis of representations of historically and systematically marginalized groups and perspectives, and how those shape students' worldviews and civic attitudes.

S. J. Adrienna Joyce is a PhD candidate from McGill University. She is interested in understanding the ways racism and colonialism impact K-12 education. Her ongoing research is informed by her classroom teaching experiences as a dominantly positioned public educator in Manitoba.