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Authentic Montessori (in a De/colonializing World)

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In fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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Abstract

This six-week qualitative action research self-study investigated how critically reflecting upon personal heritage while engaging with decolonial, antiracist perspectives would affect perception and attitudes towards Montessori materials, pedagogical philosophy and methodology. With critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework, the researcher surveyed decolonial scholarship for recommendations. She followed a program revealed by the literature. She took two tests at the beginning and end of the study to establish a baseline of bias. For the first two weeks of the study, she engaged with Indigenous peoples' cultural production. She studied ancestral trauma for the following two weeks. To provoke equal understanding and connectedness to her own ancestry, she also engaged with media concerning her own lineage for two weeks. In accordance with critical pedagogy, these engagements were followed by critical reflections, leading to a more aware state that actively resists colonial (and other) oppressions. During the last two weeks of the study she also read about the struggles of and connected with people in the Palestinian territories towards an engaged praxis of solidarity. While the metrics of spiritual preparedness and critical consciousness remained evasive, the researcher observed deepening understanding throughout the study coding and analyzing journal reflections for themes. Recommendations following the study include: a dialogue-centered approach to Montessori teacher trainings, supplementation that includes decolonial knowledges, critical pedagogy, anti-racism, and trauma informed care. Research is needed to ascertain the effects of decolonial preparation upon guides and environments towards critical consciousness development in Montessori children.

Indigenous erasure in classic Montessori materials need be addressed.

Keywords: Interdependence, ecological justice, just peace, anti-racism, decolonialism, Montessori, critical consciousness.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

“In order to tell this story, it may be necessary for me to use some pretty big and daunting words. I try hard not to use these words in everyday conversations, because I think too many people use big language as a way of belittling others. However, some of these ideas I want you to understand require these words […]” (Wilson, 2008, p. 13.)

**Decolonization**- an early mention of decolonization comes from Franz Fanon’s (1961) work *The Wretched of the Earth*. It gives name to the process of dismantling colonial empire and all of its trappings, those internalized (like racism, cis-hetero-sexism, beauty standards, etc.) and external (like settlers giving lands back to the people who are Indigenous to those lands and who have been subjugated by colonists to exogeneous domination.) In this scenario, the colonists relinquish all control and assets from those lands, and the accompanying social projects of slavery, exploitation, genocide, forced conversions, feminicide, ecocide, relocation, erasure, extraction, displacement, etc. Purveyors of decolonial or post-colonial theory and practice concur that re-ceding of colonized territory is the most important part, but in lieu of government co-operation (the United States, for example, is notoriously multifarious, unfair, and frequently defaults upon its treaties with regard to Indigenous peoples and their ownership of land, most reservation land these days is trust land to which the US Government holds legal title), the colonized person has personal recourse in

**Decolonialism/decoloniality** refers to the social constructs coming forth from colonization and is not land based (S. & D. Vanderhoop, personal communication, November 5, 2019.), it deals with the aforementioned internalized trappings of colonization. Settler colonists attempting to support a decolonial program can partner with those native to the lands that they hold to
privately transfer them their lands, work in law and advocacy to support them horizontally in solidarity, and at least begin to acknowledge colonization and genocide, and try to work towards reconciliation through a variety of means, material and spiritual, (ex. Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation committee). For native peoples, there are a variety of ways to work towards ridding the body and psyche of the trappings of enculturated colonialism, some of which are explicated in the review of literature that follows.

Post-colonialism- describes an approach to understanding the social and cultural conditions of a former colony, across disciplines.

Hegemony- political, economic, or military control of one state over others (The New Shorter Oxford English dictionary, 1993).

Indigenous- Indigeneity is just about the least monolithic “group” one can be a part of, for the purpose of this paper I will be utilizing it to describe the contextually specific concept of original or first nation or native people living in the settler colonized “so-called” Americas (also known as Turtle Island), especially the USA.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems- “refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2019, para. 1). as opposed to colonial “western”, white, European, canonical, and “objective” knowledge (Wilson, 2004, p. 16). Used interchangeably within this paper with Indigenous ways of knowing, traditional knowledge, and indigenous knowledge.

Kyriarchy- a term first defined by Elisabeth Schussler (2001) to describe the intersecting, overlapping, and inextricable issues of colonialism, classism, cis-hetero-sexist-patriarchy,
racism, white supremacy, ableism, speciesism, human supremacy, and all other accompanying oppressions. (See Appendix A for infographic.)

**Land acknowledgments**—“Acknowledgment is a simple, powerful way of showing respect and a step toward correcting the stories and practices that erase Indigenous people’s history and culture and toward inviting and honoring the truth” (Honor Native Land Guide, February 10, 2019., p. 4).

**Settler colonialism**—“The goal of settler-colonization is the removal and erasure of Indigenous peoples in order to take the land for use by settlers in perpetuity” (Morris, 2019., para. 8.) In settler colonial states, much of the displacing population has been settled for hundreds of years and continuity of memory is often so broken that many of the settler populations are not even aware of their origins nor why their families left their native lands to begin with. In the United States and in other places like Australia, Canada, Mexico, etc. there are similar settler colonialist dynamics of complexity due to the settled and intermingled nature of their colonizers with the original peoples and imported slave populations.

**Subaltern**—Used originally by Antonio Gramsci the famous Marxist to describe someone “of an inferior rank” or the proletariat class denied access to hegemonic power (*Subaltern Social Groups* by Antonio Gramsci, 1971), later was appropriated by Spivak (1988) and other scholars who used it to describe something more specific, that of the subordinate class of the colonized, especially in South Asia (Spivak, 1988).
Condolences/Acknowledgment

The author of this article is currently living upon occupied Lenni Lenape territory. She offers her sincere and humble gratitude and respect for these occupied lands, and the other beings present in this more than human world that live here, including the people that were here prior to the arrival of European colonists. The Lenni Lenape people and others stewarded the land the researcher occupies for many generations prior to her arrival as a first-generation settler and continue to do so today. The work that follows is one component of a greater work in progress to decolonize the self and pedagogical practices. It is a small attempt at harm reduction, since her role as a settler colonist and gentrifier cannot be negated, and the harm of ongoing colonization cannot be understated. If the reader is interested in learning more about contemporary Lenape life the researcher of this work recommends the book "Strong Medicine" Speaks: A Native American Elder Has Her Say (Hill Hearth, 2008).
Reflexivity Statement

Pronoun note: The researcher of this work usually uses she or they pronouns but for the purposes of clarity within this work will refer to herself as “she” and “the researcher” only.

This work is a (perhaps failed) attempt to unsettle and de-center the whiteness of the researcher, who is hoping instead to center the important cultural production of Indigenous scholars, by beginning and continuing with these very important words by Tuck and Yang:

From DECOLONIZATION IS NOT A METAPHOR “When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it re-centers whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future. Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks. The easy absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonization is yet another form of settler appropriation. When we write about decolonization, we are not offering it as a metaphor; it is not an approximation of other experiences of oppression” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 3).

The following words were reproduced in Ab-Original: Journal of Indigenous Studies and First Nations and First Peoples’ Cultures (Vol. 2, Issue 2, 2018.) in the article “The First Real Indians That I Have Seen”: Franz Boas and the Disentanglement of the Entangled by Rainer Hatoum. Boas is this researcher’s first known ancestor in the United States.
These are the first real Indians that I have seen. Red skin, eagle noses, the famous blanket, moccasins, rabbit[?] apron and deerskin jacket. The hair long and loose or braided, and guys [“Kerls”] more than 6 feet tall. (Franz Boas Professional Papers 1888, p. 125; translation and emphasis by Rainer Hatoum)

The researcher is uncertain as to how to keep this work out of the realm of appropriation. As the reader can see, the words of Indigenous scholars are used abundantly with attribution in this work to guide it, in the hopes of amplifying their important thoughts! This does not mean that the researcher has a right to them or that they are meant for her. In a research project focused on decolonizing Montessori Pedagogy through an examination of the self, a transparent sharing of personal history feels relevant in so far as this work covers topics of ancestral trauma, relationship to lands and the peoples who occupy them, and education. “Researchers, no matter how objective they claim their methods and themselves to be, do bring with them their own biases.” (Wilson, 2008, p. 16.). The researcher is a white-washed Jew born in Wappinger and Lenape lands (“New England”, see Appendix B), with a US passport, of an academically advanced background (her father is a doctor and her mother is trained as a psychotherapist and has also conducted action research, and the researcher of this work was privileged to be educated in a Montessori environment until 6th grade as well as attending a Montessori-like college). The researcher is a semi-first-generation American settler colonist (her grandparents fled to the States during and immediately following WWII and then moved back to Europe, where her parents mostly grew up, though her dad was born in South-Side of Chicago and lived there until he was nine. The researchers’ parents moved to the States together a few years before she was born, from Quebec where they lived briefly about 10 years beforehand.) She comes from two generations of diasporic refugees/stateless peoples, whose great-grandparents settled for a few
hundred years in Germany, Russia, and Poland, after being expelled from other countries due to Pogroms and Inquisitions. All of her grandparents are Holocaust survivors, and one also fled the Bolshevik revolution as a little boy. That grandfather had a PhD in sociology, and his father was a political prisoner, whereas the rest of her grandparents had between 4th-9th grade educations. All were anti-fascist and assimilated/non-observant religiously. The researchers’ great grandparents however almost all had advanced degrees (though two were master tradesmen), one Maternal great-grandmother was either a Montessori of Waldorf teacher. They were predominantly Bundists and Mensheviks, though some were Zionists. Her first known ancestor in the United States was Franz Boas, who is most famous for his ethnographic research on Indigenous North Americans, cultural relativism theories, and lately, for his part in dismantling scientific racism and training women in the social sciences. Much of his impact upon the lives of the Indigenous peoples he studied though, is unknown. The researcher followed in his footsteps (unbeknownst to her at the time) as an undergraduate, conducting ethnographic research in Mongolia. One of the researcher’s great uncles (a Zionist who named himself after a massacre at Gush-Etzion) may have been a member of Haganah, the paramilitary organization that preceded the formation of the Israeli Defense Forces. (See Appendix C for genogram).
Content Warning:

The following work discusses settler colonialism, which includes mentions of genocide, rape, and other horrors associated, as well as the resulting trauma.
Prior to embarking upon the following self-study, the researcher’s foci was nature awareness/connection and provoking awe in children towards a greater sense of interconnectivity and interdependence. However, this research project ultimately became primarily focused on colonialism. Though the path from one theme to another may seem obscure, tangible events connected the two.

Two primary events lead to the synthesis of education and colonialism for this research study. First was the Montessori for Social Justice Conference in the summer of 2018, which presented problems of inclusivity and erasure in specific Montessori materials. These concerns were reinforced reading the article “Moving Beyond Peace Education to Social Justice Education” (Han & Moquino, 2018.) The other was through attending the subsequent winters’ Nature Connection Leadership conference (2019) which hosted a panel of leaders of Tribal Nations from across the Northeast to discuss colonialism as it manifests in nature awareness education. The speakers at both conferences prompted the researcher to actively and consistently consider the reality that nature education and Montessori needed to be decolonialized. The researcher’s next consideration was that possibly all education needs to be decolonized and that all lands and beings would benefit enormously from decolonization, including the whole of “nature.”¹

Around the same time that this synthesis of experiences was beginning to precipitate, dire predictions were delivered by climate scientists regarding the longevity of (most) life on earth. According to these reports, most Earthlings are doomed, including “Human life [on Earth is on the way to extinction.]” (Barrie, 2019, p. 3.) Concurrently children like Greta Thunberg, Autumn

¹ Which, within the collective imagination of the White Masters of the Anthropocene under the law of human supremacy, is the wild place humanity is separate from but that humanity alone is capable of dominating and taming.
Peltier, Artemesia Xakriabá, Xiúhtezcatl Martinez, and Xiye Bastida (Abidi, 2019, para. 4.), to name a few, as well as colonized, indigenous people from all over the world made their voices heard in defense of the preservation of life in all of its biodiverse beauty. They ask that settler colonialists not only listen to and uplift the voices of Climate Scientists, but also that they cultivate a sense of relatedness, interconnectivity, and inter-dependence to other life forms before it is too late, and all life suffers further or perishes.

Simultaneously the politicians of most of the Americas do little-to-nothing to slow the climate crisis that promises to be the 6th Great Extinction event (Center for biological diversity, 2019.) In some cases, politicians of the Americas have even passed legislation exacerbating damage to the ozone (Davenport & Landler, 2019.) at the expense of the world’s most vulnerable at-risk populations, humans included. (Newkirk, 2018). Meanwhile, an uptick in apparently unprecedented human displacements (in the historical record) due to catastrophic weather events has occurred. According to data published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Centers for Environmental Information

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, which compiles data from governments, United Nations humanitarian agencies and media reports, concluded in a report published Thursday that floods, landslides, cyclones and other extreme weather events temporarily displaced more people in the first half of this year than during the same period in any other year. (Sengupta, 2019, para. 2)

From the months-long forest burnings of much of the Congo, the Amazon, Alaska, the Canary Islands, Indonesia, and the Taiga to the premature melting of polar ice caps in Greenland and increased hurricane activity worldwide the situation in 2019 was looking more and more dire every day. Last summer,
average global temperature in July was 1.71 degrees F above the 20th-century average of 60.4 degrees, making it the hottest July in the 140-year record, according to scientists at NOAA’s [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Centers for Environmental Information]. The previous hottest month on record was July 2016. Nine of the 10 hottest recorded Julys have occurred since 2005; the last five years have ranked as the five hottest. Last month was also the 43rd consecutive July and 415th consecutive month with above-average global temperatures.” (NOAA, 2019, or para. 1.)

Would life on this planet be on threatened by climate collapse at this time if Indigenous peoples\(^2\) were listened to? Would humanity be on the verge of climate collapse if interdependence with the very “nature” that most settler-colonist think of themselves as being separate from, dominating of, and superior to were understood to be inextricable from human health, wellbeing, and existence? Would humans find themselves on the verge of climate collapse if climate scientists, who substantiate many of the claims of much of indigeneity as it relates to climate, were listened to?\(^3\) In Dr. Montessori’s pedagogy, there are extensions in the cultural section of the classroom that places humanity within biomes; this is a cultural corrective in the age of climate collapse. Likewise, in Nature connection work, human beings are also located as members of an ecosystem. Nonetheless, in both standardized Montessori models and nature education work, there is an emphasis on learning nomenclature, classification and taxonomy. Observation, identification, and documentation of the other beings who make up the

\(^2\) Not to suggest whatsoever that Indigenous Peoples are monolithic or monolithic “Noble Savages,” but rather that there is a common message coming through at least most mainstream media channels right now from Indigenous, and especially Tribal individuals and communities throughout the world.

\(^3\) And if those climate scientists made less-conservative estimates.
more than human\textsuperscript{4} world is the crux of the empiricism espoused by Montessorians and Naturalists alike.

If what many colonized, indigenous people have to say has merit, then pedagogues might consider more explicitly and consciously centering the engendering of respectful relationships to beings of the more than human world with a sense of interconnection, interdependence, kinship, communication, community, reciprocity and mutual aid. Including a clear connection between the Darwinian theory of evolution within the context of a timeline of life presentation\textsuperscript{5} could perhaps even help towards positioning humanity solidly as related to other life rather than the supreme and solitary pinnacle of life. Understanding causality and investing in mutual veriditas\textsuperscript{6} towards harmonious symbiosis is a much larger cultural, ethical, social, economic, and spiritual issue than a mere pedagogical issue, though what we learn as children in school has much to do with our adult perceptions. Resulting from these epiphanies, the researcher’s priorities began reorienting and then reconfiguring from an approach that emphasizes empiricism (as taught through a typical Montessori teacher training program or Nature awareness training) to a focus on Indigenous epistemologies\textsuperscript{7} of relationality\textsuperscript{8}(Harrison, S., Simcoe, J., Smith, D., & Stein, J. 2018), and its byproduct, the cultivation of awe (Thayer-Bacon, 2017). An additional crowning concern became to vigorously uplift the voices of those still experiencing the impact of ongoing settler-colonialism, extraction, and exploitation. The researcher’s work therefore seeks to blend

\textsuperscript{4}“the more-than-human world” is a phrase coined by David Abram as a way of referring to the other beings who inhabit the planet besides humans, i.e. nature, animals, plants, their spirits, etc (Abram, 1996.)

\textsuperscript{5}One of Dr. Montessori’s Great Lessons that is a part of the “Cosmic Curriculum” created for the second plane of development (6-9 years old) and begins with the origin story of the universe and gradually becomes more granular.

\textsuperscript{6}A term used by Hildegard von Bingen in her 1152 work \textit{Scivitas} meaning “vitality, fecundity, lushness, verdure, or growth.”

\textsuperscript{7}Which shall henceforth be used interchangeably with “Indigenous Knowledge systems” or “Indigenous ways of knowing”

\textsuperscript{8}“the concept that we are all related to each other, to the natural environment, and to the spiritual world, and these relationships bring about interdependencies.”
interests of improving Montessori and nature-connection praxis through anti-colonialist engagement. This approach seeks to support the transformational decolonialization work of herself and others, while also shifting her sense of connectedness with her human\(^9\) family.

In the microcosm of dedicated Montessorians, most can recite by rote Dr. Maria Montessori’s concepts of respect for children and cultivated independence, peace and peacemaking within the classroom environment. Some might say these values are what differentiate Montessori learning from most other pedagogies. When critically examining and reckoning with colonialism, however, one must accept that these concepts attributed to Montessori are colonial, though in many ways Dr. Montessori was a woman ahead of her time, her time was still steeped in colonialism (however supportive she was in decolonization efforts in India, for example.) Independence is not a concept that can easily co-exist within a relational, interdependent world view. (Harrison, S., Simcoe, et al., 2018) Therefore, unless the classroom guide has begun the deliberate, systematic, rigorous, continuous work of dismantling the colonial self, amongst other factors, the pedagogy will remain couched in colonialism. (Han & Moquino, 2018, para. 8). This line of inquiry can only lead to the production of more questions problematizing dominant respect, independence, and peace narratives examining (a) The possibility of a classroom culture truly and deeply practicing a respect of diverse membership of disparate races, ethnicities, religions, cultures, classes, and abilities when the very notion of independence is a Christianized, colonial construct (Anker, 2014); (b) The peacemaking stories present in Montessori materials are often times largely appropriated (as with the story of the Great Peacemaker used in the peace curriculums of some classrooms\(^{10}\)) without proper

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\(^9\) And more than human

\(^{10}\) Replace with *Hiawatha and the Peacemaker* by native author Robbie Robertson instead.
attribution or contextualization of colonization. (Han & Moquino, 2018, para. 8); (c) The possibility of peace in the midst of ongoing colonialism; (d) Whether respect, independence, and peace can be relevant concepts in the midst of political revolution or climate collapse; (e) If the meaningfulness of terms like “respect,” “independence,” and “peace” are lost in a colonial environment. As proposed in the article Moving Beyond Peace Education to Social Justice Education (Han & Moquino, 2018)

Cosmic, or peace education, while a beautiful theory, is incomplete without the historical context […] They] require that we develop […] the tools to dismantle inequity in ways that are significantly different than the current practices in most Montessori schools and teacher training programs. (para. 1).

Dr. Montessori was quite specific about what she meant (Montessori, 1972) when she described the peace we strive towards in our classrooms and in the world must be a “just peace” in order to qualify at all. Montessori stated

Human history teaches us that peace means the forcible submission of the conquered to domination once the invader has consolidated his victory, the loss of everything the vanquished hold dear, and the end of their enjoyment of the fruits of their labor. The vanquished are forced to make sacrifices, as if they are the only ones guilty and merit punishment simply because they have been defeated.

Meanwhile, the victors flaunt the rights they feel they have won over the defeated populace, who remain victims of disaster. Such conditions may mark the end of actual combat, but they certainly cannot be called peace. The real moral scourge that stems in every people on earth is marked by one wave after another of such triumphs and such forms of injustice, as long as such profound misunderstanding
continues to exist, peace will definitely fail to fall within the range of human possibilities.” (Montessori, 1972, pp. 6-7)

In many classrooms, concepts of Peace are intrinsically tied to Grace and Courtesy, a component of Practical Life\textsuperscript{11} curriculum, and this notion must be interrogated and interrupted to ameliorate systemic inequity and injustice. Han and Moquino (2018) stated

In Montessori classrooms across this country, children are forced to suppress righteous anger about inequitable treatment because the conflict that anger generates is considered unpeaceful. It’s as if grace and courtesy are enough to undo accumulated oppressions; that if we can control the environment to mitigate the disturbances or outbursts, then we will have accomplished peace in our classroom. (para. 7)

Even if the “just peace” that Montessori directresses strive towards is achieved in a classroom environment as a result of undertaking proper preparedness of the classroom and the guide, the pressing issue would then be, how do we (and especially children) live with/hold the dissonance of experiencing injustice/colonialism as usual in the macrocosm of life outside of the classroom? All beings on this planet experience suffering at the intersections of various oppressions. Pedagogues must reach to expand beyond the usual capacity to recognize, acknowledge, and actively seek to learn to empathize with others and provide empathy

\textsuperscript{11} Dr. Montessori on Practical life: “The children of three years of age in the "Children's Houses" learn and carry out such work as sweeping, dusting, making things tidy, setting the table for meals, waiting at table, washing the dishes, etc., and at the same time they learn to attend to their own personal needs, to wash themselves, to take showers, to comb their hair, to take a bath, to dress and undress themselves, to hang up their clothes in the wardrobe, or to put them in drawers, to polish their shoes. These exercises are part of the method of education, and do not depend on the social position of the pupils; even in the "Children's Houses" attended by rich children who are given every kind of assistance at home, and who are accustomed to being surrounded by a crowd of servants, take part in the exercises of practical life. This has a truly educational, not utilitarian purpose. The reaction of the children may be described as a "burst of independence" of all unnecessary assistance that suppresses their activity and prevents them from demonstrating their own capacities.”-Dr. Maria Montessori, \textit{From Childhood to Adolescence}, p. 66.
engendering experiences for children. It is imperative that teachers and students deeply understand that beings are interdependently intertwined in the web of life. The underlying “misunderstanding” of human supremacist, white supremacist, colonialist culture that resists just peace by the Montessori standard then, is the lack of understanding or acknowledgment of horizontal interdependence. The long-standing consequences of this could be perceived in our climate disaster of the moment and extrapolations beyond could abound. One extrapolation worth mentioning is that all beings, human and otherwise, need to be seen and accepted for their intrinsic worth, and little people especially. In white supremacist culture, many children are having their sense of worth undermined in the classroom, and the consequences for their learning, and for the whole human ecology are deleterious.

As students of child behavior and psychology, empirical observers, and Montessorians know, children experience various sensitive periods for absorbing certain forms of sensory information throughout their planes of development (Montessori, 1969). What is learned in childhood is incorporated into adult understandings and attitudes, which is why Montessori teachers proceed in our classrooms with utmost sensitivity. This too, certainly applies to cultural values and mores communicated on varying levels from infancy onwards. If dominant, colonial cultural values as conveyed through lessons, books, and materials are all that children are exposed to, (for example, the value of independence instead of interdependence), then cultivating true respect for cultures that have differing values is hopeful at best. (Augustin, 2010).
Problem Statement

The purpose of this action research self-study is to become adequately “spiritually prepared” as a Montessori teacher, which involves more than an average teacher training. Montessori wrote that “an ordinary teacher cannot be transformed into a Montessori teacher, but must be created anew, having rid herself of pedagogical prejudices” (1969, p. 67). In her works, Dr. Montessori calls also for soul searching and for the banishment of personal biases. Examining colonial history is a way to begin an examination of the self and of the methodology. This undertaking is a necessary part of the spiritual preparation process, in order to mitigate the likelihood of perpetuating trauma upon students from an unexamined pedagogy. Furthermore, the researcher will also attempt to come to deeper understanding of anti-racist perspectives and especially decolonial cultural production, particularly in Montessori education. This process is a necessary component of this guide’s spiritual preparation.

Research Question

How will critically reflecting upon my heritage while engaging with decolonial, antiracist perspectives affect my perception and attitudes towards Montessori materials, pedagogical philosophy and methodology?
Theoretical Framework: Critical Theory/Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is a term first associated with the 1969 work of Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire envisions a liberatory pedagogy that builds solidarity between students and their educators through common struggle. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* defines education as inherently political and encourages the development of analytical skills within students towards development of a critical class, cultural, and racial consciousness and participation in democracy (Freire, 1969). Freire’s work was carried into this intersectional era of educational theory by bell hooks and others (hooks, 1994). Critical pedagogy arose from critical theory (Horkheimer, 1937), which is the post-modern practice of the continuous questioning and analysis of cultural production often utilizing a Marxist or sociological lens (Geuss, 1981). In his writings, Freire (1969) uses the term dialogics to describe an alternative to what he perceived to be a banking or depositing method of education, wherein students are perceived as empty vessels waiting to be filled with thoughts of a teacher who is a mechanism of oppression, teaching people to be producers to feed the aims of capital. Dr. Maria Montessori offered similar critiques of this banking method of education in her book *The Absorbent Mind* (1967) which preceded the provenance of critical pedagogy by two years. In it she said, “we discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but in virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment” (Montessori, 1967, p. 7).

Dialogics, rather than depositing information instead humbly proposes that people talk to each other on equal human terms and reflect on their discussions (Freire, 1969). The banking method of education prevalent in Brazil in 1969 where Freire was teaching and to some extent
still in the USA in 2019, leaves little space for critical reflection or building of critical consciousness through reflection, leading to personal and political transformation, which Freire perceives as an educational and revolutionary goal. Furthermore, he states

True dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking—thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them—thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity—thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved. (Freire, 1969, p. 92).

This theory of educational practice towards critical consciousness requires a cycle of discussion, reflection, discussion, reflection, and action. Therefore, the research that follows is guided by this clearly delineated process-based learning approach towards building a critical consciousness in the areas of colonial and race/ethnicity-based trauma-reification in others and recognition of those cycles as they play out within the self. The following research attempts to disrupt that cycle with interventions within the self and acts of solidarity with students, colleagues, and comrades in arms against continued colonial violence, subjugation, and oppression.

bell hooks adds in *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (2013) that another component of critical pedagogy incumbent upon an educator to transmit to student is “to bring a spirit of study to learning that takes place both in and beyond classroom settings, learning must be under-stood as an experience that enriches life in its entirety” (p. 42). This idea, too, is in alignment with Dr. Maria Montessori’s philosophy of education. hooks goes on to say, too, that fodder for Freire’s dialogics is critical and transnational literacy, “critical” in this case, of the
canon, and with “post-colonial awareness to bring justice to education” (hooks, 2003, p. 7). The project of decolonialism work and engaging with and charting that work using a critical pedagogy lens is proposed to the ends of personal reclamation of deeper ancestral knowledge to engender personal healing and simultaneously curb mis-appropriative tendencies. It is also intended to find helpful means to provide colonial harm reduction through acts of solidarity with others suffering under settler colonial oppressions. This could lead to greater confidence in future knowledge disclosures to wee folks and gentler more compassionate, healing centered engagement with empathy and awareness of ancestral trauma.

Review of Literature

Many adults in the United States had their first exposure to colonialism through the ditty “In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue” written by Jean Marzollo (1991). The origins of colonialism in the United States and elsewhere, however, are actually quite controversial. It is described by Veracini (2011) as

primarily defined by exogenous domination … an original displacement and unequal relations. Colonisers move to a new setting and establish their ascendancy. Different settler colonisers may disagree on what indigenous people ‘going away’ should actually mean (i.e., being physically eliminated or displaced, having one’s cultural practices erased, being ‘absorbed,’ ‘assimilated,’ or ’amalgamated’ in the wider population). In the case of colonial systems, a determination to exploit sustains a drive to sustain the permanent subordination of the colonised. (Veracini, 2011, p. 1)

Colonialism is often conflated with imperialism, adding additional confusion to the term. Imperialism suggests economic and political subjugation (as in the case of British Imperialism in
India), whereas in colonization, economic and political control is seized by the colonizers from the native population in addition to land-control and resource extraction (as in the case of much of Latin America). In the case of settler colonialism, an accompanying ideology is racial superiority (and therefore more worthy claims to the land), along with replacement of native populations with colonizers and enslavement of native population (as in the case of the North America and Australia.)

The Spanish are some of the most successful colonizers of the post-medieval world (based on the metric of the sheer amount of land, peoples, and resources they dominated and for the duration of that domination. One obvious example of this is language: throughout Central and South America the Spanish language is still the dominant language spoken. The British, French, Portuguese and the Dutch are also considered to have excelled at conquering by the same metric. Europeans undertook massive colonization projects all over the world starting around the time that Columbus first mistook Taino lands as the West Indies (in 1492).

Settler Colonialism and White Supremacy

The justifying ideology for settler colonialism in the Americas (and in South Africa) came to be known as “scientific racism” or Eugenics. Eugenics (meaning literally “noble heredity” in Greek) was proposed by Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin’s and was extrapolated from Darwin’s theory of evolution. Eugenics theory suggested that racial superiority could be scientifically proven, and that those who are inferior should not be allowed to breed. The theory of eugenics and the field of research that was developed to prove and further it provided a basis grounded in science of the time by which to uphold white supremacy. White supremacy is the ideology that white, “western” people or people of European descent are naturally morally and intellectually superior to people of other races (Strom, 1994.)
Not all indigenous people “went away” through outright genocide, eugenics experiments, or assimilation as settler colonizers planned, however (Veracini, 2011.) In present times, much of the colonized world (that is those who survived colonization, and their descendants throughout the continents of Africa, Asia, Oceania, Polynesia, North and South America) are resisting ongoing colonialism (Cultural Survival, 2001). These efforts were first formalized within the international community when in 1960, the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. “The Declaration affirmed the right of all people to self-determination and proclaimed that colonialism should be brought to a speedy and unconditional end. Two years later, a Special Committee on Decolonization was established to monitor its implementation” (Un.org. 2019, para. 5). Within the Declaration it was stated that the domination, exploitation, and subjugation inherent to settler colonialism as a practice was a violation of fundamental human rights. The declaration went on to state that colonialism goes against UN policies and international norms, impeding the propagation of peace and co-operation throughout the world. It even went so far as to say that colonialism delays and inhibits the contributions to civilization and innovation of the peoples oppressed by colonialism (Un.org. 2019). The declaration was passed unanimously, but, notably, all of the nations that abstained from that vote were at the time still active colonial powers, the United States included (Un.org. 2019).

The need for a peoples’ movement of de-colonialism was being more clearly identified and ignited by colonized Martiniquais/Algerian philosopher, politician and psychologist Frantz Fanon in his seminal classic Wretched of The Earth, published in 1961 in the midst of the Algerian war of independence. In it, Fanon described the psychological and political fall-out for the colonized due to colonization and the justification of force against colonial oppression,
helping readers find a common language to define their experience. At the time, many activists within the burgeoning Black power movement in the United States also seized upon Fanon’s words. Prominent theorists in critical theory, post-colonial theory, and subaltern studies spheres included Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and with his later writings, Howard Zinn.

**Critical Pedagogy and the Montessori method**

Nearly 10 years after the publication of *Wretched of the Earth*, Paulo Freire expanded on work in critical theory in the book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. With its publication, Freire founded the field of Critical Pedagogy (Kiylo, 2013, p.49,). Freire noted there can be no pedagogy of liberation without “dialogics,” stating attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated. At all stages of their liberation, the oppressed must see themselves as women and men engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human. Reflection and action become imperative when one does not erroneously attempt to dichotomize the content of humanity from its historical forms. (Freire, 1969, p. 65)

Freire thus imagines the subject-participants co-creating a liberatory or “critical consciousness” through acts of cognition achieved through dialogue. This critical consciousness betweendialoguers leads to revolutionary activism (Freire was a Christian Socialist opposed to neoliberalism and imperialism) or to "intervene in reality in order to change it" (Freire, 2013, p. 4). He views this model of education as being opposed to the “banking model” of depositing
information into the brains of empty vessels (students) dominant in traditional or non-liberatory education, which he viewed as perpetuating cycles of domination and oppression.

Critical pedagogy fits with the Montessori framework for education. The educational philosophy Dr. Montessori espoused ran counter to her contemporaries, who treated children as empty vessels (what Freire terms “the banking method”) waiting to be filled with rote knowledge. She too, developed her pedagogy with and for the marginal (whether because of class, caste, or ability). A difference between the two methodologies is one is highly materials-based. Montessori developed extensive physical objects to serve as auto-didactic learning tools with which a child can teach themselves a skill through the experience of engaging with the material that has a built-in control of error, rather than just having a concept explained to them. Freire’s philosophy can be grounded in revolutionary ideas and actions leading to a more just world, not ritualized objects that are relics of a material classroom culture. Another significant difference is that Freire was primarily concerned with the adult learner, while Dr. Montessori was primarily concerned with children. Tuck and Yang (2012), however, offer a critique “Freire’s philosophies have encouraged educators to use “colonization” as a metaphor for oppression. In such a paradigm, “internal colonization” reduces to “mental colonization”, logically leading to the solution of decolonizing one’s mind and the rest will follow. Such philosophy conveniently sidesteps the most unsettling of questions.” (p. 20).

**Decolonializing the Self**

Pedagogues of settler colonist descent who are interested in creating an environment of liberation in the classroom can begin by critically reflecting upon themselves and what they

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12 and also directly supported efforts by Subaltern Indians to be freed from British Mandate rule, as requested (according to Dr. Montessori’s biographer, EM Standing) by Gandhi.
teach, how they teach it, and why the culture they find themselves within requires them to do so. This process is part of Freire’s program to attain “critical consciousness,” and also is in alignment with Dr. Montessori’s program for “spiritual preparedness of the Montessori guide” (Montessori, 1969, p. 67). This process might lead to beginning the process of attempting to decolonialize the self and reducing complicity in ongoing colonialism upon Indigenous Peoples. Several possible approaches exist to pursue to this end. Many of them are personal practices that seek to banish some of the demons described in the *Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon, 1961), that haunt the settler colonists and the colonized alike, in different ways.

**A note on the process of research**

Indigenous knowledge systems “refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2019). Indigenous knowledge systems been suppressed through assimilation techniques like Indian Boarding schools in North America (National Museum of the American Indian, 2007), and in favor of canonical studies of “Dead white European males” (Shorris, 2000, p.225). An indigenous researcher wrote that even the institution of the literature review generally is alienating and problematic and seeks to find ways to satisfy the purpose of a literature review in a way that is culturally compatible. Wilson stated, “Critiquing others’ work does not fit well within my cultural framework because it does not follow the indigenous axiology of relational accountability” (Wilson, 2008, p. 43).
Recipes for decolonizing the self

There are several parallel and overlapping approaches to personal decolonizing work, which must be differentiated from Anti-bias and anti-racist work, as colonialism “is not an approximation of other experiences of oppression” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p.3). Therefore, indigenous voices that have persevered under colonialism must specifically be read and understood to embark meaningfully upon this particular endeavor.

To begin the path towards decolonizing ones’ self (and therefore also to begin the process of decolonizing one’s pedagogy) Davis (2010) suggested “dislocating white, First World subjectivities from the center of the knowledge field” to intersection-ally “represent … a transnational critique of material histories of imperialism and the political economies of nation linking race, class, culture, sexuality, and ethnicity. … confronting the colonial history of western knowledge” (Davis, 2010, p. 2).

One aspect of dislocating colonialism is critical self-reflection. This reflection is necessary to unbind the mind from the dominant paradigms that separate them from their relatedness to nature, to self, and to generations of wisdom” with attention to the “the patriarchy within, the subjugation of body … the perpetuation of trauma, and the need … to consciously examine the perceptions of my environment regarding identity and sense of belonging. (Gaudet, 2014, p.3)

Gaudet points as well to the importance of the restoration of memories, personal and ancestral and relational. She also asks the question “What would it mean for a Métis woman to thrive in the 21st century?” What would that look like? How would it feel? (Gaudet, 2014, p. 5).
According to Nadeau and Young (2006) decolonialization internally involves de-traumatizing the body from overlapping sexual and racial traumas. This process should begin with unlearning, followed by reaffirmation and reclamation of Indigenous Knowledge, including spiritual systems such as ceremony, song and dance while being witnessed by community. Nadeau and Young (2006) prescribe a system they call “educating bodies for self-determination” which blends “somatic expressive arts in an embodied pedagogy” and reclamation of Indigenous spiritual and cultural knowledges (Nadeau & Young, 2006, p.9). This involves an acknowledgement of the body as sacred and a fine tuning of trust in one’s personal intuition as the body is understood to itself to be a “significant source of knowing” rather than to seek “external validation from the colonial gaze” (Nadeau & Young, 2006, p.3). They are careful to avoid the term “healing” specifically as they describe the term healing as reinforcing a “victim-oppressor” dynamic which directly undermines notions of self-determination and reinforces damaging lessons learned under colonialism. (Nadeau & Young, 2006, p.3). They also explicate the notion of “sacred vitality” as an “aliveness” that “allows one to stand one’s ground in experiencing one’s rootedness in a web of relations” of interconnectivity (Nadeau & Young, 2006, p.4). Nadeau and Young (2006) offer these tools to contrast what they term as “welfare colonialism” or individual therapy programs which pathologize the self rather than addressing systemic causes of harm (p.4). Some of these causes are disjuncture from relational spirituality due to forced conversion to Christianity and the pillaging of natural resources (once understood as ancestors and family) and, plummeting wealth and health conditions on reservations and disappearing women. In the opening of an “educating bodies” session (Nadeau and Young, 2006, p.9), one would likely sing a traditional song to connection with the ancestral line, meditate on the breath, and say a short prayer that acknowledges inherent goodness. Then one
might be guided through a visualization that involves “sending compassion and acceptance to specific parts of our body that have done so much for us over the years” (Nadeau and Young, 2006, p.6). The same is done for parts of the body that hold physical or emotional pain. Throughout the course of the 12-session program, one can also expect to take a foray outside of the city to reconnect “sensually” with land. (Nadeau & Young, 2006, p.7)

Shahjahan, Wagner, and Wayne (2009) stated that no anti-colonial work can meaningfully be done without attending first to the “broken spirit” that colonizers evangelized and forced conversion upon is explicated in some depth. With reclaiming spirituality comes a challenge to the power and privilege that seeks to suppress it. Shahjahan, Wagner, and Wayne (2009) describe using their own reclaimed spiritualities as tools in a classroom setting, not to impose upon students as a colonizer would or to bring church and state together in unholy matrimony, but rather to offer a corrective to the empty-vessel notion that Freire critiqued in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1969). They theorize that by offering a fuller picture of themselves as humans with spiritual lives, they are also helping to restore their student’s humanity and offering alternative methods, like those of their respective traditional cultures, for understanding the world around them and the experiences that both students and teachers walk into the classroom carrying. De-emphasizing rationality, might also de-emphasize the role of the internal colonizer (Shahjahan, Wagner, Wayne).

Apropos, Rhee and Subedi highlight another neocolonial tendency to avoid “spirituality of the Other is appropriated and placed on markets to be consumed by the neoliberal/neocolonial subjects within the context of recreation. Indigenous scholars have criticized the New Age appropriation of Indigenous ways of being” (Rhee & Subedi, 2014, p.7). In the context of the United States this seems easily problematized, given that Indigenous peoples had their

“On and after August 11, 1978, it shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites.” (the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (AIRFA) (42 U.S.C. § 1996.)

Rhee and Subedi (2014) made it clear that an absolutely inappropriate course of action for a non-indigenous person seeking to decolonize themselves is to mis-appropriate, and especially yield income off of the very recently legalized cultural and spiritual practices of oppressed and colonized groups in the interest of healing themselves.

Conclusions

A common thread connecting the authors is the recommendation to begin the journey towards de-colonialism by immersing the self in disclosures of settler-colonial oppression: to try and understand more deeply, relate to and empathize with de-colonial, post-colonial, and subaltern perspectives. A next suggested step is reflecting deeply upon those readings and conversations and experiences towards achieving Freire’s (1969) “critical consciousness.” A further suggestion is seeking an embodied practice that is aligned with the culture or cultures of the seeker’s origin, reconnection with land and the more than human world as a necessary component of this work. In addition, digging into the spiritual practices that come from one’s
culture of origin and practicing them, to feel more in tune with connection to that culture, while
being witnessed by others who are a part of that community is also suggested. Prashad, Rhee,
and Subedi (year)point to the importance of being careful not to veer into the realm of cultural
misappropriation and rather re-direct that interest into digging deeper and deeper into one’s own
cultural legacy, otherwise, one may be participating in perpetuating neo-colonialism.

Research Methodology

To go about answering the research question “how will critically reflecting upon my
heritage while engaging with decolonial, antiracist perspectives affect my perception and
attitudes towards Montessori materials, pedagogical philosophy and methodology?” the
researcher gathered data for the action research self-study using three data tools.

Data Tools

The first two data tools used were the Implicit Associations Test (IAT) (Greenwald, et al.
1998) and a 13 question test of the researchers own design “Survey on Bias/Inculcated Colonial
Attitudes” (about her own biases against her ingroup of Judaism) that included attitude scale
inquiries (Lickert and 1-10 rating scales) and narrative responses, used to establish baseline data
at the beginning and end of the study (Appendices B & C). A commonly used teacher-generated
artifact in Action Research is the journal, considered a “good source of data” according to
Hendricks (2017). Critical reflection is also a tool described by Freire (1969.) towards critical
consciousness, and by Gaudet (2014.) “to unbind the mind from the dominant paradigms that
separate them from their relatedness to nature, to self, and to generations of wisdom” with
attention to the “the patriarchy within, the subjugation of body […] the perpetuation of trauma,
and the need […] to consciously examine the perceptions of my environment regarding identity
and sense of belonging.” (Gaudet, 2014.) Therefore, the third and primary tool was a digital journal of critical reflections which was used throughout the course of the study.

Engagement with decolonial media, ancestral trauma, and personal heritage, and the researchers’ critical reflections upon them typed in a digital journal comprised the intervention. In order to fulfill the prerogative dictated by the problem statement of attaining adequate spiritual preparedness and critical consciousness, utilizing the critical pedagogy theoretical framework (Freire, 1969; hooks, 2014) the researcher experimented in collecting her own critical reflections after engaging daily in dialogue and with books, zines, podcasts, documentaries, and scholarly articles. She compiled these different research materials into four discrete categories based on the subject matter they dealt with based in her literature review of scholars who offered a guide towards a decolonial self. Each third of her six-and-a-half-week self-study research period had its own category (and one had two), based upon steps suggested by the decolonial scholars surveyed in the literature review.

**Decolonial media**

During the first two and half weeks of the intervention, the researcher surveyed decolonial media centered upon the American Indigenous experience. She read selections from books: *An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States* (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014); *Strong Medicine Speaks: A Native American Elder Has Her Say* (Hearth Hill, 2014); *Indian Givers: How the Indians of America Transformed the World* (Weatherford, 1988); *I Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* (Brown, 1971); *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Smith, 2015); *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance* (Villanueva, 2018); *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (Loewen, 2006); *Indigeneity and Decolonial
Resistance: Alternatives to Colonial Thinking and Practice (Sefa Dei & Jaimungal, 2018); and Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods (Wilson, 2008).

She read the entirety of the zines: For America to Live, Europe Must Die, a transcription of a famous Russell Means (American Indian Movement co-founder) speech delivered in 1980 and Accomplices not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex (year, published by the Indigenous Action Organization). She read the scholarly articles: Decolonization is not a Metaphor (Tuck & Yang, 2012) and Introducing: settler colonial studies (Veracini, 2011). She also used the Native Land App (Temprano, 2015) to acquaint herself with various territories she had occupied as a settler colonist at various points in her life and watched the first two parts of the documentary Origins – 1491: The Untold Story of the Americas (Aarow Productions, 2019). She read the most from An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014), to better acquaint herself with a general overview of history reading, eight chapters in total, as well as the first half of Strong Medicine Speaks (Hearth Hill, 2014) to better acquaint herself with the experiences of people who were of the land she occupied as a settler at that time (in Philadelphia). Besides consistently reading at least one chapter in Dunbar-Ortiz and Hill Hearth in a day, the researcher supplemented her learning by also reading one of the aforementioned zines, articles, or a chapter from Indian Givers, Conquest, etc. per day for 17 days. After each one of these readings or viewings she recorded her critical reflections for a minimum of 15 minutes in her digital journal.

Ancestral Trauma

For the third and fourth weeks of the intervention the researcher read selections from My Grandmother’s Hands (Menakem, 2017), a book pertaining to ancestral trauma, followed by recording her critical reflections in her digital journal for a minimum of 15 minutes per day.
Knowing that this book was designed to help people work with ancestral trauma, particularly as it manifests in the body (Somatics, Hanna, T. 1990), she had decided to devote the entirety of the two-week period to it, in case it became too emotionally complicated to handle doing more than that, as the “descendant ritual carrier who may truly feel the scars.” (Kidron, 2003, p.20.)

**Personal Heritage**

For the final two weeks of the study period the researcher occupied herself with media that pertained to her Jewish ancestry and specific ancestors, while also revisiting books about Palestinian life, culture, and predicament. She read selections from the books: *Generations of the Holocaust* (Bergmann, & Jucovy, 1990); *She Who Dwells Within: A feminist vision of a renewed Judaism* (Gottleib, 1996); and *The Hebrew Goddess* (Patai, 1998). As for books that pertained to specific ancestors she was aware of, she read selections from: *Gods of the Upper Air* (King, 2019); *Elsewhere: A Memoir* (Schueler, 1999); *Radio Hole in the Head* (Critchlow, 1995) and the article *Columbia University’s Franz Boas: he led to the undoing of scientific racism* (Baker, 1998). She also read the zine *The Past didn’t go anywhere: making resistance to antisemitism part of all of our movements* (Rosenblum, 2007) and listened to the Podcast *Tehomot: Exploring the depths of Jewish Witchcraft* (Berkowitz, 2018). Then she focused on Palestinian studies, reading selections from *Culture and Imperialism* (Said, 1994); *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the foundations of a Movement* (Davis, 2016); *Steadfast Hope: the Palestinian Quest for a Just Peace* (Episcopal Peace Fellowship, & Israel Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), 2011); and *A Wall: On the Green Line? Israel’s Wall Project under Scrutiny* (Müller & Merkaz, 2006). She also visited synagogue during the high holy days and spoke of what she was learning about with remaining living members of her family who have direct information about the family line and history and
worked on a genogram. The researcher allotted herself three and a half hours per week (or about 40-50 minutes per day) for this work.

The above readings, recordings, and viewings were compiled based upon suggestions noted at the Montessori for Social Justice conferences (St. Catherine’s University, 2018 and Lewis & Clark University, 2019), at the Decolonization Panel at the Nature Connection Leadership conference (Wild Earth School, 2019.), from the National History Museum’s “Teaching Decolonization Resource Collection,” from reading the references of articles and books she already had in her possession, and research done on the scholarly databases searching for terms like “decolonization,” “post-colonialism,” and “subaltern studies,” and also with input from professors at a small Midwestern university.

Because Freire suggests that one (and possibly the most important) aspect of critical consciousness attainment through dialogics is action (Freire, 1969), and because “decolonization is not a metaphor” (Tuck & Yang, 2012), solidarity work was also called for, to the ends of repatriating lands and supporting ongoing anti-colonial struggles, and to avoid a false “move to innocence” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p.3). Therefore, as another aspect of the intervention, the researcher also sought to rekindle ties with activists involved in global solidarity movements of decolonial resistance amongst Indigenous Palestinian organizations and Indigenous US American organizations: Indigenous Montessori schools, the Palestinian Solidarity Project, Green Olive Tours. These organizations were chosen because the researcher’s family are settlers in the United States and Israel. The intent of these proposed acts of solidarity will be to answer the direct requests of affected peoples, so as not to reify the “white savior” dynamic inherent in white supremacist settler colonist culture: to support reclamation projects of lands, languages, autonomy, cultural and spiritual traditions.
Analysis of Data

The purpose of this action research self-study was to become adequately “spiritually prepared” as a Montessori teacher, which involves more than an average teacher training, and calls for banishment of personal prejudices (Montessori, 1967.) The researcher sought to investigate: how might critically reflecting upon personal heritage while engaging with decolonial, antiracist perspectives affect perception and attitudes towards Montessori materials, pedagogical philosophy and methodology?

To answer this question, the researcher began to collect baseline data by taking the Implicit Association test (for bias against American Indians see Appendix B) and took a test of her own design (see Appendix C) about her own inculcated biases against her ingroup. For the first two weeks of the self-study period, she kept a digital journal so as to record reflections after watching, reading, and listening to de-colonial scholars. The researcher also recorded reflections for the next two weeks of the study while engaging with My Grandmother’s Hands and did the same for the last two weeks of the research period while engaging with books and other media related to her personal heritage. She also recorded reflections in her digital journal on feelings experienced while re-establishing contact with some of her acquaintances from the Palestinian territories and with groups providing solidarity to Indigenous peoples in the United States. Finally, she ended the study period by taking the bias tests again, to see if there was any measurable change in attitudes that came from the research to compare to her baseline data.

Project Implicit

The designers of the Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT), (Greenwald, et al., 1998.) note on the Project Implicit website that the test should be used “as an educational tool to develop awareness of implicit preferences and stereotypes,” so it was used thusly. The results of
the IAT before and after the study were the same, that the "data suggests a strong automatic association for American with Native American and Foreign with White American" (Greenwald, et al., 1998). This suggests that the researcher did not arrive at the study with a measurable bias against Indigenous peoples (at least by the metric of the IAT) and that the study did not have a bias-compounding effect upon the researcher.

**Self-designed test for personal bias against own in-group**

Teacher self-assessments are a common component of teacher-generated artifacts in Action Research when teachers are a part of an action research project (Hendricks, 2017.), Though there is always a danger that one could respond to ones’ own designed test in a “socially desirable way” (Hendricks, 2017.), (as the sole participant in this study, with no outside assessor) there were not many acceptable alternative methodologies by which to collect baseline data that the researcher had been exposed to by the time the research period was to begin.

The researcher took a self-designed test on inculcated bias against the ingroup she is from, the Jewry. She took the test at the beginning and the end of the research period. The scales used within the test were two linear numeric 1-10 rating scales along with a subjective rating scale (Positive, negative, neutral.) The rest of the 10 questions were answered narratively. The subjective rating scale and 1-10 rating scales were used for their familiarity on account of their commonplaceness, the researcher wanted to elicit in herself relatively automatic rather than highly thought-out responses.
On a scale of 1-10 do you identify with Judaism or Jewishness as a religion or ethnic identity today?
What does it mean to be Jewish to you today?
Are there any attributes of Jewishness that you recognize in yourself?
What are those attributes?
Are your associations with them
In what ways do you participate in Jewish cultural or religious legacy?
What makes you frustrated about being associated with global Jewry?
What makes you feel delighted and appreciative of being a member of this identity group?
How connected do you feel to your extended family?
How connected do you feel to your scattered ancestral lands? Which lands do you feel the most connected to? Why?
Which ritual, song, food, language, do you feel the most connected to today?
Which intellectual tradition, thinker, culture maker from your identity group do you feel the most connected to today?
How are you feeling about yourself and your identity now? Why?

Figure 1. Questions on the self-designed test.

According to the 1-10 scale, the researcher felt less strongly identified with Jewishness as a part of her identity after the self-study was conducted than before, however, the overall outlook expressed towards her Jewish identity also improved.

Figure 2. Sense of identity before and after the intervention, blue is before intervention, green in after.
In the 13-question test that the researcher designed for herself, she analyzed the data by looking at language used to respond to questions in the test. First, she highlighted all language that had a charge, whether positive, negative, or neutral. Then, she counted those highlighted incidences of language coded “positive,” “negative” (which for the purposes of this study were defined as disparaging against her own ingroup, or would likely be characterized as the language of a “self-loathing Jew,” which is both a psychological and political phenomenon), or “neutral.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learned, philosophic inquiry, humor-3 pos</td>
<td>Solidarity-1 pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grief, insecurity, settler-colonial, assimilated, -4 neg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affinity for solidarity-1 pos</td>
<td>feeling welcome now vs. before: settler, gentrifier, squatter (in the worst sense)-1 pos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eggheaded-1 neg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intellectualism, solidarity, culture bathing-3 pos</td>
<td>In three or four ways actively right now neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trauma reification, conspiracy Jews-2 neg</td>
<td>Zionists-1 neg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>standing together against oppression-1pos</td>
<td>Radical leftist Jewish thought, Never again is now, etc. – 1 pos (these 2 things are the same)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wanting more-neutral</td>
<td>More than usual-positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>most connected to lands I’ve lived on</td>
<td>Looking forward to getting to know New Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ancestor altar on shabbat</td>
<td>Israeli food, Mikveh’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franz Boas, Starhawk</td>
<td>Hannah Arendt, the Witch of Endor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking forward to learning more-neutral</td>
<td>Settled/unsettled-neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive-8, negative-7, neutral-3</td>
<td>Positive-5, negative-1, neutral-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Coded results of Inculcated Biases against Ingroup*
Some examples of “positive” associated words and phrases in the coding include: “empathy,” “philosophic inquiry,” “honor,” “intellectualism,” “solidarity with other oppressed peoples.” Words and phrases associated with the “negative” coded category included: “egghead,” (an anti-intellectual and antisemitic slur) “insecurity,” “trauma-reification,” and “conspiracy theory Jews.” “Neutral” phrases were equanimous or non-judgmental in contrast.

Figure 3. Personal associations with Jewishness were recorded as being “neutral” before the intervention and “positive” after the intervention.

**Coding critical reflections in digital journal entries**

The researcher used a similar technique to the one described above while inductively coding the reflections recorded in her digital journal entries. This time though, the categories became more complex. Rather than using “positive,” “negative,” or “neutral” as categories (which were the exact language used in the questionnaire), she combed the 22 entries produced over the course of the six-week self-study period for repetition of themes. These categories were derived from critical reflections made in her digital journal directly following reading/watching media which was mostly selected prior to the onset of the research period.
In the first two and a half weeks of the study period, the researcher surveyed decolonial media centered upon the American Indigenous experience. For the next two weeks of the self-study period the researcher occupied herself with selections from *My Grandmother’s Hands*, a book pertaining to ancestral trauma. For the final two weeks of the study period the researcher occupied herself with media that pertained to her Jewish ancestry and specific ancestors, while also revisiting books about Palestinian life, culture, and predicament. During this time, she also began contacting old acquaintances in the Palestinian territories to see what service she might be able to provide to them from afar. After all of these readings and viewings, the researcher recorded her critical reflections in her digital journal.

After the categories were established, the researcher sorted the reflections and artistic productions initially coded, then coded them line by line, and eventually sorted the reflections into first emergent and then clearer more defined categories. Each piece of data was highlighted, and the reflections were to be placed in their appropriate category. The reflections within each category were reviewed and re-categorized by the researcher. Then they were inputted into a graph.

She highlighted the words or phrases that were repeated most frequently or expressed a similar thought or feeling, and then developed themes. The initial heuristic themes were unclear and there were many overlaps, so they were combed again until nine themes (though three of them still overlapped) emerged. Those nine themes included: “feeling challenged and unsettled,” “awe at resilience,” “grief,” “feeling ungrounded/untethered to land/sense of belonging to place,” “shame at being a settler/gentrifier,” “envious of having a place to be indigenous to that is not highly problematic (in the case of Israel),” “intrigue around traditions the researcher didn’t know
belonged to her culture and heritage,” “making cognitive connections,” and “solidarity work with other populations that have experienced similar oppressions to her family” (see Fig. 4).

![Reflection Themes](image)

*Figure 4. Initial Coding.*

In a later coding session, after reading through the reflections in her digital journal entries again to immerse herself in the data, three of the overlapping themes were condensed into one category for ease of legibility, leaving six categories which included:
“unsettled/untethered/shame,” “awe at resilience,” “grief,” “intrigued by what I’m learning about my own heritage,” “drawing new connections between oppressions,” and “solidarity work.” A new graph was generated to represent the condensed or overlapping categories that had been newly re-defined (see Fig. 5).

![Refined Reflection Themes](image)

**Figure 5.** Finalized Coding.

According to the data collected pre and post -study in the IAT, her outlook towards Native Americans was unbiased. The results of the self-designed pre and post study test were less clear cut, but it appears as if the researcher’s bias towards her own in-group dissipated
somewhat during the research period. The data collected from reviewing critical reflections in her digital journal were much more complex and required more sorting to make sense of the results. They did, however indicate a movement in the direction of a modicum of decolonial consciousness as evidenced by deeper self-awareness and awareness of personal heritage, deeper understanding of history and connections between oppressions, deeper understanding of ancestral trauma, feeling “unsettled” and a desire to be more engaged to support decolonialism efforts in solidarity with colonized peoples (in alignment with Freire’s goal of a liberatory education, political activation and participation in democratic processes.)

Discussion

The question the researcher sought to answer in this self-study was: how will critically reflecting upon my heritage while engaging with decolonial, antiracist perspectives affect my perception and attitudes towards Montessori materials, pedagogical philosophy and methodology? The purpose of this action research self-study is to become adequately “spiritually prepared” as a Montessori teacher, which involves more than an average teacher training. Montessori wrote that “an ordinary teacher cannot be transformed into a Montessori teacher, but must be created anew, having rid herself of pedagogical prejudices” (1969, p. 67). In her works, Dr. Montessori calls for soul searching and for the banishment of personal biases. Paolo Freire in his works on critical pedagogy writes of dialogics as a means to a liberatory pedagogy and attainment of “critical consciousness” (Freire, 1969.), much in alignment for the purposes of this study with Dr. Montessori’s notion of spiritual preparedness. Examining colonial history is one way to begin an examination of the self and of the pedagogy critically. This undertaking is a necessary part of the spiritual preparation process, in order to mitigate the likelihood of perpetuating trauma upon students from an unexamined pedagogy.
Followed by two tests to establish baseline data, the first two-and-a-half weeks of the self-study period involved reading, watching, and listening to “Indigenous voices.” (those who produce Indigenous or Traditional Knowledge, specifically, decolonial voices.) Thereafter, the researcher would reflect critically about what she read, watched, or listened to in digital journal entries. The next two weeks involved reading about ancestral trauma and critically reflecting upon it in a digital journal. The final two weeks of the self-study research period were occupied with personal ancestral research and rekindling of ties with activists involved in global solidarity movements of decolonial resistance including: the Palestinian Solidarity Project, Green Olive Tours, and an Indigenous Montessori school. These organizations were chosen because the researcher’s family are settlers in the United States and Israel. Tuck and Yang (2012) argue that “attending to what is irreconcilable within settler colonial relations and what is incommensurable between decolonizing projects and other social justice projects will help to reduce the frustration of attempts at solidarity; but the attention won’t get anyone off the hook from the hard, unsettling work of decolonization” (p. 4). This was another rationale for engaging with so many forms of decolonial media, and specifically decolonial media, rather than broader anti-racist, multi-cultural or social-justice oriented media, and critically reflecting upon it in addition to making plans to engage in more solidarity work in the future with colonized peoples.

**Reflective journal samples: Weeks one and two**

What follow are a few selections of the 22 critical reflections written in the researcher’s digital journal approximately every other day during the roughly 42-day research period. The selections highlighted represent the six highest occurring themes. The reflections in total are about 15 single-spaced pages long (see Appendix D for the complete passages they are derived from, though not the entirety of the digital journal). Because the reflections are long, there are
often multiple categories covered per critical reflection/journal entry. This accounts for what might otherwise appear to be a discrepancy or miscounting, considering there were only 22 reflections listed in total and there are a total of 63 incidences of categorizations within those reflections. The entirety of the reflections in their raw form were not included because of length and because they occasionally were too emotionally charged and tender to share, reflecting personal trauma (not directly related to ancestry or being a settler) that had been triggered through the investigation. Therefore, selections of critical reflections from the digital journal that contained the highest occurrence of the finalized categories were included.

The six categories the researcher sorted her reflections into ultimately were “unsettled/untethered/shame,” “awe at resilience,” “grief,” “intrigued by what I’m learning about my own heritage,” “drawing new connections between oppressions,” and “solidarity work.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sept.</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsettled/untethered/shame</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awe at resilience</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grief</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrigued by what I’m learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about my own heritage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing new connections between</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oppressions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity work</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63=

*Table 2.* Tallies of categories represented in critical reflections recorded in digital journals.
What follow are three examples that represent those initially separate thematic groupings that were later merged into one category; (feeling untethered to a sense of belonging to place)

Watching “1491: Origins” my first impression is [...] that from an indigenous perspective, the peoples have always been here according to their origin stories. [...] Politicized, Zionist Israeli archeologists (and the Torah, our origin story lies in Genesis as Jews) would have me believe, too, that my people have always been in Israel. [...] Maybe it is useful to be unattached to a particular land mass insofar as it surely contributes to my anti-Nationalistic sensibilities (Journal entry, September 21st.).

(shame at being a settler/gentrifier)

On the topic of Doikayt (hereness) and diasporism: An additional tension worth noting (for me at least) is [...] and not imposing my presence as settler colonialist. [...] It’s being an unwanted guest because your presence is colonial and displacing, [not because of antisemitism and xenophobia...] Is there a place to be where my mere presence as a multi-generational refugee of the Jewish diaspora isn’t causing harm? I feel so ashamed of my unwanted, unintended impact, just for being born where I was. I know this emotion isn’t terribly productive or helpful, but it still exists, nonetheless. (Journal entry, October 6th.)

(envious of having a place to be indigenous to that is not highly problematic, in the case of Israel)

I feel so envious of people who have a place they are native to! My people have been vagabonding throughout the continents for what seems like a millennia. [...] (Journal entry, October 1.)
All of the above samples were eventually added to the category “unsettled/untethered/shame.” Although many of the feelings expressed in these critical reflections were not entirely new to the researcher, their increased incidence following concerted engagement with Indigenous points of view, both Palestinian and Native American, suggest increased consciousness and sensitivity to the researcher’s settler presence upon other peoples’ ancestral lands. Therefore, it seems worth noting that this process alone impacted attitudes towards the researcher’s self, pedagogical philosophy and methodology.

The theme “intrigue around traditions the researcher didn’t know belonged to her culture and heritage” occurred in 15 separate reflections in the month of October alone, with one incidence in September and one in November. This critical reflection recorded in the researchers’ digital journal represents the category

*I am absolutely delighted to learn that built into ancient, more mystical Kohen/Kohenet (priest/priestess) iterations of pre-rabbinical Jewish traditions are practices to honor loved ones after they have passed that feel highly resonant.*

*One of these traditions is to call upon ancestors to ask for help with understanding and healing family trauma. According to ancient Jewish mysticism, ancestral traumas can be healed within a four-generation cycle. I wonder also if the ‘Al Het (apologies for sins) can also be used within Jewish cosmology to apologize on behalf of ancestors to try and create repair within a four-generation cycle with those they may have negatively impacted.* (Journal entry, October 9th.)

From this passage, one can see a desire for repentance or future positive impact to try and reconcile harms of the past, while embracing cultural traditions that are the researchers own,
rather than trying to borrow from others, as was cautioned against by authors in the literature review.

Following the high number of incidences of the tied categories “unsettled/untethered/shame,” (17) and “intrigue around traditions the researcher didn’t know belonged to her culture and heritage” (17) is “drawing new connections between oppressions,” with 11 total incidences. Selections coded “drawing new connections between oppressions,” occurred most frequently (five times) in the week of September 22nd to October 1st. These were connections made through synthesizing selections from *An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States* and discussing it with others, primarily, as well as through reading other sources and reflecting upon them critically alone. One reflection, in response to *An Indigenous Peoples History* (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, p.7.) was about the connection posited by the author between neocolonialism and post-modernism

> *Inherent in the paradigm of post modernism (which is made up of a blend of skepticism, subjectivism, or relativism; suspicion of reason; suspicion of ideology’s role in politics and power) is a kind of solipsism (that the self is all that can truly be known to exist.)* What allows neocolonialism to thrive is the post-modern take on solipsism and its total lack of acknowledgement or awareness of interconnectivity which allows supremacy (White, Christian, rich, human) to thrive as a justification for further expansionist control. (Journal entry, September 24th)

The understanding that the researcher is coming to in this highlighted journal selection is one that is critical informs a praxis of active questioning of hegemonic systems and seeks to undermine them.
Within another reflection are expressions of surprise and relief at seeing Dunbar-Ortiz craft an argument in part through showing Europeans learned the technology of conquest by first trying it out on peasants, Moors, and Jews, then witches and practitioners of animistic and Indigenous spiritualities. The quote “The crusades in the Iberian peninsula (Spain and Portugal today) and expulsions of Jews and Muslims were part of the process that created the core ideology of modern colonialism—white supremacy—and its justification for genocide” (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, p. 37.) helped me to locate my own desires for solidarity with Muslims, and other refugees (amongst them other Jews, Latin Americans, American Indians, Romani, Palestinians, etc.) and expelled and displaced peoples within a corroborated historical context.

This critical reflection was coded into the category of “solidarity work with other populations that have experienced similar oppressions to her family” (a category which was recorded as having nine incidences throughout critical reflections)

 Even though the Never Again is Now Action I attended recently was relatively short and small, [...] it felt like a true affront to power, showing the discontent of a peoples who have historically experienced similar treatment [...] I am here, and for now I must start here. I can speak out and try to act against my own and others complicit participation [...] in a variety of oppressions.] I guess I’m kind of a Bundist (except for the socialist part, ha! Doykait or hereness being the slogan of East-European Jewish socialists--the Bundists-- we must struggle, with feet firmly planted where we stand, for the liberation of ourselves and all other people.)[...]I am looking forward to furthering a collaboration with an Indigenous pedagogue to correct some Montessori materials that do not represent and therefore erase Indigenous existence. We are thinking about some of the
“Fundamental Needs” charts and the total absence of Indigenous production on the shelves, and also thinking about Geography and the puzzles that uphold artificial borders. [...] To the end of pursuing meaningful solidarity projects with Palestinians, my correspondences have been rich in possibility. [...] What does solidarity look like? It can look a variety of ways [...] as beings whose liberation and existence are necessarily wrapped up in one another as interconnected and interdependent life forms. (Journal entry, October 21st.)

This passage highlights a desire to move towards an active solidarity practice, within and without the classroom, with students, colleagues, and oppressed and displaced peoples the researcher and her family negatively impact in the US and in the Palestinian territories.

Of equally low incidence was the category of critical reflections that were coded “awe at resilience,” here is an example

Initially, what strikes me about Strong Medicine Speaks is how the narrator speaks of community in her childhood, how her family and indeed many in her community passed as ‘colored’ rather than ‘Indian’ so as to remain on her native lands rather than being relocated to a Western reservation. Another initial impression is around how people in her community fared well during the depression because of the skill sets they retained as Indigenous Americans living upon their native ancestral lands, [...] passed on with continuity of tradition.

(Journal entry, October 16th.)

This passage highlights a wish for all peoples to be able to be able to have continuity of tradition, something the researcher herself lacks to a large extent in her own lineage, and that was taken from most Indigenous peoples and colonized and displaced peoples all over the world.
Finally, the most infrequently coded critical reflection was the category of “grief” with five total incidences. Here is an example recorded in the researcher’s critical reflection digital journal from September 9th

*I was having a memory from a few months ago, (around the time that I decided to go in this direction with my research) of my father, lying on the couch all day. [...] My dad seemed to identify strongly with this story of “second generation syndrome” and suggested that if he hadn’t made his way to Jungian analysis as a young man, that he would likely be in the same boat [dead]. (Journal entry, September 9th.)*

Another telling example seems worth sharing in that category because it adds some depth to the multi-generational nature of the impact of trauma upon grief individuals can carry

*My grandmother is a holocaust survivor (in fact, all 4 of my grandparents are.) She and three of her siblings survived from a family of ten children. *When I was little, I was the repository for all of her trauma tales and her wails* [...] Literally lying between her trauma disclosures and my grandfather’s recurring holocaust night-terror (he was the sole survivor of his family of 8) in bed as a two or three year old, I learned to be a very good listener and to be a receptacle to hold and protect other peoples’ trauma. [...] Both of my parents growing up in post-war Germany reinforced this notion [...] of “self-loathing Jews.”. (Journal entry, October 20th.)*

Highlighted with inclusion of these passages is the researcher coming to terms with the amount of trauma carried in the family line, which helped her to engender deeper empathy for the
ancestral trauma of others who have been impacted by hundreds of consecutive years of conquest and genocide. It also helps to bring perspective. Yes, in the mythology (or possibly history) of Jews there are many exoduses and oppressions over the centuries, but for the past 400+ years in the Americas, with no breaks from oppression, Indigenous peoples have been systematically assimilated, converted, exploited, enslaved, displaced, raped, disappeared, killed, and erased.

This collection of artifacts was a part of an iterative process. In Action research, an iterative process usually consists of the stages: plan, act, observe, and reflect (Siegel, 2015.) In this case, the order was somewhat different, (nor was there a subject to observe but the researcher herself), as suggested by the review of literature (both decolonial scholars and Freire alike) and played out as plan, critically reflect, dialogue, reflect some more, and act. Having at least somewhat of an understanding of the Indigenous perspective was necessarily a starting point (Tuck & Yang, 2012), followed by a deeper self-understanding and these two synthesized could lead to a more decolonial, critical consciousness attainment resulting in activism (Freire, hooks, et al.) in this case, both in the classroom (the microcosm) and out in the world (the macrocosm). Without going through each planned step, the researcher could not have known the outcome upon her consciousness. Wilson stated

[…] it’s especially true for […] action research. It just can’t be thought of in a linear or one-step-leads-to-the-other way. All of the pieces go in, until eventually the new idea comes out. You build relationships with the idea in various and multiple ways, until you reach as new understanding or higher state of awareness.

(Wilson, 2008, p.116-117)

Making connections between oppressions and the veiled ways that they make themselves manifest within the psyche and the dominant culture was powerful to attaining new consciousness, and
connecting with activists added new vigor to her aspirations to continue working on herself, her classroom and its materials, her pedagogical praxis, and beyond. The data collected shows the researchers deepening understanding of colonial oppression and her role within it.

However, an adequate metric to measure the attainment of “critical consciousness” or “spiritual preparedness” is evasive (though a critical consciousness scale was developed in 2014 by Matthew A. Diemer at the U. of Michigan and the researcher did take it, but not until the study period was over, marks were high). For each psyche, there would likely be a different metric of success to demonstrate having embarked upon the lifelong process of beginning to attain these somewhat abstract ideals.

The researcher was surprised by how much she learned about American history from an Indigenous perspective and Indigenous history in general as well as its thematic overlaps (and marked divergences) with other oppressed groups, like the Jewry. She was also surprised that she felt significantly more connected to her own religious heritage of Judaism than she ever had before.

She had always felt disconnected from Judaism (“It’s all in Hebrew, it’s alienating! It’s patriarchal! I didn’t grow up with it!”) coming from a family of holocaust survivors who lost their faith when they experienced genocide, and Social Democrats who snubbed religion as a stupefying force as well as the root cause of all of the ills in the world. All sides of her family had their own reasons for abandoning Judaism, while allowing themselves to be assimilated into the dominant cultures of whatever region they found themselves in to simultaneously avoid more antisemitic oppression. She found that when she did concerted research into its history, her religion (which in this case, is also an ethnic identity), held so many parallels to her own self-made cobbled together spiritual practice, the need for which had been solidified in the vacuum of emptiness and disconnection. It was also surprising to her that she was able to learn
as much about Judaism as she did as quickly as she was able. For many years before the onset of the research period, the researcher had considered getting a Bat Mitzvah to acquaint herself more deeply with the traditions of her cultural milieu. She had “prepared” (in an unconventional way through a society for Humanistic Judaism) for a Bat Mitzvah as a youth (which would have been held in a Unitarian Universalist Church) but ultimately shirked the investment in a community whose language (Hebrew or Yiddish, she spoke neither, but rather speaks in this context, the languages of Hegemony: German, Spanish, and obviously English) and customs seemed alien and exclusionary (in particular, patriarchal, but in her region also consumeristic, disingenuous, and hollow. She reviled the American conception of a JAP or Jewish American Princess in particular). Concerted study actually allowed her to feel safe in a (Reconstructionist) synagogue and more connected to greater Jewish community, tradition, and religious practices.

Beginning the process of unpacking of the researcher’s relationship to Judaism also made her feel more invested in solidarity struggles for liberation, learning more about the historical necessity of Jewish life to be in solidarity with other oppressed groups and that the oppressions tried out on her in group (as in the case of the Inquisitions) were later executed with wild success elsewhere thereafter (as in the case of genocide and erasure in the Americas, and some might say, the brutal occupation of the Palestinian territories.)
Action Plan

There are many questions that came up during the course of the six-week research period that there simply was not enough time to research deeply. For example, the researcher knows that she must explore further her own inculcated white supremacy against black and brown people to better serve children of the African Diaspora in the future. Another example is that the researcher has much to learn still about subalternity, de-colonial and post-colonial topics, as well as her own heritage and background through inter and intra-cultural exchanges and other means, like those explored in this self-study (reading, watching, dialoguing, critical reflection). She also came to understand that she had work to do on believing in and supporting coalitions, and that she must work to quiet the parts of herself that can become quite zealous (an understanding emerged through this study that this is also apparently an ancestral trait), to the detriment of getting valuable and meaningful work done across political and identity lines. The researcher also feels it is important to visit more of her ancestral lands, like Romania and Portugal (where her maternal grandmother's family came from before they arrived in Germany), Russia (where her maternal grandfather grew up during the Bolshevik revolution), and Poland (where both of her father’s parents grew up) as well as undertaking a deeper study of the history, political landscape, and cultural contexts in Germany (where she lived for a year in the past and where both sides of the family have resided for significant periods of time and where both of her parents are up) and Israel (where much of her remaining extended family resides today.)

The researcher’s desired outcomes of this self-study were to be less biased (towards spiritual preparedness), more in-tune with own traumas (ancestral and otherwise) in order to be less likely to trigger/be triggered in the classroom (spiritual preparedness), in touch with a personal spiritual practice in connection to personal lineage (spiritual preparedness), and being
an accomplice to students and other adults working to dismantle oppressions of human, White supremacy and colonialism (the Freire-ian goal in attainment of critical consciousness). Those desires do seem to have been met to some extent, however, the researcher concludes that more research is needed. If the desired outcome of critical consciousness or sufficient spiritual preparation of the guide within the context of the self-study had been less-nebulously defined, the research would have benefitted. Lack of clarity around the metrics of critical consciousness or spiritual preparedness led the researcher to question the validity of her data. The researcher embarked upon the research period with a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm at the possibility of creating a crash course for herself in banishing personal biases and getting to know her own lineage more deeply without explicit ideas of what a “successful” outcome could/would look like. Although this approach was useful as the researcher learned much about herself and de/colonized identities towards critical consciousness attainment and better spiritual preparedness, she has only accessed the tip of the iceberg, and this engagement with learning on these topics must continue throughout life. It might also prove challenging to replicate the extremely personal methodology towards a more concrete metric for attainment of the aforementioned qualities. A more targeted vision of the intervention would have provided a clearer evaluative framework for the experience.

The solidarity component was important insofar as fulfilling the Jewish imperative of mitzvot or service. As de-colonial scholars Tuck and Yang (2012) reiterate “Solidarity is an uneasy, reserved, and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict. There are parts of the decolonization project that are not easily absorbed by human rights or civil rights-based approaches to educational equity” (p. 3). The intervention feels successful as paving a path for continued growth in the aforementioned areas towards a
more adequately “spiritually prepared,” more “critically conscious”, more concretely antiracist, de-colonial Montessori pedagogical praxis.

The researcher concludes that a dialogue centered approach to Montessori teacher trainings would be more likely to yield critically conscious teachers. Inclusion of decolonial works in addition to critical pedagogy, anti-racist exposures, and trauma informed care should supplement Montessori training programs. A model for decolonial Montessori teacher training exists as of very recently at the Indigenous Montessori Institute in New Mexico. According to their website, the Indigenous Montessori Institute “is an anti-racist, anti-biased approach to educational reform using Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the Montessori Philosophy to deliver Teacher Training” (Indigenous Montessori Institute, 2019). The researcher hopes to visit this training facility in the next year to further this research. The researcher proposes that all school personnel receive a professional development in critical pedagogy decolonialism, anti-racism, and trauma informed (or compassionate) care if they have not received those necessary components of the peace curriculum within their training programs (one suggested professional development track can be found in Appendix E). Mediation and non-violent communication skills are likely to be helpful technologies to negotiating difference and trauma in the classroom. Additionally, research is needed to ascertain the effects of decolonial preparation upon guides and environments towards critical consciousness development in Montessori children. Indigenous erasure in classic Montessori-designed materials need be addressed. (Han & Moquino, 2018.)
Future Action Research

The researcher is interested in turning her attention next to the effects of centering the explicit agenda of critical consciousness attainment and anti-racist, post-colonial, and indigenous knowledge systems integrated within Montessori teacher trainings through observing those trainings. It would also be very interesting to observe those teachers who have gone through anti-racism, decolonial programs in action in their classrooms after they graduate. She is also interested in how those teachers interact differently with their students, and what metric could be devised to measure that. Another area of interest is observing the effects of anti-racist/de-colonial classroom materials and environment upon critical consciousness development in Montessori children. The researcher is also interested in looking more deeply into questions of Indigenous representation and erasure in the classroom, in terms of classic Montessori-designed materials. One manner in which the researcher is looking forward to providing solidarity to other pedagogues in the future is through the co-operative development of classroom materials with Indigenous pedagogues that augment or complement existing Montessori materials.
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Appendix A

From a lecture delivered at the 2018 Bioneers conference by:

Dr. Rupa Marya called Health and Justice: The Path of Liberation through Medicine
Appendix B: Maps and my place within them

(Born in Bridgeport, CT, 1987-Wappinger and Paugussett lands)

(Lived in Norwalk, CT, 1987-1998-Wappinger and Lenape lands)
(Lived in Weston, CT, 1998-2005- Wappinger, Lenape, and Paugusset lands)

(Lived in Marlboro, VT, 2005-2009- Pennacook, Wabanaki Confederacy, Abenaki lands)
(Lived in Philadelphia briefly in 2009, then again 2015-2019-Lenape lands)

All maps retrieved from https://native-land.ca/
Appendix C: Family Genogram drawn up around 1996 by my parents:
Niki Ralis, MA, ABS and Dr. Marvin Schweitzer, N.D.
Appendix D

The researcher began the research period by collecting qualitative data on her own bias against Native Americans by taking a Harvard Implicit Associations Test on American Indians. The results from that September 5th test are as follow:

Next, you will use the "E" and "I" computer keys to categorize items into groups as fast as you can. These are the four groups and the items that belong to each:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>American, Native American, White American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>Foreign, White American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White American</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>Foreign, Native American, White American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are seven parts. The instructions change for each part. Pay attention:

Part 1 of 7
Put a left finger on the E key for items that belong to the category Native American.
Put a right finger on the I key for items that belong to the category White American.
Items will appear one at a time.
If you make a mistake, a red X will appear. Press the other key to continue. Go as fast as you can while being accurate.
Press the space bar when you are ready to start.

Press "E" for Native American  Press "I" for White American

Press "E" for Foreign  Press "I" for American

Part 3 of 7
Use the E key for Native American and for Foreign.
Use the I key for White American and for American.
Each item belongs to only one category.
If you make a mistake, a red X will appear. Press the other key to continue. Go as fast as you can while being accurate.
Press the space bar when you are ready to start.

Press "E" for Foreign  Press "I" for American

or

Press "E" for Native American  Press "I" for White American

Part 4 of 7
This is the same as the previous part.
Use the E key for Native American and for Foreign.
Use the I key for White American and for American.
Each item belongs to only one category.
Go as fast as you can while being accurate.
Press the space bar when you are ready to start.
AUTHENTIC MONTESSORI (IN A DE/colonializing WORLD)

**Part 5 of 7**

Watch out, the labels have changed position!
Use the left finger on the E key for White American.
Use the right finger on the I key for Native American.

Go as fast as you can while being accurate.

Press the space bar when you are ready to start.

**Part 6 of 7**

Use the E key for White American and for Foreign.
Use the I key for Native American and for American.
Each item belongs to only one category.

If you make a mistake, a red X will appear. Press the other key to continue.

Go as fast as you can while being accurate.

Press the space bar when you are ready to start.

**Part 7 of 7**

This is the same as the previous part.
Use the E key for White American and for Foreign.
Use the I key for Native American and for American.
Each item belongs to only one category.

Go as fast as you can while being accurate.

Press the space bar when you are ready to start.

---

**Questionnaire**

Please rate how much you associate the following group with the concepts "American" and "Foreign":

**White Americans**

- Strongly American
- Moderately American
- Slightly American
- Neither American or foreign
- Slightly foreign
- Moderately foreign
- Strongly foreign

**Native Americans**

- Strongly American
- Moderately American
- Slightly American
- Neither American or foreign
- Slightly foreign
- Moderately foreign
- Strongly foreign

Submit

Decline to Answer
"Your data suggests a strong automatic association for American with Native American and Foreign with White American."

These results (according to the Harvard Implicit Bias project itself) reflect a relatively historical outlook, rather than a highly biased one.
Appendix C

Self-made test:
The researcher went on to collect data on herself the next day by taking a test she designed herself on her personal bias against her own ethnicity/religion background. The results are as follows:

Are there any attributes of Jewishness that you recognize in yourself? *
Yes.

What are those attributes? *
Today it's just my nose, a certain variety of egg-headed-ness, my strong affinity for fighting for the oppressed. By neutral I mean both, below. Because some of these attributes are also heinous stereotypes.

Are your associations with them *

1. Positive
2. Negative
3. Neutral

What does it mean to be Jewish to you today? *
It means that I am of the people of the book. I am of a learned legacy that also carries much grief and insecurity, impositions and inquisitions in its epigenetics. It means that I am a natural skeptic who doesn't shy away from deep philosophic inquiry with a humor informed by a self knowledge of no knowledge. It means that for countless generations, my peoples have agreed to honor a holy covenant with at least one aspect of spirit that animates and vivifies life on this planet, and that more recently they became assimilated, secular, agnostic, politicized by forced migrations and anti-Semitism, and settled, and also a settler colonial population both here in the so-called United States and also in so-called Israel.
in what ways do you participate in Jewish cultural or religious legacy? *

Lively intellectual debate. Resistance through existence and solidarity. Hangs with my friends and family who are Jewish. Very occasional high holy days synagogue visits. Honoring of my ancestors in an unsanctioned (by any denomination of Judaism I am aware of, except for the Kohenet tradition, which is broken, perhaps) way, with an altar and divination for communication.

What makes you frustrated about being associated with global Jewry? *

The intractable situation in the Palestinian territories. The IDF. The Jeffrey Epsteins and Jared Kushner’s of the world. The sense of chauvinism and exceptionalism espoused by many about us and some of us ourselves. The burden of ancestral trauma which is not exceptional, it exists in all lines but sometimes we act like we have a monopoly, as we continue to generate more trauma out of our own for others and ourselves through violent trauma reification cycles.

What makes you feel delighted and appreciative of being a member of this identity group? *

1. I do actually feel most at home in many cases amongst a group of eccentric, leftist, queer Jews. We are strengthening our stands against injustice (Never Again is Now, If Not Now, Jewish Voice for Peace, the Palestinian Solidarity Project). I feel very connected to the rivers and the plants and the trees.

3. Last night I caught myself speaking in German over dinner. I said my daily gratitude affirmation or prayer which includes a verse in Hebrew:

Thy Will be done,
today is a day of completion,
Thank you for this perfect day
With Miracle upon Miracles
And Wonders that never cease

I am grateful for my soul to be alive
And to be loved and supported

I pray to be a vessel and a conduit of
Sacred light, love, healing, compassion, wisdom, and right action
To serve the manifestation of the highest

Oseh shalom bimromam ha ya’aseh
Shalom aleihu v’al kol yisrael
Ye kol nefesh v’limero, amenn

I am grateful for my soul to be alive,
an emanation of the divine:
loved, supported, and held.

What makes you feel delighted and appreciative of being a member of this identity group? *

4. My existence is worthwhile
As is the existence of all beings
Great and small

I give thanks for all of the people
All of the wonderful teachers and students
The mothers and babies
For the ancestors, friends, and family on the other side
For all of the beings who paved the evolutionary path

For their fossils records deep beneath the earth, stored in metamorphic rock
For the clay and rocks and crystals that grow deep beneath the earth

For the plants: shrubs, herbaceous, ferns, vine, fern, seaweed, tree that grow on its surface
Medicinal, edible, buildable, carnivorous, weatherable, breathable, beautiful

For the fungi, moss, lichen, algae
For all of the decomposers

For the animals: fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, marsupials, insects
Vertebrates, invertebrates, arthropods, arachnids

For the water, the earth, the sky, air that they live in And the fire that burns inside of all creatures great and small

Reflected from the sun above.
This data suggests that the researcher at the onset of the research period had much to learn about her own marginal identity in relationship to others, but had a relatively favorable outlook upon her own traditions, though she was also relatively uninformed about her own background, having grown up in a non-religious household that was “politically opposed” to religion as a construct and also traumatized through the generations by the negative impacts of religious identity being used as a target for genocide.
Appendix D

Weeks 1-6: Contextualizing Colonial Trauma & Digging into my own roots

Coded critical reflections from digital journal entries

Watching “1491: Origins” my first impression is that I was not aware that a contemporary dominant theory of arrival in addition to that of the Great Bering Strait land/ice crossing was arrival by canoes. Anthropologist Dr. Joe Watkins (Choctaw) posits that 18,000-20,000 years ago (according to the archaeological record) people arrived from all over the world, but that from an indigenous perspective, the peoples have always been here according to their origin stories.

Politically, Zionist Israeli archaeologists (and the Torah, our origin story lies in Genesis as Jews) would have me believe, too, that my people have always been in Israel. According to some sources I’ve read it is likely true that around 11% of the population of the geo-political entity of Israel has more or less always been “Israelites” or Jews. Anyways, that is neither here nor there, since the last Knesset under Netanyahu passed Draconian legislation snuffing out dissent or critique of Israeli policy. I would not be allowed to go to Israel if I wanted to because of my Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions organizing work my last year of college. So even if a holocaust were to occur again, apparently Israeli Jews would prefer to be left alone about being colonizers than actually providing safe haven for those in the diaspora who might be murdered, just because their political opinion is that it is not acceptable for us (Jews, which in much of the world is synonymous with Israeli) to be treating Palestinians the same way that we have been treated throughout the ages by our oppressors. Funny, I was under the impression that this was why the (most recent iteration of the) Israeli colonization project began in the first place, to provide safe haven for diasporic Jews post-WWII.

Despite some the pain associated with being diasporic, maybe it is useful to be unattached to a particular land mass insofar as it surely contributes to my anti-Nationalistic sensibilities (as opposed to the dual/traitorous National loyalties anti-Semites would believe of us.) Perhaps having ones’ belief in a historic continuity jarred is also a good thing (the archaeological records would support that virulently, for its truthfulness.) (Journal entry, September 21st.)

(shame at being a settler/gentrifier)

On the topic of Doikayt (hereness) and diasporism: An additional tension worth noting (for me at least) is around being indigenous to some place (is that Israel? Israeli archaeologists would have us think so but honestly, they’re so politicized I don’t know what to think) and not imposing my presence as settler colonialist. This ties into the notion of “guestness”. But it’s a little bit of a different dynamic here in the US or in Palestine than it traditionally is: living in the midst of a hostile xenophobic culture as an unwanted guest. It’s being an unwanted guest because your presence is colonial and displacing? Obviously, this tension is deep in Israel. It is here in the Americas too, in a slightly less personal way (at least for me as a quasi-first-gen American who has less of an active, direct role in colonization and is rather passively benefitting from it.) Is there a place to be where my mere presence as a multi-generational refugee of the diaspora isn’t causing harm? I feel so ashamed of my unwanted, unintended impact, just for being born where I was. I know this emotion isn’t terribly productive or helpful, but it still exists, nonetheless. Maybe going to Europe is the answer to this question (I did try that already in my early twenties), but my family’s citizenship is revoked there... (Journal entry, October 6th.) (envious of having a place to be indigenous to that is not highly problematic, in the case of Israel)
I feel so envious of people who have a place they are native to! My people have been vagabonding throughout the continents for what seems like millennia (which on one level is probably the story of homo sapiens in general, we move around...). Before me, a quasi-first generation American (it’s complicated), were two consecutive generations of refugees and stateless peoples, hustling for passports and citizenships... (How lucky I am to have an American passport now!) Before that, my family was briefly assimilated for a few generations, before they arrived at their respective lands as casualties of the Portuguese Inquisition and Eastern European pogroms. In Germany, for example, where my mother’s family settled for about 300 years, Jews were less likely to be murdered or forced into conversion perhaps, but were also not allowed to occupy cities or even have last names.

We as a people earned the title of the wandering Jews (also a lovely plant by the way, that gets very easily rooted), an archetype that I comfortably occupied as a youth, feeling a strong affinity to Romani peoples, Mongolian herders, Bedouins and other nomadic peoples. Now though, besides being tired, I am mostly just tired of being in the wrong place and not knowing where my place is, everywhere I go I feel like I am an unwelcome guest, whether because of xenophobia and anti-Semitism or because my presence is necessarily a gentrifying and colonizing force, no matter what I do. I wrote two poems about it that I call “personality crisis”

picking apart my own personality
just to discover how little of it is me
so much belongs to the others
brother, mother, father
aunt, uncle, great uncle, great aunt
cousin
grandma, granny, grandpa, g_dmother

and those that came before

before my parents ever even met
(they were 12)

before i was ever even a thought
before i was ever even conceived
before i ever even came to term
before my mother managed
to push me
(if i was me, by then)
with no drugs
and no complications
and no interventions
out through the birth canal
and into this realm
(approx. probability of existence:
400,000,000,000,000 TO 1)
before my mother was ever even born with all of her lifetime’s worth of eggs (approx. 2,000,000)
before my granny was ever even born with all of her lifetime’s worth of eggs
before my great grandmothers were born with their lifetime’s worth of eggs
even before that
there were those who
fled and fled
and then had to flee again
before it got light outside
they left all their things behind
all of the trappings of home

and created homes for themselves
in inhospitable places
and developed nervous disorders
because they knew
they weren’t welcome
and internalized that knowing

maybe it was to stay safe
maybe it was so it wouldn’t hurt as bad
when they had to flee again
maybe it was so they would be ready
when it came

and now as a people
we are known for our anxious dispositions
but the reality is that

we are all very anxious
not just these people
or that people

we are all very anxious because
the conditions of the moment
bring out our latent anxiety

you could think about it like epigenetics
(check the box that applies)
i would not, have seldom or never have
presented this anxious allele if
you would not present this impossible situation
of imminent collapse, mass extinction. (Journal entry, October 1.)
All of the above samples were eventually added to the category “unsettled/untethered/shame.” Although these feelings were not entirely new to the researcher, their increased incidence following concerted engagement with Indigenous points of view, both Palestinian and Native American, suggest increased consciousness and sensitivity to the researcher’s settler presence upon other peoples’ ancestral lands. Therefore, it seems worth noting that this process alone impacted attitudes towards the researcher’s self, pedagogical philosophy and methodology.

The theme “intrigue around traditions the researcher didn’t know belonged to her culture and heritage” reoccurred in 15 separate reflections in the month of October alone, with one incidence in September and one in November. This critical reflection recorded in the researchers’ digital journal represents the category

I am absolutely delighted to learn that built into ancient, more mystical Kohen/Kohenet (priest/priestess) iterations of pre-rabbinical Jewish traditions are practices to honor loved ones after they have passed that feel highly resonant. According to the Tehomot podcast (as well as sources from the Kohenet tet Hebrew priestess training reading list Hebrew Goddess by Rafael Patai, the Hebrew Priestess by Jill Hammer and Taya Shere and She Who Dwells Within: A Feminist Vision of Renewed Judaism by Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb) and the, I have access to ancient channels of connection first traced by my ancestors that can connect me back to them. Channels such as saying the mourners Kaddish for 364 days after a loved one passes, Putting stones on graves, “yahrzeit” anniversary of death recitations of psalms, recitations of lineage list from Adam & Eve to me, in Hebrew (Rebbe Nachman.) Calling upon ancestors and asking for help with understanding and healing family trauma. According to ancient Jewish mysticism, ancestral traumas can be healed within a four-generation cycle. Learning these traditions exist and were likely once common amongst Jews fits into my animistic approach to the world and feel deeply validating and help me to feel more connected to my heritage and trust the wisdom of my own intuition and natural inclinations. I wonder also if the ‘Al Het (apologies for sins) can also be used within Jewish cosmology to apologize on behalf of ancestors to try and create repair within a four-generation cycle with those they may have negatively impacted. (Journal entry, October 9th.)

Following the high number of incidences of the tied categories “unsettled/untethered/shame,” (17) and “intrigue around traditions the researcher didn’t know belonged to her culture and heritage” (17) is “drawing new connections between oppressions,” with 11 total incidences. Selections coded “drawing new connections between oppressions,” occurred most frequently (five times) in the week of September 22nd to October 1st. These were connections made through synthesizing selections from An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States and discussing it with others, primarily, as well as through reading other sources and reflecting upon them critically alone. One reflection, in response to An Indigenous Peoples History (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, p.7.) was about the connection posited by the author between neo-colonialism and post-modernism

Inherent in the paradigm of post modernism is a Christo-moral relativism and also a kind of enlightenment solipsism. What allows neocolonialism to thrive is the solipsism and its total lack of acknowledgement or awareness of inter connectivity which allows supremacy (White, human) to thrive as a justification for further expansionist control. (Journal entry, September 24th.)
Within another reflection are expressions of surprise and relief at seeing Dunbar-Ortiz craft an argument in part through showing Europeans learned the technology of conquest by first trying it out on peasants, Moors, and Jews, then witches and practitioners of animistic and Indigenous spiritualities. The quote “The crusades in the Iberian peninsula (Spain and Portugal today) and expulsions of Jews and Muslims were part of the process that created the core ideology of modern colonialism—white supremacy—and its justification for genocide” (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, p. 37.) helped me to locate my own desires for solidarity with Muslims, and other refugees (amongst them other Jews, Latin Americans, American Indians, Romani, Palestinians, etc.) and expelled and displaced peoples within a corroborated historical context. This critical reflection was coded into the category of “solidarity work with other populations that have experienced similar oppressions to her family” (a category which was recorded as having nine incidences throughout critical reflections)

The supremacy paradigms (Human, white) need to be disrupted in positionality to the Palestinians, Jews, Romani, Curds, Latinx, Indigenous peoples, and diasporic black peoples, etc. all over the world.

Even though the Never Again is Now Action I attended recently was relatively short and small, over 30 people were arrested (which was planned) and it felt like a true affront to power, showing the discontent of a peoples who have historically experienced similar treatment, and blocking a seemingly unaware parade. Providing jail support afterwards actually felt nourishing.

Reading about the current situation amongst the Romani in Bulgaria is trying, or the Uighurs in Chinese “re-education” camps, but what change can I affect in those places? I am here, and for now I must start here. I can speak out against my own and others complicit participation on a national level in child detention projects in border zones, the growth of the Prison Industrial Complex and the school-to-prison pipeline and continued illegal (by international standards) Palestinian displacement, as well as continued displacements, extractions, sterilizations, erasures, disappearances to Native American Nations here.

I guess I’m kind of a Bundist (Doykait or hereness being the slogan of East-European Jewish socialists- we must struggle, with feet firmly planted where we stand, for the liberation of ourselves and all other people.)

I am looking forward to furthering a collaboration with an Indigenous pedagogue to correct some Montessori materials that do not represent and therefore erase Indigenous history past-present-and-future. We are thinking about some of the “Fundamental Needs” charts and the total absence of Indigenous production on the shelves, and also thinking about Geography and the puzzles that uphold artificial borders. Those geography puzzles also begin so big, especially with really little people who might be better served at their cognitive developmental stage by a more place-based curriculum that has to do with where they are in relationship to their biome and the other more than human creatures that co-habitate it with them.

To the end of pursuing meaningful solidarity projects with Palestinians, my correspondences with members of the Palestinian Solidarity Project and Green Olive Tours have been rich in possibility.

What does solidarity look like? It can look a variety of ways. But at its core it is “submitting ourselves” to “the potentially disruptive process of asking ‘what place is there for me in your universe?’” (Anker, 2014.)
The place for you in my multiverse is as a partner in co-operation towards a more harmonious and symbiotic existence that validates us all equally, (unless one has chosen to turn away from all others, as in the case an extremist xenophobic nationalist white/human supremacist, though someone more benevolent and loving and hopeful than I like Daryl Davis might challenge this notion. Can we co-operate with the “enemy” towards our mutual good without being collaborators in our own destruction? Is this what coalition building is about? I have a lot to learn on this topic. Thinking of the Iroquois Confederacy and others), as beings whose liberation and existence are necessarily wrapped up in one another as interconnected and interdependent life forms. (Journal entry, October 21\textsuperscript{th}.)

Of equally low incidence was the category of critical reflections that were coded “awe at resilience,” here is an example

\textit{Initially, what strikes me about Strong Medicine Speaks is how the narrator speaks of community in her childhood, how her family and indeed many in her community passed as ‘colored’ rather than ‘Indian’ so as to remain on her native lands rather than being relocated to a Western reservation. Another initial impression is around how people in her community fared well during the depression because of the skill sets they retained as Indigenous Americans living upon their native ancestral lands with awareness of the plant allies (“weeds”) they had on their lands for food and medicine and also because they retained some of their historic skills that were passed on with continuity of tradition.} (Journal entry, October 16\textsuperscript{th}.)

Finally, the most infrequently coded critical reflection was the category of “grief” with five total incidences. Here is an example recorded in the researcher’s critical reflection digital journal

\textit{Just now as I was meditating, I was having a memory from a few months ago, (around the time that I decided to go in this direction with my research) of my father, lying on the couch all day. At one point in the late afternoon I came downstairs and he called me over. He said he had just been crying. I asked if there was anything wrong and if so if there was anything I could do to help (I have only seen him cry maybe 3 times in 30 years) and he told me there was nothing he could do; he was just feeling his feelings. He had listened to every possible version of this song Erev shel shoshanim – which Mike Brant & Nana Mouskouri also recorded in the early ‘60’s when he was a boy. It’s a love-song, a duet between a very popular female Greek popstar Nana Mouskouri and a very popular young Israeli male popstar, Mike Brant. Then he told me that Mike Brant had killed himself shortly after this song came out and no one ever knew why, he never left a note. But that later it was discovered that his parents had both been holocaust survivors, and he was suffering from “Second generation syndrome.” My dad seemed to identify strongly with this story and suggested that if he hadn’t made his way to Jungian analysis as a young man, that he too would have continued to feel tortured.} (Journal entry, September 9\textsuperscript{th}.)

Another example in that category

\textit{My grandmother is a holocaust survivor (in fact, all 4 of my grandparents are in various ways.) She and three of her siblings survived from a family of ten children. When I was little, I was the repository for all of her trauma tales and her wails. I don’t know how conscious of this my parents were, but my birth apparently retriggered the trauma of the loss of her younger brothers and her inability to save them from being gassed in Nazi concentration camps.}
Literally lying between her trauma disclosures and my grandfather’s recurring holocaust night-terror (he was the sole survivor of his family of 8 children) in bed as a two or three year old, I learned to be a very good listener and to be a receptacle to hold and protect other peoples’ trauma. As a side effect perhaps, I also learned that laws are not always just, fascism is the worst thing ever, power will inevitably be used to keep others powerless, and to be cognizant and supportive of the efforts of the oppressed and righteous underdog. I also learned to feel some shame and secrecy around my heritage, that most people wouldn’t understand what my people had been through and that it was safer to not share it.

Both of my parents growing up in post-war Germany (and my mother not even learning of her Jewish heritage until she was 12 years old, while some of her close relatives converted to Catholicism also to protect their children) reinforced this notion. Last year when I went to visit my aunt with her in Germany, I was surprised to hear them both espousing attitudes what would fall squarely under the classic category of “self-loathing Jews.” This gave me some pause and made me want to understand my roots more, so as not to carry on such a self-undermining belief. (Journal entry, October 20th.)

Onwards: Solidarity with those who I/my people colonize
- Concrete suggestions for exercising solidarity with Palestinians offered to me by acquaintances at Green Olive Tours and the Palestinian Solidarity Project:
- Provide water tanks especially to Bedouin folks, tents, and even a playground where children can have fun under such difficult conditions as these communities are deprived from any facilities.
- Another way for providing help can be through donating cameras for people there to document the violence they are subjected to from settlers surrounding them.

Suggestions for connecting with Palestinian and Bedouin support organizations:
- http://www.internationalfunders.org/english/
Green Olive Tours has a fund that contributes to Bedouin education.

FILMS:
- https://enclosure.oxfam.org/
- https://mondoweiss.net/2012/05/nowhere-to-go-jahalin-bedouin-homes-slated-for-destruction-outside-jerusalem/
- https://topdocumentaryfilms.com/the-iron-wall/
Appendix E: My reading list

Media on Native American History/Culture

Books:


Scholarly articles:


Zines:


Videos:


https://youtu.be/3JDxZ6PMFeATop of

Other:


Media on ancestral trauma

Books:


Media on Jewish history and culture

Books:


Gottlieb, L. (1996). *She who dwells within: A feminist vision of a renewed Judaism.* New York,


Zines:

Podcast:

Videos:


Media on personal ancestors

Books:


Articles:


Media on Palestinian history and culture

Books:


Media on Diasporic African American History and approaches to pedagogy

Books:


Media on critical pedagogy

Books:


### Additional Resources

**Professional Development Planner:**

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<tr>
<th>Challenge: None of the teachers or students know whose land they are on.</th>
<th>Sphere of Influence: First baby steps: Install the Native Lands ap on all school devices, place the Native lands map as the background on every screen, introduce land acknowledgements/condolences at the beginning of the school year, at commencement, and anytime something important is going on outside, like a new garden. Put it on the school website, at the very top. Invite Indigenous peoples into the school to teach about their own culture, abolish Thanksgiving and Columbus days and replace them with the day of mourning and Indigenous people’s days. Invite a task force of teachers who have taken initiative to learn more about this subject to remove literature that is ahistorical as it relates to colonization.</th>
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<td>Communications are not flowing, and they are not kind! People are not giving one another the benefit of the doubt because people are stewing in their feelings in silence! Total communication breakdown! When communications do come through, they are accusatory rather than collaborative and solutions based! They are therefore often times not even being received, and no meaningful change is occurring. Children/their education are suffering because everyone is a lone ranger, and there is no consistency or “team” plan, nor really a team like atmosphere or team, for that matter!</td>
<td>Summer reading assignments: <em>The Four Agreements</em> by Don Miguel Ruiz (it’s short and sweet) and <em>Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators</em> by Elena Aguilar. Staff development 2 weeks prior to onset of school year PD: Non-violent or compassionate communication intensive workshop! (Two days). Daily meeting/planning space/time established/created for the remainder of the year in all classrooms amongst classroom staff, meetings happen bi-weekly within the department (ex. All primary staff), and all staff can meet in institution-wide meetings monthly (they are not scheduled during school hours while teachers are in the classroom, this includes also trustee meetings). Additionally, a google groups space is made where teachers can have ongoing discussions outside of school hours. All communications that pertain to all staff are also posted there, or emailed to the whole group! Same with digital inter/intra departmental communications! White board in office/kitchen</td>
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Also so that basic and important communications like “Lily out, sub in 4/20” for example are there additionally, in case someone missed the online memo, because some people want to unplug from work when they get home so they can live a balanced life and leave work at work. (Half day.)

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<th>Many teachers are becoming concerned, flustered and feel unequipped to cope with students’ emotional outbursts in the classroom, they are finding their own emotional states are spinning out with the students/they are not able to hold it together.</th>
<th>Pre-school year staff development weeks, intensive trauma-informed care training (Starr.org’s National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children) with licensed psychotherapist (1.5 days), followed by full day meditation techniques training (School Mindfulness Project) with option also to train as a certified child yoga instructor (Child Light Yoga) to be able to facilitate the techniques in a classroom setting.</th>
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<td>In many public/charter/magnet school environments in particular, we are delighted to receive the support from Speech therapists, ESL teachers, Special Ed teachers, Occupational Therapists, school counselors, and social workers. But nonetheless, the school to prison pipeline paradigm/infrastructure is still in place. Teachers send their kids to the counselor/social worker to talk and rather than receiving the care that they need, the social worker calls a cop on them or has the child suspended, instead of meeting their needs meaningfully and the underlying cause of the disturbance to the normalized work flow repaired/restored.</td>
<td>Peacemaking/restorative/transformative justice models can be taking place autonomously within a classroom as an addition to the normal peace infrastructure we put in place in our classroom, rendering redundant the need to send a kid out of the classroom at all (in most circumstances.) International Institute of Restorative Practices offers trainings and we would like to invite them into the school for the beginning of the second week of staff development prior to the onset of the school year. Learning and practicing this should take no more than 1 day.</td>
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<td>Students calling teachers colonists, racist or homo or transphobic hurts their feelings and leaves them wondering what they are doing wrong and questioning if they actually are racist.</td>
<td>The “Embracing Wholeness” workshop offered by Embracing Equity is a two-day training that offers a reflective space to interrogate and understand our own biases.</td>
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<td>Accessibility, both cultural, financial, locational, and in terms of going above and beyond the ADA is an ongoing problem at our school. How can we meet the needs of families in this way?</td>
<td>At this point in PD (day 8) we can break into working groups to address these issues! One group to discuss financial accessibility. One group to address how to get people to our school if they cannot take the bus (at my school last year we were down a two-mile dirt roadway out of the way of public transportation). Another group to</td>
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address making our school more accessible to those with different needs: both physical and also cognitively! At the end of the day we present our ideas and discuss them as a whole faculty and decide on what we will try and implement first! These could also be year-long working groups! It might be hard to come up with so many solutions in 1 day. The working group charged with physical/cognitive accessibility is also charged with reading *NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity* and *The Real Experts: Readings for Parents of Autistic Children* so that our school is a safe learning environment for cognitive difference/neurodiversity. This would have to be a year-long reading group that meets 1 day/week to discuss a given section, and present findings both during midyear PD and also at the end of the school year with recommendations for implementation. There will also be a working group that is focused throughout the year in generating racial equity resolutions to ongoing issues as they arise! There is a wealth of materials on this topic!

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<th>Some teachers have no idea how to make good documentations!</th>
<th>On the 9th day of the pre-school year PD, we will spend a half day on brushing up on documentation and presenting it to families at conferences, and how to talk with families (the day/half remainder of the week should be spent setting up/organizing classrooms and making materials!) We will also meet our year-long coach 🙏.</th>
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<td>Teachers would like to know what others are doing, they feel as if some of their techniques for classroom management and learning facilitation are ineffectual. They also complain that they are doing an enormous amount of unpaid labor constantly reinventing the wheel! Their weeks are strenuous enough!</td>
<td>One day/month every single classroom teacher has an opportunity to observe in another environment. First three months spent in various Montessori environments, and for the remaining six, 1 observation in a traditional public school (here in Philadelphia I would choose the Friere Charter, oldest charter in the city or a project based learning facility), thereafter in a Waldorf school, and unschooling/Sudbury Valley/Free School/Summerhill model school, a co-operative school, a farm school, or a wilderness school/forest school. Also: organize a union.</td>
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<td>A few teachers seem to unduly emphasize academics and ignore the whole child, this is because of the pressures of standards, etc.</td>
<td>In mid-September, we have a workshop during our one-day PD on social-emotional learning, just a brush up!</td>
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<td>Some teachers seem to avoid going outside at all costs.</td>
<td>Therefore, we have an Indigenous permaculturalist come in to offer a three-day training to show how permaculture really mirrors many of Montessori’s own principals, and to get teachers excited about engaging their children in a vital component of the practical life curriculum, gardening and systems design! This is a one-day PD offered in mid-October (with the option of diving deeper into it with a full weekend training!)</td>
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<td>Staff express some apprehension around engaging children in cooking projects.</td>
<td>Teachers from varying cultural backgrounds are encouraged and empowered to offer a class in their favorite cuisines, and how to prepare them, in preparation for the holidays! (Mid-November, mid-December.)</td>
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<td>Staff express that they do not think they are creative or skillful enough to offer sewing or other handicrafts on their practical life shelves!</td>
<td>A number of teachers on the faculty are encouraged and empowered to present a workshop on this topic at the January and February PD</td>
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<td>A few teachers seem nervous about going outside because they do not feel like they have the tools to offer learning opportunities outside of a classroom, or worry that if a child got hurt on their watch outdoors, they would not be able to respond appropriately.</td>
<td>Therefore, throughout March and April we offer both an opportunity to attend the Art of Mentoring workshop and a Wilderness First Aid/First responder training to encourage further learning outdoors! We present the timeline of life and many other great lesson extensions pertaining to (botany and zoology) biological diversity outside! It is laminated, after all!</td>
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<td>As things heat up outside, so do some conflicts in the classroom!</td>
<td>Time to offer more Peace Education skills! Chestnut Hill College has a whole course on the peace curriculum Dr. Montessori developed. We have a trainer come in mid-May to offer a (1 day) truncated “highlights” version of the course as a reminder.</td>
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<td>The ESL teacher has been receiving feedback from many students throughout the year that they would feel more at home in their classroom if their teachers greeted them in their home language and learned some of their language to help them integrate.</td>
<td>Final PD of the year (at the conclusion of the school year, mid-June) is a 101 on how to go about learning the basics of another language/cultural competency!</td>
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</table>
Printable zines:
https://ia800201.us.archive.org/30/items/ColonizationAndDecolonization/colonization_decolonization.pdf
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kydhdxWVtxAR--cq8pwER1Z3SniKKI5O/view
https://libraryguides.berea.edu/ld.php?content_id=35708787
https://libraryguides.berea.edu/ld.php?content_id=48775258
https://libraryguides.berea.edu/ld.php?content_id=37821770
https://libraryguides.berea.edu/ld.php?content_id=35708802

Other accessible resources on decolonization:
https://decolonization.wordpress.com/decolonization-readings/
http://rabble.ca/toolkit/rabblepedia/decolonization-500-years-indigenous-resistance
https://decolonization.wordpress.com/decolonization-readings/
https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691165219/decolonization
http://www.oupcanada.com/catalog/9780199340491.html
https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Postcolonialism%3A+An+Historical+Introduction-p-9781119288954
https://nationalhistorycenter.org/teaching-decolonization-resource-collection/
https://research.un.org/en/docs/decolonization/resources
https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630/15554