

## **Antiracist Orientation in Research: Antiracist-oriented Citation Investigation Project**

**Context:** Antiracist citation projects help students deepen their appreciation of those institutional and disciplinary communities, stakes, and hurdles that shape the academic research and writing processes. When students learn to write for a disciplinary-specific academic audience by deliberately connecting their values to their literary research practices, they are better able to make explicit some of the norms and gaps in those scholarly conversations in which they seek to offer a critical intervention. By extension, students' interventions are often higher-stakes than when their research is driven exclusively by concerns about the number and genre of their sources. In antiracist citation practice, students help one another to research scholars and publishing venues through a framework of equity in order to identify what Sara Ahmed calls "companion text[s]" for themselves. Building on Donna Haraway's (2003) concept of a *companion species*, Ahmed writes that *companion texts* are works "whose company enable[s] you to proceed on a path less trodden" (*Living a Feminist Life*, 2017, p. 16). In undergraduate courses involving research-based writing, an antiracist citation project will offer upper-division students an ethical framework and a set of strategies for pursuing critically significant inquiry that amplifies and engages a variety of scholarly voices, particularly marginalized ones. The activity helps fulfill course goals of evaluating sources, offering a critical intervention in a scholarly conversation, and teaching values of equity, antiracism, anti-ableism, and feminism through academic practices of individual and communal research. Antiracist citation practice is suitable for non-white and white students alike.

### **Assignment Description:**

Step 1:

Read "Building Feminist Worlds" by Sara Ahmed (p. 10–17 of *Living a Feminist Life*, 2017).

Step 2:

Discuss Ahmed's citation policy in class. How could it apply to undergraduate researchers? How can we see implicit, explicit and/or systemic/structural racisms as affecting scholarly research, according to Ahmed? What are some of the risks and rewards of Ahmed's "strict citation policy?"

Step 3:

Design your research essay's inquiry question in class.

Design Prewriting:

- What is the topic or key phrase you're interested in? (e.g. the representation of children)
- What is the specific context in which you're going to research it (e.g. which novel will you analyze to say something about children's representation within it?)
- What are related, contextualizing keywords?
- What are some synonyms, antonyms for your key phrase, key words?

- What do you already know about the topic? What's obvious or evident about it already?
- Who is your ideal audience and who would a likely secondary audience be for your research paper? Why?
- What kinds of evidence would be most compelling to that particular audience, given the topic you've chosen? Why?
- What types of sources would you look for to find that evidence?
- What are 3-4 resources you can identify that could connect you to relevant sources you don't already know about? These resources might be certain people or websites or places.
- What might the topic be glossing over or leaving out? (e.g. differences between how able-bodied children and children with disabilities are represented; what the depiction of a so-called "childless woman" in the text might also tell us about the text's representation of the *idea* of children)

Inquiry question draft:

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Anticipated search terms for research:

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Step 4:

Attend the presentation by a university librarian on using the library's resources for your research. Learn how we find, evaluate, and use academic sources and non-academic sources. Make contact with the resources you listed that could help you find more kinds of sources.

Step 5:

In the individual time portion of the library resource presentation, begin your research.

Part I: As a first step, use the library's search databases and chat with presenting librarian and librarians online to help you find

- A) top-rated academic journals in the field of your research
- B) other relevant but perhaps smaller or less prestigious relevant academic journals
- C) any non-academic sources useful for your research

Part II: By the end of class, make sure you have listed at least 3 peer-reviewed academic journals that may have information relevant to your research and at least 2 fairly recent (within the last 2–8 years, depending on your discipline and topic) peer-reviewed journal articles closely related to some part of your topic. Read their abstracts and lightly skim each of them. In 1–2 sentences for each question, write down your answer to the following: What does each focus on, specifically? What is the argument each article seems to be interested in making about their topic? Include these answers along with MLA-formatted works cited

entries for these two potential sources in your homework assignment related to this step. Bring the articles you found to class.

Step 6:

**Ethical Problem/Possibility Analysis: 3 citation investigation methods**

1. Research Reflection Part I: Do a Google search for the author(s) of both articles, each in their own tab. What can you tell about them, given their profile descriptions and other available material about them online? (Answer in chart below)

Is the author identifying or publicly identified as	Knowledge based on what evidence? ( <b>Do not simply assume!</b> Cite the source of the facts or write, ' <i>unknown</i> ')
white, BIPOC, of various racialized backgrounds?	
neurodiverse or neurotypical?	
working in the U.S. or in another country (which country?)?	
a woman, a man, or a nonbinary person?	
cisgender or transgender?	
working-, middle, or upper class? caste status?	
able-body-minded or having a disability?	
a well-established scholar in their field or a newer or less established one?	
a scholar with a lot of prestige given where they work and publish?	
LGBTQIA+ identifying or straight?	

working in a country as a refugee, asylum-seeker, or (im)migrant; or working as a citizen of birth country?	
someone who has experienced particular world-reframing trauma (or a member of a collectively traumatized group/a survivor) or someone who has been free of such an experience (still experiencing of course little-t trauma that is common to humans)? [ <i>Consider: where should we draw such a distinction? Should we?</i> ]	

- o Write 250 words about the problems and possibilities afforded by this citation investigation method for someone who wants to establish an ethical citation practice in their research. Be specific about which knowledge and types of sources of it most illuminate these problems/possibilities. Turn this into the homework module for today on Canvas.
- Research Reflection Part II:
  - o Go to the bibliography or works cited page for one of your articles.
  - o Read through the titles of each of the works cited.
  - o Write a 3-4 sentence free-write reflection about what these titles focus on and—more challengingly—identify 1-2 gaps (omissions) and/or 1-2 only minimally present types of (sub)-topics that you see in this title list.
  - o For any topic you listed as only minimally represented that also sounds to you to be ethically important in terms of equity-building in research topics, see how often the source(s) on it are mentioned in the in-text citations. You might do this by using Ctrl + F to “find” an author name in a text.
  - o Write 75 words about what you found about doing this bibliographic title research: was/were the source(s) used extensively or not? What patterns of focus do you see in these titles? What are the problems and possibilities afforded by this method of assessing equity in a topic’s source conversation? What was interesting about the titles you found?
- Research Reflection Part III:
  - o Keep open the bibliography or works cited page for that article.
  - o Do a Google search for each of the names listed in the works cited. *For co-authored sources, just Google-search the first two author names listed.* For each search, just quickly skim the authors’ online presence, including text and images.
  - o Take a couple quick notes during your searches
    - Which patterns, anomalies, or gaps can you notice in the pattern of who seems to be getting cited here? If you can’t tell because you can’t determine enough about the authors, try at least to find where they teach and work and what their specialties and other research interests

are. Do they research with an explicit focus on intersectionality or identity or social justice concerns?

- What information is hardest to verify?
- o Make a note of any self-described or publicly described BIPOC scholars and go back to one of their profiles. Or note that you did not find any.
- o If you found some cited, *what else* has that scholar or those scholars produced—articles, books, recorded talks, other publications? List 2-3 other works they have produced (written, filmed, created) and note whether their titles sound relevant or interesting.
  - Go back to the library database and do a search to find one of the sources by that scholar.
  - If you can access the source, repeat research reflection part II to spot-check 3-4 sources in *its* bibliography to see whom they are citing. If you cannot access the source, you might try a “look inside” research using amazon.com’s page for a book by that author. Search for “Bibliography” or “References” or “Words Cited.”
  - Write 100 words about what you found afforded and limiting about doing this bibliographic author research. What can you learn about the citation record this way? What can’t you learn? What are the ethical and/or intellectual costs of seeking to learn about citation records this way and create more equity in your own citation record this way? Are there any potential benefits? If so—what?

Turn in this series of reflective analyses as homework.

Step 7: **In-class antiracist-orientated citation query**—bring laptops or tablets or meet in a computer lab to participate in an activity helping you identify more scholarship by BIPOC, especially any women and men identifying as trans or as having a disability. We’ll be deepening our intersectional antiracist research awareness by researching in two ways. First, by casting a wide net all over the Internet to see whom we find working in a particular discipline. Second, by looking closely at who is already present, but perhaps new or marginalized in a current citation conversation already happening within a peer-reviewed article.

**Working from the outside-in to citation conversations in the discipline:**

1. Google search “BIPOC scholars working on \_\_\_broad thematic topic keyword\_\_\_.” Set a timer for 5 minutes, allowing yourself to click through various links, Twitter feeds, listicles, PDF article links, and so on to learn about any BIPOC scholars you can find working in our discipline.
2. To our in-class live shared Google doc, add the full names of up to 3 scholars you find working in the field with a dash next to their name and a word describing one of their thematic research interests or their disciplinary specialty next to their name. In a different color, add your first name and last initial after each Google doc contribution you make.
3. Google search “BIPOC scholars in \_\_\_\_[our common discipline or subfield]\_\_\_.” Repeat the timed information gathering process from step 1.

4. Add 1-3 more names to our shared class Google doc. Try to challenge yourself not to repeat a name already listed in the doc.
5. Do a Google search for key words related to antiracist lenses AND the general topic of interest OR search for any of the other contextualizing keywords or key phrases related to your inquiry. I will help you identify what some such relevant keywords might be for our particular discipline and field of study. For example “Black mothers” AND “Romanticism” or “racism AND “nineteenth century” AND “family.” See if you can find any essay collections, theoretical books, and/or histories related to these topics.
6. Into the Google doc, try to add 1-4 sources by title and author from #5. List your name next to each source in the doc.
7. Do a quick Google search on the authors you found. Do you see any writers of color? Any women writers of color? And so on. In the Google doc, to the names you just added for #6, add **\*BIPOC** next to any text written by an author identifying as BIPOC

**Working our way out from within an already existing citation conversation:**

8. Do a Google search on 3 peer-reviewed journals relevant to your research and take 3 minutes or so to learn more about each. Specifically
  - a. Is the journal affiliated with any larger organization or group?  
           Y        N
  - b. Does the journal or its affiliated group hold conferences at which there are awards for scholarship highlighting BIPOC representation or for BIPOC scholars working in the field?  
           Y        N                    What are the awards?
  - c. Does the journal or group offer any recognitions for new/emerging scholars, scholars from disadvantaged backgrounds?  
           Y        N                    What are the awards?
  - d. Does the journal have any special editions dedicated to the study of race or intersectional concerns in its field? &/or does it have any very recent articles doing antiracist-themed scholarship, even if it’s only very generally related to your topic or field?  
           Y        N                    What are 1-2 such articles?
9. Google-search authors who came up listed in any of the searches for 1a-1d if you didn’t already research them. See what else they have written and if it could be relevant. If the journal/group has none, you can be finished with this step once you’ve established that fact. Move on to step 11.
10. To our class Google doc, add their names and a topic descriptor of their research focus, especially noting for yourself on any scholars whom others mention that sound relevant to your research.
11. Do an amazon.com search for one of the relevant books you found or read the title of in the Google doc and scroll down the page to see “Customers who bought this also bought…” or “Related searches.” Click through the book images and author names to see if you can find 2-3 more sources related to the history, theory, or analysis of some aspect of your chosen topic. List them in our class Google doc, including title and author

12. In the Amazon page, click on one of those related texts and scroll down to *its* “related searches” for that text and see what *else* and *whom* else you can discover doing work on important topics.
13. Add to our in-class live Google doc 1-3 texts you find, including title and author. If the title is already listed, no need to mention it again.

This Google doc making is followed by class discussion on the ethical and informational possibilities this citation investigation creates.

Step 8:

Continue your research until you have found all the sources you need and all the sources you want to be able to put into practice your research values of equity and integrity. Make explicit for yourself and for your readers what gaps or omissions and what minimally available kinds of sources are available in this research archive you’re building. Consider refining your research topic to accommodate your values-led research more directly and fully.

Step 9:

Draft the research paper’s first draft.

Step 10:

On the same day you turn in your first draft, which you’ll bring to class for collaborative peer response, turn in via the Canvas homework module a formal 2p. reflection on your antiracist-oriented research process. In it, discuss what you found and learned and how the search strategies affected the way your research took shape through your first draft of the essay. In the paper, identify your own subject position (or any one aspect of it you feel comfortable sharing with me) in relation to the topic of study you’re researching and reflect on what it means for you to do this research from your subject position. What feelings, values, and ideas emerged as significant for you? What new or continued approaches do you want to take towards any work you do—further research or work in another discipline or career, given what you found (and/or found confirmed) in this antiracist citation process? What changes or next steps would you suggest for other novice scholars seeking to follow in Ahmed’s footsteps without having as much long-built-up firsthand knowledge working with BIPOC academics from around the world?

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