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Racial awareness is a critical foundation to racial sensitivity, and it is a necessity for future professionals who want to be prepared to succeed in an increasingly diverse society. Several factors have been shown to influence racial awareness in professionals including their own race, their personal experience with racism, and the amount/quality of training they receive on the topic of race. Institutions of higher education that pride themselves on preparing students to work in a global and diverse market should make a purposeful effort to teach students how to address issues related to race and racism. This chapter offers recommendations for how to transform traditional programs into programs with a focus on antiracism using a Critical Race Theory paradigm. For example, curricula should be designed to challenge students to focus on their personal experiences of racism and racial identity rather than simply studying others'. Student resistance can be minimized by recruiting faculty and students with not only racial diversity, but with diversity of experiences with racism. Finally, by purposefully engaging in interdisciplinary work on campus, smaller departments or more homogeneous departments can provide racial minority students with much needed opportunities for racial identity development and cross-racial interactions.

Addressing Racial Awareness and Color-Blindness in Higher Education

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Institutions of higher education that pride themselves on training future professionals prepared to work and succeed in an increasingly diverse society should make a purposeful effort to teach students how to address issues related to race and racism. It may be tempting to believe that race and racism are no longer the important issues they were two generations ago and that American society has finally moved beyond the racial atrocities of the past. However, race and racism are still current issues with implications for several facets of people's lives. In 1997, the American Psychological Association acknowledged that racial prejudices continue to exist and that race and skin color still "figure prominently in everyday attitudes" (2).

This claim has been supported by several empirical studies in which most participants, even racial minorities, had implicit, automatic positive associations with White people and automatic negative associations with people they identified as racial minorities (Burston, Jones, and Robertson-Saunders 1995; Correll et al. 2002; Eisenberg and Johnson 2004; Feagin 2006; Nosek, Banaji, and Greenwald 2002).

Racial minorities, compared to Whites, also face overt acts of racism in several life domains pertinent to their ability to achieve success. For example, several studies that examined racism in the job market consistently found that despite progress in employment laws and policies, employers often chose to not hire candidates belonging to racial minority groups, especially when White candidates of equal (or sometimes lesser) qualification were available (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Blumrosen and Blumrosen 1999; Pager and Western 2004). In the domain of education, research also found that students attending predominately minority schools are less likely to have high-quality and experienced teachers or college-preparatory classes (Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor 2005; Grant-Thomas 2010; Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin 2004; Jackson 2009). Besides having a direct effect on racial minorities' propensity for success and achievement, racism has a negative effect on psychological well-being. Undoubtedly, being treated unfairly for any reason could have an adverse effect on any person's psyche. However, racial discrimination is considered to be an especially detrimental type of unjust treatment due to the marginalized status of racial minorities within society (Williams and Williams-Morris 2000).

Because of the continued adverse consequences of explicit and implicit racism, sensitivity to these issues is required of faculty and staff who work with racial minorities. Likewise, if institutions wish to train future professionals who can compete in a diverse society, these institutions must make racial sensitivity a primary part of the curriculum. A critical foundation to racial sensitivity is *racial awareness*, a person's "ability to recognize that race exists and that it shapes reality in inequitable and unjust ways" (Laszloffy and Hardy 2000, 36).

Racial Awareness and Color-Blindness

To be racially aware is to acknowledge the fact that real life is not always just or that society does not always offer merit-based rewards to people of all races (Neville et al. 2000). Those with racial awareness can begin to address issues of racism because they have a cognitive understanding of the continued existence of race-based privilege and oppression.

Neville et al. (2000) have highlighted that those without this awareness often deny or minimize the continued influence of race on reality. Such a worldview is known as *color-blindness* (Neville et al. 2000). Color-blind attitudes, even as they exist in the most well-intentioned of people, ignore the fact that (1) certain laws and policies continue to imply White

superiority over racial minorities, (2) privileges are afforded to people belonging to the White race that inherently place racial minorities at certain disadvantages, and (3) general race-based discrimination continues to pervade the daily lives of racial minorities (Neville et al. 2000). Color-blindness is often seen in the ideals of *postracial liberalism*: a combination of rhetoric that transcends race and the push of race-neutral policy agendas based on the assumption that racism is no longer an influential factor for disparities between the races (Wise 2010).

Color-blind ideologies may stem from a distorted belief that openly claiming to see skin color and race as a significant factor that shapes reality makes one racist (Hardy and Laszloffy 2008). In a study of private versus public self-reports of racial attitudes, Plant and Devine (1998) found that college students were highly motivated by fear of social disapproval to appear racially neutral even if this was not their authentic stance. Findings by Bonilla-Silva (2006) also suggested that some people, especially Whites, are more likely to speak in cautious “double-talk,” “beat around the bush,” or use politically correct semantics when discussing race so as not to mistakenly appear racist (164). Hardy and Laszloffy (2008) however take great care in pointing out that acknowledging the influence of race on present-day society and discussing such issues candidly are not the same as racial discrimination or being racist.

Negative Effects of Color-Blindness. Denying the continuing influence of race does not effectively make racism less of a reality. Instead, color-blind attitudes expressed by persons of any race support the perpetuation of racist ideologies in several ways (Hardy and Laszloffy 2008; Neville et al. 2000; Sue et al. 2007). First, the minimization of racism or the blatant denial of individual racial biases has been identified as a type of racial microaggression (Sue et al. 2007). Secondly, those with color-blind attitudes will be less likely to take action against modern-day systemic oppression of racial minorities because they do not acknowledge or cannot recognize that it even exists, thereby supporting pro-racist ideologies by tolerating the status quo (Frankenberg 1993).

Color-blindness also perpetuates racist ideologies by denying the system of privilege and oppression that exists on the basis of race. When this system is ignored or minimized, the disparities that exist between racial minorities and Whites are erroneously attributed to the shortcomings of those minorities. As a result, solutions are then aimed solely at fixing those perceived shortcomings, and the results are ineffective (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Frankenberg 1993; Wise 2008).

For example, Bill Cosby (2004) demonstrated his own color-blindness when he used postracial ideologies to repeatedly blame the plight of the Black community on a supposed lack of family values and moral standing:

Today, ladies and gentlemen, in our cities and public schools we have fifty percent drop out. In our own neighborhoods, we have men in prison. No

longer is a person embarrassed because they're pregnant without a husband. No longer is a boy considered an embarrassment if he tries to run away from being the father of the unmarried child. (paragraph 2)

Even more recently, President Barack Obama (2006) wrote, "... what ails the working-class and middle-class Blacks and Latinos is not fundamentally different from what ails their White counterparts ..." (245). Comments such as President Obama's and Bill Cosby's minimize or ignore the roles of historical oppression and current institutional discrimination in the cause and maintenance of racial inequities. This denial prevents policy makers from targeting the root causes of racial inequity and runs the risk of placing blame on racial minorities for social problems.

When people working to provide services to racial minorities (that is, student services professionals, mental health clinicians, and professors) deny that they harbor racial biases, they fail to recognize their position of power relative to that of their clients or students. The color-blind person also minimizes the racial experiences of those they work with, therefore jeopardizing engagement and retention (Casmir and Morrison 1993; Sue et al. 2007). If future professionals are going to be able to enter their respective fields and be successfully able to collaborate with stakeholders and engage consumers, they will need an education that teaches them to be aware of modern-day racial realities.

Influences on Racial Awareness. Several factors have been shown to influence racial awareness including race, personal experience with racism, and cultural competency training.

Race and Racial Awareness. The role of race in the development of racial awareness may be a function of people's general resistance to acknowledging their social positions of privilege, and their privileged experiences also ensure the ongoing oppression of those outside of their group (Gushue and Constantine 2007; Neville et al. 2001). On the other hand, people are much more willing and able to recognize the ways in which their social positions cause them to be oppressed and marginalized. This means that White Americans are more likely to lack awareness of their racial privilege and the ways in which the benefits they so often enjoy maintain the gaps between themselves and minorities (Advisory Board to the President's Initiative on Race 1998). Racial minorities, on the other hand, are likely to be quite aware of the social ramifications of being a racial minority in America (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Helm, Sedlacek, and Prieto 1998; Jackson 1999; Laszloffy and Hardy 2000; Worthington et al. 2008). When racial minorities are unaware of the racial realities around them, they risk violating implicit social codes regarding acceptable cross-race interactions, the results of which can potentially be severe. Helm, Sedlacek, and Prieto (1998) articulated this difference of reality between Whites and racial minorities: "It is likely that Whites do not see the relevance of their culture to diversity

issues because the overall culture . . . has been, and continues to be, designed for them” (115). Likewise, Laszloffy and Hardy (2000) reported that racial minorities, relative to Whites, are more racially aware because they are socialized from an early age to recognize how to navigate racial interactions in such a way that protects them from racially motivated dangers and leaves Whites feeling comfortable in their presence. On the other hand, White Americans are actually more likely to promote ideas of racial unawareness when teaching their children about race relations (Hamm 2001). One example of this might be a well-intentioned White mother who tells her young son that he should not bring attention to the fact that his new friend is Asian because he should not “see color.”

Most of the literature that has explicitly examined racial awareness and color-blind attitudes in racial minorities either has been limited to samples solely consisting of Black Americans or does not have large enough samples of other minority groups to allow for a meaningful analysis. However, there has been some evidence that indicates that racial awareness may appear differently across various minority groups. For example, a 2001 survey sponsored by the Kaiser Foundation suggested that although Hispanic and Asian Americans were less likely than Whites to endorse color-blind beliefs, they were more likely than Black Americans to agree with statements consistent with color-blind ideologies (Washington Post, Kaiser Family Foundation, Harvard University 2011).

Black parents were also found to be significantly more likely than Mexican and Japanese-American parents to transmit messages regarding racism and discrimination to their children (Phinney and Chavira 1995), thus demonstrating that Black parents have an acute awareness of the realities of racism. Also, the children who received these messages from their parents were more likely than children who did not receive these messages to also show increases in racial awareness (Phinney and Chavira 1995).

Personal Experience with Racism and Racial Awareness. The link between personal experiences with racial discrimination and racial awareness is an intuitive one. Individuals who have reported experiencing personal injustices based on their race are probably more likely to be aware of overall cultural and institutional climates, which often determine rewards based on skin color. In their study of influencing variables on perceptions of racial–ethnic climates, for example, Worthington et al. (2008) found that participants who experienced their college campus as having a negative climate toward racial minorities also tended to have higher levels of racial awareness. Also, parents were more likely to demonstrate and promote racially aware messages to their children when the family had experienced racism (Hughes 2003; Hughes and Chen 1997; Stevenson et al. 2002, 2005).

As mentioned earlier, racial minorities are less likely than Whites to endorse color-blind racial attitudes. This influence of race on racial

awareness appears to be, at least in part, a function of personal experiences of racism as racial minorities are more likely than Whites to experience racial discrimination and more likely to perceive themselves as the direct targets of racism.

However, just as all minority groups do not display the same levels of racial awareness, they also do not perceive or experience racism in the same way. Although Latino students were more likely to report feeling strong pressure to conform to racial stereotypes than White students, they were less likely than Black and Asian students to endorse these realities (Ancis, Sedlacek, and Mohr 2000). Blacks were found to be more likely than other minority groups to report experiencing daily microaggressions or racial conflict (Ancis, Sedlacek, and Mohr 2000; Mont-Reynaud, Ritter, and Chen 1990). These findings may provide some explanation for why Black parents provide their children with more racial awareness messages than other minority groups (Biafora et al. 1993; Hughes 2003; Hughes and Chen 1999; Phinney and Chavira 1995).

It should be noted that vicarious racism—witnessing or hearing about another person’s or group’s experience with racial discrimination—“can also teach valuable lessons about the places where racism hides and resides” (Harrell 2000, 45) and, therefore, is a more accessible avenue through which Whites can experience the existence of racial discrimination and increase their awareness of the realities of racism within society without having to be a direct victim of the experience.

Education and Racial Awareness. Rather than being due to blatant racism or explicit beliefs in White superiority, lack of racial awareness is often due to a lack of knowledge and can likely be combated with education and training. Racial awareness in higher education is usually sought in conjunction with overall cultural competency, which has been defined as improving students’ ability to “integrate issues of diversity into their work” (Vera and Speight 2003, 253).

Many institutions and curricula within higher education choose to utilize a traditional model of cultural competency training that tends to focus on skills-based competencies and the process of identifying personal biases. This traditional paradigm has been heavily criticized as being too focused on individual attitudes, therefore leaving students and future professionals “unequipped to deal with institutional racism and oppression on all of the levels where it permeates” (Abrams and Moio 2006, 247). In other words, traditional cultural competency paradigms neglect to deeply expose students to ways in which oppression and privilege affect marginalized groups across several systems of society.

Another criticism of traditional cultural competence training has been that current teaching paradigms often lack specific and concrete objectives related to racial justice. Rather, discussions of oppression and privilege have been expanded in order to simultaneously focus on several categories of social difference (Abrams and Moio 2006). For example, in an

article describing a mental health multicultural competency course, topics included:

culture, White privilege, race, racism, oppression, social class, cultural identity/genogram, gender, self-of-the-therapist, child-free couples, voluntary single-parenthood, adoption, gay/lesbian families, families of African origin, Asian families, Hispanic families, Middle-Eastern families, families of European descent, Immigrant families, Jewish families, religion/spirituality, and disabilities. (Murphy, Park, and Lonsdale 2006, 307)

Students in the Murphy, Park, and Lonsdale (2006) study demonstrated increases in their multicultural knowledge immediately following the end of the course. However, it was unclear as to whether or not these increases were long term or if their awareness of racial justice issues specifically was changed.

Although the expansion of cultural competency curriculum to include as many forms of oppression as possible has been an expected and honorable response to academia's realization that people have multiple identities, it also prevents an in-depth analysis of any one type of oppression or social construct. Even more dangerous, this pedagogy assumes an equality-of-oppressions stance that places content relevant to racial minorities at risk of being overshadowed or diminished all together while reinforcing the idea that racism does not exist or currently affect individuals and families (Schiele 2007). When interviewed about their experiences of racism within their graduate programs, students of color often reported feeling oppressed when a lack of attention was paid to racial issues (McDowell 2004).

Critical Race Theory Paradigm of Cultural Competency Training

Discussions of more effective methods of delivering racial competence training within higher education have already begun within the field of social work education using the framework of critical race theory (CRT). CRT, as described by Delgado and Stefancic (2001), has several tenets: (1) though a social construct, race has forceful meaning and real implications, especially for racial minorities, (2) racism is oftentimes so commonplace and pervasive within the fabric of society that it is frequently invisible, and (3) this invisibility is also what helps to maintain its existence. Critics of traditional cultural competency teaching paradigms have suggested that curriculum should move from a pedagogy of antioppression—"a term loosely applied to models that identify exclusion and oppression from within and outside of the profession"—to one of antiracism—similar to antioppression, except it "positions race as a central mechanism of oppression" (Abrams and Moio 2006, 253). Antiracist frameworks assume the following: (1) race has salient social effects despite the lack of biological basis for the concept of

race, (2) historical processes of White power continue to exist as a reservoir of privilege for White Americans, (3) the role of traditional institutions is to produce and maintain race-based inequalities, and (4) the problems of racial minorities cannot be understood out of context from the “ideological circumstances in which minorities find themselves” (Maiter 2009, 270).

Suggestions for Implementation. By teaching and supervising from a CRT framework, institutions can help students develop skills to reframe individual racism from a critically conscious lens, which can then be generalized to other types of social oppression. In this way “race remains central and does not get lost” (Abrams and Moio 2006, 255). Three of the biggest obstacles to taking an antiracist approach are: (1) providing effective experiences in a classroom setting, (2) overcoming student resistance, and (3) ensuring that instructors are prepared to teach CRT content.

Providing Effective Experiences. There has been a general consensus in the literature that in order to be effective in increasing racial awareness, educational experiences ought to be experiential and transformative in nature. These experiences should also be weaved throughout students’ entire campus experience and higher education curriculum rather than single classes or optional coursework.

The use of books, movies, and other publications that overtly illustrate racial experiences are effective ways in which instructors can introduce students to racism and privilege within the context of the classroom (McDowell et al. 2002; McGoldrick et al. 1999), although adding these things alone may hinder the advanced development of racial consciousness (Zimmerman and Haddock 2001). For students who are beyond the early stages of racial awareness, less overt examples can be used to illustrate more subtle instances of racism and privilege as well as encourage students to use a critical antiracist framework to critique traditional theories (McDowell and Shelton 2002; McDowell et al. 2002; McGeorge et al. 2006; Zimmerman and Haddock 2001).

Also, requiring students to participate in out-of-class cross-racial events can give them firsthand racial experiences that they may otherwise not receive in their personal lives (Laszloffy and Hardy 2000). These types of experiences increase the chances for organic cross-racial interaction between students, which is a much more effective way to increase consciousness rather than artificial or secondhand experiences (McDowell et al. 2002).

Campus programming and classroom discussions should purposefully challenge students to engage in active consideration of race—their own as well as that of others. Pushing students to focus on their personal experiences of racism and racial identity is cited as being an important component to developing racial awareness (McDowell and Shelton 2002; McGoldrick et al. 1999). This type of identity work helps students become aware of their own roles in the system of race-based privilege and oppression, thus

deepening their awareness of how race shapes reality (Laszloffy and Hardy 2000).

Reducing Student Resistance. Discussing one's own role in systemic oppression and privilege can be difficult; feelings of guilt and resistance are often normal during the process of becoming more racially aware (Abrams and Moio 2006). Challenges with student resistance can be minimized, however, if institutions reconsider their methods for increasing racial diversity within their student bodies and faculty. The most common strategy taken by institutions for attempting to create environments conducive to the facilitation of meaningful interactions around issues of race is to increase compositional diversity (Milem, Chang, and Antonio 2005). This strategy has also even been suggested in the literature as a strategy for providing students with more frequent and more organic experiences with race (McGeorge et al. 2006; McGoldrick et al. 1999). Although it can enhance diversity, using this tactic alone runs the risk of actually perpetuating the proracist ideology that only racial minorities care about advocating for racial justice and further isolating racial minorities who begin to be viewed as tokens of "diversity with whom all others should interact" (Milem, Chang, and Antonio 2005, 19). Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2005) also added that utilizing this method alone causes leaders to lose sight of the fact that racial diversity is "an educational process" serving to increase racial competency outcomes rather than "an end in itself" (16).

Leaders of individual programs should also focus on recruiting and admitting students who will not only add to the compositional diversity of their programs, but who can also demonstrate an understanding of why antiracism is paramount to competent practice and research. Programs should purposefully recruit students who are able to identify personal experiences they have had with issues related to racism—direct or vicarious—and can articulate the effect these experiences have had on their development. These students can easily be identified during their application or interview process. These experiences, rather than race alone, are more demonstrative of students' awareness of social realities and perhaps their openness to bringing issues of racism (and other types of oppression) into discussions of their personal and professional development. Furthermore, programs and campuses that struggle to recruit racial minorities, intentionally looking more broadly for students with personal experiences with racism, can help ensure that their programs have learners who recognize the importance of racial justice and can contribute to more meaningful interactions even if they are not racial minorities themselves.

Ensuring Instructor Preparedness. In order to address the third challenge associated with taking an antiracist approach to cultural competency training and instructor preparedness, individual programs within an institution should be willing to acknowledge when they are limited by the size or expertise of their faculty and unable to provide students with

comprehensive, multidimensional antiracism socialization. In such cases, regular and unambiguous interdisciplinary collaboration with other on-campus programs and departments with more CRT expertise (that is, cultural studies and public policy) can be a first step toward addressing such limitations. Such practice would not only provide students with access to faculty members who specialize in antiracist models of teaching cultural competence, but it would also publicly model a willingness to engage in cross-group interactions at a systems level. Such collaborations could take several forms including interdisciplinary faculty research projects on which students take assistantship positions, students taking courses taught within these other departments, regularly inviting lecturers from other departments to cofacilitate classes, and regular research symposiums during which research on issues of race and racism are presented and the findings discussed in a seminar format.

Even if interdisciplinary collaboration is implemented, programs with limited racial expertise should also have goals to recruit more faculty members from their field who are doing research on issues related to race, faculty members who are experienced and trained in CRT pedagogy, and faculty members who demonstrate competency in facilitating dialogue about institutional racism in and outside of the classroom. Although Abrams and Moio (2006) suggested that racial minority faculty and junior-level faculty are more likely to fit these criteria, the same caution should be taken in recruiting faculty as was suggested when recruiting students. Assuming that all non-White faculty members are comfortable and competent in delivering effective antiracism pedagogy is not necessarily accurate. Assuming that non-White faculty members are the only ones who are able to discuss difficult issues pertaining to race also runs the risk of turning them into tokens, which further perpetuates pracist ideologies and also risks missing out on White faculty who have the experiences and training to facilitate a great paradigm shift.

Creating an Antiracist Environment. Besides providing access to racial experts and mentors, interdisciplinary collaboration and better recruitment of faculty will start to transform the campuses and classrooms in which students and future professionals learn. One characteristic of university campuses that specialize in antiracist issues is that like-minded participants who, along with the faculty and staff, contribute to rich discussions and interactions about antiracist ideals also usually attend them. Phelan et al. (1995) endorsed the supposition that students' attitudes and ideologies are influenced by their educational environments where the "ideal culture is transmitted" (130). Students who are able to find themselves immersed in environments and consistent interactions where the "ideal culture" is one that prioritizes antiracism are more likely to be socialized toward that way of thinking than those who are not. Conversely, students who do not venture out into these arenas are likely being socialized toward an "ideal culture" where the status quo ideologies of color-blindness are perpetuated.

Although students' direct engagement in opportunities provided by the changes that have been suggested would vary due to individual student characteristics, Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2005) suggested that simply being in an environment committed to antiracism can impact students' attitudes and beliefs. Furthermore, such a demonstration of commitment to racial justice would help ensure that racial minorities recruited onto predominantly White campuses are not considered tokens for racial diversity, but rather are also seen as being potential beneficiaries of antiracist initiatives. Racial minority students also need opportunities for racial identity development and cross-racial interactions.

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