Abstract

This paper works with theories of racial capitalism to show how formal education has been produced through interlocking systems of domination: capitalism, racism and colonialism. With a focus on the enduring histories of British settler colonialism, we put forward a framework for analysing the constitutive relationship between contemporary systems of education and racial capitalism. The paper discusses three connected relations: (I) the ongoing enclosures and dispossession of land and people, with which the material infrastructures of education are built; (II) the racialised divisions of labour which education systems not only create but are also premised on, and; (III) the extraction of value in and through education, normalising hierarchised life and steeped in racial capitalism’s defining project of dehumanisation. The paper suggests that sociologies of education need to attend more fully to these relations of racial capitalism if they are to imagine beyond, and mobilise against, education’s role in sustaining white supremacy.

Keywords: racism, settler colonialism, capitalism, dehumanisation

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Authors:

1) Jessica Gerrard, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Australia
   Jessica.Gerrard@unimelb.edu.au (corresponding author)

2) Arathi Sriprakash, University of Bristol, England

3) Sophie Rudolph, Melbourne Graduate School of Education University of Melbourne, Australia
Education and Racial Capitalism

Introduction

Education is central to the production and reproduction of racial inequalities globally. Systems of formal education cannot be separated from colonial and national projects that have sought to categorise, divide, oppress, enslave, and assimilate people on the basis of race. This paper identifies some conceptual tools that can bring greater attention to the material foundations of education systems – land, infrastructures, commodities – and their relation to the divided labours of education: building, cleaning, learning, knowledge production, caring and so on. Our aim is to extend analyses of inequalities in education, which often focus on epistemological and pedagogical matters, to argue that these inequalities rest upon material injustices within the production of education. We consider how formal systems of education have been based on: first, the dispossession and enclosure of people and land; second, the division of labour; and third, the extraction of value – thereby working as a system that hierarchically differentiates life itself. In doing so, we advance an analysis of the relationship between education and racial capitalism, arguing that the entwined systems of capitalism and racial domination have been constitutive of educational systems and practices.

Our explorations of racial capitalism and education emerge from our engagement with the past/present/future of British settler colonialism: the connected histories of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, for instance. While it is beyond the scope of the paper to go into the historical specificities of each of these contexts, we build on work that is interested in how racial capitalism has been connected to the mutually-constituted projects of liberalism and white supremacy that have rendered these places ‘white men’s countries’ to be violently appropriated in the name of economic and civilisational ‘progress’ (Lake & Reynolds, 2008; see also: Lowe 2015; Swartz, 2019; Ince, 2018). This is not to suggest that racial capitalism under British settler colonialism works in universal ways. Indeed, across the British metropole and settler colonial contexts there are, as Lisa Lowe examines, ‘situated histories of indigeneity, slavery, industry, trade and immigration [which] give rise to linked, but not identical, genealogies’ (Lowe 2015, 11). These are some of the different operations of white supremacy; multiple dividing practices of capitalism and colonialism which continue today. As Lowe suggests,

The operations that pronounce colonial divisions of humanity – settler seizure and native removal, slavery and racial dispossession, and racialized expropriations of many kinds – are imbricated processes, not sequential events; they are ongoing and continuous in our contemporary moment, not temporally distinct or as yet concluded. (Lowe 2015, 7).

That these histories endure points to the ongoing project of British settler colonialism, not least through education.

In what follows, we work with the longstanding conceptual apparatus of racial capitalism to bring attention to the racialised politics of education under capitalism. The conceptual contribution of racial capitalism is not that it identifies something ‘new’ in capitalism, but to insist on how capitalism – and its contemporary expression through neoliberalism – continues to build its house from race (see Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Lubiano, 1997). The paper begins with an introduction to the concept of racial capitalism and how education is a site for its
dividing practices. We then outline three conceptual frames that provide a means to understand the relationship between education and racial capitalism. First, we discuss how education is connected to the ongoing dispossessions and enclosures of land and people. Second, we examine how the divisions in labour that lie at the centre of capitalism, and which are intimately racialised, are realised through education. Third, we look at how the extraction of value, and related processes of valorisation, are central to the ways in which education works, focusing specifically on the commodification of ‘diversity’ that holds white supremacy in place.

Racial capitalism

The concept of racial capitalism has seen a recent resurgence within education and the social sciences as a means to address, in Satnam Virdee’s (2019, 9) words, ‘capitalism’s inherently racializing capacities’. Of course, thinking about the co-articulation of racism and capitalism can be traced to a long history of anti-colonial and anti-racist scholarship and struggle – even if some of these did not draw on the term ‘racial capitalism’ explicitly. Arun Kundnani (2020) examines some of this history, including how the term ‘racial capitalism’ emerged through anti-Apartheid activism in the 1970s in order to show how South African racism was strengthened rather than weakened by capitalist growth. The idea was expanded upon by Cedric Robinson in the early 1980s, whose work we build on here. Within education and Critical Race Theory too there has been important analyses of the interlocking of race and class (see for example, Leonardo, 2012): the concept of racial capitalism is not in itself new, but its redressal within education research and practice remains urgent.

Indeed, we are writing at a time of significant global uprisings against state-led anti-Black and anti-Indigenous violence, including police brutality and deaths in custody, environmental racism and destruction, and structural racism across social institutions including schools and universities (see Verán, 2020; Onus-Williams et al, 2020; Strong 2018; Patel 2021). As so many of these uprisings have shown, racial inequalities – whether in relation to access to clean drinking water, public health, housing, legal rights or education – are not aberrant to the capitalist settler-colonial state but are foundational to it (e.g. Allam et al, 2021; Siegfried 2020; 2021). Recent activist and academic work that mobilises the idea of racial capitalism has underlined the integral part racism continues to play in establishing, building and maintaining capitalist relations (see Bhattacharyya, 2018). The concept racial capitalism thus helps understand the interlocking systems of capitalism and racial domination which, as we discuss, education is not only constituted through but also works to sustain.

In his landmark text, Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition, Cedric Robinson (2000) traces how the processes of racialisation and capitalism are entwined. He states, ‘The historical development of world capitalism was influenced in a most fundamental way by the particularistic forces of racism and nationalism’ (Robinson, 2000, 9). ‘The tendency of European civilisation through capitalism,’ Robinson (2000, 26) writes, was ‘not to homogenize but to differentiate - to exaggerate regional, subcultural and dialectical differences into “racial” ones’. Robinson (2000, 27) argues that it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that ‘race became largely the rationalization for the domination, exploitation, and/or extermination of non-“Europeans” (including Slavs and Jews). ‘Race’, then, is a part of capitalism’s requirement for categorical social divisions that can in turn support divisions in labour to create value; divisions which require subjugation from multiple axes – including notions of ‘ability’ and ‘capacity’ which have been central to education.
As such, and as Jodi Melamed (2015, 77) argues, the concept of racial capitalism ‘requires its users to recognise that capitalism is racial capitalism’. Melamed (2015, 77) goes on to explain:

Capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups—capitalists with the means of production/workers without the means of subsistence, creditors/debtors, conquerors of land made property/the dispossessed and removed. These antinomies of accumulation require loss, disposability, and the unequal differentiation of human value, and racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires.

Here, Melamed draws attention to the ‘antinomies of accumulation’ in which capitalism is dependent on racial divisions. Following Robinson, she surfaces the structural force of racism as the organising principle within capital relations, which trains attention to the dehumanising premise of capitalism. ‘Capital,’ Marx (1952, 377) wrote, ‘comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt’ (see also Virdee, 2019). For instance, as has been demonstrated in the scholarship of Black intellectuals and activists, the connections between capitalism, colonialism and slavery, and its afterlives in the present, reveals the systemic investment in and normalisation of Black suffering under white supremacy (Hartman, 1997; Gilmore, 2007). The history of racial capital is, as Sara Ahmed (2019, 5) suggests, ‘a history of those who are worn down, worn out; depletion as the extraction of surplus value or profit’.

Racial capitalism, then, is a means by which to bring together the intersecting structures of racism, colonialism and capitalism that are differently configured across contexts. Capital has always depended on the appropriation of land and the labour of enslaved, indentured, and dispossessed people – which under transatlantic slavery and British colonialism became bound to the colonial expression of white supremacy. The racialised exploitation of land and labour under British settler colonialism enabled the creation of capital that encoded ‘white ownership’ into social, political and legal norms (Harris, 1993; Bhandar, 2018; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Focused attention on the interwoven histories of capitalism and colonialism helps to see how racialisation is central to the divisions and categorisations of capitalism, which have sought to establish the classed, raced, and gendered social relations that enable capital accumulation. Analyses of racial capitalism, then, recognise race as a shifting signifier: race does not have ‘inherent’ or fixed meaning, rather it is an historically situated formation which articulates with systems and practices of domination to have profound material effects (Omi & Winant, 2014; Hall, 1996).

Indeed, the long view we speak of here draws attention to the enduring practices of racialisation, and attending divisions, as constantly changing and diverse. Melamed (2011), for instance, identifies how post-WWII liberal multicultural, and even self-declared anti-racist, initiatives prompted changes in the orders of racial capitalism. Whilst significantly challenging the institutions and cultures of racial capitalism, ultimately these initiatives became a means for ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ to become symbolic, performative and associated with feelings of ‘doing good’ without altering systems of oppression. The dynamic character of racial capitalism indicates the centrality of systems of education as sites for both social regulation and control and for struggle, contestation and renewal. Robinson (2000), for instance, draws on the example of 19th-century British colonial mission schools to demonstrate how education can both emblemise the colonial project of control and reveal its limit points. Mission schools were spaces of domination which aimed to eradicate Blackness and cultivate white supremacy, and yet, at the same time, colonised people’s survivance, insurgency and refusal through
education showed that the project of education was neither all-determining nor complete (Robinson, 2000, pp 179-181).

We suggest these theories of racial capitalism (Melamed, 2011; Robinson, 2000; Virdee, 2019) offer an important lens for understanding education inequalities in at least two key ways. First, it brings specific focus to the racial divisions which underlie the inequalities of contemporary global neoliberalism. As we discuss below, capitalism and the divisions of labour upon which it rests *is and always has been* racialised. Second, it prompts a longer analytic view that moves beyond analyses of neoliberalism which often pit contemporary conditions against the post-World War II Keynesian welfare states of the global North. Such analyses can implicitly or explicitly portray Keynesian welfare states in romantic terms; as pearls to be salvaged (see AUTHOR 1). We see a need for critiques of neoliberalism, which proliferate widely in sociologies of education, to acknowledge the racial underpinnings of their key category of analysis: capitalism. Working with the concept of racial capitalism brings focus to how these welfare states were products of, and in many ways supported, racialised global violence and exclusions even while vast social movements protested this (see Bhambra & Holmwood, 2018). Whilst of course the history of capitalism cannot be presented as an unwavering set of oppressions with synonymous qualitative character across time, to understand contemporary inequalities it is helpful to delve into the co-articulation of capitalism and racism that extends well before post-war welfare state neoliberalism, and that stretches into our present-futures. As such, we see the theories of racial capitalism we have explored here as fundamental to understanding education systems and thus they should not be siloed into specialist inquiries or made marginal to the field. Indeed, the way in which the lens of racial capitalism allows for race and class to be examined, understood and addressed *concurrently* offers an opportunity in sociology of education to move beyond analyses of inequality that position class and race in competition as factors to consider.

In the sections that follow, we put forward an analytic framework of racial capitalism that aims to extend its treatment within sociologies of education. Focusing on education in contexts of settler colonialism connected to British imperialism, our framing draws attention to three interrelated practices of education:

I. the practices of *enclosing/dispossessing* that stem from the capitalisation of Indigenous land, the containment of people and land, and the material construction of education systems and sites;

II. the practices of *dividing labour* that draw attention to how education rests upon racialised work in institutions and systems – cleaning, building, administration, teaching, caring, and so on; and

III. the *extraction of value* through education, whether through material infrastructures and commodities, hierarcised people and knowledge, or the outputs of education, including racial diversity itself.

These practices are both interdependent and accumulative: dividing labour relies upon the enclosure and dispossession of land and people, and the extraction of value occurs through divided labour. We suggest this three-fold framing provides a useful way to examine the role of education in the long history of capitalism and colonialism into the present. In addition to connecting contemporary analyses with histories of the racialising character of capitalism, these three practices offer important new directions for educational research. As we discuss below, an analytic focus on enclosing/dispossessing, dividing labour, and extraction of value brings much needed attention to aspects of educational practice that lie underneath the more
common objects of educational research (e.g. curriculum, pedagogy, educational access, participation and outcomes, etc.). Racial capitalism orients educational research to a wider analysis to consider: the material bases of education on stolen land; the divisions in labour in the production of education; and the divisions in humanity that underpin the ‘value’ of education. While we gesture towards some examples below, we hope the conceptual framing we present can support sustained examinations of racial capitalism in future sociologies of education.

I Education as enclosure and dispossession

If education holds the promise of renewal and justice, it is also a practice that has been based on enclosure and dispossession. Education’s capacity for violence has received significant attention in critical scholarship, particularly in relation to the role of mass schooling in cultural assimilation, linguistic erasure and ‘epistemicide’ – the systematic destruction of knowledge (Santos 2014). In the settler colonial context of New Zealand, for instance, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has argued that schooling systems are part of state projects of enclosing Indigenous people, key vehicles for epistemological violence in which culture, life and being are dispossessed. There is a growing body of work that examines how modern schooling, even in its ‘progressive’ forms, contains or encloses people through its enduring ‘civilising’ missions (Fallace 2015; Simpson 2007) and its colonial and racialised hierarchies of knowledge (Coloma 2017; AUTHORS; Bain 2018). However, the material conditions of enclosure and dispossession that underpin these epistemic relations have not received as much attention. These are the foundational conditions of racial capitalism which we focus on here.

Enclosure is the process of extracting value from land and in doing so dispossessing the people whose livelihoods and lifeworlds are connected to it. As Marx (1952) documents in the case of England, capitalism was characterised by the mass enclosure of ‘the commons’ and subsequent dispossession of land through the displacement of peasants. This act of enclosure and dispossession fundamentally altered the social relations of work and livelihood, but also the social relations of land (Melamed, 2015). In Marx’s (1952, 355) terms, this is a part of primitive accumulation: the act of enclosure was a moment when ‘great masses’ were ‘forcibly torn from their subsistence, and hurled as free and ‘unattached’ proletarians on the labour market. The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, [their] separation from the soil, is the basis of the whole process’. In other words, enclosure necessarily requires dispossessing, and this dispossessing involves radically denying the existence and worth of those who live there. For Marx and Engels? (2010, 21) this dual process of enclosure and dispossession was central to the colonial relations that underpinned the development of capitalism, as it ‘opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie’.

We bring enclosure and dispossession together analytically to denote the constitutive mutuality of these two forces in the practices of racial capitalism. Working with Aileen Moreton-Robinson’s (2015) examination of the ‘white possessive’, enclosing/dispossessing can be understood as a fundamental act of colonial violence. Writing about settler colonialism, Moreton-Robinson (2015) suggests that ‘possessive logics’ create the taken-for-granted conditions of settler colonisation in which land becomes propertied, a ‘thing’ to be laboured on and have value extracted from it. This foundational act of possession is at the same time an act of enclosure. In this act Indigenous people are rendered ‘propertyless’ and subjects of the colonial state to be controlled, contained, and – ultimately – possessed. Possession is centrally concerned with valorisation and the capacity to own and to make value from land, things, and
people and is carried out by the state. As settler colonial theorist Patrick Wolfe (2001, 868) notes, ‘settler colonialism introduced a zero-sum contest over land on which conflicting modes of production could not ultimately coexist’. Here then, the colonial state becomes the ‘possessor’, and the project of enclosing/dispossessing continues to be carried out in the name of nationhood.

The logics of the ‘white possessive’ under British settler colonialism as set out by Moreton-Robinson, relates to Byrd, Goldstein, Melamed and Reddy’s (2018) discussion of ‘economies of dispossession’. Writing from the US context, they contend that economies of dispossession are used to articulate how ‘modes and relations of production, distribution, consumption, and reproduction’ are materially enacted and create ‘a specific systemic organization or logic of circuits of interaction and exchange’ (Byrd et al, 2018, 2). In this way, enclosing/dispossessing is centrally concerned with creating particular relations to land, value, labour, and things that are underpinned by capital and property. Private property holds that land can be worked on to extract wealth, making land something to be owned, laboured upon, and commodified. In the Australian context, the logics of the ‘white possessive’ became rationalised through the assertion of ‘terra nullius’, an idea made possible by understanding land as a property requiring particular forms of ‘settlement’, ownership and labour, and by the wilful dismissal of Indigenous knowledge, care and labour (Pascoe, 2014). The colonial capitalist nation state is founded upon, and continues to be steeped in, this declaration of terra nullius: the denial and dispossession of Indigenous people continues to legitimise settler ‘ownership’ of land - a clear example of how capitalism is racial capitalism.

The racial regime of ownership under settler colonialism requires, as Brenna Bhandar (2018, 9) outlines, ‘continual renewal and reinstatiation to prevail over other ways of being and living’. Education, we suggest, has been a potent force for this renewal. Indeed, enclosure/dispossession is at the very foundation of education institutions. Consider, for example, the material buildings of schools and education institutions. As Sharon Stein (2020) documents in the US context, the Morrill Act of 1862 established oft-celebrated public (state) land grants that aided the formation of higher education institutions.¹ This expropriation of Indigenous land re-embeds practices of enclosure/dispossession which denied – and continue to deny – Indigenous claims to the land upon which these institutions sit (Stein, 2020). Stein’s analysis points to the ongoing processes of enclosing/dispossessing in which social institutions of the nation state – such as public education – cannot escape its past-present-future relation to racial capitalism (see also Bhambra & Holmwood, 2018). Indeed, in her discussion Stein argues that critiques of, and resistances to, neoliberal privatisation of education need to take better account of the violence of such ‘public’ claims, and how these ‘public institutions’ reinforce racial divisions even as they claim to broaden access to education. As Clayton Pierce (2017, 42) discusses, the ‘public’ school system in the U.S., often held up as a site for democratic potentiality, is built upon racialised divisions in humanity, and ultimately the ‘fungibility of Black bodies’ (original emphasis).

There are many more examples of enclosure/dispossession in education we can point to: the building of international branch campuses as part of the expansion of education institutions,²

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¹ For details, maps and narratives, see the database at Land Grab Universities https://www.landgrabu.org/
² There is a growing literature on ‘off-shore’ university campuses, much of it focusing on pedagogic models and experiences (Siltaoja et al. 2019; Dobos 2011). However we were unable to identify studies that focused explicitly on matters of land acquisition, material infrastructures, and displacement/gentrification in relation to the expansion of Higher Education through international branch campuses.
the infrastructures of platform capitalism in education, and the securing of ‘public’ land, which is unceded Indigenous land, by private schools. Take for example Eliot Tretter’s (2015) analysis of how US universities’ increasing role as ‘land developers’, particularly through industry partnerships, is rationalised through anti-Black racism. Under projects of ‘urban renewal’, universities are actively involved in land seizures and clearance, and therefore the displacement and impoverishment of existing communities (Tretter, 2015; see also Baldwin 2021). Tretter (2015, 54) examines two urban renewal schemes by the University of Texas where, ‘approximately one thousand people were displaced, mostly African Americans, and countless businesses, many African American-owned, were forced to close’. University-led expansion occurs, Tretter argues, through a racist theory of value, an idea we return to later. He suggests University of Texas administrators and city officials worked with the assumption that African American neighbourhoods, households, and bodies were simply less valuable and desirable than those of whites. Since the university was going to change the ‘colour’ and character of the neighbourhood by removing its inhabitants, it was also going to improve its value. (Tretter, 2015, 49).

As these examples attest, the expansionist and extractivist projects of education systems under capitalism – the capitalisation of land, buildings, infrastructures – require racialised enclosing/dispossessing.

II The divided labour of education

The material practices of enclosing/dispossessing are premised upon, and create, divisions in labour and humanity. Relations of racial capitalism involve the extraction of value through intertwining classed, gendered and racialised divisions of labour. These divisions of labour emerge from, and themselves create, hierarchies of worth over human life. Consider, for example, the precarious and underpaid labour of disproportionately Black and Brown cleaners, carers, transport and service-staff who, through the Covid-19 pandemic, have been categorised as ‘essential’ to the economies of white settler colonies and the British metropole as well as ‘disposable’ to them (Verma, 2020; Powell, 2020). British colonialism and settler colonialism was and is built on a division of ‘humanity’: white colonisers were seen as ‘civilised’ whilst the colonised were rendered less-than-human and denied sociolegal personhood; by law and in practice people have been treated as part of the natural environment, or property, to be tamed, controlled and used (Moreton-Robinson, 2015; see also Bennett, 2020).

Racialised divisions in labour and humanity under British colonialism led to the amassing of wealth and power by white colonialists. The infamous Cecil John Rhodes, for example, whose legacy via the Rhodes Scholarship has been celebrated as a marker of educational excellence, built status and wealth as a mining magnate and politician upon colonial enclosure/dispossession (Kombo, 2019; see also Adam, 2016). Similarly, Edward Colston’s prominent status as an educational philanthropist in England was tied to the wealth he extracted

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3 Recent research on data infrastructures and platform capitalism in education has identified powerful corporate interests in education, such as Amazon and Facebook. However, literature to date has tended not to focus on the material infrastructures, land appropriation and exploitation of workers involved in this expansion of education provision. See, however: McMillan Cottom, T. (2020) Where Platform Capitalism and Racial Capitalism Meet: The Sociology of Race and Racism in the Digital Society. Sociology of Race and Ethnicity Vol. 6(4) 441–449
4 See for example, how a private school in settler colonial Australia was able to purchase priority use for stolen Indigenous land, otherwise deemed ‘public’: https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/inner-west-school-to-spend-millions-on-public-park-upgrade-under-council-deal-20200504-p54ppe.html
from the enslavement of Black people (Watts, 2020). The paternalistic support for education by men such as Rhodes and Colston – their financing of schools and educational ‘opportunity’ – was dependent on colonial divisions in labour in which ‘the colonised’ were violently dehumanised. The statues of Rhodes in Cape Town and Oxford, as with so many other statues, are the debris of colonialism that normalised the connections between education and colonial violence (see Stoler, 2016). Now, in the light of student and community activism for decolonisation and Black Lives Matter, the symbol of men like Cecil Rhodes and Edward Colston, encapsulated in scholarships, school-buildings, and statues, has rightly started to crumble (Rhodes Must Fall, 2018).

Moreover, the very resourcing of education that is often held up as ‘equalising’ – scholarships, educational infrastructures, philanthropic investments and so on – are invariably networked into the divisions of labour of racial capitalism. Morales-Doyle and Gutstein (2019) examine, for example, how corporate led ‘investments’ in US schools have restricted the curriculum and filtered students of colour to produce a racially stratified workforce. Divisions in labour also include the stark classed, racialised and gendered divisions of labour which structure teaching and learning work. Hall’s (2018) research in rural Australian predominantly Aboriginal schools highlights how divisions in teaching/support work is classed, racialised and steeped in colonial relations. Aboriginal teachers hold essential linguistic, cultural and historical knowledge but are often employed as lower paid ‘teaching assistants’ or ‘paraprofessionals’ and not considered core to the schools’ function (Hall, 2018). Even for Aboriginal teachers who have received degrees from settler education institutions, both the process of qualification and the labour relationships following qualification continue to position them as a ‘lower class’ of worker (Hall, 2018). This is despite the fact that non-Indigenous teachers rely heavily on Aboriginal teachers’ linguistic and local knowledge. These racialised hierarchies of labour, and the overrepresentation of white teachers and leaders in schools and universities more broadly (see for example Casinader & Walsh, 2014), means that settler colonial education is a site in which whiteness and capitalism are interlocked.

Divisions in labour are also writ large in the ways knowledge is produced in higher education. For example, Sukarieh and Tannock (2019) examine the racialised networks of subcontracted research production in universities in the global north in which ‘research assistants’ located in the global south engage in the significant work of knowledge production – fieldwork, translation, local administration and so on – but whose labour is written out of research reporting and publications. Indeed, under the paternalistic guise of ‘capacity building’, the ‘ghost-like’ participation of these experts in the global south is often positioned as a benevolent outcome of the research (see Turner in Sukarieh & Tannock, 2019, 666). These kinds of divisions of labour reflect foundational colonial epistemological relations that structure the very formation of western academic disciplines. It is impossible to extricate the formation of the disciplines from the colonial relationships of ‘knower’ and ‘known’ and associated practices of knowledge extraction, exploitation and erasure (see e.g. Bhambra, 2007; Santos, 2014; AUTHORS). Thus, the global inequities in research knowledge production is an expression of these epistemological relations, expressed through the divided labour of academic workforce.

Divisions also occur in the distinctions between ‘core’ and ‘non-core’ labour in educational institutions. For example, maintenance, cleaning, and grounds work has largely been outsourced, privatised and separated from the assumed ‘core’ of educational labour (AUTHOR 1, 2020). Such divisions reinforce bifurcated labour relations whereby rights and conditions of assumed ‘core’ staff are not extended to so-called ‘non-core’ staff (Donda, 2019). As with the
example of Aboriginal teaching assistants/teachers, this distinction does not reflect the highly interrelated labour required for education: systems of education would simply not function without this full range of essential work. The racialised character of the divided labour of education has been poignantly demonstrated in artist Mario Moore’s portraits of ‘blue collar’, and in this context Black, workers at Princeton University (Free, 2020). Moore created the portraits because the only workers adorning the university’s prestigious walls were the mostly white, male high-status academics. Moore’s paintings and etchings of cooks, groundkeepers and security guards highlight the ‘hidden’ and devalued labour of systems of education; the labour required for research, teaching and learning to occur. ‘I wanted to make black people like my dad visible and put them in positions of power,’ Moore explained (Free, 2020, n.p.). ‘In America we put in certain hierarchies and usually don’t consider blue-collar workers to be on the same level as other people around campus’ (Free, 2020, n.p.). Moore’s work illuminates the racial dynamics of class divisions, bringing to the fore the central thesis of racial capitalism – the co-articulation of race and capitalist divisions of class.

Our central argument then is that a closer and more central consideration of race within the divisions of labour in education could allow sociologies of education to acknowledge and address the white supremacy that lies at the heart of education in the British metropole and settler colonies. Consideration of the racialised divided labour of education includes the full political economy of work which produce formal systems of education: from the labour of those who mine and produce the materials required to build computers and other infrastructures of education to the production of knowledge and the pedagogic practices of education. For example, one could examine: the networks of labour that produce the materials required for formal education – from pens and paper, to computers, bricks and mortar and steel; the differentiated labour involved within education institutions – including the manual, administrative, and academic work of maintenance, operations, and teaching; and the daily and generational reproductive labour of care and community work, essential to both education systems and the reproduction of society. Indeed, labour such as domestic cleaning, child care, and the preparation of meals, which all provide the conditions for education work to take place are often made ‘invisible’ in analyses of market economies (Bhattacharya, 2017). The care economy is classed, gendered and racialised, tied as it is to enduring histories of colonialism and racial capitalism in which intimate forms of labour – cleaning, childcare and so on – was conducted by colonised women in white households (see Curthoys & Moore, 1995; Thunig & Jones, 2021). This continues today, and as Saidiya Hartman (2020) has recently written, such labour of care is highly racialised. It not only aids capital accumulation, but the very nature of its intimacy ‘nurtures and supports the psychic life of whiteness; [it] shores up the inviolability, security, happiness and sovereignty of that master subject, of man’ (Hartman, 2020, n.p.). Divisions in labour ‘free up’ some as they ‘capture’ others.

### III Education as extracting value

Public systems of education are routinely defended for the value they bring to the nation state – both in terms of economic and social returns – as well as the value they bring to individuals. Education, in this sense, creates material value. Consider, for instance, the value of educational credentials in the labour market or the value of certain kinds of knowledge individuals need to access and participate within educational and social systems. However, the valorisation of some forms of educational, social and economic life necessarily involves the devaluing of others. As Lisa Marie Cacho (2019) writes, lives are ‘legibly valuable’ when they are assessed comparatively within prevailing economic, legal and political frameworks.
This means that those who are socially devalued do not get to decide what makes a life meaningful or the terms by which their lives are evaluated as meaningful or meaningless, as valuable or valueless. Methods within economic, legal and political frameworks to evaluate and create value differentiates life itself, dehumanising those who are considered outside the bounds of social worth. Education, as we examine below, is bound up in making and sustaining these hierarchies of worth.

The lens of racial capitalism helps to see how the production of value occurs through enclosing/dispossessing and dividing labour: it is only through these other practices that the value – of people, land, knowledges, labour, materials – is extracted and made. This brings us to consider how the creation and ascription of value in and through education can be understood as a fundamentally extractive process. Value is extracted across the commodification and capitalisation of education: its buildings, data, curricula, and so on.5 Think of how universities market their cutting-edge new or historically significant buildings to prospective students; or the data on students’ academic performance that is collected, published and used to accrue status and create educational competition between institutions; or how schools can purchase a curriculum ‘product’ to make themselves more desirable. Each of these examples can be examined through the lens of racial capitalism. As we have discussed, building such ‘valuable’ infrastructures involves practices of enclosing and dispossessing and racialised divisions of labour: behind ‘valorised’ school league table results are stories of white opportunity hoarding and white flight (Wilson, 2019; Ho, 2011); and the prestige of ‘desirable’ curriculum products is often built from the erasures of non-European knowledge and, in some cases, direct histories of ‘civilising’ colonised people through education, as recent research on the Cambridge International curriculum has shown (Golding & Kopsick, 2019).

Here, we demonstrate our argument about the extraction of value by focusing on how ‘diversity’ has become a valuable educational commodity. Appearing to foster a culture of ‘diversity and inclusion’ has become a pervasive, performative practice of liberal educational institutions. As Sara Ahmed (2007, 2012) writes, these practices are premised on an ‘institutional whiteness’ in which the habits, routines and rituals of an organisation are ordered around a presumed white subject and agency (see Ahmed, 2007, 2012). Moreover, as Leigh Patel (2015) has so powerfully demonstrated, under white settler colonialism the cultural, economic and social capital of educational institutions continue to be understood as ‘white property’. Writing specifically on higher education in the North American context, Patel (2015) explains how the valuing of ‘diversity’ in universities and colleges, even if performative, is met with ‘backlash’ precisely because these institutions are governed by the proprietorial assumptions of whiteness.

And yet, under neoliberal educational markets, markers of ‘diversity’ feed into institutional targets and metrics, rendering scholars and students of colour as indicators of calculable value. In the context of settler colonial Canada, and drawing on Nancy Leong’s (2013) exposition on the extraction of value that underpins racial capitalism, Rosalind Hampton (2020, 152) argues:

As the racial demographics of Canada change in response to globalization and forced migration from the global South, universities seek new ways to derive social and economic value from associations with racialized people. Discourses of “diversity,” like those of “multiculturalism,” are strategies of racial capitalism through which non-whiteness is “exploited for its market value.”

The valorisation of diversity, then, rests on its extractive fetishization of ‘difference’; used as a currency that does not intend to alter the structural relations inequality in educational institutions (see Ferguson, 2012; Hong, 2008; Musser, 2015). Diversity, as a tokenistic and performative exercise, is valorised precisely because it does not disturb ongoing practices of enclosure/dispossession and the racialised divisions of labour. Moreover, there is a fundamental violence when Indigeneity becomes folded into ‘diversity’, when this diversity does nothing to recognise or redress the foundational acts of colonisation (see Povinelli, 2002).

The extractive intentions of this valorisation of diversity are illuminated by the experiences of scholars of colour who are called upon to ‘diversify’ the curriculum and workforce, and perform a range of other cultural support services for the dominant white institution. This includes the ‘invisible’ and devalued labour of anti-racist care and service carried out by workers of colour (Magoqwana et al. 2020; Hirshfield & Joseph 2012; Grollman 2015; Hogarth, 2019). For example, Thunig and Jones (2021) highlight the experience of being expected to undertake invisible racialised work that is not recognised in the formal workload for Australian First Nations women academics. This work amounts to feeling like a ‘black performer’ and ‘institutional cleaners’, picking up the work that is deemed ‘below’ their non-Indigenous colleagues (Thunig & Jones, 2021). The extraction of value from academics who have been historically excluded from the academy enables the university to both project an image of diversity and avoid the material requirements of decolonising. Similarly, Amber Jamilla Musser’s (2015) critical auto-ethnography in a North American university draws attention to the emotional and physical labour required of academics of colour in responding to the institutions’ diversity and inclusion rhetoric. As Jennifer C. Nash (2019, 2019) argues these requirements are ‘part of the academy’s systemic extraction of knowledge and service from black women’ and amount to how ‘the academy quite literally cannibalizes black women’. This profoundly dehumanising function of anti-Black division of labour in universities has been theorised as a ‘plantation politics”; a practice of education systems through which Black suffering has become institutionalised (Dancy et al, 2018; Doherty, 2020; Andrews, 2016).

Such projects of devaluing human life through the performance of valorisation is a cruelty that is constitutive to the relationship between education and racial capitalism. For at the very same time that universities valorise what they can cannibalise – knowledge, cultural support, images of diversity – they diminish and reject all efforts to unsettle liberal power hierarchies and disrupt the processes of racial capitalism. Valuing and devaluing human life is arguably the central function of settler colonial education systems: educational credentials are one of the most important social and economic ascribers of worth that also, by implication, devalues what is not included within the credential. This illustrates how racial capitalism’s methods of evaluating and extracting value differentiates life itself, dehumanising those who are considered outside the bounds of social value, whose objectification holds capitalism and racism in place.

Conclusion
In this paper we have mapped a conceptual framing for understanding the relationship between education and racial capitalism. Our framework draws attention to the enduring histories of dispossession and enclosure under capitalism and colonialism which education systems have been founded on. It shows how this dispossession/enclosure is premised on the need to divide labour through dividing humanity, revealing how racialised exploitation is required for the functioning of education systems and institutions. And finally, the analysis demonstrates how education can be examined for its extraction of value; how its logics of valorisation under capitalism and settler colonialism is premised on the devaluing and dehumanising of life.

In highlighting these relations of racial capitalism we suggest that efforts to address educational inequalities must go beyond questions of access and participation, inclusion and diversity. Relations of power are relayed not only through the ‘message systems’ of schooling: curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. The power and dominance of racism is also foundationally bolstered by the material economies of education – its land, labour, value. It is how white supremacy has structured education systems and practices. As Saidiya Hartman (2020, n.p.) argues,

The possessive investment in whiteness can’t be rectified by learning “how to be more antiracist.” It requires a radical divestment in the project of whiteness and a redistribution of wealth and resources. It requires abolition, the abolition of the carceral world, the abolition of capitalism. What is required is a remaking of the social order, and nothing short of that is going to make a difference.

This points to the need to resist the impulse to ‘resolve’ the relations of valorisation within education systems. Rather than attempt to ‘resolve the contradictions’ of a system that is built on the degradation and refusal of humanity, there is a need to ‘mobilize against preserving this way of life or the ways of knowing that this life preserves’ (Cacho, 2012, 33, original emphasis). This is a radical challenge for education. Treatments of racial inequalities in education cannot continue to translate ‘Black suffering into white pedagogy’ (Hartman 2020, n.p.) or be confined to the ‘special interests’ of a few voices on the margins of a field. Instead, we need analyses that can engage reparations for, and the abolition of, systems of education that are premised on racialised enclosures/dispossession, divisions of labour, and extractions of human value. Capitalism is racial capitalism and it is how education has built its house.

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