

## **Abolishing Whiteness: Preparing MSW Social Work Students for Anti-Racist Practice**

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**Abstract:** *The power, privilege, and oppression paradigm that most schools of social work currently espouse to are often taught through an experiential approach to whiteness, privileging the majority of white students with the opportunity to explore their white identity at the expense of the learning of the Black/Brown, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students in the classroom. Many BIPOC students experience these courses as a hostile environment, finding themselves and their racial group identified in contrast to whiteness – oppressed, marginalized, silenced, and powerless. This paper presents an innovative course outline using Critical Race Theory and Critical White Studies as theoretical frameworks to decenter whiteness and attend to the learning needs of BIPOC students. Using these two theoretical frameworks, students will learn the history of the racial hierarchy of humans; the social construction of whiteness, the evolution of anti-black racism and the extension to other people of color; and the relationship between white supremacy and racism.*

**Keywords:** *Anti-racist practice, whiteness, critical race theory, critical white studies, social work education*

COVID-19, racial unrest, and the political divide created a perfect storm that will forever mark the year 2020 as a pivotal point in the history of the United States (U.S.) and the world. Life will be forever defined as life before 2020 and life after 2020, before the pandemic and after the pandemic. For many Black/Brown, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) 2020 will be remembered as a time of White society's awakening to the egregious, endemic racism that has always been and continues to be part of their everyday lives. This paper is the result of several conversations between the three authors (two BIPOC, one White) over the last year regarding the impact of these events on our lives, our MSW program, and our students. Two of us are long time instructors of courses within our MSW program related to power, privilege, oppression; and diversity, equity, and inclusion – a subset of our curriculum labeled “values courses” designed to help our students explore these issues in depth, focusing on populations we serve and social justice. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a foundational theory for the majority of these courses. The third author is a recent graduate of our program who prompted our exploration of Critical Whiteness Studies as she began to try to make sense of her experience as a BIPOC student in our predominately White institution. With the racially charged events of 2020 as the backdrop, our conversations led us to question our approach. Are we truly preparing our students to do this work in authentic and culturally appropriate ways? Are we preparing all of our students or are we just preparing our White students - actually causing harm to our BIPOC

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students? In what way can we do this without centering Whiteness, recognizing that we are all co-conspirators (Love, 2019) in this struggle. We concluded that a new approach, one that integrates the key constructs of the two theories, was one way we might address our concerns.

### **A Racial Awakening**

The death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 at the hand of the police sparked unprecedented outrage and protests against racial injustice from people of all races, all over the world. George Floyd's death as well as the death of Breonna Taylor just six weeks prior highlighted the rate of fatalities from police shootings for Black people in the United States is more than twice that of White people (32 per million for Black people as compared to 13 per million for White people; Statista Research Department, 2020). Latinx persons are almost twice as likely to die from a police shooting (24 per million). According to the Washington Post (2021), since 2015 over 6000 fatal shootings occurred in the U.S. at the hands of an on-duty police officer with 998 people killed in 2020. Of those killed in 2020, 43% were identified as BIPOC – 27% Black/African American, 19% Hispanic/Latinx, 2% Indigenous, 2% Asian, <1% Other (Washington Post, 2021). Of the over 6000 deaths recorded since 2015, nearly 287 have been female. In roughly 600 cases, the person was either unarmed or the presence of a weapon on the person was undetermined.

### **COVID-19**

In addition to society's awakening to racial injustices at the hands of the police, the Coronavirus pandemic publicly unearthed the racial disparities and injustices within the US health system for BIPOC. Within a relatively short time frame, emerging data showed the Coronavirus had disproportionately impacted BIPOC across the nation (Godoy & Wood, 2020). By late summer 2020 data indicated that BIPOC were between 1.1 and 2.8 times more likely to be infected with COVID-19 – Asian persons (1.1x); Black persons (2.6x); Latinx persons (2.8x) and Indigenous persons (2.8x) - than White persons (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020). Indigenous persons were 5.3x more likely to be hospitalized, followed by Black persons (4.7x), Latinx persons (4.6x), and Asians (1.3x). Lastly, while there was no difference in the rate of death amongst Asian persons in comparison to White persons, Latinx persons were 1.1x more likely to die as a result of Coronavirus, Indigenous persons 1.4x more likely, and Black persons 1.1x more likely. According to Tai et al. (2020), the disparities of COVID-19 seen in BIPOC communities are most likely rooted in “medical, social, economic, environmental, and political contexts that predate the pandemic” (p. 705).

### **Social Work Education Response**

These two pivotal racial moments in time highlight the need for culturally responsive, anti-racist social work practice. As schools of social work look to prepare MSW social workers to respond to the *new normal* that will most likely exist after 2020, it is vital that curriculum related to issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, power, and privilege be

reevaluated for its effectiveness and applicability. According to Salsberg et al. (2017) the majority of the social work workforce with a master's degree or higher is White (72.6%). Most recent data indicate that MSW graduates are 88% female, and surprisingly 43% BIPOC (George Washington University Health Workforce Institute, 2019). However, disenfranchised, marginalized populations, who are more than likely to be BIPOC, are overwhelmingly disproportionately represented within the client populations and systems social workers serve (Fong et al., 2015; Huggins-Hoyt et al., 2019; McIntosh et al., 2018; Salsberg et al., 2017). Social work education is charged with designing competency-based curriculum with the goal of graduating social workers who have the "ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, and skills to practice situations in a purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being" (Commission on Educational Policy [COEP] & Commission on Accreditation [COA], 2015, p. 6). More specifically, Competency 2 of the 2015 Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (COEP & COA, 2015) states that:

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power. (p. 7)

This competency aligns with National Association of Social Workers (NASW) second core value "social justice" and ethical principle "social workers challenge social justice":

Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people. (NASW, 2017, p. 2)

This paper presents a course outline using CRT and Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) as the theoretical frameworks. The power, privilege, and oppression paradigm many schools of social work currently espouse to is rooted in the idea that in the U.S. there is a socially constructed racial hierarchy that places White people at the top and Black people at the bottom with other people of color in betwixt (Lopez, 2013). This socially constructed hierarchy creates a culture of systemic and institutional racism rooted in white supremacy

and yields a power of whiteness that leads to the oppression of all others as a means of maintaining the status quo of white supremacy. Unfortunately, many BIPOC students in these courses experience micro/macro aggressions/assaults from their White peers – some of which may be “working through” their White guilt or shame towards their “awakening.” Most importantly, while the BIPOC student may leave the course feeling somewhat validated and hopeful that some of their white peers have learned what many of them have known all their lives – that race matters; many may also leave bewildered and perplexed as to how the content of the course will help them as they move forward into an overwhelmingly White profession as a BIPOC social worker.

In this paper, we argue that *Whiteness* is not the product of white supremacy but rather that *White supremacy* is a construct of *Whiteness*, which maintains the status quo and keeps racism alive. Using two theoretical frameworks, CRT and CWS, we outline a course curriculum in which students learn the history behind the racial hierarchy of humans; the social construction of Whiteness and the way this manifest differently for White people versus BIPOC; the evolution of anti-black racism and its extension to other people of color; and the relationship between White supremacy and racism. Historically, the profession of social work and social work education has mirrored the contemporary racial norms of society. For example, early social work followed the practice of separate but equal in the provision of services to White people versus Black people (Rabinowitz, 1974; Seraile, 2011). Social work activism and education related to diversity and racial justice has evolved overtime in response to the sociopolitical context of the time (Jeyapal, 2016; Schiele, 2007). The events of 2020 pushed systemic racism to the forefront of the sociopolitical discourse. This course presents an opportunity for social work education to lead the charge and equip MSW students of all races for anti-racist practice that serves to dismantle whiteness across systems including systemic racism, entitlement, colorism, and cultural appropriation.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

### **Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

CRT emerged in the mid-1970s during a time when the country seemed to have moved on after the civil rights movement of the 1960s. While much had changed, much remained the same, and in some cases, regressed (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Frustrated with the status of racial reform in the United States, legal scholars, Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, began the critical race theory movement building off of critical legal studies and radical feminism. From critical legal studies, CRT added racism as a critique of mainstream liberalism and adopted the postmodern concept that not every legal case has one correct outcome (i.e., there is more than one way to interpret the facts depending on the interpreter; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998). From radical feminism, CRT incorporates concepts related to power, the social construction of roles, and the invisible patterns of structural oppression.

Over the last few decades, CRT has evolved from a legal theory to a movement, “a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship

among race, racism, and power” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 3). CRT and social work are compatible in that both aim to promote social and racial justice through the dismantling of structural racism (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Constance-Huggins, 2012; Kolivoski et al., 2014). The tenets of CRT provide a critical framework or lens social workers can use to shine a light on race and racism that underlies societal structures and institutions.

### Tenets of Critical Race Theory

The primary tenets of CRT discussed here are 1) racism is endemic or ordinary, 2) the social construction of race, 3) whiteness as property, 4) differential racism, 5) intersectionality/anti-essentialism, 6) the unique voices of color, 7) counter-storytelling or counter narratives, 8) interest convergence, and 9) the critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

*Racism is endemic or ordinary* means that racism is endemic to society and an ordinary part of the everyday life of BIPOC. Chester Pierce (1970) identified the “offensive mechanisms” of racism, ranging from the more subtle, often unintentional microaggressions to the more “gross, dramatic, obvious macroaggressions such as lynching” (p. 266). Sue et al. (2007), defines microaggressions as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 273). Chester noted that while these microaggressive offenses may not be crippling in isolation, “the enormity of the complications they cause can be appreciated only when one considers that these subtle blows are delivered incessantly” (p. 266). Kendi (2019) goes further, stating

I do not use “microaggressions” anymore. I detest the post racial platform that supported its sudden popularity. I detest its component parts – “micro” and “aggression.” A persistent daily low hum of racist abuse is not minor. I use the term “abuse” because aggression is not as exacting a term. Abuse accurately describes the action and its effects on people: distress, anger, worry, depression, anxiety, pain, fatigue, and suicide.” (p. 47)

These acts of racial abuse impact BIPOC whether they are experienced firsthand, witnessed directly, or witnessed indirectly (through social media, mainstream media/news, or word of mouth). In 2020, the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd were recorded and witnessed repeatedly by all on social media and news outlets. The murder of Breonna Taylor was witnessed repeatedly through detailed reporting and reenactments based on eyewitness testimony, police, and court documents. Each of these incidents had a profound and traumatic impact on BIPOC across the country and around the world.

Kendi (2019) believes that one’s actions are either racist or anti-racist and that racism is the result of racist policies and ideas that perpetuate inequalities and discrimination. Kendi holds that changing these policies and ideas from racist to anti-racist is the key to ending systemic racism. While racial realists agree that the key to progress is systemic, political change in the allocation of privilege, status, and resources; racial realists hold that “racial progress is sporadic, and that people of color are doomed to experience only

infrequent peaks followed by regressions” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 183). In other words, the racial realist holds suspect any progress towards racial justice, anticipating the victory to be short-lived. The racial realist is not surprised when racism is unveiled as they have no reason to doubt that it is always there (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). This was never more evident than in the case of Breonna Taylor. In June 2020, Breonna’s Law was passed banning no-knock warrants in Louisville, Kentucky (Riess & Waldrop, 2020). Three months later, the grand jury in Louisville failed to charge any of the officers for their role in her death (Donaghue, 2020). This case left many BIPOC who were holding out hope that the justice system would work deflated and defeated (Price, 2020).

*The social construction of race* argues that race is a social construct, defined by society and maintained by its social structures. It is these social structures that create systemic racism that governs and affirms racist behaviors within our society. This can sometimes be a hard concept to grasp given that as a society we have been socialized to “see” race. We look at the color of the skin, the shape of the nose, the size of the lips etcetera, and categorize people into distinct racial categories that we have collectively accepted as true. Anthropologists, geneticists, and other social scientists continue to debate the extent to which race is biologically, culturally, and/or socially constructed (Anemone, 2019; Hartigan, 2008; Meloni, 2017; Reardon, 2004). CRT holds that while there may be physical characteristics passed down genetically, race is a very real construct with ascribed meaning constructed by society and codified by law in the U.S. This is most evident through the evolution of Whiteness described below.

*Whiteness as property* refers to the idea that whiteness has value to those who possess it and comes with a set of benefits and privileges (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Justice Sutherland stated that the provision of the Naturalization Act which at the time granted access to citizenship to free White people and persons of African nativity of descent

...is not that any particular class of persons shall be excluded, but it is, in effect, that only white persons shall be included within the privilege of the statute. "The intention was to confer the privilege of citizenship upon that class of persons whom the fathers knew as white, and to deny it to all who could not be so classified..." (United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind, 261 U.S. 204 [1923], Section 208)

Historically, the benefits and privileges granted to those who possess whiteness have been codified in the US through the coupling of whiteness with citizenship, land ownership, and other preferential treatment sanctioned by law. With property ownership comes the right of possession, use/enjoyment, disposition, transfer, and exclusion (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

*Differential racism* refers to the ways the dominant culture racializes different non-dominant racial groups *at different times* depending on the needs of dominant society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Racialization is the process by which a race is socially constructed, the creation of a dominant racial narrative by the dominant culture that serves to meet the needs of dominant society. Slavery is a clear example of this. Initially, slavery was justified as a means to save the soul of the African by converting them to Christianity (Tisby, 2019). However, once a generation of slaves were converted because it was illegal for Christians to enslave other Christians, Africans became racialized as inferior, less than

human, to justify chattel slavery. A contemporary example is the *debate* over Mexican immigration. Even though many Mexican's overnight found themselves to be living in a foreign land as the result of annexation of Mexican territory in 1848, Mexicans have historically been the target of immigration laws in the US while simultaneously serving as the primary workforce of agricultural labor. Although the exact number is not known, it is reported that between 1929 and 1935 anywhere from 82,000 (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2020) to 1,000,000 (Balderrama & Rodriguez, 2006) Mexicans (over 50% were US Citizens) were deported due to the concern that they were taking American jobs during the Great Depression. Seven years later, the Bracero Program began bringing millions of Mexican men to the U.S. to meet the need for agricultural labor (Bracero History Archive, 2020). In 1954, many Mexicans remained in the U.S. beyond their contractual time and the U.S. began Operation Wetback, deporting not only those who remained past the end of their contract but also their children who were born in the U.S. It was during this time that American workers became increasingly concerned about that the employment of Mexicans was a deterrent to the employment of American workers. The program ended in 1964. Today, Latinx persons, particularly Mexicans, are again racialized as "illegals" who are taking American jobs, described as criminals, rapists, and drug dealers, fueling the immigration debate (Armenta, 2016). In reality, the majority of the undocumented persons living in the US are taxpaying and law-abiding citizens (Green, 2016; Obiokoye, 2018).

*Intersectionality and anti-essentialism* go hand in hand. Members of a racial group are often essentialized down to the lowest common denominator or what is determined as the "unique essence of a group" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 173) and these common attributes are mistakenly applied to all members of that population. Many times, these essential attributes are grounded in stereotypes and societal myths about the population. CRT acknowledges that each racial group as well as individuals within each racial group has their own origins and history. *Anti-essentialism* recognizes that the experience of one member of a racial group cannot be generalized to the entire group. Persons within the same racial group will have unique perspectives on the same experience because of the concept of *intersectionality*. While a person's racial identity impacts how they view the world, so do the other, overlapping, *intersecting*, identities related to attributes such as class, gender, ability, and sexual orientation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

The tenet of the unique *voices of color* highlights the fact that people of non-dominant racial groups – BIPOC – are in the best position to speak to experiences related to race and racism, more so than their white counterparts. While their experiences vary dependent on their unique racial identities and the history of their racial group with oppression and structural racism; the common thread, while not generalizable, is transferable to the experiences of other BIPOC. As possessors of whiteness and its unearned benefits and privileges, White persons may speak about issues related to race and racism; however, they must be careful not to appropriate the experience of BIPOC or the legitimacy of their discourse may be suspect.

The unique voices of color can often "cast doubt on the validity of the accepted premises or myths" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 171) held by the dominant or majority culture. Dominant narratives often place the dominant culture in a more favorable light and

the non-dominant racial group in a less favorable one. *Counter storytelling* or *counter narratives* challenge the dominant narrative by providing the “other side of the story.” For example, many of us grew up believing the positive dominant narrative of Christopher Columbus, his discovery of the “New World”, and the pilgrims joining with the indigenous people of the lands for a unifying celebration of Thanksgiving. The counter narrative, as we now know, is that this “discovery” led to colonization of the New land and subsequent genocide of millions of people indigenous to the land through disease, murder, massacres, and war as they pursued western expansion and used the ideology of manifest destiny as justification (Grand, 2018). Challenging the dominant narrative often involves a reexamination of historical records, revisioning history, “replacing comforting majoritarian interpretations of events with ones that square more accurately” with the experience of minoritized populations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 25).

*Interest convergence*, a CRT principle coined by Derrick Bell (1980), simply put is the idea that “the interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interest of whites” (p. 523). This concept is most understood in hindsight, through the reexamining of history, examining more closely the context in which significant gains in civil rights for BIPOC were made. Re-envisioning history or examining historical records, challenging the dominant narrative with counternarratives that more accurately reflect the experiences of BIPOC will often “unearth little-known chapters of racial struggle” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 25). The idea that the only way for change to happen is if there is convergence of interests between White people and BIPOC places suspicion on all motives behind policy changes that on the surface appears to benefit BIPOC. If racial equity is truly the mutual goal and neutral principle guiding these changes, then one would expect the racial majority to recognize that to equalize the unequal balance of racial power and privilege inherent in society would require altering their status. In other words, “true equality for blacks will require the surrender of racism-granted privileges for whites” (Bell, 1980, pp. 522-523).

Lastly, CRT holds a strong *critique of liberalism*, specifically the notion of color-blindness. CRT holds that to be “color-blind” is to ignore or reject the impact of history and structural racism on BIPOC (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). A critique of the concept of professionalism serves as an example of this tenet. The Council on Social Work Education’s Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS; COEP & COA, 2015) states in the first competency that social workers “demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication” (p. 7). Through a CRT lens, the concept of professionalism appears on the surface to be color blind, focusing on a set of behavioral expectations in the workplace not influenced by race or racism. What is not considered is the fact professionalism is a concept historically used as a tool of social control, designed to maintain dominant standards of behavior rooted in White supremacy culture (Frye et al., 2020; Jones & Okun, 2001). This concept creates an intolerance to behaviors deemed as problematic such as diverse workstyles, timeliness, questioning, disagreement, anger, and resistance that if committed, are punishable by censure both informally and formally. This can include exclusion and isolation in the workplace, discrimination, as well as loss of pay or firing. Racially or culturally based expressions of self, such as speech, dress or hairstyle may also be deemed problematic. In November 2020

Colorado passed the CROWN Act (Creating a Respectful and Open Work for Natural Hair Act) after several incidents of discrimination based on natural hair type and race-based hairstyles made state and national headlines (Wilbur, 2020).

CRT also challenges the liberal ideal of racial equality. Kendi (2016) states that “when you truly believe that the racial groups are equal, then you also believe that racial disparities must be the result of racial discrimination” (p. 11). Discrimination, disproportionality, and disparities would not exist as all racial groups would be impacted equally and proportionately by raced-based laws and policies. CRT stresses that the goal is equity not equality. “In seeking equality rather than equity, the processes, structures, and ideologies that justify inequity are not addressed and dismantled” (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004, p. 29). Equity acknowledges the unequal playing field created through structural racism and strives for structural change that will have longer lasting impact and correct the balance.

### **Critical White Studies (CWS)**

CWS, or the study of whiteness, is a relatively new field of study emerging in the 1990s. While CRT centers race and focuses on the intersection of race, power, and the law, CWS centers whiteness, the white race, and what it means to be white with an aim of dismantling racism and getting rid of white privilege (Chen, 2017; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Chen identifies two primary perspectives on whiteness that frame CSW. The first, the historical perspective, looks at the history of whiteness, its evolution over time, and sees it as a fluid concept that is transformative. The experiential approach or perspective views whiteness as a hidden condition of White people that needs to be revealed and resisted. This approach sees the primary method to dismantle racism is at the individual level, helping White persons to understand the effects of white privilege and the imperative of overcoming whiteness as a condition. In this paper, we take a dual approach, recognizing that it is important to attack the problem at the macro and micro level.

W. E. B. DuBois (1920) was one of the first scholars to tie the concept of *white supremacy* to racism stating this “assumption that of all the hues of God whiteness alone is inherently and obviously better than brownness or tan leads to curious acts” (p. 34). When many people think about the term white supremacy, they envision extremist groups such as the KKK, the Proud Boys, and the Aryan Nations. While these extremes are indeed exemplars, white supremacy is rooted in the invention of the White race, the racial and social conditions that maintain the racial hierarchy, as well as the political and legal context that enforce white privilege and racial injustice (Rabaka, 2007). DuBois (1920) saw white supremacy as a global concept stating

I do not laugh. I am quite straight-faced as I ask soberly: "But what on earth is whiteness that one should so desire it?" Then always, somehow, somehow, silently but clearly, I am given to understand that whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen! (p. 34)

Rabaka (2007) makes the case that white supremacy goes beyond race, impacting other forms of oppression and injustice:

White supremacy serves as the glue that connects and combines racism to colonialism, and racism to capitalism. It has also been illustrated that it exacerbates sexism by sexing racism and racing sexism, to put it unpretentiously. Thus, white supremacy as a global racism intersects and interconnects with sexism, and particularly patriarchy as a global system that oppresses and denies women's human dignity and right to be humanly different from men, the ruling gender. (p. 3)

Similar to CRT, the *social construction of Whiteness* is central to CWS. Whiteness is viewed as a socially constructed identity assigned to "European explorers and settlers when they came into contact with other ethnic groups, specifically the Africans and the Indigenous inhabitants of the Americas" (Roediger, 1991 as cited in Chen, 2017, p. 15). The concept of race, specifically the Black race, was constructed by the European Whites to justify the enslavement of darker skinned person and ascribed to the Africans. Blackness was then racialized as savage, wild, subordinate to the Europeans (Chen, 2017). The concept of whiteness was constructed by these same Europeans, in contrast to blackness, and ascribed positive superior attributes. As the Europeans encountered other darker than white skinned people, the negative attributes assigned to Black people were extended in contrast to the positive attributes of White people.

The social construction of whiteness in the U.S. can be traced back to 1790 when Congress passed the nation's first Naturalization bill limiting access to U.S. citizenship to free White people and white immigrants only thus making being a white person a criteria for citizenship (Lopez, 2013). This criteria did not change until 1848 when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo extended citizenship to the inhabitants of the land annexed after the war with Mexico; however, it was not until 1870, two years after slavery was abolished, that former African slaves not born in the US were granted citizenship, and it was not until 1898 that any child born in the U.S., regardless of race or parent's citizenship, was granted citizenship (National Museum of American History, n.d.). Indigenous persons were not granted U.S. citizenship until 1924 with the passing of the Indian Citizenship Act. Asians were excluded from citizenship by omission and in 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act specifically banned the Chinese from citizenship. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 eliminated race as a criterion for immigration or citizenship (National Museum of American History, n.d.).

Between 1790 and 1952, several non-white and non-black persons from a wide variety of backgrounds petitioned the courts, asked to be legally declared White so that they could become U.S. citizens (Armenia, Arabia, Burma, China, Hawaii, India, Japan, Mexico, Syria; Lopez, 2013). The results were inconsistent with some being declared white and others not. Two famous cases were argued before the Supreme Court which seemingly struggled to define what it meant to be White: *U.S. v. Ozawa* (1922) and *U.S. v. Thind* (1923). *Ozawa*, a Japanese citizen who had settled in Hawaii, argued that while he did not fit the scientific category of "Caucasian" which was considered synonymous with White, his life reflected that of the White citizen (Luconi, 2019). *Thind*, an Asian Indian, argued that based on the science at the time, he fit into the category of Caucasian and therefore should be allowed citizenship. Both were denied citizenship as they were deemed not to be White. Justice Sutherland delivered the final opinion in *U.S. v Thind* stating:

What we now hold is that the words "free white persons" are words of common speech, to be interpreted in accordance with the understanding of the common man, synonymous with the word "Caucasian" only as that word is popularly understood. As so understood and used, whatever may be the speculations of the ethnologist, it does not include the body of people to whom the appellee belongs. (United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind, 261 U.S. 204 (1923), Section 215)

As a result of these rulings as well as the many that came before, the white race was not only socially constructed, "the courts constructed the bounds of whiteness by deciding on a case-by-case basis who was *not* white" (Lopez, 2013, p. 779). Race became constructed giving the common white man the power to define and decide who was white and those who were non-white. To be white one must be *not* non-white.

A primary difference between blackness, brownness, and whiteness is visibility. In a country where white is seen as the norm, whiteness is rendered *invisible* whereas non-whiteness is visible and distinguishable. In his opinion, Judge Sutherland clearly identifies physical appearance as the distinguishing characteristic between White persons and non-White persons

It is a matter of familiar observation and knowledge that the physical group characteristics of the Hindus render them readily distinguishable from the various groups of persons in this country commonly recognized as white. The children of English, French, German, Italian, Scandinavian, and other European parentage, quickly merge into the mass of our population and lose the distinctive hallmarks of their European origin. On the other hand, it cannot be doubted that the children born in this country of Hindu parents would retain indefinitely the clear evidence of their ancestry. It is very far from our thought to suggest the slightest question of racial superiority or inferiority. What we suggest is merely racial difference, and it is of such character and extent that the great body of our people instinctively recognize it and reject the thought of assimilation. (United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind, 261 U.S. 204 (1923), Section 215)

The invisibility of whiteness extends beyond the physical characteristics. Flagg (1998) coined the term "transparency phenomenon" to describe the tendency of White people to be unconscious of their whiteness. Race is something that belongs to the Other – external to White people. Until a person's whiteness is brought to their consciousness, they do not think about their life experiences in terms of their race. Unlike BIPOC, most White people do not have an active consciousness of their racial identity that causes them to question every interaction with other races as whether or not their race had any impact on the interaction or outcome.

Whiteness is the norm; Black and Brown people are the ones who are different and thought of in racial terms (Guess, 2006). As the norm, Whiteness is not *noticed* as it is assumed to be the case. For example, until very recently, more often than not, when the media described a person of interest, they will only add a racial qualifier if the person is nonwhite. If they are white, other attributes may be discussed such as age, gender, hair color, eye color, height, yet the fact that this person appears to identify as White is not mentioned. While the media may be doing better, this phenomenon can often be seen in

personal conversations when we describe our friends or colleagues. Often race is not mentioned unless the person is BIPOC.

For many Peggy McIntosh's (1990) essay *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* was their introduction to the concept of white privilege. McIntosh describes white privilege as "an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks" (p. 1). Those who espouse to the experiential approach to whiteness studies often use this essay or others like it to expose White persons to the concept in hope that they will recognize the deleterious effects of their privilege and be moved to battle racism, not taking into account the systemic nature of racism and white supremacy. This approach has been critiqued as one that takes the attention off of whiteness as a racist concept, instead viewing whiteness in a more favorable light with a presumption of innocence, unaware of these privileges therefore not responsible for the impact these privileges may have (Chen, 2017). A similar critique can be applied to the often-used qualifier when racial microaggressions occur as "well intentioned White brothers and sisters [who] are generally unaware that they have committed an offensive racial act" (Sue, 2009, p. 183). CWS argues that whiteness is anything but innocent – but rather a subtle form of the racism endemic to our society as espoused by CRT theorists.

A relatively new concept to CWS is the idea of *White fragility* (DiAngelo, 2018). As defined by DeAngelo "white fragility is much more than mere defensiveness or whining. It may be conceptualized as the sociology of dominance: and outcome of white people's socialization into white supremacy and a means to protect, maintain and reproduce white supremacy" (p. 116).

Critique of this concept is in tandem with critique of whiteness studies overall. Some argue that the experiential approach to whiteness, including educating White people about White fragility, assumes that all White people see race and racism the same (Chen, 2017). They argue the heterogeneity of White people – stating that not all White people are privileged, that not all White people are oppressors, that some White people are oppressed, and that some are not racist. This critique loses sight of the primary definition of racism – a system of advantage based on race (Wellman, 1977) – as individuals we commit racist acts and perpetuate a system of racism.

On September 22, 2020, President Trump issued an Executive Order that both exemplifies this critique while simultaneously serving as a prime example of DeAngelo's definition of white fragility. The order claims to "combat offensive and anti-American race and sex stereotyping and scapegoating" (Exec. Order No. 13950, 2020, p. 60683). It defines race or sex stereotyping as "ascribing character traits, values, moral and ethical codes, privileges, status, or beliefs to a race or sex, or to an individual because of his or her race or sex" (Section 2 [c]) and provides supporting examples of incidents involving "non-minority males." In Section 5(g) among other things, it disallows federal funding for any training that makes "any individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race or sex." The irony of this statement being that an underlying truth for both CWS and CRT is that historically, the training and education most of American has received in the classroom and in the

workplace results in BIPOC feeling discomfort, anguish, and other forms of psychological distress on account of their race. President Biden rescinded these training restrictions by executive order on January 20, 2021 (Wagner, 2021).

A central premise of CWS is that whiteness is the central issue of racism and until White supremacy is abolished racism will not be absolved. In order to combat white supremacy, White people must make the invisible visible, deal with the “internal conflict at the core of white racial identity” (Tanner, 2019, p. 183) and actively join the war. They must come to grips with the fact that racism is not just a problem for BIPOC, it is also “a white problem” (Tanner, 2019, p. 182).

Just as racism is a higher-level concept that does not solely impact or involve BIPOC, whiteness is a higher-level concept that does not solely impact or involve White people. Whiteness is a concept that is fluid, constantly changing, and adapting as society that needs to be unearthed and dismantled. Just as racism is systemic, embedded in our institutions and perpetuated by individual racists acts, and maintained by society’s acceptance that this is *just the way it is*, whiteness is systemic, embedded in our institutions and maintained by society’s acceptance that this is just the way it is. Kendi (2016) argues that race did not create racism but rather racism created race. Race was created to justify and maintain the racial hierarchy. Similarly, whiteness created a culture of white supremacy meaning that once the white race was identified in contrast to the Other, the theory of White supremacy or superiority emerged to justify keeping White people at the top of the hierarchy. White supremacy is an attitude, a belief that whiteness is the norm, is the status quo, is the preferred state of being. Laws, policies, cultural norms all serve to maintain this way of life. Dismantling racism means dismantling whiteness - and just as dismantling racism requires intentional, active, efforts of both BIPOC and White people; dismantling whiteness requires intentional, active, efforts of both White people and BIPOC. As social work educators we know that this work must be done at the macro and micro level. As we prepare MSW students for anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice, we must simultaneously educate our students on the history and systemic nature of racism and whiteness while also guiding them as they grapple with their racial and ethnic identity.

### **Anti-Oppressive and Anti-Racist Practice and Social Work**

The social work profession has always and continues to practice within a racist society. As a result, social work is not exempt of charges of racism, having been complicit in racism, allowing the racial norms of society to guide practice (Corley & Young, 2018). Social workers have been instrumental in perpetuating the myth that anyone who is not White, or wealthy is delinquent or deviant, unsuitable as parents, or uncivilized (Kennedy, 2008). Jane Addams’ settlement house movement was more aware of the macro, systemic issues impacting immigrant communities and communities experiencing poverty; however, neither this nor the Charitable Organizational Societies’ approach addressed the root causes of social problems and, as a result, arguably did more harm. Due to this, social work professionals sought more systemic approaches rooted in social justice values with a focus on racial and economic justice.

While social work has expressly identified activism and advocacy for social justice for oppressed groups as a primary value, the inclusion of race, diversity, equity, and inclusion has evolved over time. In response to the civil rights movement, social work practice and social work education began to place emphasis on diversity and cultural competence in the 1960s and 1970s (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Schiele, 2007); however, these early efforts were rooted in ethnocentrism and a universalist perspective that held that the theories and methods used were applicable to all, regardless of race/ethnicity. Once race was identified as a significant consideration, issues facing ethnic minorities (i.e., BIPOC) were essentialized and little attention was paid to the unique problems facing diverse populations. As racial diversity began to be addressed, social work moved towards a model of multiculturalism – expanding attention to other marginalized identities (Schiele, 2007). In the 1990s, the idea of multiple and intersecting identities further expanded social work’s view of diversity, equity, and inclusion and social work education’s focus. According to Schiele, this led to the emergence of the equality-of-oppressions paradigm leading social work education to focus on oppression and anti-oppressive practice.

Anti-oppressive social work practice uses a person-centered philosophy and attempts to address institutional and structural inequities; an approach that includes both process and outcome, and accounts for power and hierarchy (Dominelli & Campling, 2002). It attempts to address how power is used to oppress and marginalize people and how the power of communities can be used to work towards liberation (Tew, 2006). Fundamentally, anti-oppressive practice believes that society is inherently unequal and that we must work as social workers to address the imbalance at the roots.

Anti-oppressive practice is a broad umbrella category that does not always center race, racism, or anti-racism, and there is critique that anti-oppressive social work practice has not effectively involved impacted communities in determining what anti-oppressive practice should be. There are concerns that anti-oppressive social work practice has essentially co-opted community knowledge as “expert” knowledge and used it to label oppressed communities in ways that furthers their oppression and marginalization (Wilson & Beresford, 2000; Wilson, 2016).

In the current political context of COVID-19, Black Lives Matter, The March for Our Lives, The Women’s March, #MeToo, etcetera, social work has again shifted a focus on race and anti-racist practice. This time, intersectionality is at the forefront – recognizing that we are all complex individuals with multiple, overlapping identities. Often misinterpreted, Audre Lorde’s (1983) essay *There Is No Hierarchy of Oppressions*, is not supporting an equality-of-oppression paradigm but rather the reality that the oppression of one group is often a pre-cursor to the oppression of another; therefore, we must battle oppression of any kind when it presents itself. This aligns with the CRT tenet of differential racialization – the target of racial oppression may be Black people today, Latinx people tomorrow, and Indigenous people next week. If we are to successfully combat racism, we must fight it on all fronts regardless of the racial group being targeted.

Kendi (2019) identifies several aspects of racism, identifying the difference between how these may play out as a racist as opposed to an anti-racist. Using these characteristics as a framework, anti-racist social workers:

- Espouse to the idea that all racial groups are equal, none is superior or inferior to the other, or needing to be developed.
- Acknowledge and accept that there are cultural differences among racial groups, rejecting efforts to equalize these differences and create cultural standards that result in a cultural hierarchy.
- Support policies that reduce racial and ethnic inequity, opposing racial capitalism, and protected racial spaces that support racial inequity.
- Work to defeat colorism and antiracist policies that produce inequity between lighter and darker skinned people.
- Acknowledge intersectionality and work to defeat policies that result in racial inequities for those with intersecting identities (i.e., gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, religion, class etc.)

## **Course Development**

### **Current Course Design**

Currently, the course taught in the authors' social work program centers a power, privilege, and oppression framework. CRT is the theoretical foundation and students are led through a process of critical thinking as outlined in Ore (2009). The course's dual focus is on 1) individual identity and self-awareness, and 2) an understanding of systemic and institutional oppression dynamics. In this course, faculty and students work to make connections between individual themes of socialization, policies, and practices that perpetuate oppression. Students are asked to do assignments of personal reflection, self-identification, and cultural values related to their individual backgrounds.

Scenarios based on current events allow students to make connections between their personal identities and the broader societal context. Students are asked to critically examine the Ferguson Report (U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2015) and recent Supreme Court decisions on the Voting Rights Act through a CRT lens to gain better understanding of the institutional and systemic racism that exists in present day. The challenge is that the time frame of the class does not allow for an in-depth look at CRT and each of the tenets. Additionally, the course covers other forms of oppression such as ableism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and transphobia. Given that the program is on the quarter system with classes meeting once a week for only 10 weeks, the course is only a cursory glance at these broader societal issues. While the class approaches conversations about oppression from a lens of critical thinking and self-awareness, much of the focus ends up being on White people learning about their own and society's racism, which places students of color disproportionately in a role of witnessing their white classmates having epiphanies around race and racism at their expense.

Like many schools of social work, the authors are affiliated with a predominately White institution in which Black and Brown students make up a small percentage. In the social work program, a class may have one to three BIPOC students enrolled. The power,

privilege, and oppression class is a mandatory class taken by all students within their first quarter of the program. This means that students from a wide range of backgrounds are in class with people they do not know as they tackle these issues of racial and social justice.

While the students come from diverse backgrounds, we know that statistically BIPOC students are more likely to have taken a vastly different path to higher education than their White peers. Many are first generation, having overcome significant challenges within a very short lifetime, whether financial, educational, or social. These challenges are often ongoing into young adulthood. For some, attending a predominately white institution, being the only BIPOC in one or all of their classes is a new experience (McCoy, 2014). They come to campus believing they are welcomed only to be faced with racial realities that they may or may not be prepared for – definitely not within a school of social work that is supposed to be the embodiment of social work values, fighting for social justice for all marginalized and oppressed groups.

Our observations as instructors and student are that BIPOC students often look forward to classes that focus on issues of diversity; however, in a class that is majority White, conversations around race and racism can quickly become frustrating and disappointing (Curtis-Boles & Bourg, 2010; Hubain et al., 2016). They often become audience to the experiential approach of CWS – White students becoming aware of their privilege or the need to be aware of their privilege, learning about microaggressions as something they should not do without a full explanation as to why, and exploring their White identity. While the BIPOC student completes the same assignments and is present for class discussions, rarely are the assignments or lesson plans developed with the BIPOC student in mind. Unfortunately, BIPOC students are often witness to or the target of insensitive comments that may or may not be based on a lack of knowledge or understanding. While most instructors have learned not to tokenize students and ask them to speak as representatives of their whole group, BIPOC students are often faced with the dilemma over whether not they should correct, educate, or allow misconceptions to go unaddressed because the instructor may or may not address it (Hubain et al., 2016; Linder et al., 2015). If they choose to address it, the BIPOC student must understand that their contributions are only seen as valuable when whiteness is not threatened. Once whiteness is threatened the voices of BIPOC students are no longer valuable, but rather labeled angry and uncooperative. When whiteness is the primary focus of the class, BIPOC students in the classroom are not seen as student learners, but rather audience members in attendance at the service of whiteness (Cabrera & Corces-Zimmerman, 2017). This is further complicated when readings, videos, and assignments highlight the negative stereotypes or challenges faced by the racial group to which the BIPOC student belongs (Curtis-Boles & Bourg, 2010). BIPOC students may feel that their White peers presume the composite picture of the racial group reflects their lived experience placing them in a vulnerable position. They can either confirm that this reflects their lived experience, disclose how their life is *different* or remain silent, allowing their white peers to reach their own conclusion through the lens of whiteness.

The concepts of whiteness and white supremacy may receive a cursory nod within social work education. Whiteness walks into the classroom with White students and their biases and racist ideas, that may or may not be challenged by their professor. Depending

on their level of awareness, BIPOC students may or may not recognize whiteness in action, thereby allowing the whiteness to continue and go unchallenged. The role of whiteness has been influential in the dominant narratives about people of color, immigrants and those experiencing poverty; however, the dominant curriculum around power, privilege and oppression still presumes that whiteness is something that is largely invisible. In discussing whiteness in this way, we are falling into a trap that Jeyasingham (2012) critiques stating “if whiteness studies seeks only to uncover evidence of a whiteness that is already assumed to be both dominant and invisible, then it is poorly equipped to examine whiteness when it is experienced by socially disenfranchised communities or visible minorities” (p. 674). By presuming whiteness is invisible, we are silencing the voices of BIPOC who see the patterns of endemic racism and have to maneuver and navigate life through whiteness daily. By not addressing whiteness head on and in depth, social work education plays into the white supremacy that has resulted in structural and systemic racism.

If we are to prepare social workers for anti-racist practice, we must educate about both racism and whiteness. The fundamental question in teaching at a predominately White institution is: How do we teach white students about racism without centering whiteness? Using CRT and CWS as theoretical frameworks we offer a course outline that decenters whiteness while also interrogating it broadly, so that all students can see the role that whiteness and white supremacy play in U.S. culture and throughout the world.

The curriculum outline considers the identities of BIPOC students, the intersectional identities of all students, and attends to their learning experience equitability. In doing so, we believe that students will be better prepared to dismantle dominant cultural norms through anti-racist practice upon graduation as professional social workers.

### **Course Outline**

Ideally, we recommend a team-teaching approach with one instructor who identifies as BIPOC and the other instructor who identifies as White. If this is not possible, we encourage the inclusion of guest lecturers to cover the materials that may not reflect the identity of the instructor of record.

The course outline below in Table 1 presents summary descriptions of suggested modules and activities in a recommended order that can be adjusted to meet a quarter or a semester long class. Additional resources, that are not listed in the above text, are listed to assist instructors in developing the course, lesson plans, and reading lists. These resources are by no means exhaustive. We encourage instructors to research the literature, specifically seeking out BIPOC scholars who have addressed anti-racist practice in social work and related fields.

Table 1. *Course Outline: Modules, Activities, and Additional Resources*

Module	Description	Suggested Activity(s)	Additional Resources
<p>1: <i>The social construction of race &amp; whiteness</i></p>	<p>Starting with these two foundational tenets of both CRT &amp; CWS helps students to understand the endemic nature of racism. The social construction of race often centers on the construction of non-white races starting with slavery in the America. Kendi (2016) provides a pre-American historical overview of anti-blackness, helping students to understand the skin-color based racial hierarchy that was in place before the colonization of America. Concurrently, providing the evolution of whiteness in the U.S. as outlined above helps students to understand the fluidity of the race &amp; the purpose it serves in maintaining white supremacy. Providing students with historical fact prior to diving into the experiential approach at the onset of the course provides an undeniable legitimacy to the experiences that students will explore later in the quarter or semester.</p>	<p>A critical self-reflection of the students education on race, exploring the messages they have received about race &amp; whiteness up to the present point in time from influential informants such as their parents, extended family, school, peers, social media, &amp; other sources helps the students to connect the social construction of race &amp; whiteness to their reality. This assignment can be structured by the instructor to guide the student either chronologically or topically. It can be a written narrative, a worksheet, or a small group discussion. It is also recommended that students view <i>Race the Power of Illusion</i>, Episode Two “The Story We Tell” (Adelman, 2003) as a part of this module.</p>	<p>DeGruy (2017); Delgado &amp; Stefancic (2017)</p>
<p>2: <i>White Supremacy &amp; Whiteness</i></p>	<p>This module explores the constructs of whiteness &amp; white supremacy &amp; the behaviors that uphold these constructs. It is important to help the students understand that white supremacy created racism which in turn created race &amp; whiteness. Defining what is meant by white supremacy &amp; white supremacy culture is pivotal to this module. The focus is on interrogating whiteness, recognizing themes of actions &amp; behaviors grounded in white supremacy to identify ways to dismantle these systems through action. The performative nature of whiteness is also explored to help all students, both White &amp; BIPOC, to identify patterns of behavior in social work practice as well as their internal values &amp; norms of social interaction that that uphold whiteness &amp; white supremacy. This allows students to begin developing new patterns of behavior that challenge the status quo.</p>	<p>Have students read Jones &amp; Okun (2001) <i>The Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture</i> &amp; answer the discussion questions posted at the end. Through this activity students will explore not only the broad categories of behavior attributed to white dominant culture, but more specifically how those behaviors manifest in their daily social interactions. Encourage them to think about these behaviors in others as well as themselves possibly using their field agency site, a previous or current workplace, the university, or school of social work as an anchoring point. This allows students to explore this at both the macro &amp; micro level.</p>	<p>Delgado &amp; Stefancic (2017); Messer et al. (2018); Middleton et al. (2016); Zucchino (2020)</p>
<p>3: <i>Racial Identity &amp; Intersectionality</i></p>	<p>In this module students learn about the various racial identity models (see Rockquemore et al., 2009) &amp; how they impact a person’s worldview. The concepts of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1990) &amp; positionality (Harley et al., 2002) are introduced &amp; discussed throughout the remainder of the course to emphasize the concept of anti-essentialism (Delgado &amp; Stefancic, 2017). In discussing identities with students, it is important to differentiate between role identities &amp; social identities (Hogg et al., 1995). Role identities are “the role positions in society which we occupy” (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 256) such</p>	<p>Have students self-identify racially &amp; critically assess where they are developmentally according to the appropriate racial identity model. Next have the students create an eco-map that identifies their intersecting &amp; overlapping social identities &amp; reflect on how this impacts their racial identity. Reflections can be written assignments, discussion boards, in small groups or dyads. This activity works well if students share with someone who shares their racial identity so they can discuss how their world views may differ. If that is not possible, then</p>	<p>Cross (1995); Helms (1997); Poston (1990), Metzl (2019)</p>

Module	Description	Suggested Activity(s)	Additional Resources
	<p>as daughter, father, social worker, activist. Social identities are those identities that describe a social category such as race, gender, religion, socioeconomic class that we feel an affinity to or feel we belong to. “Social identities are not only descriptive and prescriptive; they are also evaluative. They furnish an evaluation (generally widely shared or consensual) of a social category, &amp; thus of its members, relative to other relevant social categories” (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 260). Simply put, social identities are those group identities that society has ascribed meaning to (i.e., race, gender, sexual orientation, ability etc.). For the purposes of this course &amp; this module the focus is on social identities.</p>	<p>have the students pair with someone that they share an intersecting identity.</p>	
<p>4: <i>Anti-Oppressive/ Anti-Racist Macro Practice</i></p>	<p>This module offers a perspective on macro social work practice that is rooted in approaches that interrogate &amp; challenge white-centered interventions. Students look to indigenous practices, BIPOC community centered approaches &amp; practices around mutual aid. Students use CRT to examine social policies &amp; the ways leadership &amp; management can uphold patterns of white supremacy.</p>	<p>Provide students with macro case studies looking at organizations known for embracing anti-racist practices to engage in macro, social change work. Consider providing them with macro case studies of organizations that do not embrace anti-racist practices to compare &amp; contrast. Using these case studies have students identify organizational solutions that are anti-racist, collectivist, &amp; community centered.</p>	<p>Spade (2020); Dixon &amp; Piepzna-Samarasinha (2020)</p>
<p>5: <i>Anti-Oppressive/ Anti-Racist Micro Practice</i></p>	<p>Clinical skills are the focus of this module. It is important for students to see culturally responsive, anti-racist, anti-oppressive practice as a skill. In this module students explore &amp; develop clinical skills that reflect a recognition of the historical trauma &amp; present-day impacts of race &amp; racism on physical &amp; mental health of BIPOC clients. Students will challenge clinical behaviors that center the individual as the primary root of life challenges &amp; circumstances &amp; offer a perspective that merges micro &amp; macro factors perpetuating inequity &amp; injustice, placing the individual &amp; the interventions in a person-in-environment cultural context.</p>	<p>Using Kendi’s (2019) operationalization of an anti-racist as a guide, students can explore the level to which their own practice is anti-racist. This can be done through a self-reflection or a Likert scale self-administered survey. In addition, students in clinical internships can present case studies from their internships &amp; have the class collectively or in small groups critically assess how best to respond with cultural humility &amp; using an anti-racist approach.</p>	<p>Graham (2000); Graham &amp; Schiele (2010); Menakem (2017)</p>
<p>6: <i>Contemporary Application</i></p>	<p>This module should highlight the application of the concepts of CRT &amp; CWS to contemporary events. These will of course depend on what is going on in society at the time. These will be primary opportunities to highlight concepts such as differential racialization &amp; the fluidity of whiteness. In addition, students may be encouraged to bring current events into weekly conversations as deemed relative by the instructor.</p>	<p>Students can be assigned a current event &amp; be asked to critically analyze them using CRT or CWS. Depending on the context of the event the students could debate the topic using the tenets of the CRT &amp; CWS.</p>	

In addition to the suggested readings and activities, we encourage instructors to integrate contemporary events in course assignments and discussions. It is clear as we write this in early 2021, that the impact of the events of 2020 is both long term and unknown. At this time, we are dealing with continued disparities related to COVID-19 morbidity and mortality, testing, vaccine distribution, and now, the Delta variant. According to the Washington Post (2021) 19% of the 552 persons shot and killed by the police between January and August 2021 have been Black (101 males, 4 females). Although the 2020 election is over, the events of January 6, 2021 made clear that the issues of race, racism, and the political divide cannot be disentangled (Blake, 2021). It is no doubt that there will be numerous opportunities for instructors and students to apply the constructs of the two theories in real time.

### **Discussion**

The most recent attack on Critical Race Theory presents a unique challenge to the teaching of the curriculum content presented here (Sawchuk, 2021). Added to the challenge is the underutilization of Critical Whiteness Studies in social work education. Both theoretical frameworks have been misrepresented as divisive and accusatory when in actually they both provide a unique lens by which to understand the already existing divisive nature of systemic racism and white supremacy. In order to create a truly transformative learning experience for students, instructors of this content must be securely grounded in the theoretical constructs of both CRT and CWS. A team-teaching approach is recommended; however, we recognize that having two instructors, one BIPOC and one White, to teach the course may not be feasible for many social work programs. While not ideal, a single instructor could augment their teaching by calling upon learned guest speakers and/or recorded lectures freely available online from experts in the constructs presented. As academics, we understand that while readings and lectures are important components of the transfer of learning, in graduate school it is often the critical dialogue that occurs within the classroom that is the key to transformation. Teaching this content not only requires knowledge, but also strong facilitation skills to handle often difficult and taxing conversations.

Social work is a profession that claims to be rooted in social justice and anti-oppressive practice. The events of 2020 have forced the social work profession and social work education to re-examine its complicity with structural and institutional racism. The time has come for social work educators to acknowledge the endemic nature of racism and shift the focus of their diversity curriculum from a broader anti-oppressive umbrella to an intentional anti-racist framework that centers anti-BIPOC racism. Recent events affirm this need as we daily see reports of the atrocities that BIPOC face, including murder, forced sterilization, inequitable sentencing and incarceration, and voter suppression. Teaching this content through the lens of CRT and CWS creates a meaningful and effective foundation for MSW graduates to move forward in anti-oppressive and anti-racist practices. Course content that does not center whiteness or the needs of the White students at the expense of BIPOC students is vital. In addition, instructors must be intentional not to center whiteness in a way that caters to White fragility and prevents White students from sitting in their discomfort with the racial reality of the world. Many of these students are victims of miseducation that narrowly taught a favorable, whitewashed dominant narrative and have

never heard the documented counternarratives, the voices of color, that challenge and correct these long-held misbeliefs that are only a part of the story. Teaching these historical truths not only serve to reeducate the White students but also to validate the experience of the BIPOC students who may also be victims of miseducation; however, for these students, this content fills in the gaps between their formal education and their lived experiences.

By changing the narrative and the practices within social work education we not only begin to disrupt racism and white supremacy but dismantle it. Through application in practice, research, and policy courses, the goal would be for students to develop a practice of challenging, and interrogating content through an anti-racist lens that they can carry into their professional practice after graduation. It would be important to assess the effectiveness of this course in both the short and the long term for all students, prioritizing the experience of the BIPOC students. Ideally, a short-term assessment would be multifaceted including but not limited to student feedback different from teaching evaluations at multiple points in time – during class, after class, prior to graduation and post-graduation.

### Conclusion

The events of 2020 magnified the deadliest disease threatening our country – racism. It is flowing through all of our systems – social, political, and economic. As evident by the events of January 6, 2021, it is the greatest threat to our democracy. As social workers, we are the uniquely positioned to effect lasting change as our field is versatile and we are strategically located, serving at all levels of society. As social work educators, we must reconcile our complicated history with race and racism and acknowledge that the time is now to attack this disease head on – unapologetically calling out white supremacy culture, decentering whiteness in our classrooms, and preparing ALL of our students for anti-racist practice.

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