

Critiquing Israel as Child Abuse: How Colonial White Feminism Disrupts Critical Pedagogies of Culturally Responsive and Relevant Practices and Inclusion through Ongoing and Historical Maternalism and Neoliberal Settler Colonialism

Authors : Wafaa Hasan

Abstract : In May of 2022, Palestinian parents in Toronto, Canada, became aware that educators and staff in the Toronto District School Board were attempting to include the International Holocaust and Remembrance Definition of Antisemitism (IHRA) in The Child Abuse and Neglect Policy of the largest school board in Canada, The Toronto District School Board (TDSB). The idea was that if students were to express any form of antisemitism, as defined by the IHRA, then an investigation could follow with Child Protective Services (CPS). That is, the student's parents could be reported to the state and investigated for custodial rights to their children. The TDSB has set apparent goals for "Decolonizing Pedagogy" ("TDSB Equity Leadership Competencies"), Culturally Responsive and Relevant Practices (CRRP) and inclusive education. These goals promote the centering of colonized, racialized and marginalized voices. CRRP cannot be effective without the application of anti-racist and settler colonial analyses. In order for CRRP to be effective, school boards need a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which the vilification of Palestinians operates through anti-indigenous and white supremacist systems and logic. Otherwise, their inclusion will always be in tension with the inclusion of settler colonial agendas and worldviews. Feminist maternalism frames racial mothering as degenerate (viewing the contributions of racialized students and their parents as products of primitive and violent cultures) and also indirectly inhibits the actualization of the tenets of CRRP and inclusive education through its extensions into the welfare state and public education. The contradiction between the tenets of CRRP and settler colonial systems of erasure and repression is resolved by the continuation of tactics to 1) force assimilation, 2) punish those who push back on that assimilation and 3) literally fragment familial and community structures of racialized students, educators and parents. This paper draws on interdisciplinary (history, philosophy, anthropology) critiques of white feminist "maternalism" from the 19th century onwards in North America and Europe (Jacobs, Weber), as well as "anti-racist education" theory (Dei), and more specifically, "culturally responsive learning," (Muhammad) and "bandwidth" pedagogy theory (Verschelden) to make its claims. This research contributes to vibrant debates about anti-racist and decolonial pedagogies in public education systems globally. This paper also documents first-hand interviews and experiences of diasporic Palestinian mothers and motherhoods and situates their experiences within longstanding histories of white feminist maternalist (and eugenicist) politics. This informal qualitative data from "participatory conversations" (Swain) is situated within a set of formal interview data collected with Palestinian women in the West Bank (approved by the McMaster University Humanities Research Ethics Board) relating to white feminist maternalism in the peace and dialogue industry.

Keywords : decolonial feminism, maternal feminism, anti-racist pedagogies, settler colonial studies, motherhood studies, pedagogy theory, cultural theory

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