EVERYDAY ANTIRACISM IN EDUCATION

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Introduction

The world of K-12 education contains infinitely complex race questions—and endlessly oversimplified race answers. In US K-12 education, the field in which I work as an anthropologist of education, "race groups" are often portrayed as falsely static, firmly bounded groups. They are portrayed as "cultural" groups, if not explicitly "genetic" ones, with different ways of behaving that directly cause racially inequitable outcomes like "achievement." Educators need tools for thinking and talking far more complexly about racialized difference and racial inequality.

Race Wrestling

I have found that anthropology and its methodological tool, ethnography, offer some key components for moving dialogue in education beyond oversimplified notions of "racial" difference and oversimplified explanations for racial inequality. For rather than simply asking respondents to restate these commonsense notions, ethnography can show educators the ways in which they and their students struggle daily *with* race. By focusing attention on *everyday struggles* over race categories and racial inequality, ethnography can facilitate what I call "race wrestling": people struggling self-consciously with normalized ideas about "racial" difference and about how racial inequality is produced.

Anthropology, in its serious attention to the ongoing everyday activity of ordinary people, also helps educators think about how their own ordinary moves either reproduce or challenge structures of racial inequality. Educators need tools for analyzing the consequences of their everyday behaviors because they are often unsure which ordinary moves, in an already racialized world, are racist and which antiracist. Indeed, antiracist educators must constantly negotiate between two *antiracist* impulses in deciding their everyday behaviors toward students.

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Moment to moment, they must choose between the antiracist impulse to treat all people as human beings *rather* than "race" group members, and the antiracist impulse to recognize people's real experiences *as* race group members in order to assist them and treat them equitably.

The ethnographic question to ask about antiracism in education is thus not abstractly *whether* people should be treated or not treated as race group members in schools (this is the typical US debate about "race consciousness" vs "color blindness"), but rather concretely *when* and *how* it helps in real life in specific places to treat people as race group members, and when and how it harms. Static advice to "be colorblind" regarding one's students, or to "celebrate" their diversity, or to "recognize" their "identities," is not equally helpful in all situations. In daily life, *sometimes* being colorblind is quite harmful to young people; *sometimes* a "celebration" of diversity can be reductive and harmful; *sometimes* "recognizing" one aspect of an identity (a student's or one's own) detracts from a sense of common humanity.

Educators in the US and elsewhere are routinely given too-static, overarching, abstracted recommendations for dealing with race in school. Educators need instead to wrestle with their own daily *struggles over* race in educational settings, and to consider moment to moment decisions about how best to assist real children in real world situations.

Lessons for Antiracist Practice

Some lessons for everyday antiracist practice in education have emerged in a forthcoming collection of essays I am editing (see the work of sociologist Michele Lamont for exploration of "everyday antiracism" in other realms). These lessons engage, in part, Audrey Smedley's arguments about the key features of racism since race categories were developed to facilitate slavery and colonial expansion in the 15th century. Then and today, racism has been about building structures of unequal resource and power on oversimplified notions of human difference. Today, racism still involves unequally measuring human worth, intelligence and potential along static "racial" lines, and accepting the distribution of racially unequal opportunities, and the production of racially patterned disparities, as if these are normal.

Everyday antiracism in education thus requires that educators make strategic, self-conscious everyday moves to counter these ingrained tendencies. First, then, everyday antiracism in education involves *rejecting false notions of human difference*, and actively treating people as equally human, worthy, intelligent and potentialed. In educational settings, antiracism particularly requires actively affirming that intelligence is equally distributed to human beings, and that no "race group" is more or less intelligent than any other. Antiracism in education also involves actively rejecting race categories' "genetic" reality. It involves learning, proactively, that "races" are not groups that are genetically different in

any real way, but rather geographical groups that developed minor physical differences and have come over centuries of social practice to live very different lives. Everyday antiracism in education also involves challenging oversimplified notions of human diversity, and asserting that complex people do not always fit easily into single, simple boxes of "racial" (or "ethnic") identity or behavior.

Second, everyday antiracism in education involves *acknowledging and engaging lived experiences along racial lines*, even if the categories themselves have been built upon genetically insignificant differences. Over six centuries of American history, people have both been lumped into ranked "races" by others, and chosen race-group membership for themselves as a means for social empowerment. The Irish "became white" in the 19th century, and Jews "became white" in the 20th; "Asian-Americans" became "Asian-Americans" in the 1960s; then too emerged "Latinos" or "Hispanics." Today, we all make one another "racial" on a daily basis. Racialized "groups" in the US today bring very different experiences to the table, and they are shaped by very different experiences with educational resources, opportunity and success. Everyday antiracism thus entails engaging one's own and others' experiences of this differential treatment—whether we have benefited from such differential treatment or been sabotaged by it.

Third, everyday antiracism in education also involves *capitalizing upon, building upon and celebrating* those diversities that have developed over centuries and decades to sustain strength and foster enjoyment within racialized groups, long grouped involuntarily and destructively by external others and grouped proactively and positively by themselves. As Cornel West wrote in "Race-ing Justice, En-Gendering Power," being "black," for example, involves both the negative experience of responding constantly to denials of equal opportunity (typically, in history, at the hands of "whites") and the positive experience of enjoying a community that has bonded through expressive and political practices with one another even in the midst of such oppression. Antiracism thus requires *enjoying* and *sharing* difference in ways that assist individuals to feel respected, broadened and challenged. It involves not just sharing and respecting "group" forms of expression, but also sharing and respecting the critical lenses that members of various "groups" bring to any table.

Fourth, everyday antiracism in education involves *equipping self and others to challenge racial inequality*. Everyday antiracism particularly involves actively challenging the widespread tendency to see racial disparities in opportunity and outcome as "normal." Everyday antiracism in education involves clarifying any ways in which opportunities must still be equalized along racial lines, and then equipping people to actually equalize life chances and opportunities arbitrarily reduced along racial lines. Everyday antiracism in education also entails proactively reminding students of color laboring under false notions of racial "inability" that they are equally intelligent and potentialed. Everyday antiracism in education also entails reminding white students that they

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are not naturally superior, but rather privileged by an intricate system that they, too, can make more equitable for others.

These four paragraphs suggest seemingly contradictory things: rejecting false notions of human difference, engaging lived experiences shaped along racial lines, enjoying versions of such difference, and constantly critiquing and challenging systems of racial inequality built upon these notions of difference. The four are actually not self-contradictory. Rather, they demonstrate that everyday antiracism requires doing each situationally on a daily basis. Antiracism requires *not* treating people as race group members when such treatment harms, and *treating* people as race group members when such treatment assists. Deciding which move to take when requires thinking hard about everyday life in educational settings as complex, conflict-ridden and deeply consequential. Anthropology can assist educators and students to turn a critical analytic lens on their own everyday experiences in schools and districts to see how "racial" difference and racial inequality are being produced or dismantled in small bits.

Mica Pollock is the author of *Colormute: Race Talk Dilemmas in an American School* and the forthcoming *Everyday Justice: Disputing Educational Discrimination in the New Civil Rights Era*. She is editor of the forthcoming book *Everyday Antiracism: Concrete Ways to Successfully Navigate the Relevance of Race in School*.

McMaster
University

Inspiring Innovation and Discovery

What is Unique About Inquiry Courses?

(Dale Roy, Erika Kustra, Paola Borin, 2003)

McMaster University has been involved in teaching Inquiry for over twenty years in elite programs and professional schools. Now, Inquiry is being offered to all first year students with a growing number of follow-up courses offered in subsequent years. In 2001, over 670 students in year one chose an Inquiry course. So, what is Inquiry you ask?

What is Inquiry?
Why Teach Inquiry?
What features characterize the Inquiry approach?
How is Inquiry related to engaging in research?
Who takes responsibility for learning?
How do Inquiry and Problem-Based Learning differ?

What is Inquiry?

Inquiry is a form of Self-Directed Learning and follows the four basic stages defining self-directed learning. Students take more responsibility for:

- Determining what they need to learn
- Identifying resources and how best to learn from them
- Using resources and reporting their learning
- Assessing their progress in learning

A comprehensive senior inquiry course will have all four of these elements. Students will take the initiative and be largely responsible for seeing they successfully complete their learning in a given area. Generally, students draft a "learning contract" and then execute it – the instructor submits a grade on completion of the contract.

A first course in inquiry may require more teacher direction and is likely to focus more time and activity on two or three of these skills. The instructor may start by expecting less initiative and responsibility on the part of students, but works towards increasing the responsibility by the end of the course. **Why Teach Inquiry?** Inquiry aims to build research skills in students. This seems a most appropriate outcome for students who graduate from a research-intensive university like McMaster. Moreover, successful graduates need to be skilled in self-directed learning because, if they continue in the discipline, they will need to keep current, and if they work outside the discipline, self-directed learning skills will be all the more important. **What features characterize the Inquiry approach?**

Teaching through "inquiry" involves engaging students in the research process with instructor support and coaching at a level appropriate to their starting skills. Students learn discipline specific content but in doing so, engage and refine their inquiry skills. An inquiry course:

- Is question driven, rather than topic or thesis driven
- Begins with a general theme to act as a starting point or trigger for learning
- Emphasizes asking good researchable questions on the theme, and coaches students in doing this
- Builds library, interview, and web search skills, along with the critical thinking skills necessary for thoughtful review of the information. Coaches students on how to best report their learning in oral or written form.
- Provides some mechanism (interviews, drafts, minutes of group meetings, bench mark activities, etc.) to help students monitor their progress within the course.

- Draws on the expertise and knowledge of the instructor to model effective inquiry and to promote reflection.

How is Inquiry related to engaging in research?

Inquiry is closely related to what we do when engaging in research as seen in the table below:

How research is conducted?	How Inquiry is conducted?
1. Researcher selects an area of study	1. Instructor identifies a general theme
2. Researcher forms "good questions" on which to base their research	2. Students determine what they need to learn in the area and draft "good questions" on which to base their Inquiry
3. Researcher identifies resources and how best to learn from them; consults primary literature and conducts primary research	3. Students identify resources and how best to learn; they consult research from primary and secondary literature and could engage in original research
4. Researcher reports their insights (learning) by publishing papers, giving presentations	4. Students use resources and report their insights (learning) in a variety of formats (symposium, skit, formal paper)
5. Researcher assesses their own learning and peers play a role in the review of research quality	5. Students assess their own learning, peers, peers may play a role but the instructor is responsible for assigning a grade
6. Researcher identifies the next set of research questions	6. Students may identify the next set of research questions

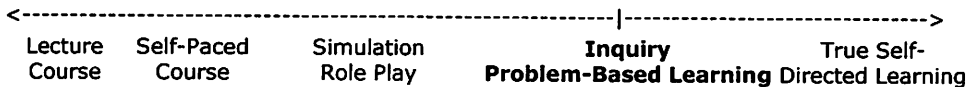## Who takes responsibility for learning?

Teaching methods can be seen along a continuum. At one end, the instructor takes complete responsibility for course content and the direction of the course; at the other end, students take complete responsibility for course content and the direction of the course requires more student initiative and responsibility.

Teacher takes more responsibility   **Student takes more responsibility**

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| Lecture Course | Self-Paced Course | Simulation Role Play | **Inquiry Problem-Based Learning** | True Self-Directed Learning |

How do Inquiry and Problem-Based Learning Differ?

This table outlines the major differences between the two different teaching methods.

	Inquiry	Problem-Based Learning
How does it begin?	General theme or issue.	Authentic, specific scenario or used as a trigger.
Timescale (Duration of Study)	Generally months. May repeat the inquiry cycle a second time within a single course.	From one class to a few weeks. Will examine a series of scenarios within a single course.

Breadth of Study	Varies by student interest, within theme.	Focused area of study.
Depth of Study	Opportunity for sustained study.	Study limited by time.
Final Product	Varies. Defined by students with guidance from class and instructor.	Expectations are fairly specific. i.e. discussion, presentation, role play, written submission.
The Instructor/Tutor	Chooses themes or issues under examination. Chooses triggers for learning (movies, books, articles, guest speaker, simulations, role play).	Creates a series of "problems" (scenarios) intended to bring about learning of a specified area of curriculum; often with specific content goals.
	Identifies general content objectives. Identifies specific skill objectives.	Identifies specific content objectives. Identifies specific skill objectives,
	Designs activities to help develop specific inquiry skills (i.e. how to critically read and assess information on the web).	Skills are developed inductively through repetition, with feedback.
	Facilitates the process of inquiry (to ensure skill and content goals are met).	Facilitates exploration of problems posed (to ensure skill and specific content goals are met).
	Moderates various activities.	Moderates discussion with a view to developing moderation skills in students
	Provides feedback on the quality of the question, research and communication.	Provides feedback on quality of issue identification, research and communication.
	Guides self and peer feedback.	Guides self and peer feedback.
	Assesses student performance usually with peer feedback.	Assesses student performance usually with peer feedback.
Nature of the Questions Asked by Students	Develops a good question. This may involve questions for which there is no known answer. (Could require primary research).	Identifies good questions from problems posed. Generally involves questions for which answers exist, i.e. what are the primary causes of ulcers?
	Students are not dependent on the research of others but benefit from their colleague's research.	Students are dependent on the research of others to fully understand the opening scenario or situation posed.

Sophia McClennen

Inquiry-based Learning

As faculty, we engage ourselves in inquiry throughout our academic careers when we explore questions and try to make sense out of what is going on in our fields. My guess is that most of us chose our field of study because one question, somewhere along the way, peeked our curiosity and motivated us to find an answer. A common question asked by faculty is, "How can I motivate my students' interest and get them excited about the subject they are studying?" One way to do this is to give your students inquiry-based assignments and activities that are relevant to their lives and future careers and give them the opportunity to engage in course concepts and tasks. After reading the next few pages, you will learn more about inquiry-based learning (IBL) and along with some tips on effectively integrating IBL into your course.

What is IBL?

Inquiry-based learning is a research-based strategy that actively involves students in the exploration of the content, issues, and questions surrounding a curricular area or concept. The activities and assignments in an IBL classroom can be designed such that students work individually or together to solve problems involving both in-class work and fieldwork. While the strategy is meant to be highly student-focused, the extent of teacher-directed vs. student-directed learning can vary depending on the level of the students in your course and their understanding of the inquiry process. The amount of faculty involvement in the process is explained in, Designing an Instructional Plan, Activities, and Assignments, below.

Why Use IBL?

Other than increasing student motivation, one of the main reasons to think about using IBL in your course is because it provides a means to actively involve students in the learning process. With the trend in higher education to move away from teacher-centered instruction to a more student-centered approach, IBL gives you the opportunity to help students learn the content and course concepts by having them explore a question and develop and research a hypothesis. Thus, giving students more opportunity to reflect on their own learning, gain a deeper understanding of the course concepts in an integrated fashion, and become better critical thinkers.

Integrating Inquiry into the Classroom

The process for integrating inquiry into your course contains phases that are similar to those used in the design of any course: determining your goals and objectives; an analysis of your potential students (their experience, prior knowledge, and academic level); your role in the learning process; developing an instructional plan; and designing activities, assignments, and assessments. As you proceed through each phase of the process, keep in mind that your teaching method (IBL) and all of the activities, assignments and assessments should be congruent with the goals and objectives for

your course. Therefore, you need to continually revisit each phase as you go through the process, making sure that this congruency exists.

Stating Your Goals and Objectives

Think of your course as an entire system of individual units and lessons. When you do this you'll realize that you not only have goals and objectives for the entire course, but also the individual units and lessons. Regardless of the part of the system, all of your goals and objectives should be related. If you decide to use IBL in your course, then two of your goals should be: 1) to have students become better problem solvers and critical thinkers and 2) to have your students engage in higher-order thinking skills. Beyond these, your goals should focus on what your students should know (concepts, principles, and rules) or be able to do (procedures and tasks) when they leave your course.

Analyzing Your Potential Students

When you are designing a course for inquiry-based learning, you need to look at your students on two different dimensions. First, you need to consider the academic level of your students. That is, what do they already know about the concepts and procedures in your course. Have they taken any prerequisite courses? Do they have any real-world experiences that will help them understand the content in your course? Is there any other prior knowledge that they might possess? Second, you need to consider is the amount of experience they have doing inquiry or undertaking the research process? It is important in this analysis that you do not overestimate their experience because when you begin to plan your instruction, their level of experience will dictate the amount of structure and modeling you need to do in the beginning of the semester.

Determining Your Role in the Learning Process

Even though IBL is considered a student-directed approach, if your course is the first time that your students encounter the inquiry process you will need to provide more structure early on in the semester. Too often, students experience frustration because the assignment is too difficult for their level and they do not know where to start. To avoid this dilemma, it helps to assume that the majority of your students are not "ready to go solo: and provide them with prompts, cues, and a chance to watch you model the process for them.

Designing an Instructional Plan, Activities, and Assignments

A large part of the faculty and student roles in an inquiry-based course are dictated by the instructional plan you choose. Bonstetter (1998) provides a guide for planning instructional (see Figure 1) that is based on the perceived knowledge, skills, and abilities of your students with respect to the inquiry process.

	Traditional	Structured	Guided	Student Directed	Student Research
Topic	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher/ Student
Question	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher/ Student	Student
Materials	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher	Student	Student
Procedures/ Design	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher/ Student	Student	Student
Results/Analysis	Teacher	Teacher/ Student	Student	Student	Student
Conclusions	Teacher	Student	Student	Student	Student

Figure 1: From Bonstetter, R.J. (1998). Inquiry: Learning from the past with an eye on the future. Electronic Journal of Science Education, 3(1).

To use this model effectively, it is best to identify your "starting point" for the semester. If your students have little or no experience with inquiry, then the 'Traditional' column is the place to start. In this column, you are directing student learning by modeling the entire inquiry-process. Once you feel that your students are ready, you can work your way through the structured, guided, etc. plans. The key in this planning guide is to recognize that as you progress through the semester, your involvement lessons becomes more as a facilitator and less as a director (see the appendix for an example of how one problem can be used in three different types of instructional plans).

Developing Assessments

The best way to assess inquiry-based assignments is to use a rubric (grading guide) that identifies the areas you want to assess and the criteria for different levels of achievement within each area. Rubrics take the "mystery" out of grading and help students understand what you are looking for as you grade the assignments.

Final Thoughts

In summary, inquiry-based learning is a method that can be used to actively engage students in an in-depth exploration of the concepts and skills associated with your course. The important thing to remember if you are going to adopt this strategy is to gauge how much experience and prior knowledge your students have doing inquiry-based tasks so you can determine the amount of direction you need to give them. If you would like to meet with a consultant to discuss changing your course to an inquiry-based learning environment, please send an email to the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence site@psu.edu.

Appendix

Example Inquiry Problem

When the "Darmok" episode of Star Trek: The Next Generation was first shown on television, the question "Is Tamarian a possible human language?" was hotly debated among professional linguists. The opinion of linguists was divided equally among those who believed Tamarian could be a possible human language and those who believed that it lacked some of the features that all human languages possess. In an essay, make a strong and convincing argument on whether Tamarian does or does not demonstrate each of the design features of human language. (B. Bullock, LING 100, 2001)

Possible Instructional Plans

(Faculty-directed steps in red; faculty and student collaborative step in green; student-directed steps in blue)

Structured Instructional Plan
- Show "Darmok" video
- Pose the problem to students
- Present a series of lessons on the design features of human language and provide students with resource materials
- Model how to use the materials and notes along with the main points of the video
- Assist students with the analysis based on notes, materials, and the video
- Have students write their own conclusions based on the evidence

Guided Instructional Plan
- Show "Darmok" video
- Pose the problem to students
- Present a series of lessons on the design features of human language and provide students with resource materials
- Assist students in the design of how to research the question and conduct analysis
- Students analyze the results individually or in groups
- Have students write their own conclusions based on the evidence

Student-Directed Instructional Plan
- Show "Darmok" video
- Pose the problem to students
- Students research and find information on the design features of human language
- Students design how to research the question and conduct analysis
- Students analyze the results individually or in groups
- Students write their own conclusions based on the evidence

Student Research Instructional Plan

- Assist students in developing a question or issue to research that is based on the unit of instruction
- Students research and find information about the question or issue
- Students design how to research the question or issue and conduct the analysis
- Students analyze the results individually or in groups
- Students write their own conclusions based on the evidence