Anti-Racist Pedagogies

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What is Anti-Racist Pedagogy?

Anti-racist pedagogies interrogate socially constructed notions of race and challenge systems and structures that re/produce and sustain racial disparities. This pedagogy is explicitly conscious of race, Indigeneity, ethnicity, language, accent, migration experiences, and place of birth and intersections with gender, ability, social class, sexuality, and faith/worldview/religion. It addresses not only experiences and expressions of racism and intersecting systems of oppression but also the social construction of whiteness by exploring how the knowledge, values, behaviours, interests and needs of White people have become privileged and normalized as the status quo or the norm in society. Anti-racist pedagogies acknowledge the prevalence of white supremacy as an economic, cultural, and political system that maintains power asymmetries, normalizes whiteness as the standard, and maintains control among White people (Frances Lee Ansley, as cited in Gillborn, 2015). In challenging white supremacy and normativity, anti-racist pedagogies focus on centring a multiplicity of intersectional and experiential ways of knowing and being. Sharing the counter-narratives of Black, Indigenous, and racialized people and communities challenges majoritarian narratives that dominate schooling and society and often create negative associations with non-white "Others" that are historically and intentionally denied access, opportunity, belonging, and education.

Anti-racist pedagogy is an *active process* of understanding, exposing and dismantling racism that moves within and beyond the classroom. It is an organizing effort for institutionalized and social change. This process requires educators to reflect on their social positions and apply these insights and anti-racist practices in their research, disciplines, institutions, and communities (Kishimoto, 2018). When instructors teach from an anti-racist approach, they must explicitly name and talk about race and locate themselves in these conversations. They must also acknowledge the historical and structural roots of racism and oppression and investigate how race and racism play out presently in their classrooms, education systems, and society.

Why Do We Need Anti-Racist Pedagogy?

Anti-racist approaches are needed to identify how racism is built into our social structures and systems and affords rights and protections for white people while reproducing racial inequity for

Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities. These include racial inequities in education, justice, healthcare, politics, the media, housing, employment, policing, and more. Anti-racist pedagogies must also counter white, middle-class dominant norms in educational settings. When educators confront white students with the realities of racism from the perspective of racialized people without addressing the systemic constructions of whiteness, marginalized voices are dismissed, and learning is delayed (Leonardo, 2004; Reason & Evans, 2007).

What are Examples of Racist/Oppressive Education?

Examples of racist or oppressive education include teaching practices, materials, or curricula that:

- Use language or images that are offensive or derogatory.
- Promote or reinforce stereotypes and ideologies of "otherness."
- Ignore or silence the contributions, lived realities, and knowledge systems, of racialized peoples or reduce their full range of human experience to deficit, trauma, and harm.
- Fabricate ideas of racial and other group-based hierarchies through "objectivity," "scientific findings," or other racist uses of research.
- Fail to center or critically analyze race and power.
- Fail to acknowledge, value, and engage students of colour.
- Fail to address racial slurs, microaggressions, and racist behaviours in person and online.

Racist and oppressive education can also manifest through policies that are silent on addressing racism, oppression, or histories of exclusion for racialized students (Galloway et al., 2019). Educational policies and practices can also be oppressive when designed to disproportionately target students of colour, such as policies surrounding disciplinary action. Moreover, policies designed to counter racial inequities can be oppressive if they utilize deficit-based or race-neutral language (Galloway et al., 2019).

Anti-Racist Pedagogy is Not

To engage in anti-racist pedagogy, instructors must create conditions for charged learning environments. In these spaces, students unlearn normative constructs in society and learn about knowledge systems that have long been marginalized. Instructors accept and expect resistance and center multiple and often contradictory truths. This will likely be an uncomfortable process for many people. However, it is important to distinguish between comfort and safety, especially for students with greater privilege in the classroom. The fantasy of comfort needs to be challenged by centring discomfort as a necessary part of this work. Safety acknowledges historical and present-day power asymmetries that result in relations of domination and subordination and disproportionate outcomes and realities politically, economically, socially, culturally, and psychically. Educators should accept and establish that anti-racist pedagogy is not:

- Easy
- "Positive"
- Comfortable
- Linear/neat/orderly
- Polite
- A quick fix
- A resume-builder

Foundational Concepts for Understanding Anti-Racist Pedagogy

Many anti-racist pedagogies are grounded in Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an academic movement that seeks to understand and transform race, racism, and racial power structures. At its core, CRT is concerned with how power is distributed among different races and how race-based oppression has been used to maintain the power and privilege of white people through law, education, and other institutions (Mensah & Jackson, 2018). CRT interrogates systems' historical, economic, political, social, and cultural contexts. It also considers intersections with settler colonialism, ableism, sexism, classism, transphobia, and other forms of oppression. In education, CRT explains how notions of fairness, meritocracy, colour blindness, and neutrality are framed through dominant perspectives and ignore the

collective experiences of race and racism that shape the lives of Black, Indigenous, and other racialized students. Anti-racist pedagogies are also found in cultural studies, Critical Whiteness Studies, racial capitalism, and other frameworks.

Key concepts/frameworks that are connected to CRT frameworks include:

- Anti-Colonial Theories
- Racialization
- Racial Hierarchy
- Racism
- Relational racialization
- Whiteness
- White supremacy

What is Whiteness? Why is it Important?

Gillborn (2015) refers to whiteness as "a set of assumptions, beliefs and practices that place the interests and perspectives of white people at the center of what is considered normal and every day" (p. 278). Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) identifies and deconstructs the racial construct of whiteness by analyzing the historic, social, political, and cultural elements of white supremacy and how they have contributed to the marginalization of people racialized as other than white. CWS examines how history, law, culture, and pseudoscience have been used to invent notions of whiteness. In addition to analyzing histories of whiteness, CWS explores how white privilege and supremacy are maintained and how they can be challenged and dismantled. For example, interest convergence speaks to the pattern that Black and racialized interests will be advanced only when they align with white interests.

Key concepts to explore when learning and teaching about whiteness include:

- o Whiteness
- o White Identity
- o White supremacy

- o Othering
- o Erasure
- o Myths of Neutrality and Meritocracy
- o Reverse racism

Pedagogical Considerations

Engaging in anti-racist pedagogy will differ for each of us based on our power and privilege. This is an iterative process that begins with self-reflection. For example, educators should ask critical questions, including:

- How do I understand myself as a raced person?
- How am I replicating ideas that perpetuate racism?
- How am I disrupting and interrupting them?
- How do I move beyond inclusive teaching strategies to redistribute power more equitably in my classroom?
- Which voices are heard? Who or what counts as an authority? What kinds of discourses are valued in my classrooms?

How Do I Practice Anti-Racist Pedagogy in My Courses?

- Acknowledge uneasy solidarities (Upadhyay, 2019).
- Recognize *relational racialization.*
- Recognize *power asymmetries.*
- Historicize and contextualize racial injustices.
- Emphasize contributions of Black, Indigenous, and racialized peoples.
- Focus on intersectionality and challenge essentialist characterizations of any group.
- Teach about global and local resistance movements.
- Create spaces for *cross-racial solidarities* for racial justice.
- Engage in conversation about complexities, complicities, and divergences.
- Challenge normative ways of knowing and center multiple and diverse knowledges and ways of being.

- Question what counts as scholarship and research and what has been normalized and naturalized under codes of whiteness.
- Review our syllabus to see how many Black, Indigenous, and racialized people are listed, particularly those with intersecting identities.
- Expose examples of scholarly knowledge and contributions stolen from Black and Indigenous and racialized people and claimed as white knowledge.
- Look for knowledge in students' lived experiences, communities, places of practice, and other locations beyond the academy.
- Create conditions for critical care communities that challenge normative ideologies with fierceness and directness *and* practice deep respect and care for the dignity of all life.

Activities

Reflection Exercise

- When did you first know you were raced, or when did you first know that you had a race? Take a moment and reflect on what that memory was for you. The first time race became a marker of difference in your memory could be a story of direct experience or learning by omission (who or what you are in relation to what someone else is not).
- How did learning this shape your experience moving forward? OR What did you learn from this experience?

Reconstructing Your Class and Syllabus from a Decolonial and Anti-Racist Framework
(Adapted from <u>Decolonizing Your Syllabus, an Anti-Racist Guide for Your College</u>)

Introducing Yourself & Your Position

- Do students know who you are? Consider introducing yourself— race or ethnicity, gender pronouns, academic experience, cultural identity, etc.—as the instructor of the course and providing anti-racist and equity-minded messaging to welcome your students. This creates a sense of safety and belonging for Black, Indigenous, and racialized students who have likely experienced harm in their schooling histories.

Anti-Racist & Inclusive Messaging

- Does the syllabus include explicit language about the intolerance of microaggressions and racist remarks, actions, and behaviour in the course? Which students and faculty are protected while engaging in racist behaviours? Which students and faculty are harmed because we stay silent when harm is committed, omit their realities and existence in what we choose to teach/not teach, or view their resistance as a threat to our power and control?

- Do your course syllabus and eClass site include positive messages and affirmations to validate and celebrate differences and provide a greater sense of belonging for BIPOC students in the course?

- Do the images and videos in the course showcase the diversity and representation of the students and a diversity of ways of knowing and being?

Accessibility

- How can your course be more accessible, clear, inclusive, welcoming, and supportive for all learners to follow despite the modality of asynchronous or synchronous teaching?

- How do you include messaging regarding your responsibility as a faculty member to alert learners early if participation, learning, and attendance are not met?

- Can students contact you through multiple methods and with flexibility in communication times?

- What books, articles, and readings have been selected in your course? Are your course resources inclusive of diverse student realities on the basis of race, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexuality, disability, immigration status, language, and first-generation status?

- How does your course syllabus provide information regarding housing, food insecurities, and other on and off-campus resources that benefit economically disadvantaged students?

Towards Collective Care, Belonging, Safety and Integrity

- How might you challenge individualistic notions of learning and success and create opportunities for relational accountability, collective care, cooperation, and co-constructed learning?

- How might you encourage students to both learn about and engage in acts of collective resistance within and beyond your class?

- How do we work towards the safety and belonging of all students on the basis of protecting historically oppressed groups, recognizing that safety and belonging are not possible for all people in all places at all times? How, instead, do we develop the lens of who might not be included and continuously reconstruct our classrooms to increase safety and belonging?

- In what ways are you, as an instructor, continuously engaging in un/re/learning about how racism operates, how we might dismantle it, and *whom we need to be* in this process? In this way, teaching and living are in greater alignment, and we operate with greater integrity.

Co-Creating Learning Experiences with Students

- Do students contribute to the content and co-creating community norms and learning engagements outlined in the course syllabus?

- How are assessments and evaluations used to replicate the logics of punishment? Allocating points can cause students to assume they need more room for growth and may drop out of the course (Rose, 2017). Instead, faculty may consider holistic modalities and progression steps—for example, beginning, emerging, and proficiency—to develop opportunities for the learner to grow (Feldman, 2019) before finalizing student grading in the class.

Pedagogical Responsibilities to Support Student Learning

- Are mistakes expected, respected, modelled, and used to elevate students' understanding of the subject?

- Do you offer opportunities for resubmitting missed or late work?

- What opportunities do students have to catch up if they are behind due to personal circumstances, technological barriers, or other personal deterrents?

- Is language around policies and expectations of students supportive, or are they punitive? How might they promote deficit thinking that places the responsibility of success and failure on individual students, absolving faculty and the institution of their role in student learning (Valencia, 2010)?

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