The Politics of Resistance From Within: Dismantling White Supremacy in Social Work Classrooms

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Abstract: *Everyday racism embedded in all facets of society, coupled with ongoing injustices against racialized people globally, have reignited an urgent action to turn the gaze within social work education. There is a need to challenge and resist white supremacy that continues to institutionalize systemic racism and justify state control of social and political processes. These current realities are in direct contradiction to the neoliberal push for state withdrawal from social programming and essential services. Yet the interconnectedness between neoliberalism, white supremacy and fascist ideologies has gone undetected in social work circles resulting in a political and ideological vacuum in the profession. Within the social work curricula, there is a lack of attention and involvement to effectively dismantle white supremacy and racism that are perpetuated within and through the profession. The social work classroom has been a natural place to incubate a new wave of resistance that has the potential of changing the face of the profession. Considering the deleterious effects white supremacy has for racialized bodies within academic spaces, we assert the embodiments of resistance with a call to action for social work scholars, students, administrators and practitioners. These key actors must reject the legacy of white supremacy in our profession that acts as social control agents serving the state's interests and perpetuating its hegemony. We explore some of the ways in which we confront and disrupt white supremacy, which includes interrogating and dismantling dominant discourses, systemic and institutional academic racism (teaching, research and service), social work curriculum and priorities, and racist classroom dynamics that have been shaped by whiteness that continues to impact the interactions between racialized and white students and professors. We conclude with a call to infuse social work with practices and approaches that equip students with knowledge and tangible tools to enact change beyond academic spaces.*

Keywords: *White supremacy, racism, academia, social work education, whiteness, neoliberalism, racialization*

Social work profession and education have a complex historical and contemporary legacy of advocating for social justice while simultaneously upholding dominant discourses that reinforce whiteness and white supremacy (Gregory, 2021). Indeed, a critical examination of social work theories, epistemologies, policies, practices, and pedagogies demonstrates that whiteness is rooted in the profession's knowledge base in ways that construct white bodies and experiences as dominant norms. Furthermore, social work curricula are imbued with whiteness. According to Deepak and colleagues (2015), diversity content is diluted, minimized and "insufficiently infused throughout the curriculum," and material used mostly represents the "white, upper class male norm" (pp. 116-117). Similar patterns can be seen in the limitations of social work education to prepare students to be

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anti-racist social workers and address issues of racism, ableism, and sexism (Richards-Schuster et al., 2015).

Such assumed universality of whiteness acts as gatekeepers that not only maintain and facilitate white dominance, but also delegitimize the "racialized other" and render their experiences insignificant. A wide range of scholarship has questioned the dominance of whiteness within social work theories, epistemologies, and ontologies (e.g., Dominelli, 1989; Pewewardy & Almeida, 2014; Walter et al., 2011). The relationship between dominance and control also shapes the ways social work has been implicated in conceptualizing, facilitating and normalizing ableist and racist colonial policies, processes, and practices. Indeed, Chapman and Withers (2019), El-Lahib (2017, 2020), and Joseph (2015) problematize the ways in which the social work profession not only facilitates states' colonial, racist and ableist agendas, but also contributes to normalizing these practices that dissolve the state's accountability.

Furthermore, the marriage between neoliberalism, dominant socio-political, economic relations of power and social work cannot be minimized or dismissed. As we write this article, people across the globe are raising awareness and supporting racial justice initiatives. In contrast, now former U.S. President Donald Trump made the headlines with a controversial executive order (Cineas, 2020) to remove all diversity and anti-racism training from federally funded agencies and exclude concepts such as white privilege, unconscious bias, and critical race theory (CRT) from any training material for federal employees (BBC News, 2020). For Trump, these concepts are divisive and anti-America (Guynn, 2020). Failure to remove such content would result in the withdrawal of government contracts and funding. This move has created fear across government bodies and organizations as they scramble to meet Trump's directive (Washington Post, 2020).

It appears that Trump views white privilege and CRT as two sides of the same coin. White privilege provides substantial benefits and opportunities to white people, whereas CRT is an analytic that critiques white privilege and its effects on the social fabric of our societies. CRT poses an existential threat to white supremacy, hence Trump's relentless tactics to protect and maintain this dominant ideology and affiliation with populist and neo-Nazis practices. This example depicts the extent and insidious nature of whiteness and white supremacy. As social work and social workers are an essential part of government training, interventions and programs, it is essential to make institutional and systemic changes within and across governmental bodies to dismantle governments' controlling processes that thwart efforts to forefront knowledge and practices intended to empower marginalized groups.

The social work profession continues to perpetuate oppression and facilitate racist, ableist and colonial practices (Chapman & Withers, 2019; El-Lahib, 2020; Humphries, 2004; Siddiqui, 2011). Social work educators and professionals have a moral and professional responsibility to address systemic racism and colonial practices and dismantle white supremacy on all levels (e.g., social, political, economic). However, the discrepancies between our professional values and the ways we operationalize social control create a great deal of uncertainties and tensions particularly for racialized and Indigenous communities. Therefore, the relationship between white supremacy, state

control and social work need to be clearly articulated. Social workers must advance a critical agenda for the profession that moves beyond the trendy notions of "activism performativity" and facilitates a meaningful process of resistance that emphasizes unlearning that activates social, economic and political consciousness. Therefore, by interrogating, questioning and challenging dominant ideologies, we can begin the process of dismantling white supremacy.

In this conceptual article, we explore some of the ways in which we disrupt white supremacy which includes interrogating and dismantling dominant discourses, systemic and institutional academic racism (teaching, research, and service), social work curriculum and priorities, and racist classroom dynamics that shape the interaction between racialized and white students and professors. We assert that dismantling white supremacy in social work is not a prescribed method that can be activated once a practitioner or educator decides to do so. It is in fact a process that requires not only divorcing social work from its own white, colonial and racist histories, but also engaging with various forms of anti-racist, anti-colonial resistance that allows us to dismantle white supremacy and challenge its assumed dominance and control.

Positionality

Before we delve deeper into unpacking the issues that shape our experiences, it is important to not only situate our own social subjectivities, but also validate our knowledge and experiences. The first author is a Black female scholar, while the second author is a male scholar of Bedouin Arab descent. As racialized social work educators, we have worked predominantly in white institutions, faculties, and communities. As we combine our efforts and embark on interrogating white supremacy and its operation within and through the profession of social work, we are cautious of not essentializing our own identities or narrowing the issues that need to be questioned and challenged to dismantle white supremacy in social work. We highlight many shared experiences of marginalization and professional degradations; however, we do not assume that our experiences as Black and Arab individuals represent the experiences of all Black and Arab scholars in social work. Our sharing is also not intended to over-victimize ourselves or villainize our own institution.

In our daily lives, we grapple with the contradictory realities that shape our existence as racialized academics. These realities either valorize our identities or subject us and our bodies to tokenizing positions representing institutional performativity of diversity. Examples of such valorizations and tokenization include being called upon to serve on university-level diversity committees or become a referral point to racialized students who need social, mental, and academic support, without any recognition of the added labour imposed on us with such requests. In addition, we interact with people who question the legitimacy of our knowledge and experiences within academic institutions and classrooms. As such, we embody many of the unchartered territories of resistance to whiteness and white supremacy in the ways we position ourselves within this context. As we grapple with these tensions and contradictions, our pride in our professional identities and commitments as anti-racist, anti-colonial, and critical social work scholars, we recognize the need to

continue to hold social work accountable to its historical and contemporary practices. The social work profession continues to perpetuate oppression and facilitate racist, ableist and colonial practices (Chapman & Withers, 2019; Humphries, 2004; Siddiqui, 2011).

Indeed, scholars and educators embody various forms of resistance when they navigate the nuanced realities of academic and institutional racism. Therefore, the accounts of our experiences are a form of discursive resistance that we hope shed light on the politics of subjectivities that racialized scholars face in their personal and professional interactions. Discursive resistance refers to our intentional resistance to individual and systemic behaviours, actions, and discourses employed against our identities and subjectivities (Anderson, 2008). For us, acts of discursive resistance speak to our efforts to reclaim and embody the complex "representation of power relations" by interrogating construction of our bodies and subjectivities as racialized academics within contemporary neoliberal dominant white academia (Lessa, 2006, p. 285). It also allows us to engage in "practices that manage to break away from the hegemony of dominant discourses" (Lessa, 2006, p. 286). As such, the process of discursive resistance for us begins with interrogating dominant discourses that shape our experiences and subjectivities within social workspaces (e.g., education, practice, scholarship, research), and we seek to disrupt these spaces by reclaiming our embodied subjectivities as racialized social work educators, practitioners and researchers through centering alternative discourses that represent our lived realities. Thus, discursive resistance in this sense embodies other forms of resistance that reject professional conformity and enrich the knowledge base of social work in ways that account for diverse perspectives and lived realities beyond the assumed white universal subjectivities.

As social work students, and now educators, it was common to be taught by just a few racialized instructors during our entire degree. These anecdotes are typical in many social work departments in Canada where curricula about the "racialized Other" are designed, constructed, and delivered mostly by white educators and scholars. Our observations are not intended to dismiss or diminish these instructors and their educational efforts. Instead, they are meant to offer an opportunity to discursively interrogate how the "racialized Other," their issues, and their experiences are negotiated, represented, and negated within social work curricula.

We consider the various forms of oppositions and resistance we confront within institutional walls. We are also acutely aware of the ongoing challenges that exacerbate racialized faculty's experiences in academia. Structural inequalities within academic walls maintain and complicate their marginalized positionality. As such we must decide the extent to which we engage in overt and covert forms of resistance. We assert our multiple intersecting identities, discourses of resistance and subjectivities as guiding frameworks to interrogate whiteness and challenge its hegemonic domination. Doing so is an important step to reclaim our positionalities and to establish the boundaries and requirements that will actively shape the process of dismantling white supremacy within social work. Such discursive forms of resistance call for the need to think about social work education beyond the comfort of white academics and scholars; this is a call that occupies spaces, gives voices and embodied experiences to racialized and Indigenous knowledges and realities beyond the imposed white subjectivities on these groups.

Terminology

As a form of discursive resistance, we begin this section with a note on terminologies to highlight the importance of interrogating language and discourse and examine their ways of shaping power dynamics and relations. As such, we highlight several key terms, namely, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), racialized, whiteness and white supremacy to help to frame our political discussion and efforts of resistance. The myriad terms used to describe racialized bodies are fluid, some of which have been imposed by the dominant group. Nonetheless, we recognize the significance in naming ourselves and our experiences.

The concept of race is now widely recognized by social scientists and the broader academic community as a social construct. Specifically, race has no biological significance. However, concepts of race have been used to differentiate racial groups based on physical features. While definitions of race are fluid and have evolved over time, the meanings attached to race contribute to differential treatment of racialized people and influence the ways in which they occupy and navigate space, their sense of belonging, accessing resources and services, and disparities in their experience on various levels of society. The term BIPOC has received increased attention in recent months in academia and broader society following protests that stemmed from increased police brutality. BIPOC is considered an umbrella term that refers to Black, Indigenous and People of Color. The term is meant to reflect their histories of oppression and experiences of ongoing racism. However, we acknowledge that its usage may conflate and homogenize racialized people's experiences. It creates a binary where BIPOC are in opposition to white people, which inadvertently elevates whiteness and white superiority.

In their seminal work where they conceptualized "coloniality of power" to interrogate experiences of colonialism in Latin America, Quijano (2000) asserts that Indigenous peoples in Latin America as well as people who were brought as slaves were 'conquered' only when they were stripped of their histories, languages and identities and became constructed as homogenized 'Indians,' 'Negros or Blacks'" (p. 219). For us, the term "people of color" is an active form of stripping racialized peoples and communities of their histories, identities, nationalities, cultures and hegemonically assign them one new identity. Such active forms of coloniality of power not only eliminate our distinctive and unique characteristics, but also classify all of us (who are referred to as people of color) in ways that maintain white and whiteness while homogenizing racialized groups based on their skin color. As such, interrogating the term people of color for us is a form of discursive resistance to languages and discourses that seek to strip us of our identities and assign us new ones that fit with the dominance and control agenda. Interrogating the centrality of white and whiteness as the dominant norm that all other racialized groups and communities are compared to and contrasted against is an important step to recognize the systemic and intentional erasure that these communities have been subjected to.

We recognize that the various terms used to describe and classify racialized people remain contentious, however, we use the term racialized and Indigenous to refer to the experiences of people who are not white. We argue that the term "racialized" is more politicized to reflect the systemic social construction that subjugates racialized groups and

communities based on their racial identities as compared to the dominant white race. The notion of "racialized" in this sense is an active rejection of the assumed neutrality of the term race and asserts that racialized groups and communities have been marginalized based on interpretations and classifications of their racial identities as understood by the dominant white majority. As such, our rejection also is extended to the assumingly neutral term "people of color" that classifies all racialized people into one homogenous category based on skin color. The current climate of social movements and the calls to reclaim spaces within the struggles for justice by Black, Indigenous and racialized people are promising in many ways. Yet there will be many stones to turn and terms to be explored before these struggles are able to reflect the pulse of the peoples and their desire to change. Until then, and based on earlier discussion, we assert our claim and advance our arguments to use the political term "racialized" instead of the purely descriptive and problematic term "people of color." It is important to note however that assuming a "racialized identity is possible only if its formation is seen as a dynamic process whereby similarities and differences are taken to be of equal importance" (Britton, 1999, p. 40). Thus, we recognize the multiplicities of our identities including gender and class and the ways in which they complicate our experiences.

Another term that is discussed is the concept of whiteness, which works in tandem with white supremacy. Whiteness is defined as a "complex, hegemonic, dynamic [socio-economic and political processes] that function to obscure the power, privilege, and practices of the dominant social elite" (Lea & Sims, 2008, pp. 1-2). It is an "invisible norm against which other races are judged in the construction of identity, representation, subjectivity, nationalism and the law" (Moreton-Robinson, 2004, p. vii). It "reproduces inequities, injustices, and inequalities within the educational system and wider society" (Lea & Sims, 2008, p. 2). These conceptualizations of whiteness shape understanding of identity and skin color as well as discourse, structures, location, broader social systems and subjectivities (Duhaney, 2010; Henry & Tator, 2006; Walter, et al., 2011). Therefore, it is imperative to examine the ways that whiteness has imbedded itself within social work to shape the profession, its norms and how social work constructs racialized communities, groups and identities. For us, as racialized social work educators, grappling daily with these tensions is part of how we embody our professional identities as critical social workers. We deal with such tensions in our classrooms, on campus, with administrators at our institutions, community agencies we work with, and the broader communities we engage with. In fact, these tensions are present in every interaction we make as professional social work educators and scholars, and the impacts of these realities have lasting effects on our personal well-being and professional career advancements.

Related to whiteness is the concept of white supremacy, which is often used in conjunction with radical right-wing extremist hate groups who incite racist beliefs and promote violence. However, Ansley (1989) asserts that it refers to:

> a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings. (p. 1024)

The prevalence of white supremacy is evident when we examine disparities in income, housing, education, and the overrepresentation of racialized people in the criminal justice system. Finally, we recognize that neoliberalism is intertwined with whiteness and white supremacy to uphold dominant ideologies. In her seminal article, Larner (2000) asserts that neoliberalism is a complex ideological phenomenon that can be defined by its focus on "new forms of political-economic governance" and offers three ways to understand and distinguish between various approaches to understanding neoliberalism and its operation. The author separates between "analysis that understands neoliberalism as a policy framework, those who portray neoliberalism as an ideology and those who conceptualize neoliberalism through the lens of governmentality" (p. 6). The Foucauldian concept of governmentality, or the "art of government" (Jessop, 2007, p. 37), refers to the

> ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this … complex form of power, which has its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means of apparatuses of security. (Foucault, 1991, p. 102)

The correlation between neoliberalism and other means of social control through policies, ideologies and governance cannot be separated from the ways relations of power are conceptualized, perceived and operationalized within and through social work and the social working of marginalized social groups. As such, understanding and interrogating the current climate of neoliberalism in higher education using the lens of governmentality will be helpful to interrogate the process of control and discipline that continue to shape racialized faculty members and dictate their approaches to classroom management, access to research and scholarship as well as their chances of academic career advancement.

Contextualizing Racialized People's Experiences in Academia

We acknowledge that some of the challenges (i.e., heavy teaching schedules, research and service demands, acquisition of external funding) that racialized faculty face are related to their jobs. These responsibilities are further complicated by their overcommitment on equity and diversity committees and student mentorship. We recognize the invisible labour that we expend to break down barriers and create spaces that are conducive to our growth. Invisible labour refers to the disproportionate amount of time that racialized faculty spend on activities (i.e., advising students, sitting on various committees) which is often minimized and devalued (Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group, 2017). These "processes take on increased and amplified weight for [racialized faculty] in predominantly white institutions" (Caton, 2013, para. 6). Recruiting and hiring practices are also exclusionary and often do not grant qualified racialized people equal access. Even before they enter these homogenous spaces, their passage is marred with stereotypes that render them incompetent. Simultaneously they are predisposed to increased scrutiny. Students often publicly undermine their authority in the classroom and colleagues may question their legitimacy. Many racialized faculties go to great lengths to establish credibility and legitimacy (Kelly et al., 2017).

Resistance in Academia

Resistance in academia takes many forms and shapes, and targets the ways institutionalized forms of racism, ableism and colonialism play out to maintain dominance and control. One of the most important areas that racialized educators interrogate and challenge is research. It is not surprising that many racialized faculty members can speak to missed opportunities of being overlooked for a research position in their institutions or being dismissed of a recognition for a scholarly achievement. The ways research funding is distributed continue to focus on priorities as set by dominant groups, forcing racialized researchers to either shift their research directions to fit with funders' priorities or risk not being funded.

The distribution of research funding and allocation of priorities are heavily influenced by neoliberalism and neoliberal ideologies (Ramos & Wijesingha, 2017). Neoliberalism with its emphasis on productivity as a key measure of fund allocation combined with dominant and racist perceptions about racialized and Indigenous scholars negatively affect their chances of tenure, promotion and securing research funding. In addition, some racialized scholars experience barriers developing robust research programs, and are misunderstood by grant reviewers or dismissed for political and ideological reasons rather than on the merit of their proposals. Navigating hurdles and obstacles that we face to establish our research programs is also complicated by the ways our scholarship is viewed and evaluated.

An example of this limitation is the current attacks by politicians like former US President Donald Trump on CRT, or the current Alberta Premier, Jason Kenney, where he referred to intersectionality as a "kooky academic theory" (Woods, 2020, para. 2). Such political and ideological attacks on these theories need to be questioned and challenged. Indeed, theories such as intersectionality and CRT are premised on centering the lived experiences of oppression and marginalization as valid and legitimate sources of knowledge that honor peoples' voice, experiences and lived realities. The experiences of rejecting knowledge that racialized scholars advance speaks to the delegitimization of the theories that they embody in their research and scholarship. Recognizing the complexities of the knowledge production process and the scrutiny that scholarly publication goes through, our argument here is not to generalize these experiences or over-victimize racialized scholars and their research output. However, it is to demonstrate the interconnectedness between systemic racism, sexism, ableism and colonialism and the limited access to research funding as well as knowledge mobilizations as experienced by scholars from marginalized social groups (Dolmage, 2017; Ramos & Wijesingha, 2017; Savigny, 2014).

In addition, resistance in academia is both gendered and racialized. Although we are both racialized, we also recognize that our gendered identities may result in different realities. As a Black woman, the first author navigates what hampton (2020) refers to as racially "demarcated spaces" (p. 3). Her intersecting identities of race and gender complicate her experiences in academia, and influence, the way she navigates predominantly white spaces, her scholarly pursuits, the challenges she faces to gain legitimacy, the opportunities and supports available to her, and access to appropriate

mentors. The ways in which her Blackness is constructed in these spaces also inform her experiences in the classroom. Similarly, as an Arab man, the second author navigates his presence within the academic spaces he occupies with a great deal of caution and uncertainties due to the constant "Orientalist" interpretations of him and what he brings to these spaces (Said, 1978). His identity as an Arab scholar gets to be "exoticized" when it is suitable and can be constructed as "terrorist" when necessary. These constructions and interpretations of his body, ethnicity, and identity shape many interactions he engages with and navigates his way through (McQueeney, 2014; Merskin, 2004; Said, 1978). Phrases like "your English is perfect, and your accent is adorable" are regular exoticizing occurrences in his classes and university committees he serves on. On the opposite extreme, he has been told by students that he "terrorizes" them and they "avoid [his] classes like the plague" because of his reputation as a hard marker, even though he is well recognized for his teaching excellence and the recipient of several teaching awards. Such juxtaposition between being constructed as exotic and a terrorist makes navigating his positionality as an Arab scholar an interesting endeavour that pushes beyond academic everyday interactions.

Indeed, our experiences within academia are ongoing sites of struggle riddled with significant emotional and physical labour. At times, we may be implicated in colluding with, embracing or conforming to white supremacy to validate our legitimacy. As such, we remain hyper aware of the decisions we make around how we navigate spaces that continue to disenfranchise us as a form of resistance. We embody our roles as scholar activists who attempt to advance knowledge and contest the politics within academia to provoke broader discussions around white supremacy. The first author provides an example of the ways in which hegemonic dominance of whiteness in social work is operationalized in the classroom. She interrogates the profession's inherent white knowledge base by forefronting her experiences.

My precarious and marginalized positionality in relation to my white colleagues influences the extent to which I confront and resist whiteness and white supremacy. To confront dominant structures in academic spaces, I highlight experiences I have had in the classroom to unravel my own process of discursive resistance.

One semester, I decided to conduct an experiment in my graduate classes by asking students to not call me by my first name and instead refer to me as Professor Duhaney. My intention was to highlight the prevalence of dominant discourses and how these influenced the construction of identities. Specifically, I was interested in better understanding the ways in which these processes maintain and reinforce ideological and cultural domination. On the first day of class as I was discussing the course outline, a student interrupted me and stated that she was curious why I was asking students to refer to me as Prof. X and if I could let them know my background and work experience. Despite my attempts to provide them with a rationale, they wanted more elaboration and I poignantly halted the discussion. I then made the following statements: why are we having this discussion? When I visit my family doctor, I refer to him as Dr. X as a sign of respect. I also asked them to consider why this discussion was taking up so much time in class. I said, "if I were a white male, would we be having this conversation?" One student stated that they were surprised that I would claim the title of Prof. especially in a social work classroom where everyone was

assumed to be equal. At the end of class, one or two of these students were unhappy with the exchange they had with me and complained to administrators. In their attempts to villainize me, these students said I was "defensive and made them feel unsafe in the classroom." One student continued to berate me in her written assignment. I was deeply disturbed at the extent to which students challenged me, undermined my authority and escalated the incident. It seemed that these exchanges were meant to remind me that I did not have the power to define myself or my experiences. It also reaffirmed that I must know my place and remain passive because I am not afforded the same privileges as my white colleagues.

I was concerned that at the graduate level, some students believed that we are all equal and communicating on a first name basis assured this equality. During our second class together, I provided a more in-depth explanation to highlight the significance of titles for me. I shared the following with students,

> Because of my experience of discrimination and oppression, holding the term professor or doctor does not carry claims to power and privilege that it may for a white man or white woman. Although I have spent 23 years in higher education and have obtained four degrees during that time—I am reminded frequently when I navigate predominantly white spaces that I need to constantly prove my worth. Claiming aspects of my identity holds so much more than a title that many people take for granted. It was not too long ago that Black people did not have access to institutions occupied by white people. When they eventually gained access, they received substandard education. Although they were just as smart or smarter, they had to work 10 times harder to get any recognition. I embrace the titles, Professor Duhaney and Dr. Duhaney because of the plight my ancestors have taken for me to be in this place. As I look around me, I see very few racialized professors and even fewer in leadership positions. Some people claim aspects of their identities as a political act against intellectual colonization, which some scholars would refer to as discursive resistance. For me, asking students to refer to me as Professor Duhaney is not about elitism and power. It is a recognition of the ongoing struggles Black people encounter as they navigate and reclaim space predominantly occupied by white bodies. It is also about legitimizing subjugated knowledge and experiences. It is countering hegemonic thinking and cultural norms.

Collins and Moore (2004) further complicate the significance of titles by stating, "modes of address for African American families have historical, cultural, and psychological significance…white people did not address black people with the customary courtesy titles of respect. The standard protocol was to address blacks by their first names" (pp. 164-165). Therefore, using the last name and appropriate titles with Black people acknowledges their worth and value, and is a sign of respect. Despite my detailed explanation, the student complainant was not satisfied. They escalated the issue further by making a complaint to a non-disclosure line; this complaint was also forwarded to the dean for further investigation. The allegations stated that I discriminated against minority students, feminized a person's name and displayed micro-aggression in the classroom. The deleterious effects of these claims are long-lasting and the gravity and impact of the students' accusations on my mental, physical and emotional well-being were significant.

The emotional trauma that erupted following the accusations became unbearable and made it difficult for me to effectively do my job. During the investigation, I expressed concerns about the precedent this sets for other professors, particularly racialized professors who continue to experience hostility in the classroom. I also discussed the ways in which I was surveilled and treated as a suspect. Although the events that occurred in my class were based on students' perceptions, feelings and emotions, the onus was on me to prove that I was not culpable to vindicate myself. I went to great lengths to disprove these erroneous claims against me by providing emails from other students debunking what the other students shared as well as video recordings of the two classes in question. In the end, the accusations were deemed unsubstantiated; however, the harm was done.

The second author's experiences with knowledge delegitimization in the classroom takes similar directions. The theme for my first class was social work and diversity. I facilitated an ice-breaker activity and went through introductions. During the introductions, I listed my degrees and briefly discussed the focus of my research. However, a group of seven white female students stood up and "demanded that I prove my qualifications." I was taken by surprise at the audacity of such a request and asked the class to take a break and that we would address this when they returned. After the break, I stated that I was unsettled by the request and called out the racist assumptions that made the students feel it was acceptable to "demand" that I prove my qualifications to them. I ended the tension by asserting the class agenda and schedule and offered those who were not happy with me to contact the dean, who hired me, for further information. Such events are significant to how racialized bodies, minds and knowledges are subjugated, minimized, and discredited. In fact, these dynamics are not limited to classroom management, but extend further to official institutions and social work accrediting bodies.

Indeed, as a new hire at my current university, it was stipulated that I become a registered social worker. Without delving into detail about the issues and problems with such approaches to social work conformity, I had to adhere to this condition on my job contract. So, I went ahead and started the process of becoming a registered social worker. I was shocked when I was "required" to complete my 3rd year BSW practicum hours because they expired. This is in the context of not having my 23 years of experience as a social worker, community organizer and disability activist recognized in Canada. After I immigrated in 2005, I was forced to start my education from scratch with the BSW program. Fast forward to finishing my BSW, MSW and PhD in Canadian programs of social work and needing to become a registered social worker to maintain my job. When I contacted the Alberta College of Social Workers to inquire about this unrealistic expectation, I politely shared my frustration with the person on the phone. I also stated that I had no choice but to accept that all my 23 years of experience were not recognized in Canada, and asked, "now you also want to deny me my Canadian experience?" The person on the phone interrupted me and said, "this is Canada, and we are not selling hamburgers; this is Canada, and we have higher standards." This is where I realized the complex process of colonization and colonial practices and how whiteness and assumed white supremacy is deeply embedded in the minds and psyches of those controlling social work practice and institutions. Indeed, one of the ways colonization operationalizes is through the delegitimization of the "Other" knowledge base. The "civilization mission" of European

settler colonizers is just an example of how the assumed superiority of the "Canadian standards" constructed my 23 years of experience in five countries and two continents as useless and rendered my lifetime work as a process of "selling hamburgers."

These are not merely anecdotal experiences, the assumed superiority of white supremacy in social work runs deep in how the profession sees itself and facilitates its interactions. As the profession continues to see itself as the social justice knight and promotes its contributions to social transformation based on standards that fit its narratives, the discrepancy between the profession's perception of itself, its reputation and what it really stands for will continue to deepen. The ways we embody our identities, experiences and knowledge as racialized social work educators, researchers and practitioners is a form of resistance to white supremacy and whiteness. Our presence in academic spaces epitomizes a form of resistance, a statement that we are here, and we are not going anywhere, and social work must deal with these realities. The days that normalized stripping us out of our contributions to the profession are long gone and the current climate of political awareness in social work is something to embrace and build on. The question is, can social work truly embrace and support this transformative climate, embrace the challenges put forward to it, and activate the process of changing itself to be true to its value system as a social justice and transformation profession?

Implications for Social Work Education, Research and Practice

Social work pedagogy has systematically contributed to the erasure of the *racialized other*. Therefore, as racialized social work educators, researchers and practitioners, it is important to uphold our commitments to resistance in our classrooms and throughout our research and practice engagements. For Paulo Freire (1971), education is a *practice of freedom*, and as Richard Shaull further suggests in his foreword to Freire's book,

> there is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes 'the practice of freedom.' (Freire, 1971, p. 34)

Therefore, resisting dominance and control and challenging social work's epistemological and ontological knowledge bases and confronting notions of professional conformity is at the heart of our commitments to social justice principles.

As such, diversifying the social work knowledge base is necessary and must include different ways of knowing and being to actively disrupt the heteronormativity of whiteness and white supremacy. One of the ways we can do this is to effectively equip social work students with social justice approaches that expose them to concrete opportunities to practice social justice skills throughout the curriculum and their practice environment (Atteberry-Ash et al., 2019; Nicotera, 2019). Moreover, given the challenges students face grappling with "social injustices and oppression in the real world" (Richards-Schuster et al., 2015, p. 380), accrediting bodies of social work must consider having designated courses that approach racism and other forms of oppression from wholistic perspectives that account for complex social positionalities and lived experiences. These may better

equip social work students and practitioners with effective knowledge, skills and practices to do anti-racism and anti-oppressive work.

Dismantling white supremacy must move beyond the classroom and translate into research that accounts for other ways of knowing, and questions and challenges its dominant knowledge base, specifically, the profession's epistemologies and ontologies that valorizes whiteness. We must recognize historically marginalized ways of knowing and being as valid sources of knowledge that would help advance theorizing. For example, within contemporary neoliberal systems and market-oriented approaches to research and knowledge production, there is an emphasis on research productivities that perpetuate entrepreneurial and consumerist approaches as research priorities at the expense of the lived experiences of racialized and marginalized communities. These dynamics shape the ways research agendas are structured and prioritized and how funding is allocated and distributed. Within these broader socio-economic, political and ideological contexts, researchers from marginalized social groups and identities experience significant barriers securing funding and establishing research programs that respond to their communities' realities. As such, to dismantle white supremacy within and through social work requires a critical examination of what constitutes research agendas and how they get to be actualized.

The social work profession has been portrayed as social control agents (Chapman & Withers, 2019; Margolin, 1997). Dismantling white supremacy in social work requires an examination of our historical and contemporary practices that facilitate the control of marginalized social groups and communities. However, the process of dismantling white supremacy dictates that we question, challenge, and interrogate the mechanisms that place us as one of the states' controlling hands like the police, the army and other governance institutions. It also means divorcing the profession from its white assumed universal subjectivities. Starting on this journey of professional self-actualization for social work requires an active process of interrogating our role in facilitating oppression, marginalization and colonization, and owning the ways we operationalized racism within and through our practice. Indeed, to dismantle white supremacy in social work means severing the profession's relationship with the state and challenging the dominant ideologies that shape our knowledge and practice base. Dismantling white supremacy calls for a critical look at the various processes that define our profession and the ways we have been implicated in upholding racist, ableist and heteronormative systems. This also means that social work needs to refrain from playing the role of the expert and reject its role as a hand of the state to control the marginalized and disenfranchised. Such processes would move the profession away from its colonial and racist knowledge bases and center its political role as a profession that seeks to advance social justice and transformation, as we claim in all our professional codes of ethics and professional guidelines (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005a, 2005b; International Federation of Social Workers, 2018; National Association of Social Workers, 2017, 2018).

Conclusion

In this article, we forefront our experiences in the classroom and beyond as a counternarrative to disrupt the dominant normativity of whiteness and white supremacy,

which remain foundational elements of social work knowledge base. As we grapple with the dynamics of power that shape our interaction with social work institutions, pedagogies and practices, we are reminded of the need to reject professional conformity if we are to uphold critical consciousness and embody resistance. However, as racialized scholars, we recognize our precarious positionality in white institutions which creates ongoing tensions. These barriers and challenges simultaneously compound and diminish our capacity to resist white hegemony in academic spaces. Therefore, the act of naming and calling out whiteness and white supremacy has the potential to place us into a perilous situation. The negative repercussions that may ensue for racialized scholars is enough of a deterrence. Nonetheless, the issues discussed in this article are intended to create space for further dialogue about the state of the social work profession. Conversations around whiteness and white supremacy should not be reactionary acts of performativity in response to current social events. Indeed, we must have intentional conversations that propel us to look inward and interrogate the social work profession. We call on the profession to own its role in perpetuating racist, ableist and colonial practices and pedagogies, and be true to its value systems as a transformative profession. Dismantling white supremacy in social work requires brave actions and sustainable solutions that not only acknowledge social work's complicity in perpetuating racism but reclaim our role as agents of change to eradicate all forms of oppression.

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