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An Ethics of Repair? Towards Reparative Principles in the History of Education
Une éthique de réparation ? Vers des principes réparateurs dans l'histoire de l'éducation
¿Una ética de la reparación? Hacia principios reparativos en la Historia de la Educación

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Article abstract

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This conceptual paper takes up these intersecting imperatives for repair and the revaluation of historical research in education. It asks: what might reparative histories of education look like? What might constitute an ethics of repair for the history of education?

To address these questions, three principles concerned with the repair of past injustices are canvassed: complex implication, care and concern, and legibility. The goal is not to normatively prescribe or evaluate principles, but to explore how these are already informing some kinds of historical work, and to provoke dialogue about how we might develop reparative dimensions to our work in a world that desperately needs repair.

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Abstract

Histories of education are closely entwined with agendas of reparative justice, redress and reconciliation. Educational questions, past and present, have been central to recent debates about redress, and historical thinking has a vital role to play in making sense of the afterlives of violence that are history's present. This includes exposing the role of education in justifying human exceptionalism and legitimating violence as well as radically re-historicising educational pasts from entangled, decolonial, and post-anthropocentric perspectives, work that is already underway.

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Keywords: reparation, complex implication, structural injustice, material culture, education futures

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¿Una ética de la reparación? Hacia principios reparativos en la Historia de la Educación

Resumen

Las historias de la educación están estrechamente entrelazadas con las agendas de justicia reparadora, reparación y reconciliación. Las cuestiones educativas, pasadas y presentes, han sido centrales en los debates recientes sobre la reparación, y el pensamiento histórico tiene un papel vital que desempeñar para dar sentido a las secuelas de la violencia que son el presente de la historia. Esto incluye exponer el papel de la educación en la justificación del excepcionalismo humano y la legitimación de la violencia, así como re-historizar radicalmente los pasados educativos desde perspectivas entrelazadas, descoloniales y postantropocéntricas, trabajo que ya está en marcha.

Este artículo conceptual retoma estos imperativos entrecruzados para la reparación y la revalorización de la investigación histórica en educación. Se pregunta: ¿cómo podrían ser las historias reparadoras de la educación? ¿Qué podría constituir una ética de la reparación para la historia de la educación?

Para abordar estas preguntas, se examinan tres principios relacionados con la reparación de injusticias pasadas: implicación compleja, cuidado y preocupación, y legibilidad. El objetivo no es prescribir o evaluar normativamente principios, sino explorar cómo estos ya están informando algunos tipos de trabajo histórico y provocar un diálogo sobre cómo podríamos desarrollar dimensiones reparadoras para nuestro trabajo en un mundo que necesita desesperadamente reparación.

Palabras clave: **r**eparación, implicación compleja, injusticia estructural, cultura material, futuros educativos

Une éthique de réparation ? Vers des principes réparateurs dans l’histoire de l’éducation

Résumé

Les histoires de l’éducation sont étroitement liées aux programmes de justice réparatrice, de réparation et de réconciliation. Les questions éducatives, passées et présentes, ont été au cœur des débats récents sur la réparation, et la pensée historique a un rôle essentiel à jouer pour donner un sens aux séquelles de la violence qui constituent le présent de l’histoire. Cela comprend la mise en évidence du rôle de l’éducation dans la justification de l’exceptionnalisme humain et la légitimation de la violence, ainsi que la réhistoricisation radicale du passé éducatif à partir de

perspectives enchevêtrées, décoloniales et post-anthropocentriques, un travail qui est déjà en cours.

Cet article conceptuel aborde ces impératifs croisés de réparation et de réévaluation de la recherche historique en éducation. Il pose la question : à quoi pourraient ressembler les histoires réparatrices de l'éducation ? Qu'est-ce qui pourrait constituer une éthique de la réparation pour l'histoire de l'éducation ?

Pour répondre à ces questions, trois principes liés à la réparation des injustices passées sont examinés : l'implication complexe, le soin et l'attention, et la lisibilité. L'objectif n'est pas de prescrire ou d'évaluer des principes de manière normative, mais d'explorer comment ceux-ci informent déjà certains types de travail historique, et de provoquer un dialogue sur la manière dont nous pourrions développer des dimensions réparatrices dans notre travail dans un monde qui a désespérément besoin de réparation.

Mots-clés : réparation, implications complexes, injustice structurelle, culture matérielle, avenir de l'éducation

Introduction

In the wake of the global pandemic and ecological crises, historian Karin Priem suggested a series of directives for the future of the history of education field. Priem urged historians to "adopt a critical view of the history of human exceptionalism and its educational consequences," shift analytically towards ecological relations, and radically historicize "educational norms and values from a post-anthropocentric perspective."[1] Around the same time, UNESCO declared the need for "a new social contract for education that can repair injustices while transforming the future."[2] A new contract is required, UNESCO argued, to address "our feeling of vulnerability about the present and uncertainty about the future."[3] Sustained attention to redress and repair characterises the 2021 *Futures of Education* report. It endorses the idea that repairing the past should be a basis for just social transformation.

This conceptual paper takes up these intersecting imperatives for the revaluation of historical research in education. It asks: what might reparative histories of education look like? It also considers secondary questions like: how might a reparative orientation to historical research reframe historical practice, who might undertake it, and why? Is fidelity to an historical past a goal of reparative histories? Or is repair constructive, oriented towards the future? What might constitute an ethics of repair for the history of

[1] Karin Priem, "Emerging Ecologies and Changing Relations: A Brief Manifesto for Histories of Education after COVID-19," *Paedagogica Historica* 58, no. 5 (September 3, 2022): 768–780.

[2] UNESCO, *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* (Paris: UNESCO, 2021), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707.

[3] Ibid, v.

education? Inspired by these questions, in this article, I introduce and discuss three reparative principles: complex implication, care and concern, and legibility. My aim is not to be prescriptive. Rather, I engage these principles to offer some conceptual terrain upon which to unfold these questions more fully.

In what follows I first briefly contextualise Priem's 2022 manifesto and the 2021 UNESCO *Futures of Education* report within a broader international humanitarian discourse of reparative justice, reconciliation and redress that has been consolidated since the 1990s, drawing out connections with histories of education. I then introduce three principles concerned with the repair of past injustices. I have drawn these concepts from other fields, such as geoengineering, memory studies, and political theory, with the view to provoke fresh consideration of what it means to change research perspectives, as Priem has urged. I consider how engaging these principles in our historical work might redirect our research focus, the methods we use, and the questions we ask to develop new understandings of, and possibilities for education in past and future. My goal is to incite generative discussion of how we might develop reparative dimensions in our work.[4]

Reparative Justice, Redress and Reconciliation in Histories of Education

There is yet to be a substantive scholarly consideration of the intersections between histories of education and agendas of reparative justice, redress and reconciliation. This absence is curious because they are already closely entwined. After all, educational questions, past and present, have been central to recent debates about reparation and redress. Histories of assimilatory, colonial, and segregated schooling for Indigenous and other minoritised children are central to major national truth commission and reconciliation processes in countries such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Australia.[5] This follows the landmark Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2008-2015) which investigated the history and legacies of the residential school system for Aboriginal children – a network of boarding schools designed to forcibly assimilate Indigenous children into white society, that operated across Canada from the 1880s until 1996. Prominent historians of residential schooling, such as John Milloy, were engaged by the commission to oversee historical and archival work, and the

[4] UNICEF, *Outlook 2023: Tackling Polycrisis*, https://www.unicef.org/blog/outlook-2023-tackling-polycrisis.

[5] Björn Norlin, Mati Keynes, and Anna-Lill Drugge, "Truth Commissions and Teacher Education in Australia and the Northern Nordics," *Genealogy* 8, no. 2 (June 2024): 68, https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy8020068.

historiography of education in Canada has closely examined the role of schooling in Canada's ongoing settler colonial project.[6]

In the past two decades, histories of other total institutions, including boarding and reformatory schools, orphanages, and other forms of residential out-of-home care for children have also been the subject of major inquiries in numerous countries.[7] Historians of childhood and education have been active in these processes, serving as expert witnesses, producing research reports, contributing to the implementation of recommendations, and even serving as commissioners.[8] As Johanna Sköld has argued, official inquiries into historical institutional child abuse have produced vital new sources as well as new forms of history narratives.[9] These often depart from and challenge established methods used by historians. Prominent historians of education such as Sköld, Pirjo Markkola, and Daniel Lindmark, have each reflected on the complexities of contributing historical expertise to official inquiries.[10] This includes, for instance, interpreting changing moral standards about treatment of victimised groups over time, balancing expectations of different audiences invested in the process, and ensuring the posterity of source material for re-use in the future.

In the same period, prominent student-led protests against institutional racism at university campuses in South Africa, the UK, and United States have generated wide scale public debate about educational institutions, including their historical role in

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[6] John Milloy, "Doing Public History in Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *The Public Historian* 35, no. 4 (November 1, 2013): 54–75; Sean Carleton, *Lessons in Legitimacy: Colonialism, Capitalism, and the Rise of State Schooling in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2022); John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879–1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999); Helen Raptis with members of the Tsimshian Nation, *What We Learned: Two Generations Reflect on Tsimshian Education and the Day Schools* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2020); Andrea Procter, *A Long Journey: Residential Schools in Labrador and Newfoundland* (St. John's: Memorial University Press, 2020).

[7] Johanna Sköld and Shirlee Swain, *Apologies and the Legacy of Abuse of Children in "Care": International Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Johanna Sköld and Pirjo Markkola, "History of Child Welfare: A Present Political Concern," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 45, no. 2 (2020): 143–158, https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2020.1764383.

[8] Daniel Lindmark and Olle Sundström. *The Sami and the Church of Sweden: Results from a White Paper Project* (Borlänge: Gidlunds förlag, 2018).

[9] C. T. Jack and Laura Devereux. "Memory Objects and Boarding School Trauma," *History of Education Review* 48, no. 2 (2019): 214–226, https://doi.org/10.1108/HER-01-2019-0001; Charlotta Svonni, "The Swedish Sámi Boarding School Reforms in the Era of Educational Democratisation, 1956 to 1969," *Paedagogica Historica* 59, no. 5 (2021): 799–817, https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2021.1942935; James Griffith, "Of Linguicide and Resistance: Children and English Instruction in Nineteenth-Century Indian Boarding Schools in Canada," *Paedagogica Historica* 53, no. 6 (2017): 763–782, https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2017.1293700; Johanna Sköld, "The Truth about Abuse?: A Comparative Approach to Inquiry Narratives on Historical Institutional Child Abuse," *History of Education* 45, no. 4 (2016): 492–509.

[10] Daniel Lindmark, "Historical Justice as a New Challenge in Historical Research Reflections on the White Paper Project on the Historical Relations between the Church of Sweden and the Sami People," in *Cultivating Transformative Reconciliation: Are TRC Processes Enough?,* ed. Line Skum, John Klaasen, Bernd Krupka, and Ray Aldred (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2024).

systems such as slavery and colonialism, and their contemporary moral obligations for redress. Debates about the renaming of buildings, return of stolen artefacts, memorialisation of prominent colonisers, and decolonising curriculum all concern the history of education. As Rebecca Swartz has noted in the UK-context, there has recently been a major resurgence of public and academic "debate and controversy" about the British Empire, yet histories of education and schooling have tended to be overlooked.[11] In the US, amidst book bans, and other prohibitions on the teaching of slavery and critical race theory, Jarvis Givens' important "counter-canon" of African American "fugitive pedagogy" has chronicled a long history of educational resistance and excellence in Black communities.[12] Education histories, too, have been important for showing how Indigenous communities persecuted through colonial education policies have used schooling and education as tools and spaces for resistance and revival.[13]

Social movements for redress and reparation of historical injustices have also sparked scrutiny of school curriculum in places like Canada, the United Kingdom, United States and Australia. Contests over the teaching of histories of colonialism, empire, and slavery, are long-standing flashpoints in ongoing culture wars over the history and memory of foundational national myths. But as James Miles and I have argued, increasingly, western nation-states like Australia and Canada are embracing (limited) curricular reforms that reflect changing moral frames and expectations about history and education alike.[14] In those contexts, we argue, a distinctive "culture of redress" has developed, taking different forms, but wherein dealing with injustices in the past the unjust past has become an important aspect of national identity, belonging, and citizenship.[15] The rise of redress – in and through education – is a transnational

[11] Rebecca Swartz, "Histories of Empire and Histories of Education," *History of Education* 52, no. 2–3 (2022): 442–461, https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760X.2022.2127002.

[12] Joining a longer tradition of Black education see e.g., bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (London: Routledge, 1994); Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," *American Educational Research Journal* 32, no. 3 (1995): 465–491.

[13] Some of the community strategies for resisting assimilation have included reclaiming government boarding schools to escape the racism of integrated public schools. See, Michael Marker, "Indigenous Resistance and Racist Schooling on the Borders of Empires: Coast Salish Cultural Survival," *Paedagogica Historica* 45, no. 6 (2009): 757–772, https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230903335678; Beth Marsden, "'Our People Say That They Want Their Children to Be Able to Become Doctors, Nurses, Teachers': Contesting Education and Schooling for Aboriginal Children in South-Eastern Australia in the 1930s," *History of Education* 52, no. 5 (2023): 776–795, https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760X.2022.2098389.

[14] Mati Keynes, "From Apology to Truth? Settler Colonial Injustice and Curricular Reform in Australia since 2008," *Journal of Curriculum Studies 56*(3), 339–354, https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2024.2323612; James Miles, "Curriculum Reform in a Culture of Redress: How Social and Political Pressures Are Shaping Social Studies Curriculum in Canada," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 53, no. 1 (2021): 47–64.

[15] Mati Keynes, "Rhetoric of Redress: Australian Political Speeches and Settler Citizens' Historical Consciousness," *Journal of Australian Studies* 47, no. 4 (October 2, 2023): 656–670, https://doi.org/10.1080/14443058.2023.2217824.

phenomenon. In the period since the early-1990s, redressing historical injustices through education has become common, albeit contested, practice in liberal-democratic nation-states around the globe.

Education of the public on matters of reparative justice entail growing interplay between public history and the history of education.[16] A recent 'manifesto' on the theme argued that due to shared, intergenerational experiences of school, educational heritage constitutes a collective "memory site" and that the educational past is, by nature, a public matter. Authors, Frederik Herman, Sjaak Braster, and María del Mar del Pozo Andrés, trace growing engagement with education history among public audiences via virtual exhibitions, digital technologies, and other forms of social media. They explicitly name "dealing with historical injustice" as a major recent concern for public histories of education, including political apologies, reparations, and renaming debates.[17] Education historians Nicola Gauld and Ian Grosvenor's important work on historical legacies of WWI with minoritised communities in Birmingham is just one example of community-engaged public history of education that takes seriously questions of reparative justice.[18]

In a related vein, growing interest in the history of knowledge among education historians is another field entwined with questions of redress, but that has not yet considered them in a sustained fashion.[19] As Joel Barnes and Tamson Pietsch argue, histories of education draw out "questions of the circulation and transformation of knowledges, and of power and relations between different knowledge systems – especially in colonial and postcolonial settings."[20] In this approach, historians raise questions about educational institutions and their relationships to knowledge production, authority, expertise, hierarchy, and forms of governance. Histories written of interactions between Indigenous and non-Western knowledges and colonial and European forms of knowledge, have prompted debates about epistemic injustice, epistemicide, oppression and decolonisation.[21] And as historian June Bam demonstrates in her masterful history

[16] Both public history and history of knowledge are current Standing Working Groups at ISCHE.

[17] Frederik Herman, Sjaak Braster, and María del Mar del Pozo Andrés, "Towards a Public History of Education: A Manifesto," in *Exhibiting the Past: Public Histories of Education*, ed. Frederik Herman, Sjaak Braster, and María del Mar del Pozo Andrés (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023), 14, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110719871-001.

[18] Nicola Gauld and Ian Grosvenor, "The Role of Commemoration in History and Heritage: The Legacy of the World War One Engagement Centres," in *Historical Justice and History Education*, ed. M. Keynes et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 153–175, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-70412-4_8.

[19] Joel Barnes and Tamson Pietsch. "The History of Knowledge and the History of Education," *History of Education Review* 51, no. 2 (2022): 109–122, https://doi.org/10.1108/HER-06-2022-0020.

[20] Ibid, 110.

[21] See e.g., Amitav Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*, paperback ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2022); Veli Mitova, "Can Theorizing Epistemic Injustice Help Us Decolonise?" *Inquiry* (2024): 1–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2024.2327489; Timothy Neale and

of the southern African Cape, the history of knowledge systems are also entwined with our current ecological precarity. Bam models how writing history grounded in intergenerational Indigenous knowledges – what Bam calls "everyday decolonial-knowledge ecologies" – can produce new understandings of the deep time past.[22] Bam writes histories grounded in story, memory, botany, ritual and interwoven with sources from the colonial archive and historiography. These "herstories" of the hybridised past, move beyond dominant narratives shaped by European colonialism, and open new ways of understanding the present and restoring vital knowledge, through what Bam calls, an "emancipatory African epistemology".[23] Black, Indigenous, and non-western knowledges have long-been attuned to the intersecting vulnerabilities of humans and environment grounded in deep histories of activism, community, and education.[24]

As signalled at the outset, the intersections between history of education, redress, reparation and reconciliation are also being considered in international education policy. These themes are reflected in UNESCO's 2021 *Futures of Education* report as well as in a preceding 2020 report on "racism, education, and reparative futures".[25] The 2020 report calls explicitly for Indigenous, anti-racist, and anti-colonial historical practices that extend beyond prevailing western approaches to the history discipline. Taken together, the entanglement of histories of education and agendas of reparative justice, redress and reconciliation prompt a suite of fresh challenges for historians of education. What might it involve, then, to take seriously reparative imperatives for the revaluation of historical research in education?

Repair and Revaluation in Histories of Education

In her 2022 *Manifesto*, Priem warns that the COVID-19 crisis is in danger of being "silenced by denial and reconstruction of the world as it used to be."[26] As a remedy, Priem illustrates how historians of education might reorient their practice towards the *repair* of the damaged ecological relations which underlay the pandemic. Repair, Priem argues, requires the revaluation of dominant ways of thinking the relationship between

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Emma Kowal, "5. 'Related' Histories: On Epistemic and Reparative Decolonization," *History and Theory* 59, no. 3 (September 2020): 403–412.

[22] June Bam, Ausi Told Me: Why Cape Herstoriographies Matter (Jacana Media, 2021), preface.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Fikile Nxumalo, Preeti Nayak, and Eve Tuck, "Education and Ecological Precarity: Pedagogical, Curricular, and Conceptual Provocations," *Curriculum Inquiry* 52, no. 2 (2022): 97–107, https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2022.2052634.

[25] Arathi Sriprakash, David Nally, Kevin Myers, and Pedro Ramos Pinto, *Learning with the Past: Racism, Education and Reparative Futures* (Paris: UNESCO, 2020), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374045; UNESCO, *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* (Paris: UNESCO, 2021), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707.

[26] Karin Priem, "Emerging Ecologies and Changing Relations: A Brief Manifesto for Histories of Education after COVID-19," *Paedagogica Historica* 58, no. 5 (September 3, 2022): 770.

the human and nature, which are reflected in “ethical foundations of educational theories”. It also involves, according to Priem, accepting the historicity of anthropocentric thinking and developing new ways of analysing the past as “an assemblage of ecological relations” attuned to the kinship between humans and non-humans.[27]

Working with an archive of photographs taken during the pandemic, Priem models how future historians of education could approach these sources in ways open to developing understandings of education that go beyond anthropocentric worldviews. Priem observes, for instance, “an abundance of photographs depicting children in and connecting to nature,” which among other things such as alienation and distance, signal, “an emerging awareness of intertwined ecological relations that demand attention and recovery.” Critical attention to these sources considering the longer history of human exceptionalism and its influence on educational thinking, Priem argues, could be a first step towards “befriending the world again”, and “allowing us to develop a sensitivity to what sustains human life and needs to be treated accordingly by establishing symmetrical relations.”[28] Priem’s manifesto is certainly not the first to suggest historical research in education question its foundations in western philosophy and its legacies.[29] But it is an important contemporary call for the revaluation of historical thinking in education, while modelling ways to shift the normative limits of our work. Priem’s manifesto opens vital questions about reparative histories of education that I consider in the following sections.

Principle One: Complex Implication

Education is complicit in creating and perpetuating historical-structural injustices. Research shows that education systems have produced systemic inequalities which disproportionately impact the most disadvantaged children.[30] Historical injustices continue to shape today’s educational institutions, are inherited across generations, and are reproduced in the present, albeit in changing ways.[31] Historians of education do not sit outside of the systems that they investigate. Those of us working in universities and/or researching education systems are bound up in the very systems that we historicise, critique, and sometimes aim to transform. Historians of education have been

[27] Ibid, 772.

[28] Karin Priem, “Emerging Ecologies and Changing Relations,” 778.

[29] See e.g. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2021), accessed August 13, 2024, http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350225282.

[30] Arathi Sriprakash, “Reparations: Theorising Just Futures of Education,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* (November 2022): 1–14, https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2022.2144141; Eve Tuck, “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities,” *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): 409–428.

[31] Alasia Nuti, *Injustice and the Reproduction of History: Structural Inequalities, Gender and Redress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108325592.

active in justifying human exceptionalism and domination of the natural world through emphases on histories of human sovereignty, agency and development.[32] Stefan Berger's research on the role of historians in nation-state formation, combined with Andy Green's foundational work on education and state formation illustrates the long-standing compact between history and education in the founding and legitimation of nation-building projects and the forms of industrial modernity that underpinned them.[33] Educationalists in the recent past have justified gross violations of human rights, such as forced sterilisation, on the grounds of now-discredited eugenicist beliefs about educability and racialised superiority.[34] Historians have also been key architects of colonial projects which included colonial education intended to denigrate Indigenous cultures and assimilate children into the dominant society.[35] We, historians of education, are complexly implicated in these interlocking systems of advantage and deprivation.[36] Acknowledging implication is an important step to prevent ongoing damage and reorient historical work towards repair.[37]

But how might we embrace our implication in ways that avoid descent into simplistic binaries of victim/perpetrator or becoming debilitated by feelings of guilt or shame? Concepts such as guilt, collective responsibility, and complicity, do not necessarily spur reparative praxis, as James Miles has recently argued.[38] Writing in the context of teaching so-called difficult histories, Miles claims that feelings of guilt can incite withdrawal or defensiveness and potentially reify subject positions and identity-based reasoning. Recent research from Manning et al. supports this view, arguing that juridical frames of responsibility centred in positions of victim and perpetrator are not conducive to developing reparative approaches to history education.[39] There is a "delineation of theoretical purity" in binary, juridical concepts of responsibility, to use Alexis Shotwell's words, that are "forever failing" in their attempts to classify the world.[40]

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[32] Karin Priem, "Emerging Ecologies and Changing Relations," 768–780.

[33] Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz, eds., Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Andy Green, Education and State Formation: Europe, East Asia and the USA, 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[34] Ross L. Jones, James Waghorne, and Marcia Langton, eds., *Dhoombak Goobgoowana: A History of Indigenous Australia and the University of Melbourne*, 1st ed. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2024).

[35] Priya Satia, *Time's Monster: How History Makes History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2020).

[36] James Miles, "Guilt, Complicity, and Responsibility for Historical Injustice: Towards a Pedagogy of Complex Implication," *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 32, no. 3 (April 14, 2022): 619–635.

[37] Miles, "Guilt, Complicity, and Responsibility for Historical Injustice," 12.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Peter Manning, Julia Paulson, and Duong Keo, "Reparative Remembering for Just Futures: History Education, Multiple Perspectives and Responsibility," *Futures* 155 (January 1, 2024): 103279, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2023.103279.

[40] Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (University of Minnesota Press: 2016), 4.

Rather, Shotwell, Miles, and others invite us to broaden conceptions of responsibility away from neat ties to specific identities.[41] Awabakal, Worimi and Biripi scholar Samara Hand has recently argued that considering the role of "implicated subjects" in settler colonial contexts is important as it complicates the victim/perpetrator or Indigenous/settler binary that underpins reconciliation agendas.[42] This is useful, Hand argues, as it encourages an examination of "how people benefit from and contribute to ongoing settler colonialism."[43] Likewise, Miles argues for a "pedagogy of complex implication" that would complicate diachronic subject positions of victim, perpetrator and bystander and develop instead understandings of how we are all enmeshed in interlocking and multiple legacies of historical violence.[44] Drawing on Rothberg's "implicated subject", Miles develops the idea of "complex implication", which I am suggesting here, could be a useful reparative principle for research in histories of education.

Emerging from his work on multidirectional memory, Michael Rothberg's theorisation of the implicated subject has made an important contribution to debates about complicity and responsibility for historical injustice that breaks with the dominant juridical paradigm. Rothberg argued that "implicated subjects occupy positions aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm; they contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination but do not originate or control such regimes." An implicated subject is neither a victim nor a perpetrator, but rather a "participant in histories and social formations that generate the positions of victim and perpetrator." Miles explains:

> …implicated subjects are not direct agents of historical harm, but exist in various positions of power and privilege that are shaped by the legacies of historical violence and at the same time they may continue to prop up structures of inequality in which we all live.[45]

This accords with Alasia Nuti's powerful argument in *Injustice and the Reproduction of History,* that historical injustices persist and are newly reproduced over time creating the background conditions of social life.[46] For example, Nuti argues that the injustice of slavery as consisting of long-term structures such as racial hierarchies, that have "outlasted" the institution of slavery itself, and which keep being reproduced and

[41] Peter Manning, Julia Paulson, and Duong Keo, "Reparative Remembering for Just Futures."

[42] Samara Hand, "Australian Reconciliation and the Enduring Invisibility of Whiteness," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 18, no. 2 (2024): 237–249, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijae016.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Miles, "Guilt, Complicity, and Responsibility for Historical Injustice."

[45] Ibid.

[46] Alasia Nuti, *Injustice and the Reproduction of History: Structural Inequalities, Gender and Redress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108325592.

producing structural conditions for other events.[47] Rather than being purely victims of, bystanders to, or direct perpetrators of injustice, implicated subjects "play essential roles in producing and reproducing violence and inequality" through their ongoing participation in systems of advantage and deprivation.[48] This includes multiple and messy entanglements in interlocking histories and their legacies. Like Priem's call for historians to consider the "inseparable links between social relations and ecological relations," an implicated subject is self-consciously aware of their differential entanglements with past and present injustice.[49]

Complex implication offers a more nuanced, intersectional, and multidirectional way of thinking about connected histories of both perpetration and victimhood. Moreover, it encourages greater collaboration and alliance building between differently situated positions that are often constrained by thinking that emphasizes self-contained or pure identities.[50] This move from self-conscious awareness to action is important. The goal of acknowledging complex implication is not to remain an implicated subject.

So, what might the concept of complex implication offer historians of education? Recognising that we are imbricated in multiple, complexly implicated positions within interlocking systems is an important and necessary step in refusing "violent innocence"; the habitual disavowal of the truth of ongoing injustices. It also implies accepting and taking responsibility for our unique insider positions in those systems, in this case education systems. Practically, this could involve historians continuing to document educational injustices, their histories and legacies.[51] Acknowledging our – historians' – complex implication is a necessary step for creating the grounds upon which we begin to shift dominant modes and means of making history in order to halt the reproduction of injustice in the present. In doing so, we might begin to shed new light on educational pasts that create possibilities for building differentiated solidarities and transformative change grounded in complex understandings of historical injustice.

Principle Two: Care and Concern

The next principle I canvass is "care and concern". I've drawn this concept from Bonnie Honig's theorisation of "public things".[52] A few years ago, I was working on a research project where I conducted focus groups with parents about how they engaged in their

[47] Miles, "Guilt, Complicity, and Responsibility for Historical Injustice," 26.

[48] Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 202.

[49] Priem, "Emerging Ecologies and Changing Relations," 779.

[50] Miles, "Guilt, Complicity, and Responsibility for Historical Injustice," 15.

[51] Johanna Sköld and Pirjo Markkola, "History of Child Welfare: A Present Political Concern," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 45, no. 2 (2020): 143–158, https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2020.1764383.

[52] Bonnie Honig, *Public Things: Democracy in Disrepair,* 1st ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017).

children's schools. Amidst all the usual expressions of desire to be heard and to see their values reflected in the school, it became clear that the school itself – its grounds, buildings, and classrooms, in other words its material 'thingness' and the relations it afforded – was central to this engagement. In staging their claims for belonging, power, inclusion upon the material ground of the school, parents were interpellated into a kind of public, where the school was an object to deliberate upon and contest.[53] Importantly, the school afforded opportunities for parents to join together, to build and maintain collective projects, but it also outlasted them and exceeded their desires for control.

To grasp the affective dynamics at play, I turned to political theorist Bonnie Honig's concept of public things. For Honig, public things such as schools are sites of attachment and meaning somewhere between things and humans, that furnish our world, where we "encounter others", "act in concert", and "share the experience of being part of something that is larger than ourselves".[54] Their "thingness", Honig claims, draws people into relationships of "care and concern" through which we learn to contest and care for the world. This relational politics involves learning to care for the things that "we use and by which we are used and which may be our undoing."[55] Public things press us into relations with others and involve us in matters not merely of our own choosing.[56] In this way, Honig argues that they can be imagined as "democratic holding environments" – a "laboratory for citizenship in which we experience lifelong the attachment and play that form and reform all of us."[57]

Honig claims that from a public things perspective 'we are more moved first to ask not "who are we?" but "what needs our care and concern?"'.[58] An attention to things, and public things in particular, entails a shift therefore, from questions of identity, subjectivity, and membership towards a relational politics of care and concern for the world in common.[59] What could it mean for historians of education to be drawn into relationships of care and concern through their research? How might research be guided by the question "what needs our care and concern?"

First, this orientation clearly rests on a serious attention to the "things" of educational histories, like archival matter, school buildings, and objects, including the relations those objects imbue. This kind of research, of course, is not new in the history of education

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[53] Mati Keynes et al., "Schools as Public Things: Parents and the Affective Relations of Schooling," *The Sociological Review* 72, no. 3 (May 2024): 673–690, https://doi.org/10.1177/00380261231207214.

[54] Honig, *Public Things*, 36.

[55] Honig, *Public Things*, 7.

[56] Honig, *Public Things*, 34.

[57] Honig, *Public Things*, 54.

[58] Honig, *Public Things*, 28.

[59] Kathleen Knight Abowitz, "The War on Public Education: Agonist Democracy and the Fight for Schools as Public Things," *Philosophical Inquiry in Education* 25, no. 1 (July 28, 2020): 1–15, https://doi.org/10.7202/1070712ar.

field.[60] In 2019, Inés Dussel argued that while "educational histories have been more concerned about human activity and participation" than objects and spaces, in recent decades, a material turn of sorts has seen increased interest in the materiality of education.[61] Attention to materiality, historians have argued, can provide a counterpoint to grand narratives of human exceptionalism, or dominant themes of state building, national identity-construction, and professionalism.[62]

But a principle of "care and concern" implies more than just an attention to things. It also implies the development of capacities for a relational politics that privileges care and concern. In this vein, Dussel makes a compelling case for an attention to the materiality of education as not only a methodological and theoretical shift, but also a political one. Dussel describes her own years-long process of developing capacities for "an attentive, multisensorial listening" – a "loving attitude" – towards the textures and details of material objects and their surrounding "meshworks".[63] Developing this sensitivity, she argues, requires an attention to things in their "becoming", as enmeshed in moving processes where human and non-human are interwoven.[64] This entails a change in research perspectives, as Priem has urged, from a static, human-centred approach to historical artefacts, towards consideration of objects as co-constitutive of human worlds of experience. This shift unlocks potential for insights into different historical experiences. The same object might be remembered with nostalgia by some, but cause damage to others.

Objects also draw attention to unfolding and changing relational dynamics between humans and non-humans. That dynamism might offer reparative clues. Repair, after all, is about change. Rather than an extractive approach that would take from an historical object without offering anything in return, a reparative principle of care and concern encourages a dynamic relationship latent with the potential for transformation. Dussel thinks education histories are starting to pay attention to the "presence and making of objects" as a "means to listen or be attentive to the movement of things."[65] Objects

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[60] See e.g., Inés Dussel, "What Might a Material Turn to Educational Histories Add to the History of Education? Proof-Eating the Pudding," in *What Might a Material Turn to Educational Histories Add to the History of Education? Proof-Eating the Pudding* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021), 449–468; Paul Smeyers and Marc Depaepe, eds., *Educational Research: Material Culture and Its Representation* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2014).

[61] Dussel, "What Might a Material Turn to Educational Histories Add to the History of Education," 450.

[62] Martin Lawn and Ian Grosvenor, "Introduction: The Materiality of Schooling," in *Materialities of Schooling: Design, Technology, Objects, Routines*, ed. Martin Lawn and Ian Grosvenor (Oxford, UK: Symposium Books, 2005), 1–15.

[63] Dussel, "What Might a Material Turn to Educational Histories Add to the History of Education," 461.

[64] Objects, Dussel argues, might be approached as "stories caught halfway through," in the making, or discontinuous, rather than as complete or finished. See Dussel, "What Might a Material Turn to Educational Histories Add to the History of Education," 455.

[65] Dussel, "What Might a Material Turn to Educational Histories Add to the History of Education," 455.

might change us, the ways we think, engage, imagine, and understand the past, as much as we might have power to change them.

This is where object relations might prompt us, as historians, to learn how to foster different sensibilities and conditions of listening "that can hold diversity, discomfort and ambivalence" as Tanja Dreher has argued.[66] It is in developing these relational capacities that we might move from a stagnant vision of gradual liberal reform, and instead towards a reparative process of redistributing attention and value in the present. This is reminiscent of Naomi Hodgson, Joris Vlieghe and Piotr Zamojski's argument in *Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy:* rather than expose, envision, or debunk, they claim, the task of a post-critical pedagogy is to protect and to care for devalued aspects of our forms of life, and create "a space of thought that enables practice to happen anew."[67] This promise of renewal of our common world is distinct from a utopian striving for a world to come. As the authors explain: "This is not an acceptance of how things are, but an affirmation of the value of what we do in the present and thus of things that we value as worth passing on."[68]

This sensibility might also extend into the ways we approach study of the past. Historians of education can attend to stories, objects, knowledges with a view to what might be renewed or restored in the here and now. This is reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's instruction to appropriate a memory "as it flashes up in a moment of danger" where the historian is tasked with "fanning the spark of hope in the past" and igniting renewed collective action in the present.[69] I see this task of seeking flourishing and survivance in the past as the companion to documenting historical injustice, suggested in the previous section, rather than as its opposite. Here I am following Indigenous scholars and historians who caution away from damage-centred frameworks grounded in documenting pain and loss.[70] For example, in "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," Eve Tuck argued that damage-centred frameworks alone are not sufficient and urged instead research aimed at capturing desire. A desire-based approach, Tuck, explained, is "concerned with understanding complexity, contradiction,

[66] Tanja Dreher, "Dwelling in Discomfort: On the Conditions of Listening in Settler Colonial Australia," *Borderlands* 20, no. 2 (2021): 30–60.

[67] Naomi Hodgson, Joris Vlieghe, and Piotr Zamojski, *Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy* (Punctum Books, 2017), https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.2353835.

[68] Ibid, 18.

[69] Walter Benjamin, "Thesis IV," in *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Verso, 2003).

[70] As Amangu Noongar historian Crystal McKinnon explains: "Indigenous sovereignty endures despite settler colonialism" and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui: "Indigenous peoples exist, resist and persist." See; Crystal McKinnon, "Enduring Indigeneity and Solidarity in Response to Australia's Carceral Colonialism," *Biography* 43, no. 4 (January 1, 2020): 691–704; Kauanui, J. Kēhaulani. "'A Structure, Not an Event': Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity." *Lateral* 5, no. 1 (2016), https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.12168.

and the self-determination of lived lives."[71] Tuck positions desire as an epistemological shift away from binary thinking and towards a more complicated understanding of "agency, complicity, and resistance."[72] Importantly, desire-based frameworks still expose "ongoing structural inequity" but make room for the multiplicity of desire and contradiction, and celebrate survivance.[73] Indigenous peoples, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate scholar Kim TallBear reminds us, "have never forgotten that nonhumans are agential beings engaged in social relations that profoundly shape human lives."[74] We have much to gain in taking Indigenous direction, and rethinking histories of education from Indigenous perspectives as Swartz, Marsden and others have recently argued.[75]

When Dussel concludes that historians must "remain attentive and open to what humans and non-humans have and might yet become," she is urging a shift – in attention, sensibility, and politics – that might reorient our focus from what has been lost or damaged, to what might be restored or cared for.[76] Taking the shift Dussel urges seriously requires placing care, relationality, and maintenance work at the centre of our historical practice.[77]

Principle Three: Legibility

Dramatic changes to the Earth's climate system, triggered by human activity, now threaten future drastic change and potential devastating collapse. One possible response being advocated is to attempt to repair climate systems through geoengineering. This involves large-scale intervention in the processes driving climate change, such as efforts to reduce net heating (known as solar radiation management) and greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere (carbon dioxide removal). These technologies and associated debates are part of a broader discourse of repair, restoration, and remediation, wherein climate geoengineering is advanced to "fix" damaged earth systems. According to environmental researcher Duncan McLaren,

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[71] Eve Tuck, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): 409–428, https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.3.n0016675661t3n15, 416.

[72] Tuck, "Suspending Damage," 419–420.

[73] Tuck, "Suspending Damage," 417; Crystal McKinnon instructs us to "analyze these systems, fight against them, and build better societies with Indigenous sovereignty as the foundation." See; Crystal *McKinnon,* "Enduring Indigeneity and Solidarity in Response to Australia's Carceral Colonialism," *Biography* 43, no. 4 (2020): 691–704.

[74] Kim TallBear, "An Indigenous Reflection on Working Beyond the Human/Not Human." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21, no. 2 (2015): 230-235. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/582037, 234.

[75] Beth Marsden, Katherine Ellinghaus, Cate O'Neill, Sharon Huebner, and Lyndon Ormond-Parker, "Wongatha Heritage Returned: The Digital Future and Community Ownership of Schoolwork from the Mount Margaret Mission School, 1930s–1940s," *Preservation, Digital Technology & Culture* 50, no. 3–4 (December 1, 2021): 105–115, https://doi.org/10.1515/pdtc-2021-0020.

[76] Dussel, "What Might a Material Turn to Educational Histories Add to the History of Education," 464.

[77] Stephen Graham and Nigel Thrift, "Out of Order: Understanding Repair and Maintenance," *Theory, Culture & Society* 24, no. 3 (2007): 1–25, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276407075954.

these discourses imply "an ability to restore the functionality and appearance of some prior climate state," and rest on long-held assumptions about historical fidelity and utility, while generally neglecting the political and ethical dimensions of repair.[78] To be clear, I am not advocating use of these technologies to address climate change. I am, however, interested in how interdisciplinary debates prompt consideration of what might constitute an ethics of repair for the history of education field.

One principle from geoengineering that I would like to consider more fully here is legibility. In geoengineering there is discussion about whether the "traces" of repair, such as those left by solar radiation modification (SRM), should be erased or remain legible. Some argue that the marks of SRM should remain visible as a reminder of the damage humans have done to the climate, as well as of the negative side effects of technologies like stratospheric aerosol injection, for instance, which would whiten skies and redden sunsets.[79] Yet, scientists are developing technologies that would render those effects invisible. McLaren argues that efforts to reduce visible marks risk "yet another element of the invisible maintenance and repair that constitutes a hidden shadow to neoliberal industrial capitalism."[80] Repair should be *legible,* McLaren claims, to create a memorial regarding the cause of damage, and thereby to provide "a constant stimulus to enhance our efforts to accelerate mitigation."[81] In other words, inscribing damage in processes of repair makes unjust histories visible prompting ongoing reparative action. What might a reparative principle of legibility mean for histories of education? Next, I want to consider three intersecting vectors of legibility: parrhesia, performance, and perspective.

Legibility and Parrhesia

Legibility can also take the shape of a Foucauldian parrhesia – a forthright, risky truth-telling.[82] This involves making visible and present histories of damage, harm, and injustice. We see this approach powerfully reflected in a recent example with global relevance: a new institutional history project undertaken at the University of Melbourne. The University has a fraught history, like many others. It has inextricable links to trans-Atlantic slavery, settler-colonial dispossession of Indigenous lands, projects grounded in scientific racism including eugenics, child removals, assimilation, IQ testing, collection of ancestral remains and cultural artefacts. Most written histories of the University have omitted or minimised these links. To the contrary, *Dhoombak Goobgoowana: A History of Indigenous Australia and the University of Melbourne* – which means truth-telling in

[78] Duncan P. McLaren, "In a Broken World: Towards an Ethics of Repair in the Anthropocene," *The Anthropocene Review* 5, no. 2 (August 2018): 136–154, https://doi.org/10.1177/2053019618767211.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Stephen Graham and Nigel Thrift, "Out of Order."

[81] McLaren, "In a Broken World," 18.

[82] Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Woi-Wurrung language – documents the University's support of, for instance, eugenics research well into the late-1970s, including especially in the field of education.[83] Historians and biographers in the past, Ross Jones argues, "have ignored their subjects' attachment to eugenics in their research [...] either by deliberately removing eugenics from discussions of their published works or by discussing only those aspects of their careers unrelated to their eugenic interests."[84] As Jones notes: "It was, after all, as late as the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s that the University's eugenicists and racists were memorialised in buildings in a manner that erased their racist pasts."[85] In recent years, some of the names of eugenicists have been removed from buildings. But as prominent Indigenous intellectual Marcia Langton argues in the book's conclusion: "merely deleting their names from buildings, rooms, courtyards and roads, and not explaining why, compounds the injustices with further acts of denial."[86]

This new University history, covering themes such as philanthropy, land dispossession, human remains, loss of language, ecological damage, Indigenous knowledges, naming and renaming, re-stories the University's history by making visible the injustices and harm that are foundational to its modern story. It creates a memorial which names the University as a cause of damage to Wurundjeri Country, cultures, and communities. Rather than this damage being written out of the story or treated as isolated periods neatly divided from the more enlightened present, the University has opted to make historic damage legible in the present. *Dhoombak Goobgoowana* documents "some of the worst failings of our intellectual leaders" and reveals the University's "role in justifying the settler colonial project of imperial powers', a fact that undermines its 'claims to neutrality and objectivity."[87] The editors note that Volume I:

> …follows the failings of many biographies and institutional histories that excluded race from their stories of achievement, overlooking how racist ideas complicated and shaped their narratives. Although many things have changed, the stain of the past remains. The land has not been returned; racism persists in the institution. But the University no longer wishes to look away.[88]

Like Foucault's parrhesiast, this truth-telling is "frank and dangerous" – it eschews tradition to "tell the whole truth" without "looking away".[89]

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[83] Ross L. Jones, "Eugenics, the 1950s and Beyond," in *Dhoombak Goobgoowana: A History of Indigenous Australia and the University of Melbourne*, ed. Ross L. Jones, James Waghorne, and Marcia Langton, vol. 1 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2024), 285–310.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Dhoombak Goobgoowana, 488.

[87] Dhoombak Goobgoowana, xv.

[88] Dhoombak Goobgoowana, 10.

[89] Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 10.

Legibility and Performance

A question remains, however, about the link between truth-telling and reparative *action*. How can making damage legible spur reparative praxis? The publication of *Dhoombak Goobgoowana* is taking place within what Sara Ahmed calls "performance culture" in higher education. That is, a "disciplinary system of judgments, classifications and targets" by which to measure performance, and where "doing well involves generating *the right kinds of appearance.*"[90] A politics of making visible – of legibility – can risk falling stray to performativity. Ahmed explores what happens when diversity or equality policies come to be taken as a measure of institutional performance or excellence. For instance, Ahmed shows how the existence of a race equality document comes to be taken as "evidence that the institutional world it documents (racism, inequality, injustice) has been overcome."[91] "Diversity", Ahmed claims, "becomes what the university does because they care about excellence."[92] Organisational pride is equated with declaring commitment to anti-racism, diversity, and equality. Sometimes, a declaration of commitment can hinder rather than enable action:

> Statements of commitment might work to limit rather than enable action, insofar as they block recognition of the ongoing nature of what it is the organization is committed to opposing.[93]

Ahmed calls this "non-performativity": speech acts that do *not* bring about the actions they name.[94] Therefore, Ahmed urges attention to texts not only for what they *say* but also for what they do.

"The land has not been returned; racism persists in the institution."[95] *Dhoombak Goobgoowana* names racism and land theft as continuous. Yet it leaves unanswered questions such as: How might this text prompt action that addresses racism and prioritises the return of land? How might "doing well" on these matters come to exceed mere appearance and take material forms? Does publication of *Dhoombak Goobgoowana* interrupt the "documentary world" of the University, and serve as an authoritative foundation for the revaluation of policies to come? Notably, the introduction cites four major new university strategies, since 2023, that have "incorporated

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[90] Sara Ahmed, "Equality and Performance Culture," in *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 83–112, https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822395324-005.

[91] Ahmed, "Equality and Performance Culture," 100.

[92] Ahmed, "Equality and Performance Culture," 109.

[93] Sara Ahmed, "The Nonperformativity of Antiracism," *Meridians* 7, no. 1 (2006): 104–126, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40338719, 111.

[94] Sara Ahmed, "The Nonperformativity of Antiracism," 104.

[95] Dhoombak Goobgoonwana, 16.

Indigenous knowledge, in recognition of the vitality of this field."[96] What is the referential relationship of *Dhoombak* to these policies? The authors state:

> Our University has precipitated a wholesale ecological and epistemic transformation of Country. We cannot regain what was destroyed but we can play a role in reviving the cultural and knowledge systems that predated colonisation.[97]

In recognising the importance of this history for contemporary and future knowledge revival, the authors echo McLaren's argument that "neither historic nor functional fidelity need be perfect for repair to be valued."[98] Rather than fidelity to some historical past, in making damage legible, historians might recover that latent in the past which might be directed towards building future, more just and sustainable, worlds. Like Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò argues in *Reconsidering Reparations,* reparation is a constructive orientation.[99] Practically, this might involve, for example, historians of education prioritising ways to bring descendent families and communities into contact with archival materials and cultural artefacts that they discover in the archives or university collections, that have been produced by marginalised groups.[100]

Legibility and Perspective

If legibility is about re-storying the past in ways that make damage visible while spurring reparative praxis, then this prompts a set of considerations about voice and audience. Who is doing the re-storying? Who is being addressed? Who are the subjects and objects of repair? Following too closely a principle of legibility without meaningful collaboration with the parties subjected to harm in the past, could risk reinscribing or causing further damage. Legibility as reparative principle implies practices of re-storying that would appropriately centre the voices and experiences of those targeted by, or most impacted, harmful practices in the past.

It was Gunditjmara Elder Uncle Jim Berg, speaking at a 2019 event, who prompted the *Dhoombak Goobgoowana* project. The authors note that since then, the project has been "overseen by a steering committee with majority Indigenous membership" and Indigenous voices have been prioritised in the book compilation.[101] The authors also state "this history should not only be their [Indigenous people's] responsibility. It is also the responsibility of non-Indigenous members of the University to confront this past, to

[96] Dhoombak Goobgoowana, 10.

[97] Dhoombak Goobgoowana, 17.

[98] McLaren, "In a Broken World," 19-20.

[99] Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations* (Oxford University Press, 2022). https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197508893.001.0001.

[100] See for example, Beth Marsden et al., "Wongatha Heritage Returned."

[101] Dhoombak Goobgoonwana, 26.

understand it and appreciate its significance."[102] These sentiments echo prevailing understandings of truth-telling in contemporary Australia, which stress a shared responsibility for truth-telling between non-Indigenous and First Nations communities. Truth-telling that is Indigenous-led from an Indigenous cultural-lens, but that involves "all Australians," is widely recognised as best practice.[103]

There is still, however, a need to be wary that the stated aims to "acknowledge and publicly address" this history and "present a basis for common understanding" – in other words, efforts at the education of the majority population –do not come to dominate or detract from the repair of harms experienced by those subjected to injustice, in this case Indigenous people. How might multiple, often overlapping aims of repair, be appropriately weighted? There is a long-standing history in Australia of education of the settler public taking precedence over, or impeding, concrete reparative actions that would stand to materially improve the lives of Indigenous people.[104]

Need repair be visible to *everyone* for it to be effective? Wise to the ever-present risks of performativity, how might legibility make manifest micro practices or other relational modes of listening that fly under the institutional radar? As historians, the value of our work is often measured by its reach and audience – as wide, far and big as possible. Might attention to legibility encourage a revaluation of those measures of value? *Dhoombak* offers some clues in this respect. The authors urge actions such as encouraging "academics today to reflect on their own practices and how they might enable the kinds of intolerance that this project has uncovered." This signals the structural implications of this history for all academics working in the University, including myself. Making structural inequity and racism visible, including documenting its genealogies and legacies, remains an important task for historians of education. The authors also advocate the "recognition of Indigenous expertise and knowledge and adopting decolonising methodologies."[105] We can also begin this work of restoring Indigenous knowledges, led by and according to Indigenous people, in and through the stories we choose to tell about the educational past.

Conclusion

Prompted by contemporary movements and policy directives for redress and reparation, this paper has explored intersecting imperatives for repair and the revaluation of

[102] Dhoombak Goobgoonwana, 17.

[103] Ebony Institute, "Truth, Justice & Healing Project 'Hear My Heart'" (Ebony Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Institute, September 2020), https://ebonyinstitute.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Hear-My-Heart-Truth-Justice-Healing-Project-Full-Discussion-Paper.pdf.

[104] See Archie Thomas, Andrew Jakubowicz, and Heidi Norman, Does the Media Fail Aboriginal Political Aspirations? 45 Years of News Media Reporting of Key Political Moments (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2019).

[105] Dhoombak Goobgoonwana, 17.

historical research in education. While movements and processes of redress, reparation and reconciliation are closely entwined with the history of education, there has been relatively little explicit discussion of what taking those imperatives seriously in our research might demand, constrain, or enable. This paper has introduced three principles, drawn from outside the field, with aim to prompt conceptual discussion of reparative dimensions of historical research in education. Through engaging principles of complex implication, care and concern, and legibility, this paper has illustrated some challenges and possibilities that arise in taking seriously imperatives for repair and the revaluation of historical research in education.

Following Priem and others, this paper unfolds upon the claim that in the current era of truth-telling, ecological breakdown, and decolonisation, the grounds upon which historians of education have traditionally staked their research has shifted. Engaging that shifting ground is not merely a thought exercise or academic game. In fact, those shifting grounds are being negotiated within academic contexts marked by rolling crises of higher education, and where there are fears that a populist right-wing commentariat will see institutional truth-telling and redress as opportunities to further critique and undermine scholarly freedom and expertise. It is a risky enterprise to rethink ones' foundations, but one that has arguably never been more vital. As Hodgson et al. argue in their manifesto: "in spite of the many differences that divide us, there is a space of commonality that only comes about a posteriori."[106] We historians are entangled in the histories and presents of educational and ecological injustice that are unfolding, and for that reason, we must confront our responsibilities to produce future-oriented historical knowledge in the twenty first century. It is my hope that the principles outlined in this paper might guide historians navigating this highly politicised landscape, our own standards of professionalism, and our ethical obligations to people in the past as well as the present and future. In canvassing some potential principles for ethical research, this paper has aimed to join and spur this most urgent conversation.

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[106] Naomi Hodgson et al., *Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy*, 1st edition (Santa Barbara, CA: Punctum Books, 2017), 16.

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