Getting Out of the Left Lane: The Possibility of White Antiracist Pedagogy

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Abstract. *This article maintains that knowledge of the literature on multicultural education and social justice pedagogy is indispensable for white college professors who desire to teach effectively about racial justice concerns. In exploring this literature, I have noticed that many publications either articulate theory or reflect on concrete classroom strategies, while relatively few deploy theory to evaluate specific attempts at teaching for justice. This seems to me a gap worth filling. Speaking as a white, conventionally trained, Catholic theologian, I begin by explaining why I deem it appropriate to employ antiracist pedagogy. I then demonstrate that the literature on multicultural education and social justice pedagogy is essential to this effort by utilizing both types of literature, theoretical and practical, to analyze my own strategies and goals to date. Throughout, I discuss white antiracist theological pedagogy not as an accomplished fact, but as an emerging endeavor. See a companion essay in this issue of the journal (Anna Floerke Scheid and Elisabeth T. Vasko, "Teaching Race: Pedagogical Challenges in Predominantly White Undergraduate Theology Classrooms"), and responses by the authors of both essays, also published in this issue of the journal ("Responses: Toward an Antiracist Pedagogy").*

Whether college professors should teach in a way that sensitizes students to social justice issues and, if so, how we should do this is hotly debated.[1] Many academics are familiar with Stanley Fish's dogmatic insistence that the classroom be restricted to the impartation of information, training in intellectual analysis, and the reasoned exchange of ideas (Fish 2008). According to Fish, the classroom is no place to foster activism, and universities as well as individual professors who endeavor to contribute directly

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to students' moral or civic formation are attempting a task that is not properly theirs (2008, 55).

In my view, Fish's framing of the choice as an either/or, in which one must choose between rigorous intellectual training and moral formation, is false.[2] It lacks a critical awareness of and sense of responsibility to the larger social setting in which education takes place and in which students and teachers alike are inextricably embedded. It is not that Fish wishes to stifle the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom: quite the contrary, he urges professors to focus discussion on any and all rational arguments we deem germane to our fields. Indeed, he maintains convincingly that this is a better use of class time than asking students what they think, which often elicits a lot of half-baked opinions (2008, 39). Yet ultimately, Fish seems to see the academy as a politics-free space, where one takes time out from the world to acquire knowledge and intellectual skills. The phrase "ivory tower" comes to mind.[3]

Against this apolitical construal of higher education, I see the academy as having arisen from and existing within society in a way that renders the academy both responsible and accountable to society. In my courses, I aspire to create spaces in which students can recognize their roles in social issues, issues that do not conveniently park themselves outside the academy but often arise precisely within classrooms and educational institutions more broadly. I hope my students begin to see themselves as actors, if not as activists, who are involved daily in situations in which justice issues are operative and salient. Since my focus has been on race and racial justice, I have thought of myself as endeavoring to employ an antiracist theological pedagogy.[4] I aim to move beyond teaching isolated units on racism and privilege, a strategy that indicates that these issues are peripheral to theology, to presenting theology as intrinsically capable of and responsible for compelling Christians to work toward racial justice. In short, I believe that "all theologies are contextual" (de la Torre and Floyd-Thomas 2011, xxiii), and I aim to teach them that way.

This is not easy. Like many whites of my generation, I was raised in a white environment in which "colorblindness" was the unspoken ideal. My family, friends, and peers did not talk about race *qua* race, apparently believing this was the best way to be non-racist.[5] While this was surely an improvement on the overt prejudice with which many of our parents grew up, it still fell short of equipping us to deal forthrightly with the lasting effects of centuries of legalized slavery and segregation. Only as an adult have I begun to think critically about race, racism, and white privilege, and my awareness has developed academically, through reading and study, more than through face-to-face dis-

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[2] For a particularly cogent statement of the argument that this is a false choice, see Applebaum (2009).

[3] Many who do not share Fish's allergy to moral formation in education do imagine the university as a place set apart. Feminist philosopher Sandra Lee Bartky describes her own initial "idea of the university," which she clung to for many years, as "a gathering place for educated people" who had moved far beyond "intellectually primitive" notions such as racism (Bartky 2002, 151–2).

[4] While this article focuses on racial justice, I hope it will also prompt ideas for teaching about gender, class, sexuality, sexual orientation, and other areas.

[5] Bonilla-Silva (2006) and Wise (2010) are two thinkers who have demonstrated the inadequacy of this usually well-intentioned approach.

cussions. Moreover, as is common in the humanities, where a terminal degree doubles as authorization to teach college students, I received minimal formal teacher training, and none in addressing cultural pluralism or diversity.[6] Antiracism and the work of antiracist pedagogy do not come naturally to me but must be learned.

Deciding to approach this task more systematically, I applied for and received a research grant from my institution to study the field of multicultural education. Not surprisingly, some of this literature describes strategies, down to the specifics of curriculum design, for teaching about racism, sexism, heterosexism, and so forth (for example, see Adams, Bell, and Griffin 2007). These materials, however, are intended for discussions in which these issues are the sole focus, whereas I seek also to place racial injustice in theological context, and vice versa (to locate theology in the context of racial injustice). Moreover, the bulk of the literature is rich in theory and anecdotal reports of classroom events, but poor in systematic analysis of specific strategies and experiences.[7] Barbara Applebaum's comments are atypical only in their directness: "Some may be disappointed . . . because I have not offered any lesson-plans or concrete pedagogical suggestions. There is, however, no formula for how to do [this] pedagogy. I encourage others to share their attempts" (Applebaum 2010, 196–7). I am taking up Applebaum's challenge. I hope others will join me.

I contend that using educational theory to evaluate antiracist pedagogical strategies can render white theologians' efforts more strategic, systematic, and effective.[8] To make this case, I offer a progress report on my own attempts to implement what is being theorized in the literature on multicultural education, specifically social justice pedagogy.[9] The argument unfolds in four parts. First, I explain why I personally deem

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[6] In the literature, discussions of teaching theology with attention to racial injustice are scarce. The existing articles (for example, see Andraos 2012; Hill 2005, 2009b; Perkinson 2012; Reddie 2010; Turpin 2008, all published in *Teaching Theology and Religion*) contain mostly anecdotal reflections on various pedagogical strategies the authors or interviewees have tried, usually in seminaries and schools of theology. These thoughtful and thought-provoking discussions generally do not interface substantially with educational theory. However, *Social Justice Education: Inviting Faculty to Transform Their Institutions*, edited by Kathleen Skubikowski, Catharine Wright, and Roman Graf (2009), includes essays discussing innovative implementation of social justice pedagogy in mathematics, foreign language, social science, and writing, much as I aspire to do in theology.

[7] Ellsworth (1989) stated this critique over twenty years ago in relation to critical pedagogy.

[8] The literature on multicultural education may also be useful to educators raised in "color conscious" environments (Appiah and Gutmann's [1998] phrase), including most educators of color and a few whites. While of course I cannot speak for them, I suspect that they would tend to need it less than those from "colorblind" backgrounds.

[9] I use the term "social justice pedagogy" to describe multicultural education approaches that emphasize the urgency of social justice concerns in addition to appreciating the value of diversity. I deploy the phrase "social justice" to signal that important ethical issues are at stake, not to imply that all interested parties would agree on desired outcomes. In the case of racial justice, social science data clearly demonstrate the persistence not only of individual biases but also of quantifiable structural inequities. Accordingly, some might argue that in antiracist pedagogy, it would be appropriate to require of students particular actions, such as participation in a protest, as distinct from observing. I will contend, however, that it is possible – and in college classrooms, necessary – to insist that greater racial justice is needed without predetermining what achieving it would look like. After all, the social, political, historical, and theological complexities of racial injustice preclude simply compiling a to-do list (for example,

it appropriate to practice social justice pedagogy. Second, I describe the students and climate of my institution and discuss strategies I have tried in my courses. Third, I analyze these strategies using some of the relevant literature on multicultural education and social justice pedagogy. Fourth, I explore how certain themes from this literature might further transform my teaching. In conclusion, I discuss several factors that shape attempts to implement antiracist pedagogy. Thus, I demonstrate that knowledge of the literature on multicultural education and social justice pedagogy is indispensable for white college professors who desire to teach effectively about racial justice concerns.

Why Should a Theology Professor Employ Antiracist Pedagogy?

As a white, conventionally trained, Catholic theologian, I have come to believe that it is incumbent on me to invite students explicitly to engage racial justice issues in the classroom. This conviction is informed by the principle that education is always political, by my institution's identity as Roman Catholic, and by my research and teaching in liberation theologies, particularly womanist theologies. Here I comment on these motivators in order to establish the framework for the investigation that follows.

First, contributors to the rich and varied field of educational theory reaching back to W. E. B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson have consistently pointed out that there is no such thing as an apolitical classroom.[10] Without rehearsing this history, let me say that I too am convinced that educational realities are inescapably political, including which school a student attends, the resources available at that school, the content of the curriculum, and the pedagogical strategies used to communicate that content. To call these things political is to recognize that they never occur in a vacuum, but always unfold in the context of our larger social world. In any number of disciplines, including my own, syllabi crowded with male European or European-heritage thinkers are considered traditional, even classic. Such syllabi affirm existing social structures of dominance, tacitly if not explicitly,[11] and in turn these structures circumscribe both what the learner learns and how effectively she is able to deploy her knowledge in her lifelong endeavors toward her own and others' flourishing. That is, the content and quality of the learner's education directly affects her and others' long-term well-being. Educational choices matter, at every level.

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treat everyone the same, object to racist jokes, support affirmative action), as though checking off every item would solve the problem. Antiracist pedagogy, then, is a form of social justice pedagogy that attends to the need for greater racial justice, but without dictating the precise form that justice must take. This restraint is particularly important for white professors, since we typically benefit rather than suffer from racial injustice.

[10] Banks provides a "pioneering" overview of the origins and development of "transformative knowledge and multicultural education" (1996c, ix).

[11] In the context of teacher education, Applebaum notes, "Someone can teach about multicultural education from a philosophical perspective with a reading list of almost all white male scholars, and this course will not likely be regarded as biased. Yet a course in which the professor selects a reading list that highlights what scholars of color write on this issue and requires that the students be exposed to scholarship that addresses the ways in which power works and that challenges the 'knowledge' of the traditional curriculum will often be labeled 'championing advocacy in the classroom' or 'politicized scholarship' " (Applebaum 2009, 401).

Thus, I disagree with Fish that "only bad teaching is a political act" (Fish 2008, 70). To argue that higher education should not inculcate values, while ignoring racial inequities persisting not only in society but also at every level of education itself, is disingenuous at best, irresponsible and dangerous at worst.[12] James A. Banks, the contemporary "father of multicultural education," puts it this way: "Students must become critical consumers of knowledge as well as knowledge producers if they are to acquire the understanding and skills needed to function in the complex and diverse world of tomorrow. Only a critical and transformative multicultural education can prepare them for that world" (Banks 1996b, 22).

Second, I understand my institution's religious identity to foreground a concern for justice.[13] Our mission statement declares, "The University of San Diego is a Roman Catholic institution committed to advancing academic excellence, expanding liberal and professional knowledge, creating a diverse and inclusive community, and preparing leaders dedicated to ethical conduct and compassionate service" (University of San Diego, "Mission and Vision Statement"). The emphasis on "community" means that "the University is committed to creating a welcoming, inclusive, and collaborative community accentuated by a spirit of freedom and charity, and marked by protection of the rights and dignity of the individual"; and "compassionate service" means that "the University embraces the Catholic moral and social tradition by its commitment to serve with compassion, to foster peace, and to work for justice. The University regards peace as inseparable from justice and advances education, scholarship, and service to fashion a more humane world" (University of San Diego, "Mission and Vision Statement"). Indeed, USD, while Catholic, declares itself committed to the respectful study of all religions, including as goals productive interreligious dialogue and "cultural equity" (University of San Diego, "Catholic Identity"). USD also states a commitment to Catholic social thought, which is defined as "a rich heritage of wisdom and a living tradition of the Church's commitment to work for a just and peaceful society" and identified as one of four "strategic directions" for the university (University of San Diego, "Catholic Social Thought"). Although the exact phrase "social justice" does not appear in the mission statement, USD clearly aspires to advance this cause,[14] as does the Catholic Church itself.

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[12] For detailed analysis of educational inequities, see Kailin (2002) and Wise (2010, 101–12). Thompson (1997) and Applebaum (2009) argue that responsible education explicitly teaches students to recognize, understand, and think about how to redress the systemic inequalities in U.S. society today. Indeed, Thompson holds that "'education' that misprepares students for the actual social conditions that they are likely to encounter" is actually "miseducation," *à la* Carter G. Woodson (Thompson 1997, 15–16).

[13] Fish might not object here. Having charged with indoctrination a professor who tries to convince his students of the exigency of oppression, Fish notes parenthetically, "It should go without saying that such an accusation would not apply to avowedly sectarian universities; indoctrination in a certain direction is quite properly their business" (2008, 68). I teach at a sectarian institution, and what is more, I teach theology, albeit as an academic discipline and not as catechesis. Yet even if we at sectarian institutions can legitimately strive to cultivate values in our students – and I remain unconvinced that only we should do so – we must still employ a rigorous selection process to choose these values, and consider carefully how best to promote them.

[14] USD's administrators have made much of USD's designation as an "Ashoka U Changemaker Campus," celebrating our status as a "hub of social innovation" that is "geared toward improving the human condition" (University of San Diego 2011, 4).

Third, as a Catholic theologian I am deeply concerned with questions about justice and peace. Catholic teaching often links social issues with theological claims. The church teaches, for example, that racism contravenes justice by violating the principles that all human persons are made in the image of God, possess an inviolable dignity, and are members of a common human family (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 1979).[15] Pope Paul VI famously said, "If you want peace, work for justice" (1972). In its emphasis on charity and justice, rights and responsibilities, human dignity and the common good, Catholic social teaching exhorts Catholics to follow the example of Jesus who, in his healing and teaching ministry, created a community that made a point of including people society had ignored or discarded. Accordingly, current themes in Catholic social teaching include not only sexual and reproductive issues such as abortion but also war and peace, the economy, immigration, and racism.

As a white Catholic theologian, then, I regularly engage the work of black and womanist[16] theologians as well as other liberationists. Catholic and Protestant womanist thinkers, in particular, articulate a broad call for justice, including racial justice, that is synchronous with Catholic social thought at its best. The U.S. Catholic bishops have emphasized that racism is a sin and have critiqued both individual Catholics and the church's institutional structures for continuing to commit this sin.[17] The statements of the (mostly white) bishops, however, are generally not as incisive as womanist theologians' in discussing what this sin means for Christians of various backgrounds or how to cease to commit it.[18] Nevertheless, I experience a great synergy between the inclination of my church toward justice and the work of liberationist thinkers who urge all people and the church toward justice.[19] As I have struggled to teach in an antiracist manner, I have drawn on womanist ethics to develop pedagogical strategies for doing so. Three hallmarks of womanist method stand out for me as I strive to become an antiracist white Catholic theologian and teacher: first, a focus on particularity, attending carefully to personal and social contexts; second, an expansive concern to combat not only racism and sexism but all injustices; and third, a determination to tell the truth about what is going on in society and churches today.

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[15] Catholic theologians, including Cassidy and Mikulich (2007, 5) and Massingale (2010, 74), point out that this analysis is quite "thin" in comparison to the bishops' work on other issues, such as the economy. Tellingly, in a pastoral letter issued five years after *Brothers and Sisters to Us*, the black U.S. bishops mentioned the earlier document only to note that its hopes had gone unfulfilled (Black Catholic Bishops of the United States 1984, 19–20).

[16] Briefly, a womanist is "a black feminist or feminist of color"; Alice Walker crafted the foundational definition of the term (1983, xi–xii).

[17] See especially United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 1979. For an overview and discussion of this and other church documents on racism, see Massingale (2010, 43–82). Nothwehr (2008) provides a sweeping view of the Catholic Church's history on this issue, including substantial excerpts of relevant documents.

[18] For one womanist's practical advice to white people concerning racism, see Townes (2006, 77–8).

[19] Catholic thinkers who have recently published on racial justice, some of whom are womanists, include Cassidy and Mikulich (2007), Copeland (2002), Hayes (2011), and Massingale (2010).

In all this, I think my heart has been in the right place. Yet good intentions alone accomplish little.[20] Having begun to learn about multicultural education, I can say that my approach to antiracist pedagogy, which I now understand as a specific type of social justice pedagogy, has been preliminary and haphazard. I have taken some initial steps, including educating myself about personal and structural racism, diversifying my syllabi to include voices from traditionally underrepresented groups, and introducing the subjects of race and racism as topics appropriate for study in theology courses. While I have consistently worked to improve my methods for presenting and discussing this content, becoming conversant with the literature on multicultural education, especially social justice pedagogy, has opened my eyes to a wider variety of possible strategies.

Initial Attempts at Antiracist Pedagogy

I am young for an academic, being in my late thirties and having begun my first full-time, tenure-track teaching position in 2007. The University of San Diego is a private, Roman Catholic, liberal arts, doctoral institution with an undergraduate population of about 5,500 students. As of this writing, the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, in which I teach, is almost exclusively devoted to the undergraduate core curriculum. Because it is appropriate to my field, and so that all students can succeed without having to endure indoctrination (only about half of USD's undergraduates self-identify as Catholic), I take pains to teach not as a catechist or Bible study facilitator, but as an academic introducing students to a history of ideas, somewhat like philosophy. Most non-Catholic students understand this distinction and proceed through my courses without feeling alienated by the faith-claims that are the subject of investigation.

In terms of diversity, USD resembles other private institutions of similar size.[21] The fall 2011 entering class was 58 percent female and 42 percent male; our undergraduate student body self-reported as 57 percent white, 17 percent Hispanic/Latino, 6 percent Asian, 2 percent black, 5 percent two or more races, 0 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, 0 percent Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 6 percent nonresident alien or international (with 6 percent unknown). Eighty-two percent of the faculty are white. USD has an earned reputation for attracting students from wealthy families, but also enrolls a substantial number from less affluent backgrounds. Increased diversity of all types is widely accepted as a goal.

In terms of campus climate, an assortment of student groups is hosted by our United Front Multicultural Center, and in 2010 USD established a Center for Inclusion and Diversity. Moreover, as part of the core curriculum, all undergraduate students must fulfill a diversity (or "D") requirement, which includes taking at least one course in which one-third (or more) of the content concerns the experiences and ideas of traditionally underrepresented U.S. groups. I have consistently assigned readings authored by members of such groups, but because I believe that students should encounter this

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[20] I am beginning to understand how claiming good intentions protects my cherished image of myself as a "good person," even as I fail to challenge unjust structures (Thompson 2003b; Applebaum 2010).

[21] The statistics in this paragraph, which are rounded to the nearest whole number, are taken from the University of San Diego's internal "Stat Book," maintained by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning and accessible online to USD faculty and staff.

material routinely, I have not requested the "D" designator for my courses. When I raise diversity issues, students are ready to discuss them, albeit surprised to find them highlighted in a theology class.

Initial Strategies
In my teaching so far, I have focused on attempting to model antiracism, rather than on assessing developments in students' racial attitudes. Accordingly, I have not formulated diversity outcomes for student performance, but have considered my efforts successful when students have been willing to engage the issues. Here are five strategies I have used regularly.

1. *Diversifying the syllabus:* In terms of curricular choices, I have regularly assigned texts by theologians who write explicitly as members of underrepresented groups. This has successfully exposed students to diverse voices. Yet getting students to engage these voices seriously, as distinct from merely becoming aware that they exist, is challenging. This issue will be at the core of my efforts going forward.

2. *Listening and discussion exercise:* To introduce the topics of race and racism, I have had students listen to a story narrated by a young actress and originally aired on National Public Radio's "This American Life" (National Public Radio 2008). The actress describes working in an upscale toy store's "doll adoption center," selling expensive and highly-sought-after dolls that come in white, Asian, Latino/a, and black, and observing white customers' reactions when the store runs out of white dolls. Being not much younger than the actress and sometimes intimately familiar with low-level retail jobs, students connect with this presentation. Each time I have used it, they have engaged in curious and productive discussions, in particular about how racism is a learned behavior and about whether it is "natural" to prefer to be with people who "look like us." I believe this success is largely due to the actress's incisive and appropriate use of humor as she describes a very unhumorous situation.

3. *Self-description:* To encourage students to cultivate their own self-understandings in relation to issues of power and privilege, I present three brief narrative accounts of my own achievements in life: a "bootstraps" version emphasizing how hard I have worked, an "oppressed" version highlighting sexism I have faced, and a "privileged" version exposing some of the unearned advantages I have received. One student remarked, "It never occurred to me that you could be both oppressed and privileged at the same time." While students always pay attention when I make the subject personal and am willing to self-disclose, they do not necessarily respond by turning the spotlight back on themselves.[22]

4. *Data and statistics:* To show that racism is a social or structural problem and not just a question of individual persons with problematic attitudes, I present data from social science research showing that people from nondominant groups regularly experience disadvantages in many areas of society.[23] While some students are readily convinced by this data, others are not. For example, one objected that since

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[22] On the use of self-disclosure and emotion in the classroom, see Gillespie, Ashbaugh, and DeFiore (2002); hooks (1994).

[23] Online searches quickly locate many relevant studies. I regularly cite Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004), Maldonado (2005–6), and Pager (2003).

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black people are "overrepresented" in Hollywood, racism no longer exists. To address such claims, I discuss the concept of tokenism and challenge skeptical students to do their own research and bring it back to the class.

5. *"Freeway metaphor":* To explain further what I mean by characterizing racism as a social sin for which one can and should take responsibility, I use what I call my "freeway metaphor." I tell students that enjoying fully all the benefits of membership in U.S. society is like driving on a freeway, which is purportedly open to everyone. Some of us (for example, people of European descent) are already on the freeway, driving at the speed limit. Others of us (for example, people of African descent), for largely historical reasons (this is where the historical and social science data come in), do not have cars, or have cars that do not go fast enough to use the freeway, or are still coming up the on-ramp. Merging into existing traffic may be difficult if the freeway is crowded, yet it is not the responsibility of any single driver on the freeway to make room for the merging driver. It is polite to make room, and may avert an accident, but ultimately it is up to the entering driver to merge safely. If no one on the freeway makes room, however, then while no individual driver is solely responsible, the fact that no new cars can safely enter becomes the fault of all the drivers on the freeway. All become collectively responsible for altering the traffic pattern to facilitate safe entrances for those who also wish to use the freeway. To fail to do so is to perpetuate an unjust situation. Even those in the far left lane, unaware of the would-be merger's situation, are complicit: they are contributing to maintaining the situation, and thus bear some responsibility for altering it. Students typically find this metaphor helpful in clarifying the concept of structural racism or social sin.

To discover what these strategies do and do not accomplish in terms of antiracist pedagogy, I turn to the literature.

Analyzing the Strategies

The literature on multicultural education and social justice pedagogy falls along a broad spectrum. Pedagogies that try to educate students with an eye to the world in which they will live once they graduate, which – as these pedagogies overtly acknowledge – is the world in which they already do live, go by many names: multicultural education; culturally relevant education; social justice education; antiracist pedagogy; and teaching for diversity, to name only a few. The oldest and broadest descriptor, still very much in use, is multicultural education.[24] This multiplication of terms renders the literature somewhat complex to locate and navigate. Many publications on multicultural education and social justice pedagogy appear in venues devoted primarily to education and educational theory, but articles also appear in sociology journals and elsewhere. Much literature deals with elementary and secondary (K–12) education, often with teacher education; a smaller body of literature targets or is written by K–12 teachers trying to implement

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[24] This model has venerable origins in oppressed communities' efforts to utilize education for their survival, and as such has had the high ambition of equalizing social opportunity more broadly. It is sometimes used as an umbrella term to describe collectively the various movements listed above. Unless otherwise noted, this is how I use it.

recommended strategies, or inventing their own.[25] Relatively few publications address higher education.[26]

In some circles, multicultural education has come to be seen as passé, inadequate, or misguided. This may be because of the narrow sense in which the term is often employed, as opposed to the broad sense just described. In the narrower sense, multicultural education tries to expose students to the customs and traditions of various cultures, in the hopes that familiarity will breed the opposite of contempt – regard or esteem – or at least a "live-and-let-live" kind of tolerance. Some see this as a watered-down version of what the original multicultural educators had in mind, arguing that it does not sufficiently radicalize students to the reality of the world in which they live. At a basic level, this can represent a failure to teach at all. For example, Julie Kailin describes white elementary school teachers who behave affectionately toward all students and display pictures of black s/heroes such as Martin Luther King Jr. on classroom walls, yet exhibit little facility when it comes to attending to students' varied needs and talents. Too often, white students thrive while black students are neglected. Kailin calls this "good teachers doing bad things" (2002, 5–12). Surveying the field, she concludes that "approaches to multicultural education continue to be disturbingly superficial" (2002, 63).[27] Conversely, critics from the right charge that multicultural education amounts to politically correct pandering to special interest groups, or worse (see Niemonen 2007; Webster 1997). Both types of critic see multicultural education as ineffective, even dangerous. Yet I agree with Banks (1996a, 41) that the fact that multicultural education is not always practiced effectively does not warrant discounting it altogether, but rather indicates the need to keep refining our approaches.

Given the abundance of terms, educational theorists have proposed schemas by which to categorize the various approaches of multicultural education.[28] Banks (1996c) presents two. One breaks down "the dimensions of multicultural education" into content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and an

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[25] Kailin sets the various approaches to multicultural education in dialogue with antiracist education (2002, 47–64). While Kailin's research focuses on K–12 teacher education, her holistic approach contextualizes the issues in a manner invaluable for college-level teachers as well.

[26] For obvious reasons, this article emphasizes the literature on higher education. Examples include Skubikowski, Wright, and Graf (2009); Adams (1992); Schoem, Frankel, Zuniga, and Lewis (1993); Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007); and the publications by philosophers of education Thompson and Applebaum, cited throughout this article. Also consider Pence and Fields (1999); Barrish (2002); Gillespie, Ashbaugh, and DeFiore (2002); Bell (2003); the aforementioned articles in *Teaching Theology and Religion* (see note 6 above); and others.

[27] Martin Luther King Day and Black History Month are often critiqued as celebrations which commendably introduce black history into the school calendar, but simultaneously keep it contained and separate from the general curriculum. This reinscribes stereotypes of African American history and achievement as limited to experiences of oppression, involving few key actors, and relevant only to black people. For one such critique, see Prashad (2009).

[28] Appropriately enough, these schemas take diverse forms. Here are two examples in addition to those discussed in the text. Kailin (2002, 47–9) appeals to G. L. Brandt's threefold schema describing government approaches to multicultural education as assimilationist, integrationist, and cultural pluralism. Marchesani and Adams (1992; see also Adams and Love 2009) encourage teachers to focus on four interrelated components relevant to social justice education: knowing the students, knowing oneself as teacher, course content, and teaching methods.

empowering school culture (1996d), and the other describes five "types of knowledge": personal/cultural, popular, mainstream academic, transformative academic, and school (1996b). While Banks' schemas will be invaluable as I expand my efforts, I find Christine Sleeter and Carl A. Grant's (2009) schema describing specific teaching approaches most applicable in parsing my attempts.[29]

Sleeter and Grant describe five different attitudes to multicultural education as it is practiced in the classroom: (1) "teaching the exceptional and culturally different," seeing minority students as needing to be integrated into "mainstream" society, which is believed to be basically sound; (2) "human relations," interrupting and reducing overt incidents of intolerance, such as name-calling and racial epithets; (3) "single-group studies," focusing in depth on a particular perspective, such as black studies or women's studies; (4) "multicultural education," treating cultural differences as an asset and working towards more equitable distributions of power within the current system; and (5) "multicultural social justice education," treating cultural differences as an asset and working to reshape the currently unjust structures of society to empower all people to participate fully. Sleeter and Grant prefer the last approach, which aims to radicalize multicultural education into an activist pedagogy that trains students to recognize and combat various forms of injustice in society, including in their own schools. In distinguishing "social justice" efforts from the others, Sleeter and Grant develop a model whose goals are broadly in line with the aims of what is variously called "social justice education" or "teaching for diversity." They describe this model as "visionary" (2009, 198).

This schema helps me make sense of what my attempts have and have not accomplished. Like Sleeter and Grant, I reject the first model, the idea that "exceptional and culturally different" students need to be "mainstreamed," and tend toward the fifth, "multicultural social justice education." Perhaps most significantly, this schema reveals that diversifying the syllabus is an exposure approach, whether it represents "single-group studies" or more than one group.[30] The chief effect of my own syllabus diversification effort has been to make students aware that diversity can affect one's understanding of Christian symbols and the Christian life; for example, students are intrigued by James H. Cone's claim that Jesus is black (Cone 1997, 99–126). Such efforts, however, do not automatically translate into "social justice education" or "teaching for diversity" in the sense of empowering students to engage diversity's challenges productively.

Sleeter and Grant's schema also helps me to distinguish among presenting material from various groups in a critical and accessible manner ("multicultural education"), dealing with racist or otherwise problematic student comments ("human relations"), and trying to get white students to see how their own racial privilege is illuminated by this material ("multicultural social justice education," or, in Applebaum's [2010] phrase, "white complicity pedagogy").[31] Playing the radio story, sharing self-narratives,

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[29] Grant and Sleeter have K–12 education in mind, especially in their volume of curricular suggestions (2008). The approaches discussed here, however, are equally applicable to college-level teaching.

[30] Thompson (2002, 439–40) critiques the "exposure approach" in relation to antiracist pedagogy.

[31] As Rothenberg states, "white privilege is the other side of racism" (2008, 1). I am working to improve my pedagogy around this concept.

presenting social science data, and explaining the freeway metaphor are all ways of showing that U.S. society is structured unjustly, and I have hoped that this knowledge might inspire students to try to do something about it.[32] In presenting this material in theology classes, I have aimed to encourage critical reflection on what an adequate Catholic/Christian response (theological, practical, or both) to racism might be.

Thus analyzed, these strategies appear to exhibit rather inchoate and feeble attempts at what Sleeter and Grant call "multicultural social justice education." It is worth repeating that while I have required students to understand the arguments we consider, I have not graded them on whether they are persuaded. In fact, I have stated repeatedly that they do not have to agree with me or each other about what, if anything, should be done.[33]

At this point, a dangerous possibility arises. Having catalogued my efforts, I could congratulate myself for being a "good white person" who is sensitive to diversity issues and nudges her students to think about them. I could decide that is all I can do, indeed more than most (white) people do. It would be easy to ignore the questions lurking in the back of my mind: Should I require, not just encourage, my students to engage questions about racial injustice? and Is it responsible to require students who already "get it" to listen to me trying to persuade students who don't that race matters? Resisting this temptation, in the next section I turn to thinkers who address such questions head-on, making a compelling case for why a robust form of multicultural education – specifically, antiracist education – is needed and warranted today. Their ideas help me to evaluate my overall approach to antiracist pedagogy.

Rethinking Strategies and Goals

For critiquing my approaches, attitudes, and goals in attempting to employ antiracist pedagogy, the most useful literature I have found is the writing of philosophers of education Barbara Applebaum and Audrey Thompson. Since the 1990s, they have been naming, describing, and evaluating various aspects of antiracist education, especially as it pertains to white teachers and students. Both white, Thompson and Applebaum stand on the shoulders of Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and others. They do not claim, nor do I claim, to understand social inequities better than theorists of color. Nevertheless, as a white professor with many white students, I find Thompson and Applebaum helpful as "insider" interpreters of the white mind. White people aspiring to antiracism must acknowledge our indebtedness to people of color, but we also need to do some of the work ourselves (see, for example, Harvey, Case, and Gorsline 2004). Given our privileged racial background, we arrive at our commitment to multicultural education differently than our colleagues of color and may experience different challenges in implementing it. Thompson and Applebaum model sophisticated ways for white educators to grapple with the question of why and how we should attempt to teach for justice.

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[32] I am still working on how to present this material in a way that is equally useful to white students, many of whom are unaware of these dynamics, and students of color, who usually know them well.

[33] I have repeated this assurance in order to keep students' attention. But I may have wrongly conflated engagement and agreement (Applebaum 2010, 91–117); Thompson notes, "Merely catering to students' desire to feel comfortable is not an adequate way to address their discomfort" (2002, 446).

Like the thinkers of color upon whom they depend, Thompson and Applebaum strongly defend the thesis that social justice pedagogy is an imperative in a racialized society. They believe education should require students to face the reality of racialization and empower them to advocate for justice (Thompson 1997; Applebaum 2009, 2010). This systematic defense of social justice pedagogy maintains that one can practice this pedagogy without compromising academic integrity or objectivity (see especially Applebaum 2009), an argument that perhaps only needs to be made to a privileged white audience. While Thompson and Applebaum enumerate relatively few concrete examples and guidelines, they outline a theoretical framework within which it becomes possible to evaluate examples and draft guidelines.

Applebaum wrestles with communicating to students, especially white students, exactly what is amiss in society and why they should be concerned about it. Her elaboration of "white complicity pedagogy" (2010) proposes that white students must be carefully guided to recognize their implication in ongoing systemic injustices, and that this is a necessary step toward dismantling those injustices. This pedagogy aims to show how benefiting from white supremacy is linked to contributing to it; that simply declaring one's non-support for white supremacy accomplishes very little, although it may bolster one's sense of oneself as virtuous; that if one is white it is impossible to escape complicity; and that the way forward includes vigilance against denials of complicity. Applebaum shows that approaching such topics directly, and being clear about what is expected, is vital to success.

Thompson's corpus, also theoretically rich, contains a greater number of practical suggestions. She offers a useful caution in refusing to describe the just society we are seeking. While many proponents of multicultural education appear to presume that the nature of a just society is known,[34] Thompson emphasizes that our society is not yet skilled enough at cross-racial or cross-cultural collaboration to determine the specifics of such a vision (see especially Thompson 2003a). Until we reach this point, it reinscribes power and privilege for teachers – who are about 84 percent white in elementary and secondary education, down from 91 percent in 1986 (Feistritzer 2011), and 79 percent white in higher education (National Center for Education Statistics 2011)[35] – to take on this task. Instead, Thompson proposes that we train students to think creatively and collaboratively about justice issues, without predetermining what constitutes a good response.

To this end, Thompson advocates performative pedagogy. She encourages teachers to lean less on the knowledge and experiences that students bring into the classroom, and instead transform the classroom into a site where students share new experiences and analyze them collaboratively. This can be done in various ways. One text-based method

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[34] For example, Kailin does not seek "change for its own sake. The purpose of such change must be to build a more inclusive, democratic, and just society for all. That is the mission of antiracist education" (2002, xv). By not elaborating on what this society would entail, Kailin implies that it is simply obvious.

[35] Kailin's charge that K–12 schools, where people of color are underrepresented in teaching positions and overrepresented in service positions, "are a paradigm of the plantation" (2002, 69), would seem to apply to higher education as well. Yet white teachers are not necessarily less capable of social justice pedagogy than teachers of color; Banks (1996b, 22) points out that "there is enormous diversity among European Americans that is mirrored in the backgrounds of the teacher population, including diversity related to religion, social class, region, and ethnic origin," implying that this diversity could help to fuel transformative teaching.

is to require students to consider texts against the social backdrop against which they arose and through the perspective, not first of the student who reads the text and reacts to it, but of another established thinker who has grappled with the ideas (Thompson 1997, 34–35). For example, Thompson's students study the positions taken in the debate between Washington and Du Bois, not as ultimate statements with which to agree or disagree, but as intentional moves against a particular, complex social backdrop. These positions are further illuminated by Toni Morrison or Carter G. Woodson's interpretations of them. Students work together to make sense of the reasoning behind each perspective.[36] A second performative-pedagogy proposal is designed to disrupt dominant "common sense," the white values often enshrined as part of the educational process. Thompson suggests an immersion model along the lines of foreign language instruction: teaching a class entirely in Black English Vernacular (Thompson 1997, 33). Many professors, myself included, would not actually be able to do this; still, the idea helps to clarify what Thompson has in mind when she advocates performative pedagogy. In these and other ways, Thompson envisions creating shared in-class experiences. By provoking rigorous analysis and discussion, Thompson insists, such experiences can draw students into a subject in which they might not have been interested initially, or might have resisted if faced with it head-on.

Thompson's strategies have the potential to sidestep common obstacles to teaching for social justice: indifference or resistance from privileged students, for example, or the sense that class members must immediately take sides along "natural" lines of class, race, gender, or sexuality. From her work, I have gleaned a number of principles – cautions, really – that help me critique my efforts. The most significant five, and my reflections, are these:

1. *Stay mindful of context.* Keep in mind the racist structures of society from which students and professor come, in which the institution is embedded, and which shape the classroom unless professor and students work to contravene them (see especially Thompson 1997).[37] I have been mindful (in my mind) of society's

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[36] At first glance, this suggestion bears a striking resemblance to Fish's insistence, noted earlier, that unsubstantiated opinions be declared inadmissible in class discussions and only "rational" arguments considered. The vital difference is that Thompson would presumably reject as nonsensical, irresponsible, and dangerous Fish's notion of "academicizing": "To academicize a topic is to detach it from the context of its real world urgency, where there is a vote to be taken or an agenda to be embraced, and insert it into a context of academic urgency, where there is an account to be offered or an analysis to be performed" (Fish 2008, 27). Here Applebaum's distinction between critical thinking and critical pedagogy becomes salient: critical thinking prizes impartiality, rational deliberation, and objectivity traditionally understood, whereas critical pedagogy prizes learning to think outside the box, engaging questions that are often dismissed out of hand because they arise from non-dominant perspectives (Applebaum 2009). Drawing on Nicholas Burbules, Applebaum explains, "For advocates of critical thinking, being impartial is key, and teachers must avoid any advocacy because of the risk of imposing their viewpoint, their values, or their beliefs on their students. Advocates of critical pedagogy, Burbules explains, claim that this 'impartiality' functions to support the political status quo that remains as the invisible and uncontested background. . . . The type of criticality that critical pedagogy promotes involves asking questions that are often not considered possible to think. This type of criticality not only compliments [sic] but also enhances the criticality that critical thinking advocates endorse" (Applebaum 2009, 394). See also Ellsworth's (1989) critique of critical pedagogy's reliance on "rationality."

[37] I am rethinking how to present social science data as a result of research by Mazzocco (2006). In attempting to convince college students, who tend to favor "colorblindness," that it is appropriate and

unjust structures, and have striven to display them to students through the strategies I described previously. But I have not worked to contravene these structures as they manifest in the classroom. I need to think further about this.

2. *Perform, don't preach.* Engage in pedagogy that resembles art or performance, not propaganda, by creating generative in-class experiences that students can analyze together (see especially Thompson 1995; 1997; 2002). Having students listen to the NPR story and presenting narratives describing myself fit here. This helps me to understand why these strategies have worked and to think about creating more such experiences, including with texts.

3. *Leave outcomes open.* Do not pre-emptively specify the outcome, either of any particular student experience or discussion, or of what a post-racist society should look like; allow outcomes to emerge from conversations, and to remain future goals, rather than determining them before students arrive.[38] I am definitely guilty of specifying outcomes, although I have not always made them explicit to the students; for example, I have judged my success (as defined earlier) based on whether students have displayed openness to critiquing racial injustice, though, as noted, I have not judged student success (or assigned grades) based on this.

4. *Avoid derailment honestly.* Accept that the process of coming to awareness and facility with issues of racial justice is complex, difficult, and fraught, especially for white students, and do not allow this reality to derail the conversation (see especially Thompson 2002, 446–8; Applebaum 2010, 110–11). I have hesitated to be direct about this for fear of "losing" students. I am now finding that acknowledging it and encouraging students through it prevents at least some from "checking out."

5. *Remember your limitations.* You too are shaped by racism; don't think of yourself as the exception, the "good white" or "lone hero," the shining example for your students (Thompson 2003b, 2008). This is an especially important reminder for me; it complements Applebaum's insistence that white people can never escape complicity, though we can try to avoid denying it (2010).

However imperfectly, I am attempting to implement these principles in my teaching. For example, for a recent class session, I had assigned a text by Catholic womanist theologian Diana L. Hayes (2009). In the past, I had begun presenting womanist thinkers by explaining the term "womanist," and I could always count on some students, usually white, to dismiss them, commenting that since they discuss black women's

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necessary to address racial disparities with color-conscious policies, Mazzocco found students needed to grapple with three distinct lines of argument: evidence of current inequalities, explanations of the historical reasons for those inequalities, and a critique of the American notion of meritocracy. If any of these were missing, learners were not convinced, and in some cases their existing beliefs were strengthened. Wise (2010, 167–8) pointed me to Mazzocco's research.

[38] Imagine my surprise when, having used my "freeway metaphor" for years and titled this article after it, I discovered Thompson's article "Anti-Racist Work Zones" (2003a), in which she uses the metaphor of a freeway to critique (white) social justice educators' tendency to assume that everyone knows what an egalitarian society would look like. Thompson argues that to talk as though we all know where we are going is disingenuous at best and an abuse of power at worst, since interracial relations have yet to develop to the point where we could discuss how to structure a post-racist society. While I have used my "freeway metaphor" to discuss getting everyone onto the freeway, as distinct from getting to a particular destination, I will be more cautious with it in the future.

experiences, their ideas are irrelevant to other groups.[39] In this session, however, I presented Hayes first as a Catholic theologian whose essay exemplifies the officially sanctioned Catholic method of biblical interpretation, and only then went on to explain how her interpretation is also "womanist." This time, I encountered no overt resistance. Students asked how Hayes's ideas could apply to non-African American groups, but as a question, not a criticism. We began discussing the insidious use to which European-descended slave owners had put the biblical story of the "curse of Ham" (Genesis 9:18–27): to justify enslaving black Africans on the grounds that Egyptians were the descendants of the accursed grandson of Noah. One student asked, "But how did they know which part of Africa to get the slaves from?" Another replied, "They didn't. It wasn't based on logic." Although I had not insisted we discuss racial justice issues, the material induced the students to consider them, with curiosity rather than defensiveness. Almost inadvertently, I did what Thompson urges: created an experience with a text where the students grappled with serious issues, while doing an end-run around the hang-ups that students often bring into such a conversation. A subtle change in my approach made a significant difference.

Conclusion: A Different Kind of Conversation

My research and experiences persuade me that my initial approach to antiracist pedagogy – trying to sneak it in the back door and hoping to convince students before they notice what I am doing[40] – has been largely ineffective. In fact, insofar as it generates student resentment, it is counter-productive. Slowly but surely, therefore, I am altering the way I teach. These changes feel frustratingly minute and excruciatingly gradual. As a privileged white person, I have discovered no shortcuts, either to understanding the need for antiracist pedagogy or to enacting it in the classroom.

This is a complex and daunting task, risky to be sure. But given the social, political, and economic functions of higher education in U.S. society,[41] failing to undertake it means actively participating in perpetuating unjust systems. Consider this observation by ethicist Jack A. Hill:

> When I began teaching at TCU in 2000, I quickly became aware of a disjunction between the school's stated mission of 'educating ethical leaders and responsible citizens for a global community' and what we professors were actually doing: namely, providing largely white, upper middle class consumers with the skills to

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[39] As noted, USD enrolls very few black students; I have taught one or two per class, sometimes none.

[40] I see myself reflected in Bartky's frank description of her efforts to get students to engage sexism as "'seductive,' that is, I try to charm students into liking me so they will like the course, hence take seriously my invitation both to learn something new and in the course of this learning, to subject received opinion to critical scrutiny" (Bartky 2002, 13). Thompson calls this the "charismatic" approach (2002, 442–3).

[41] See Robert Jensen (2005, 20–22) and Patricia J. Williams (1997, 54–55) on how the Greek system both perpetuates racial segregation and produces a huge proportion of our national leaders, including presidents, congresspersons, Supreme Court justices, and CEOs; and Tim Wise (2010, 101–112) on racial inequities in K–12 education, the quality of which, of course, profoundly shapes students' access to and success in higher education.

carve out for themselves a comfort zone at the center of an otherwise fractious and threatening world. (2009a, 2)

Teaching and learning never occur in a socio-political vacuum. Yet, even once a professor realizes this and resolves to act, factors beyond her personal motivation, knowledge, and skill set will shape her efforts profoundly. Hill's account foregrounds at least three such factors: institutional orientation, faculty commitment, and student disposition.

Some scholars consider institutional support for social justice pedagogy to be crucial. As noted, Banks (1996d) identifies "an empowering school culture and social structure" as a dimension of successful multicultural education. Likewise, describing Middlebury College's decades-long quest to become a "social justice institution," Skubikowski emphasizes that

> the socially just classroom needs a socially just academy in order to flourish. Faculty will take pedagogical risks in supportive environments. . . . [M]any faculty feel vulnerable in their efforts to teach social inequity or to try new engaged pedagogies, and they need communication, development, and support. (2009, 97)

Such resources, however, may or may not exist, and some scholars proceed without a guarantee of institutional support. For example, Kuecker shows that allowing his work as an activist to inform his teaching and scholarship is an ongoing struggle because his university, like most, is set up to preclude solidarity with people on the ground: it is an "ivory tower," a place where the pursuit of objectivity is protected from the real world (Kuecker 2009, 47). Consequently, Kuecker believes that to be an "academic activist," one must either eliminate the borders between academy and society or engage in radical pedagogy (2009, 50). Changing an institution takes time, whereas individuals can alter their pedagogical strategies more quickly.[42]

Still, as Hill notes, most college professors do not emphasize grappling with social justice issues as a primary goal for their students. Institutions that declare a commitment to justice as part of their mission often do not require that this concern be taken up in the classroom. At USD, we are currently rethinking how to educate students for diversity, and it is difficult to build consensus around proposed changes. While my institution has supported my research in this area, I have done it largely on my own. It would certainly be easier to hone antiracist pedagogical strategies in a local community of like-minded colleagues.

Thinking across the academy, it is not clear that most professors, even if willing, would be prepared to implement social justice pedagogies. Many know little about them, and to learn takes time and effort. Furthermore, the ability to implement these pedagogies effectively is not only a question of gaining knowledge. While racial identity development theories, such as those described by Helms (2008) and Hardiman and Jackson (1992), have their limitations (see Thompson 2003b, 14–15), they do show that people move through stages of awareness of personal and structural racism. Some white

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[42] Getting out ahead of one's institution in social justice education can be risky; "radical pedagogy" is not typical pedagogy. Kuecker's institution supports him in the episode he describes, but such stories do not always end thus.

people never do gain much understanding. When educators, including liberal educators, "have not yet developed a critical consciousness about power relationships and institutional oppression or the ability to offer more equitable alternatives," they "are not ready to be teaching about social justice" (Goodman 2001, 172).

Once the work begins, challenges abound. Many students, especially whites, strenuously resist the idea that the comfort zone to which Hill refers is ill-gotten or illusory, while some welcome it.[43] What's more, professors who want to teach about social justice sometimes exhibit the same avoidance tactics as students (Turpin 2008, 146), perhaps because unsettling feelings of "culture shock," "self-shock," and being a "sojourner" arise when a professor of privileged background begins addressing bias in the classroom (Weinstein and Obear 1992, 39–50). Successfully negotiating these intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dynamics requires hard work and the willingness to make, admit, and learn from mistakes.

For myself, I expect implementing antiracist pedagogy to be a career-long process. Keeping this in mind, the next phase of my efforts is coalescing around a new lower-division theology course I am developing. This course affords me an opportunity to synthesize these issues in an explicit and sustained manner. Entitled "Racial Justice: Catholic Perspectives,"[44] the course functions as an introduction to Catholic theology that considers questions about racial justice rigorously and systematically, as germane to the subject. I am experimenting with applying Banks' (1996b) "types of knowledge" schema to the course's theological content. Assignments and learning outcomes will require students to engage racial justice questions actively throughout the course. I am applying to have USD's diversity designation appended to the course number, so that students can anticipate and receive credit for the work we will do. I hope to begin facilitating a qualitatively different kind of conversation in the classroom, to keep open the possibility of white antiracist pedagogy.

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[43] Turpin (2008) identifies dynamics that emerge when teaching about social justice to students with a significant degree of privilege. For discussions of student feedback, see also Applebaum (2009, 395, 401), as well as Jones' (1999) analysis of an attempt to redress power dynamics by separating dominant and nondominant students. Again, I am reminded that as a white person, I have the dubious privilege of being able to decide whether I think antiracism and antiracist pedagogy are important, with little obvious cost to myself if I conclude they are not.

[44] This title is inspired by Massingale (2010), a core text for the course.

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