

# Historical geographies of alternative, and non-formal education: Learning from the histories of Black education

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## Abstract

Shining a light on the various non-formal education spaces that have garnered attention in geographies of education over the past two decades, this review takes stock of how historical spaces of education and learning have become a key focus of this body of work. In so doing, the review signals prominent and emergent themes around which scholarship in this subdiscipline has cohered: most notably, geographies of citizenship and morality in informal education spaces, and the radical pedagogic practices of alternative education spaces. As well as looking back, the review also signals two areas that scholars in the field should consider engaging with more closely: Black education and decolonial education. Analysing literature in history and sociology on the Black education movement in Britain, the paper calls for geographies of education to engage more closely with work published in cognate disciplines and not to overlook the relational nature of decolonial education in global north contexts.

## KEYWORDS

alternative education, Black education, Black supplementary school, citizenship, decolonisation, geographies of education, geography education, informal education, non-formal education

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Geographies of education is now established as a key sub-discipline of human geography. Necessarily capacious, much early scholarship that emerged in the 2000s focused on formal spaces of education and learning such as schools, nurseries, and universities, and the experiences, inequalities, political formations, and identities that produce them (Collins & Coleman, 2008). Hanson Thiem's (2009) foundational call for 'outward-looking' analyses that situate education and learning as generative—that is to say productive of rather than produced by processes of political change and economic transformation—has precipitated work addressing education's intersections with geopolitics (Müller, 2011; Nguyen, 2020) and neoliberalism (work in this vein has also cohered under 'critical geographies of education', see e.g. Henry, 2020; McCreary et al., 2013; Mitchell, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2017). Elsewhere, other scholars have emphasised the importance of education's poststructuralist dimensions, arguing that research focusing on children, young people and families can provide valuable insight on such processes (Holloway & Jöns, 2012), as well as uncovering the diverse ways educational practices are bound up in everyday and transnational mobilities (Brooks & Waters, 2018; Waters, 2012, Waters, 2017).

Within these interlinking seams of scholarship, geographers' interest in alternative and informal education spaces has also burgeoned (Kraftl, 2013a; Mills & Kraftl, 2014), often shining important light on the spaces and practices of alternative and informal—understood together here as 'non-formal'—education spaces. While studies of home-schooling, care farms, and other contemporary educational environments have proven formative to the development of the sub-discipline in this regard (Kraftl, 2013b, 2015), a significant strand of work has also emerged that centres historical accounts of education and learning across a range of settings including citizenship education, anarchic education, voluntarism, and geography education (Alderman et al., 2022; Church, 2019; Ferretti, 2016; Mills, 2016a). Combining archival, oral history, and participatory methodologies with ethnographic and other approaches, this work has documented the practices and cultures of informal and alternative education past, albeit from predominantly Anglocentric and North American perspectives. However, despite the breadth and richness of this work to date, no dedicated review of this scholarship exists, and it is directly from this lacuna that this paper situates historical geographies of non-formal education as an emergent but coherent, conceptually-generative, and empirically-rich subfield of geographies of education.

The review has two main objectives. First, it maps the key contributions of this scholarship to date, identifying prominent themes that have emerged including citizenship and morality, radical pedagogy, and the worldly spaces of geography education. Second, and by connecting geographical scholarship to British history and sociology of education, it proposes two further thematic strands around which further research could cohere: Black education and decolonial education. Thus, while I wish to highlight how historical work on non-formal education has enabled the empirical and methodological expansion of geographies of education, the paper also identifies avenues that might guide further expansion of the subdiscipline. In so doing, the review echoes two recent calls in geographies of education and human geography more broadly. First, for the 'cross-fertilisation' (Kraftl et al., 2022) of the subdiscipline with insight from cognate disciplines, and second, for the proliferation of analyses and epistemologies that address subaltern and marginalised subjectivities so often rendered secondary or derivative in Euro-American geographical scholarship (Jazeel, 2019; Oswin, 2020). With this in mind, the paper also responds directly to Kraftl and colleagues' call to 'consider what equitable, inclusive scholarship in geographies of education might look like, and to find ways to decolonise that scholarship in ways that decentre those approaches that currently predominate' (2022, p. 6). With these retro- and prospective objectives in mind, this review offers a useful resource for scholars keen to trace both new and well-worn paths through the historical geographies of non-formal education literature.

The review is structured as follows: first, it presents existing work in the subdiscipline centred on citizenship, morality, and voluntarism. This part of the review traces the non-formal educational practices that emerged in 20th century Britain from the Interwar period to the century's latter decades. In the following section, the focus shifts to the fugitive and anarchic education spaces of 19th and 20th century North America and Europe. In the second half of the paper, I focus on recent literature uncovering the imperatives of Britain's Black education movement and other

decolonial education spaces, offering some reflections on the value and significance of alternative epistemologies for reimagining both the past(s) and future(s) of the historical geographies of non-formal education.

## 2 | HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHIES OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION: THEMES AND KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

Scholarship on 'alternative' educational environments such as homeschooling, care farms, and forest schools (Kraftl, 2013a)—spaces ideologically, pedagogically, spatially and otherwise disconnected from the educational 'mainstream'—as well as 'informal' spaces of learning that occur within, rather than outside, everyday life, has positioned a range of previously overlooked education spaces as central to geographical understandings of learning, pedagogy, and education in recent years. To date, this work has interrogated how spaces of education and learning have produced particular types of citizens, uncovered the 'alter-childhoods' (Kraftl, 2013a, 2013b, 2015; Riele et al., 2016) children and young people grow up in, and revealed how education spaces can raise political consciousness and address issues of socio-political concern (Bannister, 2014; Mills, 2013, 2016a; Mills & Kraftl, 2014). Such studies have also captured the potential of education to produce collective experiences of agency and envisage other possibilities for educational worlds that operate beyond the tenets of individualism, entrepreneurialism, and meritocracy so often fostered in formal educational settings such as mainstream schools and universities (Mitchell, 2017). Far from situating non-formal education spaces as a panacea to neoliberal practices however, geographers have increasingly argued that a formal—non-formal dichotomy overlooks the 'messiness' of education, and have encouraged context-specific analyses that account for rather than overlook the intersecting and complex nature of these ostensibly disparate educational worlds (Bauer & Landolt, 2018).

Within this body of work, scholars have considered Black and anti-racist traditions including Afro-centric schools providing an alternative to mainstream schools in Toronto (Basu, 2013) and supplementary private tuition in England and Wales (Holloway & Kirby, 2020). In the context of young people's decolonial activism, Freshour and Iniestra Varelas (2023) have traced the work of contemporary political education programmes increasing access to education for Latinx underdocumented youth and how these efforts are grounded in historical experiences of Black struggle in the US South. Foundational work by Gough et al. (2019) has positioned apprenticeships in Ghana as overlooked sites of informal education, while in children's geographies, Balagopalan's (2019) study of compulsory schooling and child labour in India centres postcolonial and subaltern perspectives to understanding the politics of education in early childhood. Similarly, employing queer theory and critical race theory, Kraftl (2020) has prompted a reconsideration of the ways childhood experiences of difference violence, marginalisation, and trauma shape the social, material, and environmental conditions of childhood itself, while Abebe and Biswas (2021) have called for research that centres decolonial, indigenous, and spiritual learning contexts as they unfold across global south and north contexts relationally.

Where much of this scholarship has focused on contemporary practices of learning, a smaller portion has concentrated on historical spaces. Not only has this work expanded the multiple spatialities and temporalities through which the diverse landscape of non-formal education is understood (see e.g. Moore, 2016 on philanthropic modes of maternal education practiced by middle-class English women in the early 20th century), it has also advanced the conceptual frames through which these spaces are apprehended and explicated, with research on the moral geographies of citizenship education and youth proving particularly instructive.

### 2.1 | Youth work, citizenship, and morality

Despite historical work in 'outward-looking' (Hanson Thiem, 2009) or 'critical' geographies of education figuring less frequently (though see e.g. Mitchell, 2017), there have been numerous poststructural analyses of informal educational settings, perhaps none more noteworthy than Mills' (2011, 2013, 2015, 2016a, 2016b) work on feminist geopolitics and scouting and the moral geographies of gender and religion. Mills' earlier work on the Scout Movement

in Britain, for example, offers insight on the production of youth citizenship education beyond formal educational institutions (2013). Another study posits a feminist geopolitical analysis of the Scout Movement, illustrating the ways informal citizenship education was bound up in geopolitical practices of nation-building and the production of imperial subjects (2011). Significantly, this work demonstrates how historical geographical enquiry is well positioned to unsettle dominant representations of popular informal education spaces.

Similarly, Mills' (2016a) investigation into another British youth movement, the Woodcraft Folk, provides original insight onto the cultures of voluntarism and training that underpinned spaces of informal education, thus uncovering valuable accounts of actors whose contributions proved crucial to this and other organisations staying afloat. In the same vein, Mills' (2015) investigation into the Jewish Lads Brigade and Club in post-WWII Manchester situates youth work as a key site for understanding the organisational politics, priorities, and challenges of informal education in urban faith communities. This work emphasised how 'axes of identity' (2015, p. 532) such as religion or gender prompt us to think about non-formal educational landscapes through the lens of difference, power, and identity. In further work on the club, Mills (2016b) explores the moral geographies of desire and encounter that played out amid the provision of historical informal educational in post-war Northern England.

Other examples of geographical research recovering historical practices and cultures of citizenship education include Dickens and MacDonald's (2015) analysis of the Salford Lads Club in Manchester and Church's (2019) account of The Council for the Preservation of Rural England, a body that oversaw the protection and preservation of rural amenity in interwar England. While both examples share temporal and spatial characteristics with the case studies examined by Mills, each extends the epistemological and methodological reach of historical geographical research on non-formal education in different ways. First, in their discussion of digital storytelling and the recovery of archival records with past Club members during a centenary celebration in 2011, Dickens and MacDonald's research demonstrates the civic value of conducting historical work on non-formal educational organisations that generated experiences of belonging, identity formation and community building. Where this work showcases the methodological value in recovering historical accounts, Church's research elides the ostensible cleavage between non-formal and formal education provision by recounting the Council's efforts to initiate the provision of informal 'nature study' in English schools by promoting experiential learning about plants and their habitats beyond the confines of the classroom. Situating this mode of provision as '(in)formal', Church's work reminds us that non-formal education includes educational practices negotiated amid and delivered within formal as well as informal or alternative educational structures.

Craggs (2011) investigation of expeditions for Commonwealth young people from Dover, England to Delhi, India during a 16 year period from 1965 to 1980 extends insight on historical modes of citizenship education in transnational contexts. Analysing overland expeditions for young people in their late teens and twenties, many of whom were students or recent graduates, this study provides evidence of the ways experiences of self-reflection, contact and hospitality between Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth young people in a post-WWII context engendered 'Commonwealth citizenship' in expedition participants. Framed around cultures of travel rather than education, Craggs' study evinces how geographical analyses of education hailing from other sub-disciplinary silos can pose valuable resources to geographies of non-formal education. Moreover, Craggs' work highlights the value of extending analyses of non-formal education beyond school age to include adult learners. Elsewhere, and extending Craggs' focus on international travel, Fairless Nicholson (2023) positions youth exchanges from London to the Caribbean island Grenada in 1983 as key sites of decolonial informal education. As this section has shown, historical studies of citizenship education provision in informal educational settings are invaluable to the historical geographies of non-formal education. In the following section, I extend this discussion by reviewing research on alternative geography education provision.

## 2.2 | Radical pedagogy, political education, and fugitive spaces of geography education

Ferretti's (2016) recent study of the Cempuis school in Northern France, 1800–1894 provides an important historical account in this regard. Cempuis was a state-funded orphanage that combined pioneering approaches such as

mixed-sex teaching and secularism with radical geography education including outdoor learning and early postcolonial critiques of Eurocentric map projections. As Ferretti argues, Cempuis' geographies offer a useful lens through which the promotion of anarchist ideology in post-revolutionary France can be understood. Following Kraftl's theorisation of contemporary alternative education spaces (2013a), another key seam of Ferretti's analysis conveys the school's diverse spatialities, including its internationalist outlook, regular timetabling of outdoor exercise, bi-weekly walks, and teaching of foreign languages.

Other work in this vein has opened up similar sites to geographical analysis, including those in opposition to formal geography provision in 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Norcup's (2015) study of the journal *Contemporary Issues in Geography and Education* (CIGE) is incisive here, revealing the critical and dissenting voices that emerged within British school and university-level geography in the 1980s. As Norcup shows, CIGE was compiled and produced by geographers enthusiastic about reshaping formal geography curricula and creating 'alternative disciplinary identities' (2015, p. 64) to normative geographical knowledge production in schools and universities. Foregrounding key voices in the founding and production of the journal through archival research on the journal's associated 'grey literature', Norcup's reconstruction represents a valuable chronicling of the often-silenced ways educators strive to engender shifts in how geographical education is taught, including in the case of CIGE, by incorporating critical perspectives on social and cultural issues of the time such as South African Apartheid, Nuclear warfare, and ecological crises.

Similarly, Alderman et al.'s (2022) study of U.S. Freedom Schools—volunteer-led summer schools operating in Mississippi, 1964—presents an account of disrupting, upending, and reimagining the traditional provision of teaching in state controlled schools during the US Civil Rights Movement. Formed as part of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee's (SNCC) 'Freedom Summer Project', the Mississippi Freedom Schools operated out of community meeting places including churches and community centres. The schools taught a curriculum that departed radically from that practiced in mainstream schools and grounded in anti-racist, participatory, and student-focused pedagogies. As the authors note, Freedom Schools 'fought to transform Black people individually and collectively into active participants in their own liberation ... [and] dismantle the box of racism that enveloped communities' in the Deep South (2022, p. 6–8). Like Norcup, a primary angle of Alderman et al.'s analysis is on geography education, and the Freedom Schools are situated as a valuable historical account of counter-canonical geography provision.

Following scholars in black geographies, Alderman et al. also situate the Freedom Schools as an original contribution to 'Black geographies of education': SNCC's Freedom Schools practiced a Black fugitive mode of learning that challenged the anti-Black racism and educational subordination of African-Americans under segregation (Mitchell, 2017). More than simply provide Black children with a helping hand to do better in mainstream subjects, Freedom Schools taught students critical perspectives on race and segregation through curriculum that prioritised comparative, regional teaching on the racialised poverty and marginalisation of the Southeastern US. In this sense, the study offers an instructive response to Kraftl et al.'s (2022) call for inclusive and decolonial scholarship within geographies of education, and builds on work elsewhere that situates Black-led education as key sites of resistance, from the clandestine appropriation of plantation buildings as classrooms, to the Black Panther Party's Free Breakfast program (Heynen, 2009) and contemporary efforts to reimagine environmental education (Nxumalo & Ross, 2019). In the following sections, I introduce two further potential strands for research on historical Black-led and decolonial modes of non-formal education in 20th century London.

### 3 | HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHIES OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION: NEW DIRECTIONS

As the discussion so far has indicated, despite a healthy engagement with historical contexts, there remains much potential for geographers to engage more closely with historical accounts of non-formal education spaces. As Alderman et al.'s account of the SNCC Freedom Schools emphasised, at stake here is not simply the expansion of a subdiscipline for expansion's sake, but rather the opportunity to advance how a geographies of education contributes to a 'questioning [of] dominant white framings of the world and open[ing] ... up to the alternative ways of knowing

and living of communities of colour' (2022, p. 16). While this work is, in Alderman et al.'s case, indebted to scholarship in Black geographies, it also builds on a body of scholarship by historians and educationalists of US Civil Rights and African American history. This is significant because, as Awcock has noted in this journal section, being open to 'the work of historians who take the spatial seriously' (2020, p. 2) can offer great value to historical geographers keen to extend existing boundaries of geographical inquiry.

As far as Black education is concerned, while employing inter- or cross-disciplinary perspectives isn't the only fillip for historical geographers of non-formal education to draw on—I would also point to the methodological significance of increased digitisation in improving access to previously inaccessible archival collections (though see Hodder & Beckingham (2022) for a more in-depth discussion on this)—turning to scholarship beyond disciplinary geography certainly offers a rich resource. In the US context, further work would benefit from engaging with historian Rickford's (2016) extensive study of Pan-African nationalist private schools that emerged from the US Black Power Movement, while Borges' (2019) account of the 'militant education' projects that formed part of the struggle for the liberation of Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau during the 1960s and 70s offers a useful frame for thinking through non-formal education spaces beyond Anglo contents.

With Alderman et al.'s (2022) call to elide geographies of education to Black geographies in mind, in the following section I review a recent body of work in Black British history and the sociology of education on the Black British Supplementary Schools Movement, a movement that emerged in British cities during the decades following WWII to reimagine and transform the education of Black and working class children in British cities. In so doing, I highlight one area historical geographers might engage with more closely in their efforts to expand the subdiscipline in ways that render it more inclusive to 'alternative ways of knowing and living' (2022, p. 16). Paying particular attention to the conceptual as well as empirical contributions that this reimagined terrain represents, I argue such an approach can inflect dominant conceptualisations in geographies of education with new registers that account more sensitively for Black educational practices and geographies. Following this, my attention turns to a second area of focus: decolonial thought. Here, and following Abebe and Biswas (2021), I caution calls for geographies of education scholarship derivative of global south contexts (Kraftl et al., 2022) not to overlook the ways decolonisation and decolonising work played out amid 'a north-south continuum' (Abebe & Biswas, 2021, p. 120). Here I situate radical educational praxis in Britain within decolonisation struggles elsewhere.

### 3.1 | Black education

Analogous to the rise of scholarship in geographies of education over the past two decades, sustained historical appraisal by sociologists, educationalists, historians and community researchers has brought the hidden histories of Britain's Black education movement of the post-WWII decades to light (Andrews, 2013; Clennon, 2014; Gerrard, 2013; Mirza & Reay, 2000; Myers & Grosvenor, 2011; Reay & Mirza, 1997; Warmington, 2014; Waters, 2018). This loose alliance of evening or weekend schools led by educators, parents, and intellectuals emerged during the late 1950s alongside a range of other community led initiatives in publishing, bookselling, and defence campaigns to resist racism in mainstream education. Incorporating both grassroots and semi-professional spaces funded by local authorities, the movement consisted of non-formal education projects—such as supplementary schools, anti-universities, and youth projects—that sought to problematise, resist, and reimagine mainstream education provision for Black children, young people, and adults.

Blending insight from original oral history interviews and an increasingly well-worn path through the material of several Black archives, a key strength of this work is its highlighting of the spatial, temporal, and organisational breadth of the movement and its potential to deliver radical and transformative educational futures. With a primary focus on Black supplementary schooling, research has revealed a range of details on supplementary school life, including: curriculum (Andrews, 2013; Jones, 1986); schools' embeddedness in wider forms of Black political organising (Waters, 2018); the gendered dynamics of participation (Gerrard, 2011; Mirza & Reay, 2000); the tensions and fractures afflicting the movement including the 'fault-line' between 'self-help' (self-funded) and 'official' (state-funded)

schools (Andrews, 2013; Myers & Grosvenor, 2011; Waters, 2018); comparisons between working-class educational movements including Socialist Sunday Schools (Gerrard, 2014; Reay & Mirza, 1997); and the decline of Black supplementary schooling amid state multiculturalism in the 1980s (Owusu, 2016).

Another key contribution of this literature has been to highlight the alternative educational cultures running through the movement. Writing in 1986, Jones' portrait of the Josina Machel supplementary school in the Clapton area of East London, for example, reconstructs first-hand accounts, recorded discussions, and written letters which together offer an in-depth look at a working school across a 10-year period. Highlighting the politics of neglect Black children faced in both the classrooms and history books of mainstream schools, Jones argued that the legacies of colonialism and institutional racism were central to Black children needing 'more motivation' in educational settings (Jones, 1986, p. 5). For Mirza and Reay (2000), Black supplementary schools initiated a reimagining of the 'hegemony of whiteness and individualism within wider society' through the production of Blackness as a social identity and radical pedagogical practice (ibid., p. 525). Drawing on interviews with educators in leadership positions at four supplementary schools conducted at the turn of the century, and responding to the new sociology of social movements literature at the time, they situated Black supplementary schooling as a new social movement and 'subaltern counter publics' (Mirza & Reay, 2000, p. 532) that resisted the pejorative signification of race and racism in Britain. Taking a similarly qualitative approach drawn from archival research in London and ethnographic research on an anonymised contemporary supplementary school, Andrews' monograph *Resisting Racism* (2013) argues that a specifically African mode of Blackness rooted in pan-African, anti-colonial thinking was the 'glue' that bound the movement together (ibid., p. 38). Together, these three studies demonstrate the sustained interest in Britain's historical Black non-formal education spaces beyond geographies of education.

A central argument across this work is that Black education spaces were diverse, varied and shifting, and reflected the urban contexts and geographies in which they operated. Serving multigenerational communities and shaping the lives of a range of actors, from educators to students and parents, Black education spaces produced distinct spatial, ideological, and temporal articulations of non-formal education in post-WWII London. As the histories of this radical educational movement are increasingly made visible in academic scholarship, best-selling books (Akala, 2018) and television dramas (McQueen, 2020) have also contributed to its appraisal. Yet, against this backdrop of piqued public and academic critique, more work is needed to better understand the movement's spatial and temporal scales. Geographers could, for example, investigate the discursive ways political as well as African-diasporic modes of Blackness permeated and animated the movement (Andrews, 2013), or uncover the spatial politics around why some Black supplementary schools relied on state funding where others resisted such funding (Waters, 2018). While insight of this nature would bolster that provided elsewhere, in geography, attending to this historical occlusion can create valuable theorisations of educational alterity in a discipline yet to sufficiently attend to issues of identity, race, politics, or culture, and address urgent questions around whose 'knowledge is worth knowing and who is marked as knowledgeable' (Patel, 2020, p. 19). At a conceptual level, this might mean extending understandings of the distinctive experiences of childhood that non-formal education spaces engender—something Peter Kraftl terms 'alter-childhoods' (Kraftl, 2015, see also Ferretti, 2016)—to include Black spatialities and subjectivities. Following Gough et al.'s work on informal education, livelihoods, and training (2019), geographers might also expand the purview of non-formal education itself, bringing attention to spaces of youth and adult education that were analogous to supplementary schooling but are yet to be documented as part of Black and anti-racist educational struggle in Britain. Finally, and as recent thinking on UK Black archives and archival geographic practice has shown, this work also poses a range of methodological as well as conceptual challenges historical geographers are well placed to engage with. These include navigating precarious access to archival resources as a result of underfunding (Hyacinth, 2019) and questions around the politics of care and ethics in archival recovery (Faria et al., 2021).

### 3.2 | Decolonising and decolonisation

Another productive way to extend Black geographies of education is to engage decolonial thinking. Deriving from the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality paradigm associated with Latin America scholarship (Tuck & Yang, 2012),

decolonial thinking posits modernity itself as derivative of coloniality and seeks to forge non-Eurocentric modes of being and knowledge (Asher, 2013). Geographers have attempted to 'insert ... [them]selves into ongoing dynamics of coloniality' (Noxolo, 2017, p. 318) by engaging with these ideas (see e.g. Craggs & Neate, 2020; Esson et al., 2017; Gergan et al., 2023). Overlapping with the imperatives of critical, feminist, postcolonial, black, indigenous, and subaltern geographies, Radcliffe and Radhuber (2020) argue that decolonial geographies problematise knowledge, subjectivity and power, magnifying and amplifying the liberation and resistance of indigenous, racialised groups against the interrelated violence of white supremacy, racial capitalism, and anti-blackness (see also Daigle & Ramirez, 2019). For Jazeel (2017), decolonial geography implicates Anglophone disciplinary geography in three key contestations: to engage with 'minor' and 'southern' modes of knowledge production; to reflect on the discipline's self-serving nature; and to interrogate geography's claims to universality despite being overwhelmingly concerned with Anglophone geography.

With decolonial interventions in contemporary geographies of education and youth now established (see e.g. Abebe & Biswas, 2021; Gergan et al., 2023), Krafft et al. (2022, p. 2) have urged extra attention be paid to 'research in and from the Global South' if the dominant conceptual and empirical frames that proliferate within geographies of education today are to be decolonised. While this call rightly echoes Jazeel (2017) and others, historical research on non-formal education should also be attentive to the ways historical education in the global north was often 'relational and in motion' (Gergan et al., 2023, p. 677), bound up in decolonial and anticolonial politics hailing from transnational contexts that spanned north and south rather than remain siloed within local or national contexts. Thus, to overlook global north contexts as part of efforts to decolonise geographies of education in favour of global south contexts threatens to occlude the complex material and ideological transnational geographies and mobilities that flowed from the global south to the global north and vice versa, and which underpinned radical, decolonial and anti-racist education spaces operating from Britain and other global north contexts in the second half of the 20th century.

Making sense of how education spaces contributed to historical processes of decolonising and decolonisation thus offers an auxiliary mode for decolonising the dominant conceptual and empirical frames that proliferate in geographies of education today. As well this spatial critique, engaging geographies of non-formal education with historical perspectives on decolonising/decolonisation illustrates the 'longer historical arc of Black radicalism, decolonial thought and the politics of liberation' (Narayan, 2019, p. 58) which animates contemporary campaigns in the global north and south to decolonise school-age and higher education today (Bhambra et al., 2018; Elliott-Cooper, 2017). Sticking with the case study discussed above, in this final section I briefly signal how Black British supplementary schools were crucial to realising decolonising/decolonisation in the second half of the 20th century, and highlight how geographical scholarship might contribute to this body of work.

As the above discussion showed, Deep South Freedom Schools waged place-specific struggles to contextualise and link their students' everyday experiences of de facto segregation by teaching the regional realities of poverty and marginalisation that affected them (Alderman et al., 2022). Similarly, Black British Supplementary Schools sought to instil students with an understanding of the cultural achievements of the Black diaspora so often erased by anti-Black violence, racism, and discrimination, at the heart of which lay police violence towards Black young people and overrepresentation in schools for the educationally 'sub-normal' (Coard, 1971). Decolonising the minds of young learners formed part of broader decolonisation efforts unfolding across civic and civil contexts of schooling, housing, policing, and employment in Britain at the time. As well as the setting up of supplementary schools, efforts to decolonise British education in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century included Black women's attempts to improve mainstream schools (Bryan et al., 1985), campaigns by parents to oppose schools for the 'educationally sub-normal' (ESN) (Dhondy et al., 1982; see also Coard, 1971), and parent-led protests against bussing (Esteves, 2018). In the decolonising world of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many of the key actors involved in these struggles had arrived in Britain as a direct result of decolonisation, and carried 'a political education in their luggage' (Johnson, 2014, p. 665).

As historians, cultural theorists and educationalists have shown, Black supplementary schooling itself operated within a set of radical ideologies, cultures, and politics spanning Europe, North America and the Caribbean



which cohered at a time of Black Power, anti-colonialism, and decolonisation. Across various scales and disciplines, scholars have referred to such transnational connections and solidarities through concepts like the 'Black Atlantic' (Gilroy, 1992) and the 'Third World Project' (Prashad, 2007), and have drawn attention to the everyday political currents that connected Britain and the US, and Britain and Caribbean in the post-WWII decades (Kramer-Taylor, 2023, Waters, 2018). This has included bringing into view accounts of internationalist self-help collective Race Today's connecting of Black struggle in Britain with anticolonial struggles in the various 'homelands' of its members (Field et al., 2019), as well as insight on similar groups hosting and visiting key figures involved in radical political organising in the US, Caribbean and Africa (Angelo, 2015; Trew, 2012). Less is known however about how these circulations of radical, internationalist and decolonial politics influenced spaces of learning or education (though see Andrews, 2013, p. 52 and Gerrard, 2014, p. 144 on one supplementary school's links with a similar organisation in the US), or how non-formal education spaces formed important nodes in transnational networks of solidarity between the UK and decolonising nations elsewhere (though see Fairless Nicholson, 2023). Engaging more closely with the ways education spaces and educators were agents in historical decolonising struggles and decolonisation movements represents an important avenue for advancing historical-geographical scholarship on non-formal education in the future.

## 4 | CONCLUSION

Indebted to scholarship analysing predominantly formal school age spaces of education in disciplinary geography, in recent years research on the historical geographies of non-formal education spaces has flourished. As this review has shown, prominent areas of focus have included educational citizenship and morality, radical pedagogy, and spaces of geography education with this work revealing the varied ways non-formal education spaces variously challenge or interlink with spaces of normative educational knowledge production. While the review has made clear the richness and value of scholarship in this subdiscipline, it has also proposed several areas of focus that can enliven these debates, namely paying closer attention to Black education spaces and the dynamics of decolonising/decolonisation.

With Alderman et al.'s (2022) call to reimagine geographies of education from black and fugitive perspectives that centre processes and practices of resistance in mind, the paper highlighted how geographical scholarship on non-formal education might engage more closely with spaces heretofore obscured or rendered marginal in this body of work. In offering a way forward, the paper highlighted the value of looking beyond disciplinary geography to animate these efforts, signalling relevant work in history, sociology, and education on the Black British supplementary schools movement that might inspire greater engagement in this vein. With its epistemological conviction to make visible other educational worlds, uncovering the rich contributions of Black educational knowledge production offers compelling ground to enrich the subdiscipline historical non-formal geographies of education.

As well as considering the geographies of Black supplementary schooling from a fine-grained, poststructuralist perspective, the paper also argued for closer attention to be paid to a politics of decoloniality. A key point here was that historical geographies of non-formal education are well placed to acknowledge the relational nature of educational knowledge production as it was fused to the politics of decoloniality, rather than (inadvertently) reproduce coloniality's urge to dissociate and segment (McKittrick, 2021; Lowe, 2015, cited in Gergan et al., 2023) educational knowledge production as situated either in the global south or north. By uncovering the historic transnational networks and practices of decolonial, anti-colonial, and anti-racist solidarity and organising woven through London's non-formal education spaces in the late 20th century, the above discussion demonstrates how the difficult task of decentring and decolonising geographies of education might be just as fertile beginning from global north as well as south contexts.

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