Reflections of Two Black Early-Career Social Work Educators Teaching Mostly White Students at Predominately White Institutions

Tuwana T. Wingfield and Raymond D. Adams

Abstract: The social work profession must become more proactive in laying the foundation for developing more culturally competent professionals in the field who can, in turn, practice cultural humility with the clients they encounter. The aim of this article is to share reflections of two early-career Black educators teaching at predominately White institutions. As two Black faculty members, we center race in this reflection of how our teaching practices promote cultural competence and subsequent cultural humility in our class discussions. Through narrative inquiry, the authors provide reflections of their students' perceptions of them as teachers—teaching while Black. Critical race theory is used to explore the social locations of race, class, and gender; of ourselves; and of our students within the classroom and in the field of social work. This reflection has implications on social work education programs preparing undergraduate and graduate students entering the field.

Keywords: Black social work educators, cultural competence, cultural humility, culturally relevant practice, critical race theory, critical pedagogy

As the social work profession continues to grow, social work educators and practitioners will need to find more culturally responsive ways to address the interlocking oppressions of racism, classism, and sexism experienced by clients. These multiplicative forms of oppression (King, 1988), if left unaddressed, will ultimately impact services to racial and ethnic minority populations. According to Abrams and Moio (2009), although the social work field has historically been dedicated to addressing issues of racism, classism, and sexism, the authors note that there are additional oppressions that impact a client's life. Therefore, the current conceptualization of cultural competence "unintentionally promotes a color-blind mentality that eclipses the significance of institutionalized racism" (Abrams & Moio, 2009, p. 245). Thus, this perceived cultural competence in social work education is problematic for clients who experience multiple forms of oppression. As two Black instructors who teach in social work programs at predominantly White institutions (PWIs), we feel that it is essential to share our experiences of teaching mostly White students culturally responsive approaches to working with persons from historically marginalized and oppressed groups. In theory, social work espouses the importance of cultural competence, yet in practice we see something completely different.

Perhaps one of the most contested issues present in social work practice and education is finding a way to develop a definition of culturally relevant practice that embraces differences while honoring clients' lived experiences (Choi, Lee, & Sohng, 2010; Jackson, 2012; Jackson & Samuels, 2011). Ortega and Faller (2011) suggest that the current socially constructed perspective of cultural competence fails to acknowledge the subtle cultural nuances inherent in individuals, families, and communities of color. The evidence presented thus far supports the idea that social work educators must re-evaluate how we are equipping future social workers to

become culturally attuned to systemic inequalities present among oppressed communities (Daniel, 2011; Gutierrez, 1990; Ortiz & Jani, 2010; Rankopo & Osei-Hwedie, 2011).

Today, the social work profession must proactively lay the foundation for developing more culturally competent professionals in the field. Therefore, we believe that the field of social work needs to look at ways to develop research and praxis that embrace the inherent differences of those who have been historically marginalized and oppressed. If the profession desires to move toward truly appreciating and recognizing how cultural diversity among oppressed groups is central to how they respond to services, social work education has to become more culturally attuned to the needs and goals of the clients served within these oppressed communities. The Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE, 2015) second core competency—Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice—further elucidates this charge. In this competency, CSWE stresses the importance of teaching social work students to understand how diversity and difference of clients' lived experiences must be taken into consideration in our practice. More specifically, the competency states:

> 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. (CSWE, 2015, p. 7)

Although this core competency is present, there is no clear framework on how to approach the difference that exists between the worker and the clients, and in our case, teacher and student. This lack of clarity about how to approach cultural awareness circumvents racial and ethnic differences between the teacher and student or worker and client, which further impedes the helping process (Boehm & Staples, 2002). The answer may emerge if diversity is celebrated and seen as an important attribute in our society. The authors suggest that social work educators, scholars, and practitioners need to devise culturally responsive practices within the theoretical framework of critical race theory (CRT) to educate newly minted social workers on the importance of centering the lived experiences of diverse client populations served, which celebrates diversity rather than relegating diversity to the margins.

The aim of this article is to share our personal experiences as Black educators teaching mostly White social work students at PWIs. We understand that we cannot speak for all Black faculty, yet we feel that it is important to center our experiences in hopes that others who are at the margins can gain something from them. The voices of African American social workers are often left out of social work education because of the demographic composition of the field (CSWE, 2018). Historically, the field is mostly White and female. As two Black instructors, we will provide insight into what our experiences have been teaching while Black (Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011) at PWIs. We will analyze our lived and practical experience in social work education through the lens of CRT. Critical race theory is utilized to further the exploration of these intersectional oppressions in social work education and practice. We will share our stories of what it means to teach White social work students culturally relevant social work practice

through an analysis of our student evaluations and personal reflections. By sharing our experiences in academe, we can add to existing literature about the experiences of Black faculty to create change (Edwards, Bryant, & Clark, 2008; Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011; Otuyelu, Graham, & Kennedy, 2016; Randolph, 2010). Also, by displaying our students' respective feedback about their experiences in our courses, we expose their "dysconscious racism" (Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011, p. 465). Dysconscious racism refers to a student's inability to reconcile their unconscious racist values and beliefs that function to maintain racism and oppression (Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011). It is our belief that open and honest dialogue can counter this dysconscious racism that occurs when social workers try to engage in meaningful discussions about members of oppressed groups to challenge institutional and structural forms of racism that reinforce White dominating ethos. Therefore, the field of social work must look at ways to develop research and praxis that embrace the inherent differences of those who have been historically marginalized and oppressed. This article has implications for social work educators, practitioners, policymakers, and students.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This article came to fruition by the shared experience of teaching via a social media group developed to support faculty of color. Collectively, we have 15 years of teaching experience at the baccalaureate level in social work. Through sharing our teaching experiences within this group, we found that we have more similarities than differences, and we felt the need to share what it is like teaching while Black (Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011) as a woman and as a man. Teaching while Black refers to the surveillance that Black instructors are under when teaching White students. Evans-Winters and Hoff (2011) note how White students in teacher education programs use silence as a weapon to resist "alternative ways of knowing and theorizing" (p. 465). The authors go on to explain how this level of resistance is a danger to the students of color whom they will encounter in classroom settings.

In this analysis, we extend the concept of teaching while Black in teacher education to social work education. Similarly, for social workers, a lack of critical analysis and theorizing of the experiences of African American faculty teaching White students about race and racism could have detrimental effects on the client populations served. Thus, it is important to use theory to provide insight into what it means to center the experiences of racial/ethnic minority faculty members in social work programs preparing White students to work for and on behalf of racial/ethnic minority populations. Theory is an important component in social work education and practice, as it allows for self-examination needed to properly address the complexities present within many social justice issues. Therefore, social work educators must select theoretical orientations that are culturally attuned to populations' unique and diverse circumstances. For the purposes of this analysis, CRT is the most suitable. Last, this paper is organized through the theme of teaching while Black. We will share our personal reflections and student evaluations to unpack the experiences two African American instructors encounter when teaching about issues of race/racism and power/powerlessness to a predominately White student body.

Critical Race Theory in Social Work Practice

Critical race theory can be used to explore what it means to center race/racism in courses we have taught across the curriculum as social work faculty. Critical race theory brings from the margins the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities and how these groups perceive acts of institutional and structural racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) to the center in terms of social work practice. For example, a central theme of CRT is that race is permanently present in our everyday lives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Critical race theory allows for an intersectional critique of the various ways in which minority groups can be oppressed (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Additionally, CRT challenges the current multicultural color-blind approach in social work education as it relates to educating future social work practitioners about issues of diversity, inclusion, oppression, discrimination, power, and privilege (Gutierrez, 1990; Ortiz & Jani, 2010). Therefore, we argue, social work educators and practitioners must consider their own positionality within the larger scheme of societal injustices and how racism manifests itself in social work education and practice (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Randolph, 2010).

For example, the historical dehumanization of Black bodies within the United States, beginning with slavery and further perpetuated into the present day through police brutality, provides unique context into why educating social work students through the theoretical framework of CRT is fundamental to their development as culturally relevant social work practitioners (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Gentle-Genitty, Chen, Karikari, & Barnett, 2014; Tolliver, Hadden, Snowden, & Brown-Manning, 2016). Through CRT, social work students can learn strategies for developing critically informed responses to acts of structural and institutional racism. For instance, case studies have been traditionally utilized to stimulate experiential learning among social work students (Holmes, Tracy, Painter, Oestreich, & Park, 2015). Case studies offer "simulated practice situations" (Holmes et al., 2015, p. 4) to provide students with opportunities to use theory in understanding how to assess clients and to develop treatment plans. Research conducted by Asakura, Bogo, Good, and Power (2018) suggests that "simulations offer immediate opportunities for students to apply concepts to practice behaviors and examine practice behaviors using various theoretical perspectives" (p. 2). This supports scholars such as Moore, et al. (2018), who postulate that CRT helps us to understand and analyze inequality and oppression today within the context of historical case simulations.

Last, and equally important, CRT provides the opportunity for social work educators and students to gain the necessary cultural insight to effect change on a systemic level. Critical race theory can also adequately describe the current landscape at PWIs that fosters exclusion rather than inclusion in relation to culturally relevant social work practice. Additionally, CRT helps us critically analyze and assess the experiences of two faculty of African descent at PWIs to shed light on practices of inclusion and seclusion as it relates to cultural relevance in social work practice and education. The next section outlines each author's institutional demographics, which provide further evidence of the ubiquitous under-representation of faculty of color on their campuses.

Institutional Demographics

Both authors are employed at PWIs, one in the mid-central region of the country, and the other in the south-central region of the country. Both programs are small in comparison to larger research institutions, yet they have respectable social work programs at the undergraduate level. The mid-central public institution has a total of 1, 208 faculty members, of which 932 are White and 40 are African American. Comparatively, the south-central public institution has a total of 277 faculty, of which 232 are White and 23 are African American. According to CSWE (2017), the number of full-time African American faculty is 16.7% in comparison to 63.6% of faculty who are White (non-Hispanic). It is obvious that there is a shortage of minority faculty teaching in social work at PWIs across the country (CSWE, 2017). Another troubling aspect of these statistics is that there is no way to discern the gender of the faculty by race/ethnicity. Thus, the experiences of Black women and men are conflated due to their gender or their race. This either/or dichotomy does not provide enough information about the exact number of Black women and men teaching in social work programs across the country.

One author works in a department that has 12 tenured or tenure-track faculty, three of whom are African American women, while the other author is one of three faculty and the only African American male. The racial/ethnic demographic diversity within each social work department is alarmingly low. As a result, there is an underlying assumption that is problematic for African American faculty teaching White students about issues of race/racism because of our racial/ethnic heritage. Our White colleagues assume that we have some special insight because of our ethnicity, and we step into the role of what we call being a *Black whisperer*. A *Black whisperer* is a person of African descent (e.g., cisgender, transgender, gender non-conforming, LGBTQI) who has insider knowledge of the Black community and, therefore, is called upon by their White counterparts to decipher the meaning of the Black experience. Thus, the burden of teaching social work students about issues of diversity and cultural competence rests with the limited number of faculty of color represented at each institution. Other minority scholars have also noted the pressure to be the *expert* in terms of discussing issues of race and racism (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Edwards, Bryant, & Clark, 2008; Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Otuyelu, Graham, & Kennedy, 2016). We argue that there is a need for our White colleagues to take initiative and engage in these critical discussions about race/racism. Moreover, social work education needs to critically assess how to prepare newly minted social workers to work with populations who have been historically marginalized and oppressed.

The Oppression of Faculty of Color in Academe

The oppressive practices perpetuated by White faculty upon their colleagues of color are too often minimized within the hallowed halls of White academe as *typical growing pains* (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, González, & Harris, 2012). However, from the most overt to covert forms of racism, these actions impede faculty of color in areas of research, scholarship, and teaching (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Tuitt, Hanna, Martinez, Salazar, & Griffin, 2009). It is because of institutional racism that the discourse centered around cultural competence needs to be aggressively discussed. From the literature, one can surmise that institutional and structural racism significantly contribute to the limited presence of faculty of color at PWIs. This

under-representation is not due to the lack of qualified applicants of color, but rather a lack of opportunity—the recruitment of faculty of color (Edwards, Bryant, & Clark, 2008; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Randolph, 2010). The next sections outline some of the challenges that each author has had teaching while Black to expose how we use our own positionality to center the voices of those who have been historically marginalized and oppressed.

Teaching While Black in Social Work Education

In our current social and political climate, social work programs need to include the study of institutional racism, White privilege, and White supremacy in the curriculum to adequately prepare White students for the field (Abrams & Moio, 2009). Additionally, from our standpoint as persons of African descent, special attention needs to be paid to the experiences of Black faculty in social work education. As previously mentioned, the lack of specific data on the number of Black women and men faculty in social work programs speaks to the way in which gender and race are often conflated, which marginalizes the experiences of faculty of color. The difficulty in interpreting this data is that there is no distinction of how many of the faculty are women or men. For this reason, our experiences as a Black woman and as a Black man are conflated with the experiences of White women and White men in social work education. Additionally, there is a dearth of knowledge in the literature about African American experiences in social work education. Therefore, we feel that it is necessary to share our narratives of teaching while Black in social work education. Moreover, the academy is a harsh representation of imperialist White supremacist patriarchal capitalism (hooks, 2013) in which faculty of color continue to experience covert and overt forms of racism and oppression. The following sections outline some of our teaching experiences while discussing issues of racism, power, and privilege.

The Beginning of Social Work

The course I teach is the gateway into the profession. Students across all academic disciplines and various grade levels can enroll in this 16-week course. The course is designed using multiple pedagogical practices to keep the students engaged and wanting to learn about the auspices and practices of social work as well as elicit their feedback about the course throughout the semester. For instance, films, music videos, songs, case vignettes, discussion forums, and small in-class and out-of-class activities are utilized to address the numerous ways in which students learn. The goal of the course is to not only introduce students to the social work profession, but also to debunk any misperceptions that are held about what social workers do and about the client populations they serve. While teaching about the various ways in which social workers practice, I also go beyond lectures and infuse the course sessions with dialogue about issues of social justice, equality versus equity, diversity, cultural competence, sex/sexism, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, and race/racism, all within the context of institutional and structural barriers that impact marginalized and oppressed groups. Ortiz and Jani (2010) assert that CRT challenges the social work profession to push beyond becoming more culturally competent to understand how institutional and structural barriers impede services to clients "because of the centrality of race in U.S. society" (p. 176). As a profession, we fall short in advocating for change at the macro level to disrupt those barriers that have historically marginalized and oppressed racial and ethnic

minority groups (Ortiz & Jani, 2010).

Diverse issues are integrated each week throughout course topics, with one culminating class lecture dedicated solely to culture, race, racism, White privilege, power, discrimination, and cultural competence. Addressing these issues is a gradual process and one in which students of all racial and ethnic groups experience discomfort. As the instructor of the course, I feel it is my responsibility to engage in discussions with my students about the reality of race/racism in America. Furthermore, I am intentional about creating an environment in which students feel that they can *speak their truth* about the topic at hand. Speaking truth about their own positionality provides an opportunity for all voices to be heard rather than one dominating voice taking over the discussion or reinforcing a narrative that relegates the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities to the margins. One pedagogical strategy that I employ to elicit truthful dialogue is to have students write a reflection about what they learned during our class period and how they felt. The following week during class, I pass out the reflections (student names are de-identified) and everyone has an opportunity to read their peers' reflections aloud until everyone's voice is heard. As a class, we process what this experience was like and what themes they heard in the reflections that we need to revisit as a class. Engaging in these discussions is never easy and students report feeling discomfort.

After teaching this course over the last six years, I have never had a student drop my course because of his or her discomfort. However, they will express their discomfort in one of the following ways: (1) use of silence to resist engaging in discussions about institutional and structural racism, (2) shift the dialogue to focus on other forms of oppression, (3) blatantly disregard the experiences that their peers, who identify as racial and ethnic minorities, share during class discussions, or (4) express their discontent in their evaluations of the course at the end of the semester. For instance, one student stated, *"This course was well done for the most part. The one exception was the divisive discussion about 'white privilege.' Such topics are important to talk about but the way that could have been presented could have been better."* Another student stated, *"This is NOT a race/ethnic studies or sociology class. Less talk about race. I felt singled out because i'm [*sic*] white, the professor/TA are not."*

Each of these examples not only illustrates each student's discomfort with discussions about race/racism and social justice/equity, but if these discussions must be had in class, they need to be presented in a way that is more palatable for White students to accept.

The second student's comment also illustrates a lack of understanding of how race/racism are deeply rooted in the social, historical, and political context of social work practice. One thing that I make clear at the start of every semester is that social work is an applied discipline, meaning that the field draws from areas such as education, psychology, and sociology, to name a few. Last, the student expressing feelings of being left out because they were not of the same race/ethnicity as the professor and teaching assistant may echo the sentiments many of their White peers who were unaccustomed to a Black instructor may share. In other words, they are uncomfortable with an instructor who does not center or privilege their racial/ethnic heritage but centers the voices of racial/ethnic minorities. Scholars of color talk about this cognitive dissonance that White students experience when they encounter a Black woman in a position of

authority and the difficulty they have in understanding who we are (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Randolph, 2010; Wilson, 2012). Referring to the previous women scholars of color, I use their scholarship to enhance my own pedagogical practices in the courses that I teach. It is also an opportunity to further elucidate the use of CRT in social work education.

Teaching this course requires that I must balance creating a safe space for my students of color to share their lived experience, while simultaneously trying to get my White students to openly discuss their thoughts about race and racism. My goal is not to shame or blame my White students for the atrocities that have happened historically to racial and ethnic minorities, but to get them to understand within the larger context that race and racism are here to stay, unless we can engage in critical and thoughtful discussions to disrupt the existing narratives about racial and ethnic minority groups. Another goal I have is to get my White students to acknowledge their privilege and to see how their privilege can be used to disrupt injustices that others encounter. For example, this was a comment from another student:

> *[Name of instructor omitted] is a great person. We do not see eye to eye on how social situations should be handled as I am a conservative and she is liberal. That being said, the world needs people like [name of instructor omitted]. She Brings [*sic*] about great things in the world and should be proud of her work.*

While some may read this comment as a compliment from a student, in unpacking this statement and taking a more critical look, the following themes are present. The first theme is my political affiliation. I never share with my students my political affiliation. However, I do share with students alternative ways to understand how policies are developed and how they impact us all. The second theme is complimenting the instructor by stating *"the world needs people like her."* Again, when looking more critically at this statement, it appears to imply that more racial/ethnic minorities should teach White people how to treat the other—in this case, racial/ethnic minorities. Furthermore, this perception of greatness suggests I have some special skill to translate the experiences of racial/ethnic minorities to White middle-class students, thus absolving them of any responsibility to understand what our experiences as racial/ethnic minorities have been in this country through a racialized lens (Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011) and what their role has been in maintaining these institutions. Additionally, Ortiz and Jani (2010) note, racial and ethnic minorities experience microaggressions in the form of "subtle racially based generalizations" (p. 179). This student might have intended his or her statement to be a compliment, but instead it underscores the sense that I am different from other Black people—Black women to be exact (Edwards, Bryant, & Clark, 2008; Ortiz & Jani, 2010).

The intent of sharing my narrative is to change how social workers practice with racial and ethnic minorities, to conduct research to address the needs of marginalized and oppressed groups, and to effect how policies are developed and implemented for and with minority groups. This is a huge undertaking, yet one which I feel is important if we really want to see significant change within the social work profession.

Teaching a Diversity Course While Black and Male

As the sole African American male, tenure-track faculty member who teaches within a BSW program at a small PWI, engagements in race-conscious dialogue with White students from majority privileged backgrounds can be epistemologically violent. Too often I am expected to filter my critical consciousness in a way that is palatable for their learning. My *realness* on racial matters, as made evident through both my lived and practice experiences, evokes incivility, thus leading to less constructive discourse. For example, when I initiate conversations about White privilege, a strong majority of White students become more defensive instead of becoming reflective. In recent years, my main challenge has been engendering respect from students who are unaccustomed to seeing a male faculty of color demand critical introspection as a part of the learning process (Hunn, Harley, Elliott, & Canfield, 2015; Toliver et al., 2015). This lack of critical introspection is evident when students disengage around scenarios aimed at strengthening their insight on the historical significance of structural and institutional barriers imposed on oppressed groups (Moore et al., 2018). Nonetheless, this fact has not affected my resolve to teach from a critical and unapologetic framework, which necessitates critical discourse from White social work students about the intersection of race and racism. Abrams and Moio (2009) suggest faculty of color, as well as junior faculty, were more inclined to address disagreements centered on diversity within a classroom setting than their White faculty counterparts. It is important to encourage reflexive dialogue during lectures where cultural conflicts are at the epicenter.

Black males' invisibility within the context of US society is clear; equally invisible is the presence of Black male social work professors teaching cultural diversity within undergraduate and graduate social work programs at PWIs. As a bilingual Xennial of African descent tasked with teaching cultural diversity to mostly White students, I knew that this was not going to be an easy undertaking. Additionally, Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, and Galindo (2009) suggest faculty of color often "[bring] unique perspectives from their personal and social histories to the academy" (p. 314), thus I frame my pedagogy through a critical race perspective. It is through this lens that White students can decolonize and decode the nuances of institutional and systemic racism inherent in our White supremacist society to closely examine its effects on historically marginalized groups. For students, especially White students, to effectively operate in their future helping roles, they must become cognizant of the traumatic effects of societal racism on oppressed groups. It should be noted that my cultural diversity course is cross-listed because it is a curriculum requirement for a strong majority of the social science disciplines at this institution. Consequently, upon my first year at my institution, the conspicuous lack of critical introspection on race-based suffrage on the part of the White social work students could not be ignored. Thus, it was imperative, as the instructor on record, to teach experientially and introduce "pedagogical strategies to assist white students to gain an understanding of the power of whiteness, white supremacy, and the historical legacy of racism" (Nylund, 2006, p. 34).

For instance, one pedagogical strategy I use is giving students a historical prompt, like *Brown v. Board of Education*, to write a reflection on how this event has impacted and affected our society. This mode of critical pedagogy has incurred positive affirmations as well as negative backlash through student evaluations. For example, one student stated in my course evaluations,

"This course could have been of such help to me with my future occupation, but all I learned is how certain populations are in the situations they are in because of other populations, and why that is still today."

Another student stated, *"This course could be improved by getting a professor who is not so biased."* As I reflect on this student's statement, Black voices are expected to be politically marginalized and never centered within White academe. My unapologetic prose regarding the historical suffrage of oppressed communities ignites, more often than not, feelings of shame among White students from privileged backgrounds. This fragility triggers a form of emotionality that is rooted in a need to shift uncomfortable realities back on the object of oppression, in this instance, the instructor on record.

As stated previously, the experiences of faculty of color outside the academy can be used to inform their critical pedagogy. However, it is imperative that the realities of oppression are presented constructively in order to induce meaningful introspection in the lives of those who are not accustomed to issues of social inequities from oppressed groups. It can be argued that every person has biases, yet unchecked biases within social work education and practice can be toxic, thus affecting how services are delivered. Challenging students to recognize the difference between the two biases (conscious and unconscious) often comes at a cost of being labeled a biased and unfair instructor. Additionally, the comment that truly exemplified the level of racist undertones I dealt with from a student stated, *"It's one thing to be professional one moment and another become [*sic*] to get **ghetto** [*emphasis added*] the next, my goodness."* While my teaching evaluations annually reflect high points as well as discernible improvements, they also reveal both implicit and explicit bias from the student population.

For instance, students have displayed acts of implicit bias through an unconscious need to question my authority regarding grading, which has prompted them to inform administration (e.g., department chair, dean) disproportionately in comparison to my White counterparts. Moreover, an explicit bias can be seen through their engrained cultural stereotypes of Black men to support their rationale in speaking to me as a peer instead of their instructor. These comments, as well as acts of bias, support what research has shown about how "other students used their formal student evaluations to vent extensive negative emotional reactions to the required nature of the courses, to diversity as a topic, and to particular groups" (Schueths, Gladney, Crawford, Bass, & Moore, 2013, p. 1267). In the sections that follow, we discuss how our respective experiences, interpretations, and pedagogical approaches motivate us to inspire students to meaningfully engage with oppressed groups through critical theoretical perspectives that encapsulate their experiences historically and contemporarily.

Meaningful Engagement with Oppressed Groups

Both of our experiences of teaching while Black expose the harsh reality of what it means to educate students on the reality of race/racism in this country. Rather than focusing on teaching students to be culturally competent, we are trying to disrupt the biases they have about racial and ethnic minorities and make them more aware of how their biases can impact services with minority client populations. According to Otuyelu, Graham, and Kennedy (2016), "We teach

how to be culturally competent when we should be teaching how to sit with bias, while discussing its detrimental effect in practice" (p. 431). Teaching our students to learn how to "sit with bias" has been an uphill battle for each of us as a result of two competing beliefs. One belief is that the United States operates under a banner of racial neutrality in which all citizens are treated fairly, regardless of race. Yet, the current state of our country does not reflect racial neutrality given that our nation is bombarded with news of *Make America Great Again, Build the Wall*, and acts of domestic terrorism. Neville, Awad, Brooks, Flores, and Bluemel (2013) hold the view that, "data on racial disparities underscore the point that we do not live in a racially egalitarian or ideal society" (p. 456). Given our current political, racial, and social climate, now more than ever, social work educators cannot afford to produce social work students who are willfully ignorant to the social issues existent among oppressed groups in this country and the world at large.

Therefore, it is important to realize that by not addressing the personal biases of social work students, we inadvertently give license to privileged perceptions that will have adverse effects on the field of social work practice and research. For this reason, meaningful engagement with oppressed groups must begin in spaces that facilitate honest discussions of how race and social inequities are situated within institutions and structures that reinforce White privilege (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Ortiz & Jani, 2010). Campbell (2015) argues that cultural competence espouses the idea of "congruent values and beliefs" (p. 10) to promote acknowledging and affirming diverse groups. Both of us often facilitate this cultural congruence within our respective courses by facilitating a safe and open dialogue where divergent conclusions in regard to oppressed groups can be critically discussed without negative condemnation or reprisal. This form of critically engaged dialogue is called "mutual vulnerability" (Berry, 2010, p. 20). Essentially, faculty and students speak openly and honestly about their lived experience within the context of the course material. In our experience, once we (faculty) share from our lived experience, students are more receptive to speaking openly about their lived experience. Engaging in mutual vulnerability is not always an easy task, but we are both committed to speaking openly and honestly about dismantling ideas, values, and beliefs that maintain a dominating narrative about minoritized groups.

Summary and Implications

We began this piece by critiquing how cultural competence in the field of social work is not the end game toward the promotion of culturally responsive practice. As two faculty of color teaching at PWIs, we are often confronted by our students' lack of understanding in working with diverse client populations. More importantly, how can we truly achieve cultural competence when there is an underlying belief that the social work practitioner is the expert and knows all there is to know about working with diverse client populations? As we have seen in the works of Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, and Utsey (2013), Ortega and Faller (2011), and Tervalon and Murray-García (1998), cultural humility is what we should strive for as social work practitioners—to be committed to life-long self-reflection and evaluation in relation to power dynamics that exist between worker and client. Although the previous authors focus on cultural humility of counselors, social workers, and so forth in relationship to clients served, we believe that it is also important to discuss what cultural humility looks like in the teacher-student

dynamic. It is our hope that by sharing our narrative reflections of our teaching experiences at PWIs, teaching mostly White students, we shed light on the challenges that faculty of color in academe experience—teaching while Black. Previous literature about cultural competence and cultural humility focuses primarily on the worker-client dynamic, yet there seems to be a gap in the literature as it relates to the teaching experiences of faculty and students. We posit there is a need for more research that explores how social work programs are preparing students at the baccalaureate and graduate levels to practice cultural humility.

In closing, the writing process is never an easy experience for any person of color in academe. We, collectively, attempt to capture our most authentic voices within the margins of every manuscript submitted for publication. Each of us recognizes on a historical level the strides our predecessors made in order for us to navigate White spaces, especially in academe. In writing this article, we tried to remain mindful of our audience while speaking truthfully about the encounters that we have had teaching. Similarly, in writing our personal narratives as social work educators within a White space, we evoked a form of racial turmoil few can genuinely comprehend, let alone appreciate. Therefore, throughout this writing process, a recurring thought we had was how we can speak truth to power without alienating our colleagues, peers, and allies in social work education.

Additionally, our unapologetic prose is not intended to placate, yet to speak to the immeasurable strength required by social work faculty of color. Routinely, if not daily, we have to exert this strength in the midst of White opposition that reinforces acts of White privilege and supremacy. A positive outcome of this collaborative authorship has revealed a pressing need for social work education to adopt a critical pedagogy that will teach social work students on all levels the effects of the interplay of historical and contemporary social inequities on the lives of oppressed communities. Moreover, social work programs also have a responsibility to help students understand the power they hold over the lives of their clients. In other words, how can we teach students the importance of valuing and respecting the lived experiences of their clients without abusing the power that has been bestowed upon them because of their degree? Respectively, we have discovered that it is one thing to be philosophically culturally competent and entirely another to demonstrate this in practice. In particular, there is a need for the development of strategies that challenge students' implicit and explicit biases of oppressed groups that will directly affect their capability to deliver culturally relevant social work practice upon their exit from the program and entry into the profession.

Too few social work colleagues are willing, or even have the capacity, to speak unapologetically of these psychosomatic triggers and oppressive privileged praxes in fear of reprisal and non-conformity to Eurocentric standards (Daniel, 2011; Diggs et al., 2009). As anti-Black racism intensifies across the country, PWIs must aggressively confront and challenge the institutional, structural, and pedagogical racism found in their social work programs, curriculum, and campuses as a whole. Challenging dominant structures, both within the classroom and outside of it, must be done in such a way that emboldens social work students to authentically advocate for oppressed communities. In doing so, PWIs should form collaborative relationships with existent faculty of color (Whittaker, Montgomery, & Acosta, 2015) to conceptualize a methodology that will stimulate critical thinking and deliverable modalities that reflect cultural humility in practice

from social work practitioners.

References

Abrams, L. S., & Moio, J. A. (2009). Critical race theory and the cultural competence dilemma in social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education, 45*(2), 245-261. doi:10.5175/JSWE.2009.200700109

Asakura, K., Bogo, M., Good, B., & Power, R. (2018). Teaching note—Social work serial: Using video-recorded simulated client sessions to teach social work practice. *Journal of Social Work Education, 54*(2), 397-404.

Berry, T. R. (2010). Engage pedagogy and critical race feminism. *Educational Foundations, 24*(3-4), 19-26.

Boehm, A., & Staples, L. H. (2002). The functions of the social worker in empowering: The voices of consumers and professionals. *Social Work, 47*(4), 449-460.

Campbell, E. L. (2015). Transitioning from a model of cultural competency toward an inclusive pedagogy of "racial competency" using critical race theory. *Journal of Social Welfare and Human Rights, 3*(1), 9-27. doi:10.15640/10.15640/jswhr.v3n1a2

Choi, H. M., Lee, H. K, & Sohng, S. (Eds.). (2010). *Social work practice with multicultural families*. Seoul, South Korea: Yang Seowon.

Council on Social Work Education. (2015). *Educational and policy accreditation standards for baccalaureate and master's social work programs*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Council on Social Work Education. (2017). *2017 statistics on social work education in the United States*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Council on Social Work Education. (2018). *2018 statistics on social work education in the United States: Appendix*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Daniel, C. (2011). Lessons learned: Pedagogical tensions and struggles with instruction on multiculturalism in social work education programs. *Social Work Education, 30*(3), 250-265. doi:10.1080/02615471003789829

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2012). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Diggs, G. A., Garrison-Wade, D. F., Estrada, D., & Galindo, R. (2009). Smiling faces and colored spaces: The experiences of faculty of color pursing tenure in the academy. *The Urban Review, 41*(4), 312-333. doi:10.1007/s11256-008-0113-y

Edwards, J. B., Bryant, S., & Clark, T. T. (2008). African American female social work educators in predominately White schools of social work: Strategies for thriving. *Journal of African American Studies, 12*, 37-49. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12111-007-9029-y

Evans-Winters, V. E., & Esposito, J. (2010). Other people's daughters: Critical race feminism and Black girls' education. *Educational Foundations, 24*(1-2), 11-25.

Evans-Winters, V. E., & Hoff, P. T. (2011). The aesthetics of White racism in pre-service teacher education: A critical race theory perspective. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 14*(2), 461-479. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2010.548376

Gentle-Genitty, C., Chen, H., Karikari, I., & Barnett, C. (2014). Social work theory and application to practice: The students' perspectives. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 14*(1), 36.

Gutiérrez, L. M. (1990). Working with women of color: An empowerment perspective. *Social Work, 35*(2), 149-153. doi:10.1093/sw/35.2.149

Gutiérrez y Muhs, G., Niemann, Y. F., González, C. G., & Harris, A. P. (2012). *Presumed incompetent: The intersections of race and class for women in academia.* Boulder, CO: Utah State University Press.

Holmes, M. R., Tracy, E. M., Painter, L. L., Oestreich, T., & Park, H. (2015). Moving from flipcharts to the flipped classroom: Using technology driven teaching methods to promote active learning in foundation and advanced masters social work courses. *Clinical Social Work Journal, 43*(2), 215-224. doi:10.1007/s10615-015-0521-x

Hook, J. N., Davis, D. E., Owen, J., Worthington, E. L., Jr., & Utsey, S. O. (2013). Cultural humility: Measuring openness to culturally diverse clients. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 60*(3), 353-366. doi:10.1037/a0032595

hooks, b. (2013). *Writing beyond race: Living theory and practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hunn, V., Harley, D., Elliott, W., & Canfield, J. P. (2015). Microaggression and the mitigation of psychological harm: Four social workers' exposition for care of clients, students, and faculty who suffer 'a thousand little cuts.' *Journal of Pan African Studies, 7*(9), 41-55.

Jackson, K. F. (2012). Living the multiracial experience shifting racial expressions, resisting race, and seeking community. *Qualitative Social Work*, *11*(1), 42-60. doi:10.1177/1473325010375646

Jackson, K. F., & Samuels, G. M. (2011). Multiracial competence in social work: Recommendations for culturally attuned work with multiracial people. *Social Work*, *56*(3), 235-245. doi:10.1093/sw/56.3.235

King, D. K. (1988). Multiple jeopardy, multiple consciousness: The context of a Black ideology. *Signs, 14*(1), 42-72.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2004). Landing on the wrong note: The price we paid for Brown. *Educational Researcher, 33*(7), 3-13. doi:10.3102/0013189X033007003

Moore, S. E., Robinson, M. A., Clayton, D. M., Adedoyin, A. C., Boamah, D. A., Kyere, E., & Harmon, D. K. (2018). A critical race perspective of police shooting of unharmed Black males in the United States: Implications for social work. *Urban Social Work, 2*(1), 33-47.

Neville, H. A., Awad, G. H., Brooks, J. E., Flores, M. P., & Bluemel, J. (2013). Color-blind racial ideology: Theory, training, and measurement implications in psychology. *American Psychologist*, *68*(6), 455. doi:10.1037/a0033282

Nylund, D. (2006). Critical multiculturalism, whiteness, and social work: Towards a more radical view of cultural competence. *Journal of Progressive Human Services, 17*(2), 27-42.

Ortega, R., & Faller, K. C. (2011). Training child welfare workers from an intersectional cultural humility perspective: A paradigm shift. *Child Welfare, 90*(5), 27-50.

Ortiz, L., & Jani, J. (2010). Critical race theory: A transformational model for teaching diversity. *Journal of Social Work Education, 46*(2), 175-193. doi:10.5175/JSWE.2010.200900070

Otuyelu, F., Graham, W., & Kennedy, S. A. (2016). The death of Black males: The unmasking of cultural competence and oppressive practices in a micro-aggressive environment. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 26*(3-4), 430-436. doi:10.1080/10911359.2016.1139994

Randolph, A. (2010). What does racism look like? An autoethnographical examination of the culture of racism in higher education. In C. C. Robinson & P. Clardy (Eds.), *Tedious journeys: Autoethnography by women of color in academe* (pp. 119-145). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Rankopo, M. J., & Osei-Hwedie, K. (2011). Globalization and culturally relevant social work: African perspectives on indigenization. *International Social Work*, *54*(1), 137-147. doi:10.1177/0020872810372367

Schueths, A. M., Gladney, T., Crawford, D. M., Bass, K. L., & Moore, H. A. (2013). Passionate pedagogy and emotional labor: Students' responses to learning diversity from diverse instructors. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 26*(10), 1259-1276.

Tervalon, M., & Murray-García, J. (1998). Cultural humility versus cultural competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved, 9*(2), 117-125.

Toliver, S. D., Moore, P. J., & Redcross, N. (2015). Intra-racial dynamics of Black faculty and black students: Barriers to success in the academy in predominately White institutions. *European Scientific Journal, 11*(3), 33-40.

Tolliver, W. F., Hadden, B. R., Snowden, F., & Brown-Manning, R. (2016). Police killings of unarmed Black people: Centering race and racism in human behavior and the social environment content. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 26*(3-4), 1-8. doi:10.1080/10911359.2015.1125207

Tuitt, F., Hanna, M., Martinez, L. M., Salazar, M. D. C., & Griffin, R. (2009, Fall). Teaching in the line of fire: Faculty of color in the academy. *Thought & Action*, 65-74.

Whittaker, J. A., Montgomery, B. L., & Acosta, V. G. M. (2015). Retention of underrepresented minority faculty: Strategic initiatives for institutional value proposition based on perspectives from a range of academic institutions. *Journal of Undergraduate Neuroscience Education*, *13*(3), A136.

Wilson, S. (2012). They forgot mammy had a brain. In G. G. Muhs, Y. F. Niemann, C. G. González, & A. P. Harris (Eds.), *Presumed incompetent: The intersections of race and class for women in academia* (pp.1-14). Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.

***About the Authors*:** Tuwana T. Wingfield, PhD, LCSW is Assistant Professor and Social Work Fieldwork Coordinator, Department of Social Work, Mount Mary University (414-930-3438; wingfiet@mtmary.edu); Raymond D. Adams, MSW is Assistant Professor, Social Work Program, Southern Arkansas University (870-235-4208; raymondadams@saumag.edu).