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Unsettling the academy: working through the challenges of anti-racist pedagogy

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Teaching antiracism is a political project, which will be especially challenging in a university environment which has traditionally valued 'objective' and 'apolitical' knowledge. This analysis focuses on specific pedagogical practices which promote an antiracism framework, with specific attention directed to the *process* of learning antiracism and how these goals may be furthered within the academy. Exploring some of the inherent challenges and benefits associated with dominant group members assuming responsibility for antiracist teaching, the focus of the paper will also be to examine specific pedagogical practices which may be helpful in introducing students to such emotionally powerful material. The efficacy of such practices will then be explored as a means of challenging the status quo and envisioning a less Eurocentric approach to higher education.

Teaching antiracism is a political project, which will be especially challenging in a university environment which has traditionally privileged Eurocentric 'objective' and 'apolitical' knowledge. This intellectual domination has imposed certain ways of seeing the world through the lenses of traditional disciplines. As a result, only specific types of knowledge have historically been recognized as legitimate in the academy, effectively excluding any ways of knowing which differ from the Eurocentric norm. Antiracism, on the other hand, challenges the essential underpinnings of the university system, which has historically been grounded in White male privilege. and seeks to deconstruct domination couched in the language of detachment and universality. In this way, it challenges previously unquestioned 'truths', broadening what is valued and foregrounding voices that had previously been silenced.

This paper will explore some of the challenges inherent in teaching from an antiracist perspective,[1] as such pedagogy deviates from the norm of the academy and therefore may be expected to evoke significant resistance, both from students and

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more broadly, others situated at varying levels of the academic hierarchy. Teaching from within an antiracist framework also generates some unique classroom dynamics, as students are challenged to think outside the narrow confines of traditional academic borders. In classes which explicitly address antiracism, as noted by many educators in the field (see Jones, 1998; hooks, 1989; Romney *et al.*, 1992; Luke, 1994), learning occurs at an unusually deep level, as students are engaged at both a cognitive and affective level. Consequently, pedagogues must be prepared to deal with emotions that are triggered in students.

The emotional reactions of students to non-traditional pedagogy have not yet received adequate scholarly attention. Too often, pedagogues enter the classroom with the intention of unsettling students by challenging them to critically analyze mainstream discourses, without adequate consideration of how they will prepare learners for the potential emotional consequences of such teaching. In this way, the message is conveyed that such learning is solely an intellectual exercise, thereby negating the reality that strong emotions are likely to be evoked. Hence, students are often unprepared to cope with the resulting feelings which emerge in the course of the often emotionally charged classroom.

Given my social location as a White, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual woman, I acknowledge that I am approaching this analysis from a particular standpoint. As a result of my location, the positioning of Whiteness will figure prominently in this analysis. My purpose is not to center the dominant group, of which I am a member, thereby granting primacy to this discourse. It is also salient to explain at the outset of this analysis that my work will be grounded in my experience as a clinical social worker, with an interest in conflict resolution. It has been my observation that people experience conflict differently, depending on their various social locations, such as race, class, gender and so forth. Since joining a faculty of education, I have begun to problematize the way in which such issues are taken up (or not) in the context of teacher education programs.

This paper will explore some practical approaches for teaching from within an antiracist framework. Rather than offering a blueprint for how antiracism pedagogy should be implemented, my hope is to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about this critically important form of pedagogy. This analysis is the culmination of reflecting on my practice as a social worker, a recent experience co-teaching teacher candidates and a formative conceptualization of the links between group work facilitation skills and the practice of educators. Throughout the paper, I will highlight the ways in which the two are inextricably linked and how each may usefully inform the other.

Re-visioning classroom practice

When addressing the issue of teaching antiracism specifically, it is critical to consider the pedagogical strategies being employed. To teach such a contentious, emotion-provoking and potentially explosive subject, requires a gifted pedagogue and a transformative intellectual. No matter how brilliant the scholar, if they are not also an accomplished educator, the results can be disastrous. Tierney and Rhoads (1993) have described this type of educator as an individual who:

> … exercises forms of intellectual and pedagogic practice that attempt to insert teaching and learning directly into the political sphere by arguing that schooling represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations … whose intellectual practices are necessary grounded in forms of moral and ethical concern for the suffering and struggles of the disadvantaged and oppressed. (Tierney & Rhoads, 1993, p. 335)

Unlike many other less emotion-provoking areas of scholarly attention, teaching from an antiracism framework can be expected to often evoke visceral reactions. Both the pedagogue and the students must be prepared for such an emotionally charged atmosphere and must develop strategies to be able to tolerate the often tumultuous process. Consequently, the *process* of learning is of critical importance and must be regarded as a legitimate part of learning. Content cannot be conveyed unless the process is first carefully developed and cultivated. For this reason, I suggest that any pedagogue undertaking this work must be extremely skilled in the area of conflict resolution, as these classes will necessarily be fraught with tension, emotion and trepidation, on the part of some students. My premise is that the *process*, rather than the specific material covered, will be of ultimate importance. Consistent with the overall goal of a university education, I am suggesting that teaching students how to think critically, from within an antiracism framework, is integrally important. Hence, what is most significant intellectually is not where we end up but how we go about getting there.

Antiracist pedagogy represents a shift from traditional university teaching practices and as such involves a change in thinking that will necessarily be unsettling for some students, as it requires them to move beyond their comfortable, deeply rooted views of the world. Any transformation in thinking necessarily entails a risk as one tries out new approaches and tests new beliefs and frameworks of understanding. As a means of promoting risk-taking, I advocate explicitly sharing the pedagogical goals of the course with learners. By this, I mean stating at the outset that the aim of the class will be to deconstruct the normative, eradicate the margins and continually attempt to view issues from a multiplicity of standpoints. In this way, students will understand the focus of the course and may support each other as they face the challenge of learning to think against the grain.

Educators must be prepared to address the resistance and emotions which are likely to accompany such pedagogy and accept that anger is likely to surface when talking about racism. Consequently, rather than fearing expressions of such strong emotions, we must anticipate anger, resistance, conflict and fear, affirming, rather than denying these realities for our students. In this way, teachers may avoid one of the most damaging outcomes that I have repeatedly witnessed—the adamant avoidance of conflict. Such practices circumvent discussions just at the point that real learning is potentially about to take place. The desire to facilitate a polite, settled class, in such instances, takes precedence over deep, potentially unsettling learning.

Translating this understanding into the classroom will require that we expressly address this sense of trepidation. One of the most effective means for dealing with fear, in my experience, is to openly address it. Hence, I am suggesting that pedagogues should adopt a direct approach with students, acknowledging that the class can be expected to be an unsettling experience for some, as some deeply entrenched

beliefs will be challenged. Stating at the outset that the material will seek to unsettle what is 'known', is one way that teachers may share power with the class, thereby fostering a collaborative learning project. Merely orienting students in this way can help them to prepare themselves psychologically and emotionally for what is likely to be required of them. Further, such a strategy affords the opportunity to normalize students' apprehensions, as anti-oppression work is often emotionally daunting, as individuals come to face their potential complicity with the unequal relations of power and/or explore the ways in which they have been marginalized. In other words, the more information the professor is able to share with the class, the less uncertain they will feel, as nothing is as intimidating as the unknown. Alternately, if students enter the classroom with the understanding that their perspectives and understandings of the world will be challenged, they will be potentially less likely to respond by withdrawing, feeling that their contributions are being dishonored, instead interpreting such discussions and contestations as integral components of the learning process.

If we accept that one of the core goals of the course may be framed as unsettling students' ways of thinking, then a primary aim of teaching will be to challenge them to adopt a different frame of reference, which is not grounded in traditional canons. Disrupting traditional dichotomous thinking, which keeps us entrenched in us/them, White/other, oppressed/oppressor binaries, may be a useful starting point. To this end, it may be productive to introduce standpoint theory which suggests that each person's standpoint will be unique, as it is based on a myriad of intersecting social locations (for instance, race, class, age, gender, sexuality, ability, etc). Further, it reinforces the fact that individuals' positions may change, based on the context.[2] Students may be encouraged to consider standpoints as existing within a three-dimensional sphere, within the confines of which our standpoints may shift. In this way, there are no margins, as we are all positioned within the spherical space, ever shifting in relation to the social relations of power. Such a model also moves away from the notion of hierarchies; no one position is superior to another.

In addition to establishing a truly collaborative learning project, such a strategy affords the opportunity to normalize students' apprehensions, as anti-oppression work is often emotionally daunting. This reality should be acknowledged at the outset and students should be encouraged to begin envisioning how they will tackle this challenging material, without lashing out at one another or completely withdrawing. The more information the professor is able to share with the class, the less uncertain they will feel. Rather than simply hoping that a sense of collegiality will develop, I am suggesting that we address the issue directly and strategize methods for teaching and engaging students differently, as we embark on this learning project.

Initiating a collaborative project

There are certain pedagogical challenges which can be expected to arise in virtually all classes taught from an antiracist perspective, as documented in the literature (see Ng, 1994, 1995; Monture Angus, 1995; Srivastava, 1997; Levine-Rasky, 2000). White[3] students, for instance, may feel silenced into guilt by the narratives of people

of colour,[4] as they become increasingly aware of how their White identity is complicitous with historical and contemporary structures which racially oppress racialized people. These students often require assistance to overcome feelings of paralysis due to guilt, as they are unable to devise action plans which enable them to become part of the force of change (Giroux, 1997; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997). Hence, White students must be challenged to find a space in which they may see themselves not only as part of the legacy of oppression but may envision a role for themselves as allies or challengers of the status quo. In this way, they may define a role for themselves that is empowering, rather than wallowing in ineffectual guilt.

It is also not uncommon for students from traditionally marginalized groups to adopt silence as a strategy of resistance, thereby refusing to provide the point of view of the 'other' for the benefit of the White students or teacher (Jones, 1988; Luke, 1994). Such a strategy may be grounded in the belief that White students are choosing to situate themselves in the role of the questioner, expecting racialized students to educate them about their experiences of racism. Before such a divide becomes entrenched, the pedagogue must establish an expectation that all students are to participate by speaking form their own unique social location. Consequently, no one is permitted to adopt a passive stance.

Experience also suggests that discussions of race and racism often collapse in frustration, anger, hurt, yelling, silence, withdrawal and a profound belief that different 'sides' are unable to listen and learn from the other. Mary Louise Fellows and Sherene Razack (1993) have termed this 'the difference impasse' (p. 338) . This impasse results when competing parallel narratives ignore the interlocking nature of systems of domination. Fellows and Razack refer to the resulting process of comparing competing marginalities, the 'race to innocence' (p. 340). In other words, when challenged regarding their domination, the response of many individuals is to draw attention to their own subordination. Clearly, there is no simple solution to this complex dilemma. Nonetheless, there is value in raising the issue with learners, in order to challenge them to contemplate their involvement in the aforementioned race to innocence. In such teaching environments, curriculum and pedagogy become tools for emancipation and empowerment so that students are able to come to terms with how their own identities have been shaped by larger social forces. To achieve such an ambitious goal, process is critical, especially when teaching about oppression, a phenomenon permeated with fear, uncertainty and ignorance.

The approach that I am proposing recognizes that the establishment of 'safety' is an untenable goal. Indeed, racialized scholars have long been attesting that a sense of safety has never been a reality for people of colour in the mainstream Eurocentric academy (Ng, 1995; Srivastava, 1997). Hence, the notion of safety is now being further complicated and the questions of safe for whom and under what conditions, are being deconstructed. Scholars such as bell hooks (1989), for instance, suggest that students must learn to come to voice in an atmosphere where they are afraid or see themselves at risk, instead of attempting to foster a safe, nurturing environment. The goal, as articulated by hooks, is for students to feel empowered in a vigorous, critical discussion. Similarly, Roxana Ng (1995) advocates that we reconceptualize the way

in which we view conflict, suggesting that we consider conflict as a pedagogical opportunity to challenge normalized forms of behaviour and thinking. In this way, conflict can be used as a pedagogical tool, rather than a dreaded consequence of engaged classroom discussion. Working from this perspective, we may then recognize the value of preparing students to address conflict in a constructive manner, as it will almost inevitably arise in the course of classroom interactions.

This reasoning clearly suggests that it is our responsibility as educators to unsettle conventional notions of what constitutes a safe environment and begin to work collaboratively with our students to establish a collective understanding of what might constitute a degree of safety which is adequate to enable students to participate in classroom learning and discussion. These negotiations must occur at the outset of courses, prior to delving into content and expecting students to take further risks (acknowledging this inaugural discussion will involve a substantial risk). In other words, the process must be accorded primacy in the classroom. In order to facilitate such learning, I would like to suggest the discipline of social work has a great deal to offer. One of the basic tenets of social work is to start where the client is. The same is true in the classroom. This principle is consistent with Paulo Friere's (1970) notion of transformational educational practices, central to which is the belief that students' should be challenged to critically consider the way in which they exist in the world. Hence, rather than conceptualizing students as disembodied heads, entering the classroom without prior knowledge learners should be encouraged to critically reflect upon these understandings, as they embark upon the educational process. Further developing this reasoning, we should not assume, for instance, that all students will come in with similar expectations for the class. Instead, it is critical that educators be prepared to discuss the type of learning environment that we intend to create, clearly outlining the contentious nature of the framework from within which we will be working.

A further social work strategy which may be of use in such contexts involves contracting. More specifically, this means that the pedagogue takes responsibility for outlining what will be expected of students—beyond the provision of a course syllabus—and students are engaged in a meaningful dialogue about what their presence will signify, in terms of an acknowledgement of the terms and conditions of the class. Specifics can be negotiated through the development of ground rules (Tatum, 1992; Thompson & Disch, 1992; Bell *et al.*, 1999). The purpose of such an approach is to begin identifying collective goals and building a sense of community, if only based on the fact that the participants share some educational goals, however broadly defined. Further, these exercises afford students the opportunity to begin developing their group work skills, as a degree of collaboration is inherent in the process of establishing ground rules. Such demystifying of the goals and processes of the class demonstrates respect for the students, as it accords them the opportunity to actively participate in constructing the manner in which the class will operate.

Another way in which the pedagogue may begin to establish the climate of the class involves stressing the importance of both acknowledging fears and anxieties and of speaking from one's own experiences. A working assumption may be that racism affects everyone and dealing with the impact of racism is a lifelong process, one with

which the educator, too, is still engaged (Romney *et al.*, 1992). Hence, as many people are only learning to overcome the racism with which they have been socialized their entire lifetime, scathing critiques and aggressive attacks will not be rewarded by the professor. Too often in academia, students equate such practices with superior scholarship, as they have never truly learned how to engage in meaningful critical dialogue. As Paulo Friere (1970) has written, dialogue is central to the project of education. Only through such an exchange of ideas can we hope to work towards transformative change. However, as noted previously, we can not taker for granted the fact that students will enter the classroom with such skills. Often, attacks are motivated by a desire to demonstrate one's mastery of antiracism, which is demonstrated by verbally eviscerating another student. In such instances, it becomes an individual pursuit of 'excellence', where one may seek to demonstrate their competence by undermining and attacking another. Clearly, such practices hinder the development of a collaborative learning project and may unalterably affect individual student's willingness to take further risks, causing some to retreat into silence as a protective measure. In fact, numerous researchers have reported that concerns about being labeled 'racist' have resulted in a culture of fear, which leaves many students feeling estranged and silenced (Martin, 2000; Schick, 2000). Hence, I suggest that misconceptions regarding academic dialogue and debate need to be explicitly addressed at the outset, to avoid such problematic encounters.

Given the contentious nature of the material, it is crucial that we prepare students to succeed in the class. All too often, I have witnessed scenes in classrooms where students are ill-equipped to deal with differing perspectives and the resulting recriminations and emotionally charged confrontations result in permanent rifts, which cause some students to withdraw, either in anger or fear, often in an attempt to protect themselves from what they perceive to be the potential for further attacks. Aggressive critiques are not only unproductive, they also quickly dissolve any sense of community which may have been established. Consequently, explicating expectations for classroom behaviour will also be an important tool for establishing a sense that a communal project is being undertaken. In this way, the process of learning is framed as being of utmost importance, rather than transcending all tensions and contradictions, to arrive at universal truths.

This is an area in which pedagogues must take responsibility for teaching students needed skills—again, 'starting where the client is'. Merely stating that open discussion is expected, will necessarily be inadequate if students do not possess the needed tools to foster their own learning. It is a common fallacy to assume that just because people are adults that they necessarily have the skills to address conflict effectively. Rather, as pedagogues, we must accept the responsibility of teaching basic conflict resolution skills, before embarking on challenging or unsettling curricula. The ability to resolve differences and identify common goals is a useful skill and one that is transferable beyond academia, which will be extremely useful in any kind of future coalition building. Utilizing such a skills-building strategy is one way that we may bridge theory and practice, while simultaneously building a sense of community. Of course such a strategy will require a pedagogue to be skilled at conflict resolution.

Another pedagogical approach which has proven useful, involves educating students about the stages associated with developing an antiracist identity. Acknowledging that knowledge is power, this is a relatively straightforward way of sharing one source of our power. The models developed by Carter (1997) and Tatum (1992), for example, outline the common feelings and reactions which often accompany the struggle associated with antiracist work, both for dominant group members and racialized people. Simply sharing this accumulated wisdom with students may help to prepare them for their pending intellectual and emotional journey by demystifying the process, thereby potentially reducing their anxiety. Further, such an approach offers students tools to track their own progress (see Corvin & Wiggins, 1989; Romney *et al.*, 1992; Thompson & Disch, 1992). Initiating discussion which acknowledges that some of the learning will necessarily be difficult, may also result in students being less likely to feel alienated when they do, in fact, experience their own resistance to the material. In other words, by normalizing their feelings at the outset, their energy may be freed up to concentrate more fully on the issues.

The aforementioned literature represents a pool of collective practice wisdom about the challenges of teaching in the area, which provides us with an excellent starting point for beginning to strategize how we may best tackle such a difficult topic. However, my point is that despite a vast array of pedagogical strategies available, unless we accord significant attention to the *process* of learning, our best efforts will likely continue to produce uneven and often frustrating classroom experiences.

Implications for pedagogues

The approach that I am advocating will require a committed pedagogue who is willing to take risks and is able to tolerate conflict, as these strategies will require more of an investment on the part of the teacher than traditional pedagogical practices. Teaching in non-traditional ways makes educators more vulnerable. They are often exposed, for instance, to the wrath of students who are resistant to attempts to challenge the status quo and theorize in critical ways which are unfamiliar to them. Hostility is not uncommon in such situations and students may vent their discontent in course evaluations, construing attempts to teach beyond the canons as 'not academic'. This backlash may ultimately impact on scholars, when their work is reviewed and decisions about tenure are being considered.

This resistance is often evidenced throughout the course, as the pedagogue teaching from a non-traditional perspective may quickly be marked as 'other', clearly outside of the mainstream academic culture. As a result, students often feel justified in challenging the professor, in an attempt to de-legitimate them and trivialize their efforts at transformational teaching (Dlamini, 2002). This is but one strategy that may be used to avoid the usually painful process of shifting one's thinking and questioning commonsense ways of knowing. These reactions may also be a defensive strategy as a result of being faced with such emotionally painful subject matter. Consequently, committed antiracist educators are working within hotly contested spaces, in which challenges both to their authority, credibility and

expertise are constant. Understandably, teaching under such conditions will be draining.

Educators can also expect to be challenged by others in the academic hierarchy who are unsettled by the contention that inequity is prevalent in traditional academia, which is based on individualistic values of White culture. An antiracist perspective challenges the belief in the 'universal rule' where supposedly anybody that 'acts' according to prescribed standards is meritorious and deserving of societal and economic rewards. Scholars such as Fine (1997) argue that although in theory, open to everyone, in fact such rewards apply primarily to those who possess Whiteness. Gradually, it has come to be accepted that race and gender are natural 'predictors' of performance, instead of products of institutional hierarchy, alienation and stratification (King, 1991; Scheurich, 1993; Sleeter, 1993; Giroux, 1997). The silences and denials surrounding privilege are a key political tool, which enable us to maintain the myth of meritocracy. This is the insidiousness of privilege; it has the semblance of 'naturalness' that in itself defends it from scrutiny. As a result, White people inhabit an invisible system which allows them to choose to recede into privilege and not worry about racism whenever they so choose, while racialized people do not enjoy such choice .

Finally, this approach defies what is traditionally valued in university settings. Unlike research and publishing, classroom teaching is not as venerated in academia. Hence, pedagogues will be devoting a great deal of energy to practices which will not necessarily benefit them professionally, in terms of tenure and promotion or professional acclaim. Instead, the only reward may be less tangible, such as engaging students more deeply in the discipline. Educators will thus be required to prioritize notions of what is inherently valuable, in terms which conflict with that of academia. Hence, it may be that much like students, pedagogues will be required to step outside of mainstream, conventional ways of thinking.

Given these realities, it is helpful if educators have some form of support outside of class, when engaged in such demanding pedagogy. A network of similarly committed colleagues, for instance, could not only provide emotional support but could also enrich the teaching, as a result of sharing approaches and learning from each other's practical experiences. On an even greater scale, pedagogues may engage in dialogue with each other through writing about their experiences and fostering further exploration of the issues, both practically and theoretically. After all, initiating any meaningful, broad scale change in the academy will necessarily involve a collective, rather than individual effort.

Confronting reluctance: White antiracists

Although some Whites claim to feel unequipped to teach antiracism, having never been the targets of racism themselves, such arguments are hollow. An abundance of literature is available, which painstakingly details experiences of racism and invite the reader to step outside of their comfort zone and reflect on the devastating impact of racism. We dominant group members must work to overcome our unearned privilege bestowed upon us, simply because of the colour of our 'White' skin and educate

ourselves about the reality and prevalence of racism. Ignorance is no shield, especially when so many people have courageously chosen to write about their experiences.

Himani Bannerji (1991), for example, has written about her experiences as a racialized woman teaching in the academy:

> In every sense they are learning on my body, I am the teacher, my body is offered up for them to learn from, the room is an arena, a stage, an amphitheatre, I am an actor in a theatre of cruelty … I am offering up piece by piece my experience, body, intellect, so others can learn. Unless I am to die from this violence of the daily social relations of being a non-White, South Asian woman, in a White Ontario, Canada classroom—I have to dissociate. (Bannerji, 1991, p. 6)

Roxana Ng (1994), writing on a similar topic, reflects on an incident in which a student behaved in blatantly a sexist and racist manner, yet when the situation came to the attention of the administration, Ng did not feel supported. In concluding, she speaks of her experiences:

> To speak of safety and comfort is to speak from a position of privilege, relative though it may be. For those existing too long on the margins, life has never been safe or comfortable. (Ng, 1994, p. 45)

Although such individual accounts are extremely powerful, their value also lies in explicating the ways in which racism manifests itself systemically and structurally. Such writing challenges our choice to retreat into privilege, which enables dominant group members to remain unaware that such encounters with racism are a daily experience for many. Consequently, we are confronted with the reality of the need to not only challenge individual acts of racism but to acknowledge and work to eradicate more subtle and pervasive institutionalized forms of racist practices.

Challenges of an antiracism approach: the importance of positioning ourselves

How we position ourselves politically is critical when engaging in antiracist work. Irrespective of our intentions, we must maintain a double-consciousness, remaining attuned to how our actions are perceived, in order to challenge any misperceptions which may perpetuate racist beliefs. This is not meant to suggest that we are responsible for all the beliefs and interpretations of others. Rather, I am suggesting that such instances may provide invaluable opportunities to engage our peers in dialogue about the nature of our work. In this way, we may be able to heighten others' awareness of the issues, possibly introducing them to this political and educational project. After all, not all learning occurs within the confines of a classroom, nor does it only involve students learning from teachers.

If we, as Whites, are committed to working collaboratively with people of colour, another issue to which we must remain attuned is the way in which our work is being engaged by the broader scholarly community. Specifically, we must consciously problematize the designation of the label 'expert'. Although we might enjoy this public recognition, we must consider the implications of such labeling in its broader context. Historically, the dominant group has demonstrated a tendency to confer greater legit-

imacy to a topic if a White person is involved, while the involvement of a racialized person offers less of a stamp of approval. Clearly, it will be problematic if the work of scholars of colour is being overshadowed by that of Whites, simply on the basis of race. Not only do such practices perpetuate systemic institutional racism but they also present a serious impediment to the development of any type of working alliance between the two groups. Such racism must be constantly challenged. Further, Whites must make a concerted and sustained effort to meaningfully include the scholarship of racialized people in their own work, in order to acknowledge their substantial contribution to current theorizing.

Such issues highlight the politics of collaboration inherent in working with people of colour. Given White people's often abysmal history associated with working collectively with members from non-dominant groups, it will be critical that we remain attuned to the complications and power dynamics embedded in our collaborative efforts. The challenges that have been experienced by the feminist movement, attest to the way in which supposedly well intentioned dominant group members have in the past, felt justified in monopolizing leadership roles, further subjugating the perspectives and agendas of the groups with whom they claim to be working collaboratively. Hence, true partnerships will require great thought and an established commitment to power sharing.

Another consideration when contemplating the possible ramifications of White faculty teaching antiracism is the fact that people of colour are still grossly underrepresented in Canadian universities. As a result, there may understandably be a sense of trepidation among faculty of colour that if Whites begin teaching antiracism, they may be at risk of being further marginalized. Such fears may emanate from a belief that teaching antiracism is one of the few areas in which racialized people are considered to possess some unique expertise. Although such concerns are legitimate, I would counter that *all* faculty have a responsibility to work towards this equity issue and to ensure that more non-White faculty are both brought into the system and reflected at every level of the organization. Rather than attempting to appropriate the domain of the few faculty of colour, I am envisioning an academy in which all professors teach from an antiracist perspective and courses on 'antiracism' are but one setting in which these discussions would be occurring. In other words, faculty of colour would be teaching on a diverse range of topics, all informed by antiracist thinking.

This highlights an underlying assumption of this paper—that all people have a responsibility to address and work to eradicate racism. This obligation emanates not from benevolent intentions but due to the fact that it is an issue which integrally affects all of our lives. Leaving it up to people who are oppressed to wage a battle against their oppressors reflects dichotomous thinking which serves to perpetuate and exacerbate the problem. Instead, it is critical to formulate racism as a social problem, one which we must all work equally to eradicate.

There are also a myriad of potential benefits associated with members of the dominant group teaching from an antiracist perspective. Students, for instance, will be exposed to a White antiracist individual, who may challenge White students to take the issue of racism seriously, reinforcing that the issue is not solely a concern for

people of colour. In some cases, this may be some students' first exposure to a White person who is publicly and professionally committed to antiracist work. Such an experience may have incalculable benefits, as a means of building an initial alliance with respect to this important work. A White teacher facilitating an antiracism class may also encourage some White students, who may be otherwise reluctant to join an antiracism class, to take the risk. Of course this is a broad generalization which will not apply to all. I suggest this, however, based on the growing body of literature which suggests that students frequently avoid the issue of antiracism, due to fear of being labeled as racist, based on their limited understanding of the subject area (Tatum, 1992; Thompson & Disch, 1992; Giroux, 1997; Maher & Tetreault, 1997). In such a context, teachers from the dominant group may make a substantial impact by openly discussing their own struggles associated with working towards becoming antiracist, thereby normalizing the inherent challenges.

Concluding thoughts

A focus on process, especially when teaching form within an antiracism framework, will create a richer learning environment, as the learning occurs in an unusually deep manner as students are engaged at both a cognitive and affective level. Such teaching helps to break down barriers that impede the building of connections. Adopting these strategies may also increase the likelihood that the class will be able to work their way through some of the commonly identified obstacles to learning, which arise when teaching unsettling knowledge. What I am suggesting is re-visioning our pedagogical strategies, as means towards establishing transformational change. If we are able to move beyond a superficial consideration of such contentious issues as antiracism, we will indeed be part of a radical educational change, one that will have meaning for students beyond the hallowed halls of academia. If we are able to use the relatively sheltered environments of our classrooms to begin the process of teaching individuals how to discuss antiracism and issues of equity, across our differences, we will have made a significant contribution. Alternately, if we do not even attempt to tackle this difficult task, how can we ever expect to fruitfully have such discussions in the community? On a more positive note, any skills which we foster in our classrooms, may translate into the development of new community alliances, as learners continue their work in the community and share new strategies with their peers. In this way, we may continue to make a unique and valuable contribution to the lives of all people.

When discussing the pedagogy of antiracism, possibly the most important point to remember is that we are all positioned subjects. As Tierney and Rhoads (1993) have written, knowledge is never neutral—it is always contested and political. Hence, as Patti Lather (1996) suggests:

> … rather than attempting to produce a text which is a clearly readable map of reality, it is important to not be 'clear'. To 'trouble' and 'worry' ideas is more important than understanding them. 'Coming clear' is part of the process of knowing, but never 'being clear' which suggests a final end point. 'Being clear' is not a posture of knowing, but of dogma and stasis.

In other words, our role as educators is not to provide students with all the answers. Rather, our goal should be to introduce them to the tools to deconstruct the world around them from within an antiracist framework.

Ultimately, it is my contention that the field will necessarily be enriched by contributions from scholars of varying social locations and standpoints. The situation of White educators, however, will be unique, because as Tamara Underiner (2000) has written, they inhabit a position which allows them to choose to recede into privilege and not worry about racism whenever they so choose, while people of colour do not enjoy such choice. It will be imperative, therefore, that White antiracist educators remain grounded in everyday realities and attuned to the workings of racism. Hence, in order to sustain meaningful engagement with the issues, these scholars will have to commit themselves to ongoing involvement with antiracism work beyond the academy, in order to maintain an informed perspective of the issues faced by racialized people. Clearly, the project of antiracism is not individual but collective and will require collective action by people from a range of locations in the social order. Only in this way will they be able to sustain a meaningful engagement with the issues.

Notes

1. According to George Dei (1993) this entails examining social and structural factors that create and perpetuate racism in society in order to analyse the ways racism is transmitted, reproduced, reworked and resisted . This perspective is grounded in the belief that race is politically and socially constructed and is inextricably linked to issues of power.
2. This approach is not intended to negate the importance of race. Indeed, I suggest that race is the most salient social location. Nonetheless, the complexities of our identities must be acknowledged.
3. This is not meant to suggest that 'White' is a monolithic category. In the context of this analysis, the term is being used to denote the dominant culture in the Canadian context.
4. I acknowledge that the terms 'racialized people' and 'people of colour' are problematic as they homogenize a diverse group of people and create a dichotomy between dominant Whites and 'others'. However, the absence of a more appropriate marker, these are the designations that I will use to refer to people who are not identified as 'White'.

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