Confronting Historical White Supremacy in Social Work Education and Practice: A Way Forward

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Abstract: Oftentimes, social work education is in denial of its seductive and pervasive relationship with White Supremacy, as if it is exempt in power relations rooted in racial formation. The present paper investigates the historical legacy of racial formation within the United States context and its inception in the field of social work. This paper provides comprehensive definitions of the key terms used in teaching social work practice from an anti-racist social justice lens. Whiteness theory is used to highlight the way social work has perpetuated White Supremacy in the evolution of the profession and Black feminist standpoint is used to examine the experiences of non-White women as they interface with racist and oppressive social systems. I advocate for the use of a social justice pedagogy in social work education to help students think critically and reflectively about their future practice to better understand the oppressive power structures in many of today's agencies, organizations, and institutions.

Keywords: Social justice education, racial formation, pre-service social workers, racial inequality and social services

Social work education is neglectful of the role White Supremacy plays in the past, present, and future by not adequately acknowledging the profession's responsibility in disrupting racist and oppressive systems. In fact, social work education is informed by the values of neoliberalism: a system of social governance where the ideals and needs of capitalism have been embraced by the state which has largely withdrawn from regulatory practices controlling companies, corporations, and entrepreneurs in the United States and globally (hooks, 2014; Marthinsen et al., 2019; Morley et al., 2017). Examples of neoliberal values in social work include but are not limited to the "increased privatization of services, the use of the voluntary or third sector, and social workers being controlled by managers whose emphasis is on completing bureaucracy speedily to meet targets" (Rogowski, 2018, p. 73). Plainly stated, neoliberalism forces social work programs to prioritize the creation of a one-size-fits-all model rooted in transactional services. This analysis also argues that the use of social justice education is a powerful platform to address and dismantle White Supremacy inherent in social work curricula, programs, and practice. The current paper provides a critical perspective of the historical legacy from the 1400s to the present day to further examine the intersection of racial formation and social work. In doing this, it also urges the need for paradigm shifts in the training of social workers in the United States and beyond.

This paper enriches existing social work literature by exploring the ways social justice education propels the learning and training of pre-service social workers. The implementation of counter-narratives into the social work curriculum is paramount because it allows students to think more critically about their role as historical and political subjects within the broader construction of power relations (Razack & Jeffery, 2002; Todorova,

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2019; Wagner & Yee, 2011). Pedagogies of this kind are ideal for undergraduate and graduate social work courses, as they help pre-service social workers reconcile their positionality and disrupt hegemonic interactions between individuals, groups, and communities (Kohl & McCutcheon, 2015; Smith, 2012; Smith, 2015; Wane & Todd, 2018).

This paper is composed of three sections: the first section, the *Explication of Key Terms* defines concepts that emerge from the literature on social justice education. The second section, *The Intersection of Racial Formation and Social Work*, contextualizes the study by providing a brief overview of racial formation as well as the social, political, and historical contexts in which social work education in the United States is embedded. The third and final section, *Disrupting Neoliberal Social Work and Enacting Social Justice*, synthesizes the importance of social justice education to mediate the abuse of power in social work practice. Section three also outlines the implications for practice and future research to ensure social justice in and outside the classroom. However, while this paper outlines both concepts and historical information that should be included in social work curricula, the particulars on how best to integrate these learnings are beyond the scope of this paper.

Explication of Key Terms

Throughout this paper, the author employs several key concepts that emerge from the literature on social justice education. The following definitions provide the foundation for the rest of this paper:

Hegemony is the political, economic, and cultural control of one group over another and allows for distinctions between individuals while simultaneously policing the bodies and militarizing the state borders of those constructed as Others (Giroux, 1981; Gramsci, 2000; Todorova, 2019). Hegemony will be presented as the unifying concept that allows for interpersonal, cultural, institutional, and systemic oppression and marginalization by the social work profession within the United States. Hegemony is the unifying concept that allows for interpersonal, cultural, institutional, and systemic oppression and marginalization by the social work profession within the United States.

Neoliberalism in education is a function of hegemony in that its rationale is to organize, regulate, and define the basic principles and workings of the state, national, and global economy (Giroux, 1981). For example, the focus of social work education has shifted from meeting the needs of service users to the assessment and calculation of cost and liability (hooks, 2014; Macias, 2013; Morley et al., 2017). Accordingly, neoliberalism and hegemony work simultaneously to maintain silence regarding issues of race and other sources of oppression (Wagner & Yee, 2011). This paper presents neoliberalism as a concept used to contextualize social work education in that students are taught to memorize information related to best practices, social welfare policy used to police bodies, and foreign policy used to justify violent military practices in the United States and abroad (Morley et al., 2017; Todorova, 2019).

Decolonization in education is about repositioning the way Indigenous Peoples regard themselves and their relationship to the work and the way non-Indigenous people regard Indigenous Peoples (Smith, 2013; Wane & Todd, 2018). This entails verbal acknowledgment, willingness to be challenged, openness to one's accountability, and expression of one's complicity in perpetuating colonial forms of oppression in globalization, patriarchy, land occupation, capitalism, and various forms of violence (Smith, 2013; Wane et al., 2011). This paper acknowledges how imperative decolonization is in the training of pre-service social workers informed by ideals of social justice education.

Racial formation refers to the process by which social, economic, and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings (Omi & Winant, 1994). Racialized people are groups of people not racially constructed as White.

BIPOC refers to black, Indigenous, and people of color and is particular to the United States context and refers to historical references to racialized peoples who were subjected to enslavement, colonization, and exploitation (Garcia, 2020; Todorova, 2019). This paper views the process of racialization as nuanced, dynamic, fluid, and particular to one's social construction and regional location.

Other/otherness/othering emerged in postcolonial studies and has evolved into an interdisciplinary concept that has taken on various meanings (Lévinas, 1947/1987; Heidegger, 1927/1962; Staszak, 2008). In this paper, the author argues how the notion of othering and representations of non-dominant groups in the United States has shaped the profession of social work education.

White Supremacy refers to the social, institutional, and cultural power over and benefits from the exploitation of racialized and Indigenous people in the United States and globally (People's Institute for Survival and Beyond Undoing Racism, 2018). It is the dominant ideology of the Western hegemony under which this paper was written.

Whiteness theory posits that "White people " are not born but made (Aveling, 2004; Leonardo, 2002; Todorova, 2019). Plainly stated, whiteness comes into being through performance, repetition of exclusionary narratives, and practices that normalize otherwise socially and culturally constructed hierarchies of superior and inferior peoples and their cultures (Aveling, 2004; Leonardo, 2002). Furthermore, social groups imagined as White can also be unmade by fostering imaginations conducive to relational and non-violent identities. Hence, in this paper, the term racial Whiteness is used to refer not just to a group of people racialized as White but also to social and cultural representations and discourses giving meaning to White and non-White racial signifiers.

Black feminist standpoint is a feminist epistemology that counters the White supremacist capitalist patriarchy by exploring systems (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Hill Collins, 1986). It proposes that, while living life as a Black woman may produce certain commonalities of outlook, the diversity of class, religion, age, and sexual orientation shapes individual Black women's lives. It is imperative in social work to incorporate the experiences of non-White women in the training and education of pre-service social

workers. The use of a Black feminist standpoint in this paper is political and counter-hegemonic.

The History and Intersections of Racial Formation and Social Work in the United States

The field of social work is informed by the values of neoliberalism: a system of social governance where the ideals and needs of capitalism have been embraced by the state which has largely withdrawn from regulatory practices controlling companies, corporations, and entrepreneurs in the United States and globally (Marthinsen et al., 2019; Morley et al., 2017; Rogowski, 2018; Todorova, 2019). Much like a company or a factory, capitalist notions of cost, accounting, and profit have come to inform how states and local governments plan and deliver welfare services to their citizens. The same logic informs the professional canon of social work, where the prevailing model of "positive social work" is essentially paying low wages to social workers, rebranded as "cost-effective service delivery" to "clients." Yet, the majority of social workers in the United States, are members of privileged racial and economic groups.

The field of social work within the United States is rooted in historical classist, racist, gendered, Islamophobic, and xenophobic structures that are a direct by-product of imperialism, colonialism, and the neoliberal hegemony within the United States (Bhuyan et al., 2017; Miller & Garran, 2017). The training and education of pre-service social workers therefore must address these issues directly.

Thus, racial formation theory teaches us that racial imaginations have permeated all levels and institutions of American life, becoming foundational ingredients of hegemonic cultural and economic institutions, as well as social behaviors, customs, and individual beliefs (Feagin & Elias, 2013; Kandaswamy, 2012). Omi and Winant (1994) further conceptualize race relations in the United States as the social construction and interpretation of differences used to justify the oppression of Black people, the stealing of Native American land, the exclusion of Chinese and Japanese immigrants, the annexation of Mexican land yet the denial of citizenship to Latina/o people, as well as colonization of foreign lands reaching to the Philippines. As result, in the United States, the White/non-White binary has been rigidly defined and enforced as a line separating the haves and have-nots (Husain, 2019). Furthermore, skin color differences have been used in educational, political, and cultural narratives to explain perceived differences in intellectual, physical, and artistic temperaments, and to justify unequal treatment of racially identified individuals and groups (hooks, 2014; Husain, 2019; Bhuyan et al., 2017). Racial formation is embedded in social, cultural, and economic relations in the United States further supporting White racial privileges in all professional fields, including social work (Leonardo, 2002; Fellows & Razack, 1998).

The social work profession must be also understood within the contexts of US imperialism, colonialism, and patriarchy (Dei, 1999; hooks, 2000a). Ideas of gender have developed in relation to practices of colonialism, slavery, racialized labor exploitation, and defining national identity: manhood and womanhood have been thus constructed in relation to colonial male governments and nation-state citizens and female domesticity and care for

family, men, and elders (Kandaswamy, 2012, p. 29). European and American imperialists also displaced (physically and emotionally) Indigenous Peoples and African slaves (Dei, 1999; Pateman & Mills, 2007), making them non-national subjects upon whose labor and land US wealth and capitalism grew (Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2010). Colonial and capitalist projects intersected further with patriarchal structures and institutions which exploited and victimized differently racialized women physically and sexually (hooks, 2000a; Pateman & Mills, 2007; Wane et al., 2011). The classification of Black women as lascivious and White women as pure was invented to elevate male power, maintain racial hierarchies, and justify the subordination of all women (hooks, 2000b). Colonial, patriarchal, and racial ideas and structure, in turn, have shaped the field of social work: White women have dominated the profession as middle class and culturally privileged subjects who deliver "care" to non-White communities treated as people in need of proper uplifting and reform. The following section provides an overview of this historical legacy from the 1400s to the present day to examine the intersection of racial formation and social work in greater depth while making the case for the need for social justice education pedagogies in the training of social workers in New York State and beyond.

Euro-American Imperialism Colonialism: 1450–1890

The world under colonialism was and still is divided into binary groups based on power and domination (El-Lahib, 2017) rationalized by presumed biological inferiority (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). Race is a category grounded not in biological difference, but rather in what perceived bodily differences come to mean in the context of particular social struggles (HoSang et al., 2012; Omi & Winant, 1994). These binary groups contributed to constructing Indigenous Peoples and African slaves as *Other* through a racial contract that included the colonizers and the colonized, conquerors and conquered, master and slave, male and female, White women and non-White women (El-Lahib, 2017; Mills, 2014). The racial contract is a metaphor used to justify the extreme forms of state-sanctioned dehumanization and social and economic exploitation of racialized and Indigenous people (Leonardo, 2002; Mills, 2014), as well as the violent persecution of enslaved African Islam and Indigenous spirituality and forced conversion to Christianity (Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2010; Husain & Howard, 2017).

Histories of colonization and oppression cannot be separated from everyday acts of racial gendered violence. For example, the intersection of colonialism and patriarchy is directly correlated to the marginalization and exploitation experienced by women of color today. African slaves were the property of slave masters, and enslaved African women "could be replaced or increased by breeding, but unlike the breeding of livestock, the slave masters themselves participated directly in the reproduction" (Pateman & Mills, 2007, p. 144). Rape was a tool of oppression and became the pinnacle of racism and gendered violence perpetrated by extreme hyper-White masculinity (Hunter et al., 2010). Racialized and Indigenous people thus (necessarily and appropriately) developed adaptive strategies to face oppression, domination, and victimization that are still used in the present day. For example, Hardy (2013) identified race-related trauma wounds such as internalized devaluation, assaulted sense of self, and internalized voicelessness: :

> Internalized devaluation is a direct by-product of racism and is inextricably linked to the deification of whiteness and the demonization of people of color, while assaulted sense of self is the culmination of recurring experiences with internalized devaluation, and internalized voicelessness is the inability to defend against a barrage of unwelcome and unjustified negative, debilitating messages. (pp. 25-26)

Such maladaptive coping mechanisms are the "legacy of colonial history that has shaped social structures underlying racial order" (El-Lahib, 2017, p. 646).

Maladaptive coping can be understood as a form of mental slavery that has resulted in BIPOC seeking or being remanded to services in a social welfare system that mirrors the racial hierarchy of formal colonialism. DeGruy-Leary's (1994) theory of post-traumatic slave syndrome provides a lens for understanding the psychological consequences of formal colonialism, institutional racism, and systematic marginalization. Historical trauma is multigenerational and, when combined with the absence of opportunity to heal or access to available physical and mental health resources, continues to impact children whose parents suffer from post-traumatic slave syndrome and often exhibit the same socialized behaviors. Key behaviors and patterns surface as lack of self-esteem, rage manifested into violent anger, and internalized racism. These behaviors and patterns have been pathologized, and the profession of social work exploits and profits from them (Abbasi, 2020; Kroehle et al., 2020; Morley et al., 2017). The impact of race on social work is evident in the broader historical racial formation illuminated above and must be read critically as an aspect of current and past legislation, policies, and the delivery of social service in the United States.

The Progressive Era: 1890–1920

The emancipation proclamation was in 1863, and most consider that the war ended in 1865 with the surrender of Lee at Appomattox, which might mark the true end of "formal slavery." However, the structural and institutional racism that emerged during the colonial era were left untouched by Reconstruction, securing political, economic, and cultural hegemony in the United States. For example, Black Codes in 1865 and 1866 were blatant attempts to continue slavery by forcing African Americans to contract work one year in advance or risk being arrested (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). Like Miller and Garran (2017), Bonilla-Silva (2017) contends, "Jim Crow laws involved the disenfranchisement of blacks, racial separation in public accommodations, segregation in housing, schools, the workplace, and in other areas to ensure White supremacy" (p. 45). Additionally, the 13th Amendment, ratified in 1865, resulted in high rates of incarceration for minor infractions and crimes, and charged large fines that African Americans could not pay (Alexander, 2011; Miller & Garran, 2017).

At the same time, the cultural genocide and erasure of Indigenous people continued through mass killings, broken treaties, and the enforcement of boarding schools (Miller & Garran, 2017). These are prime examples of how hegemony functioned politically, economically, and culturally during the Progressive Era. Whiteness has had a violent career both physically and systematically in the United States. The aggression of the White race is intimate slavery, segregation, and discrimination.

Building on this notion of hegemony and the legacy of the eugenics left by social reformers of this era, the social work profession emerged with the creation of Charity Organization Societies in 1877 in urban areas impacted by poverty. The sole function of Charity Organization Societies was to preserve the economic, political, and cultural hegemony of whiteness in the United States. At the time, social workers were exclusively wealthy White Christian female reformers who sought to assimilate and ease the transition of the high numbers of migrants from what was considered the "other Europe" (Todorova, 2019, p. 2), including Ireland, Italy, Romania, Croatia, and Poland, who were viewed as helpless and needing to be saved (Miller & Garran, 2017). Social work in this era facilitated the social and material privileges through membership of whiteness (Badwall, 2015; Gregory, 2021; Tascón & Ife, 2019). Whiteness was and continues to homogenize diverse ethnic populations into a single category for racial domination (Leonardo, 2002), and White identities continue to be the foundation of social, political, national, and geopolitical relations (Hunter et al., 2010; Leonardo, 2002).

During the Progressive Era, charity and social services were viewed as the Christian Church's responsibility (Warde, 2016). Thus, the Church deemed it necessary to determine who was worthy of aid. Plainly stated, services were available to the European migrants, whom White Americans came to refer to as "ethnic Whites," but were denied to Black, Asian, and Indigenous Americans. Interventions ranged from "friendly visitors" to families in need, to teaching financial literacy and modeling a professional work ethic (Miller & Garran, 2017; Morgaine & Capous-Desyllas, 2014; Warde, 2016), as well as religious conversion. Husain and Howard (2017) have asserted that conversion to Christianity among ethnic White communities followed in line with the historic racialization of religion during formal colonialism.

Following the work of Charity Organization Societies were Settlement Houses. The Settlement House movement is associated with Jane Addams, a White social worker of the time. It is important to highlight that, like Charity Organization Societies, Settlement Houses only served ethnic White clients and did not challenge systematic racism (Miller & Garran, 2017; Warde, 2016). The goals of Charity Organization Societies were to engage in research about poverty, provide aid to ethnic White people experiencing poverty in their transition to the United States, and support needy families through positive role-modeling (Morgaine & Capous-Desyllas, 2014), also performed by wealthy Christian women. As a result of the exclusionary practices of Charity Organization Societies and Settlement Houses, BIPOC created their social network and service programs. BIPOC organized based on shared victimhood and focused on fostering racial pride, mutual aid, and a sense of community in opposition to hegemony (Gregory, 2021; Miller & Garran, 2017; Smith, 2012). These social services and programs are reminiscent of the Indigenous practices of collectivism and sharing (Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2010; Schiele, 2017; Wane et al., 2011; Warde, 2016). This movement was led by Ida B. Wells, a Black organizer, journalist, and social worker of the time, although the history of social work is typically linked to Addams, not Wells (Hutchison, 2016). Jane Addams' status as a White woman and heroine of social work juxtaposes the silencing of social workers of color, who were pivotal to the foundation of social work as a field. There remains insufficient dialogue between the gender hierarchy and racial hegemony as it relates to the profession of social work (Smith,

2012). Thus, deconstructing how the traditions of social work are implicit in race relations and gender hierarchy is essential for the education of present-day social workers.

The classification of "White" was subject to challenges brought about by the influx of "ethnic Whites" such as Southern Europeans, the Irish, and Jews, who were culturally different from Anglo-Saxons. The new working class now considered White were recent immigrants, who organized on racial lines as much as on traditionally defined class lines. For example, the Irish on the West Coast engaged in vicious anti-Chinese race-baiting and committed many pogrom-type assaults on Chinese in the course of consolidating the trade union movement in California (Fellows & Razack, 1998; Warde, 2016). Simultaneously, newly assimilated Jews more closely aligned to whiteness, received employment opportunities that created generational wealth and further excluded an estimated two million Blacks who migrated to the Northern and Western parts of the country (Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Warde, 2016). Capitalists throughout the United States also adopted racial practices in their hiring, company policies, and daily activities (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). African Americans were denied access to certain jobs and were paid lower wages, while ethnic Whites, who had been recruited to the United States for their labor, became the foundation of the country's unionized workforce. As a result, institutional labor produced particular forms of White middle-class masculinity, as ethnic Whites were able to obtain union positions not afforded to racialized and Indigenous bodies (Gregory, 2021; Hunter et al., 2010; Warde, 2016).

The assimilation of ethnic Whites into whiteness facilitated access to union protections. This enabled ethnic Whites to develop generational wealth not afforded to Indigenous people and former slaves, who likewise migrated to the Northern United States for jobs. At the same time, the elimination of European migrants' ethnic identities served to maintain hegemonic dominance (El-Lahib, 2017). Racialized bodies were also excluded from work that would have provided generational wealth (Roediger, 1999).

The New Deal: 1930–1950

Similar to the Progressive Era, the New Deal did not challenge institutional and systemic racism. The New Deal created a series of employment projects and social insurance programs as a response to the Great Depression (Miller & Garran, 2017; Morgaine & Capous-Desyllas, 2014; Warde, 2016) that further elevated White supremacist capitalist patriarchy. The expansion of social service programs created a growing need for social workers (Gerig, 2007), but poverty-impacted, non-White bodies were effectively excluded from these positions because they were not afforded the power, social capital, and education necessary to access them. By contrast, White women were explicitly educated and hired to be social workers (hooks, 2000a, 2000b).

During the New Deal, the role of social workers shifted from assimilating European migrants into whiteness to sustaining hegemony and White supremacy under the guise of "protecting the state." Various pieces of legislation were enacted between the late 1800s until after World War II both to deny citizenship to racialized and Indigenous peoples and to restrict their migration (Husain & Howard, 2017; Warde, 2016). For example, social workers, backed by anti-immigrant laws, identified and reported Mexican Americans and

Chinese Americans for deportation when their physical labor was no longer needed due to the migration of ethnic Whites (Miller & Garran, 2017). In other cases, the social work profession was complicit in not challenging violent immigration policies and legislation, such as the Native American Reorganization Act of 1934, which perpetrated the loss of culture and heritage among Indigenous Peoples (Miller & Garran, 2017), and Executive Order 9066, which forced the internment of Japanese Americans into camps (Miller & Garran, 2017; Warde, 2016). During this period, federal legislation also justified the militarization of state borders and furthered racial hierarchies (El-Lahib, 2017). Smith (2012) reminds us "regardless of how long any particular group of immigrants resides in the United States, they generally become targeted as foreign threats" (p. 69). The legacy of racial conflicts and policies shaped the interests (or priorities) of the United States and in turn, led to the consolidation of institutional patterns that perpetuated the color line within the working class.

Speaking specifically of racial hierarchies, Smith (2015) introduced the concept of the Oppression Olympics, which contextualizes how racialized people have been socially constructed to compete for scarce resources. Smith further explains that White supremacy and the heteropatriarchy are the building blocks of governance within the United States, based on what she calls the "Three Pillars of White Supremacy": Slavery/Capitalism, Genocide/Colonialism, and Orientalism/War (Smith, 2015, p. 1). Indeed, she asserts, "White supremacy is constituted by separate and distinct, but still interrelated, logics" (Smith, 2015, p. 1). The logic of Slavery/Capitalism renders Black people into property that is inherently enslavable, while the logic of Genocide/Capitalism describes Indigenous people as a "present absence" so the heteropatriarchy and White supremacy can gain access to their land, resources spirituality, and culture (Smith, 2015, p. 68). Lastly, the logic of Orientalism/War deems what was historically called the "Orient or Asia" to be inferior and an ever-present threat to the West (Smith, 2015, p. 264). Such racial hierarchy is instrumental in sustaining capitalism (El-Lahib, 2017) and rationalizes the dehumanization and degradation of people constructed as non-White—that is, of racialized people.

The Civil Rights Era: 1958–1968

By the 1960s, social workers and other helping professionals began to see how institutional racism, poverty, and marginalization affected various groups of people and that traditional social work theories did not apply to people of color, women, people who are financially exploited, people with disabilities, military families, and senior citizens (Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Gerig, 2007; Miller & Garran, 2017; Morgaine & Capous-Desyllas, 2014). During the Civil Rights Era, many social workers collaborated with organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Black Panthers, the Revolutionary Action Movement, and MOVE (Bonilla-Silva, 2017) to combat poverty and racism, particularly the high rates of unemployment affecting Black men (Gerig, 2007; Miller & Garran, 2017; Morgaine & Capous-Desyllas, 2014).

Through collaboration and organizing, social workers and BIPOC achieved a great deal during the Civil Rights Movement for Black men and White women. However, during this period, the social work profession did not address the daily exploitation of racialized women, nor did it disclaim heteronormative Eurocentric social work theories and models of practice that did not apply to individuals experiencing social oppression and marginalization. The automation of agriculture in the South and the augmented labor demand of the postwar boom transformed Black people from a largely rural, impoverished labor force to a largely urban, working-class group by 1970. As the liberal welfare state moved rightwards, the majority of Black people came to be seen, increasingly, as part of the underclass and/or as state dependents. Simultaneously, Third World impoverishment and indebtedness fueled immigration from Asia and Latin American countries, which created the Oppression Olympics (Smith, 2015) among Black people, Indigenous persons, and Asians, sustaining a racial gendered class divide among women, described as the "race to innocence" by Fellows and Razack (1998). Hughey et al. (2015) remind us that historic and "contemporary immigration policies and practices serve as racial mechanisms in a racialized social system" (p. 1353).

The Illusion of a Post-Racial Era: 1970–present

By 1970, it was declared unethical to deny social welfare services based on race, gender, or class (Gerig, 2007; Warde, 2016). However, social work practice was still dominated by traditional theories created by and for White bodies (Hutchison, 2016), which diminished and invalidated the experience of historically racialized individuals and communities seeking services (Harlow & Hearn, 1996). Outside of the United States—in Canada, England, and Austria—social work practitioners underscored poverty and marginalization through the lens of wider political and structural inequalities, sought to provide space for individuals, families, and communities to express their needs, and sought to address individual, local, national, and global levels of inequality in their practice. Unfortunately, because this framework, which came to be known as anti-oppressive practice, did not center race, it furthered the division of women by race and class (Todorova, 2018; Warde, 2016).

During the same period, in the United States, queer and BIPOC women were having discussions about the intersections of race, class, gender, and the ways social services demonized service recipients, which came to be known as anti-racism work (Harlow & Hearn, 1996; HoSang et al., 2012; Krumer-Nevo, 2009; Mclaughlin, 2005; Warde, 2016). Neither anti-oppressive practice nor anti-racism work reached U.S. social work education until the late 20th century, and when they did, anti-oppressive practice became the preferred framework among progressive, White social workers precisely because it ignored race and did not challenge the racial hierarchy embedded in social work.

The feminization of poverty during the late 20th century illustrates why practitioners need to have an anti-racism framework and not simply engage in anti-oppressive practice. Although poverty increased among all women from 1967–1978 (hooks, 2000a, 2000b), it only became thought of as a women's issue when high rates of middle-class White women divorced in the 1980s and 1990s and experienced financial insecurity (hooks, 2000b). As

such, poverty was understood as an individual phenomenon resulting from a woman's disconnection from her nuclear family and the loss of her husband's income, rather than a systemic by-product of the capitalist patriarchy (Franklin, 1992; hooks, 2000b; Warde, 2016). The social welfare system, through racist, gendered, and classist policies, privileged White women who were divorced with resources from the state, while non-White women who bore children outside of marriage were denied state funding to support their families (hooks, 2000a; Mills, 1997; Wane et al., 2014).

It is not by accident that the "welfare queen" stereotype of the 1980s coincided with the feminization of (White women's) poverty. This characterization of racialized women as unable to take care of their children due to the primacy of their sexual desires validated the neoliberal belief that the use of social services was rampant and fraudulent among Black women. This stereotype was also used to justify institutional surveillance of Black women and their children and the construction of barriers to social service resources. This is another prime example of the control that White hegemony has over social, cultural, and political discourse, and is tantamount to colonialism.

Access to resources is an issue not just in the United States, but globally. The state creates and maintains social welfare policies, foreign policies, organizational practices, and broader governmental entities while simultaneously sustaining the racialized gender order of White privilege based on racial hegemony (Hunter et al., 2010; Wane et al., 2014; Warde, 2016). As stated earlier, during the Progressive Era, financial assistance and aid were regulated by the Church. The funding practices of that era are mirrored in contemporary government-funded social service programs, local and national nonprofit organizations, and global nongovernmental organizations, which play a role in setting the global neoliberal agenda (Choudry & Kapoor, 2013, p. 462). In exchange for material and financial resources provided by the government, nonprofit, and nongovernmental organizations, racialized and Indigenous Peoples are no longer in control of their narratives and free will. Funders, whether public or private, determine funding priorities based on their political ideology and interests (Kivel, 2007; Morgaine & Capous-Desyllas, 2014), creating hegemonic conditions and limitations of services for those in need (Bundy-Fazioli et al., 2013).

The three pillars of White supremacy set up the conditions for BIPOC to always be in competition for resources in the United States and abroad. Indeed, as Benn-John and De Mello (2018) assert, resources are always limited, and grant-funding programs are generally time-limited and fail to address underlying issues that are deeply gendered and raced. Smith (2007) describes this funding hierarchy as the "Nonprofit Industrial Complex," a system of relationships between the state (or local and federal governments), the wealthy, private foundations, and nonprofit and nongovernmental social service and social justice organizations that results in the surveillance, control, derailment, and everyday management of political movements. Furthermore, she claims that this complex pits organizations against each other rather than encouraging collaboration and forces racialized and Indigenous people experiencing financial deprivation to compete for scarce resources at the individual, community, and systemic levels (Macey & Moxon, 1996; Morgaine & Capous-Desyllas, 2014; Smith, 2007; Warde, 2016). Marsiglia and Kulis (2009), meanwhile, highlight how problematic and ineffective neutral social service

programs are and suggest that many agencies assume and impose heteronormative middle-class values and simultaneously overlook and deemphasize the cultural and social strengths among groups who continue to face marginalization and systematic oppression. The authors fail to underscore the importance of decolonization during the education and training of pre-service social workers. Marsiglia and Kulis (2016) suggest that travel abroad programs provide social work students a sufficient "understanding of traditional culture…and the possible tension and contributions clients may be experiencing" as they are forced to assimilate to American culture (p. 352). This view of social work education underscores neoliberalism in that those who can pay for experience have access to it (Furman et al., 2021). Also, mere access does not teach pre-service social workers to deconstruct these values or discourage them from imposing these values abroad. In a similar vein, Choudry and Kapoor (2013) introduced the term "NGOization" in reference to the professionalization and institutionalization of social action, and suggested that institutions that receive funding have a profound impact on communities locally, nationally, and globally, shaping rather than supporting them. Thus, nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations are complicit in the process of colonization, hegemony, and neoliberalism (Choudry & Kapoor, 2013; Furman et al., 2021; Marsiglia & Kulis, 2016).

Likewise, government social services are a function of hegemony and neoliberal politics, where power is accorded, distributed, withheld, and/or denied based on race, gender, class, and sexuality (Dei, 1999). Social services are meted out to optimize efficiency rather than to address human needs fully (Hill Collins, 2002; hooks, 2000a; Lorde, 2012). To counter institutional and systemic racism in social welfare programs, it is essential for pre-service social workers to examine their thinking processes and emotions, and explore their socially constructed identities, social relations, and structures of inequality based on power, privilege, and oppression. Understanding racial formation in the U.S. context is paramount to disrupting structures of inequality embedded in the social work field. However, traditional social work education focuses instead on how to pass exams, fill out paperwork, work individually, and not challenge the system. Social work education is reduced to a form of theoretical memorization, where knowledge is presented as something and only given to those who can afford it (Gramsci, 2000). In his text on *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1984) reminds us that the more knowledge one accumulates, the more useful one becomes to the state and its borders. Thus, the state teaches, corrects, trains, controls, and manipulates pre-service social workers as political investments (Ball, 2012; Foucault, 1984).

This section highlights the role the field of social work has played in sustaining racial formation in the United States by examining the Progressive Era, the New Deal, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Post–Civil Rights Era. The creation of social identities such as race and class was and remains an attempt to maintain hegemony and justify the oppression, marginalization, and exploitation of the Other—and specifically racialized women. The creation of social welfare programs has reconfigured formal colonization. As a result, social workers are trained in this system and become servants of the state, regulating financial resources and perpetuating the gendered and racial exploitation of Black, Indigenous, queer and trans people that were fundamental to formal colonialism.

Pre-service social workers must learn to theorize the multiple intersections of individuals, groups, and communities constructed as the Other to achieve personal, institutional, and systematic transformation. The next section discusses the organizations using social justice work and then examines the current literature on using social justice pedagogy to address power, privilege, and oppression in social work education.

Indeed, social justice education must be embedded in social work education and specifically in practice courses to position pre-service social workers for transformative work with and among individuals, families, and communities impacted by systems of oppression and marginalization. Enacting radical social work education must also involve the unlearning of colonial knowledge, and demanding the decolonization of pre-service workers training well. Such practice displaces Euro-American ideals and norms as "truth" and the only way of knowing, replacing them with an epistemological forest where European, Indigenous, Black, White, and other ways of knowing are equal and equally thriving (Macias, 2013; Todorova, 2019).

Disrupting Neoliberal Social Work and Enacting Social Justice

Although this paper conceptualizes the profession of social work with existing systems of oppression, it proposes a new direction in the teaching and training of pre-service social workers. To combat White Supremacy, I argue that naming the historical legacy of racial formation and its inception in the field of social work furthers discourse in the training and education of pre-service social workers. Although critical discourse in itself does not erase societal power structures, the use of counter-narratives in classroom settings can awaken, provide insight, and disrupt harmful power structures within the profession of social work. Through this dynamic process, educators and students alike learn to become critically reflexive and honor different ways of knowing and being; thus, transcending the social worker-client relationship to one that centers healing and collaboration through reciprocity.

One way to move this work forward is by creating a framework that integrates the key concepts discussed earlier in the paper to uncover the historical legacy of White Supremacy. More specifically, a study can be done to compare the learning experience of students engaged in this framework and those who are not. Such an expansion would reconstruct old paradigms and make way for new social work pedagogies and practices.

Ultimately, this paper documents the legacy of racism and oppression in the United States as it relates to social work; while giving scholars and educators the language needed to further problematize social work education and practice. The current scholarship illustrates the importance of social justice education and underlines the unchallenged past of social work to improve the training of pre-service social workers nationally and internationally.

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