



2022

A “Totally, Acceptably Racist Environment”: Examining Anti-Black Racism in a School of Social Work

Jenn M. Lilly
Fordham University, jlilly9@fordham.edu

Jasmine Hillyer

Eboni Jagers

Kayla Garnigan

Follow this and additional works at: https://research.library.fordham.edu/gss_facultypubs



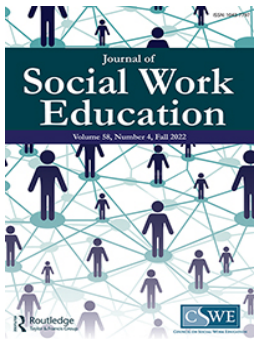
Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lilly, Jenn M.; Hillyer, Jasmine; Jagers, Eboni; and Garnigan, Kayla, "A “Totally, Acceptably Racist Environment”: Examining Anti-Black Racism in a School of Social Work" (2022). *Social Service Faculty Publications*. 31.

https://research.library.fordham.edu/gss_facultypubs/31

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School of Social Service at Fordham Research Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Social Service Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Fordham Research Commons. For more information, please contact considine@fordham.edu, bkilee@fordham.edu.



A “Totally, Acceptably Racist Environment”: Examining Anti-Black Racism in a School of Social Work

Jenn M. Lilly, Jasmine Hillyer, Eboni Jagers & Kayla Garnigan

To cite this article: Jenn M. Lilly, Jasmine Hillyer, Eboni Jagers & Kayla Garnigan (2022): A “Totally, Acceptably Racist Environment”: Examining Anti-Black Racism in a School of Social Work, Journal of Social Work Education, DOI: [10.1080/10437797.2022.2119357](https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2022.2119357)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2022.2119357>



Published online: 21 Nov 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)




View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



A “Totally, Acceptably Racist Environment”: Examining Anti-Black Racism in a School of Social Work

Jenn M. Lilly , Jasmine Hillyer, Eboni Jagers, and Kayla Garnigan

ABSTRACT

Social work education is considered an important venue for advancing the field's commitment to anti-racism. This research employed collective autobiographical methods within a Critical Race Theory framework to explore Black social work students' experiences of anti-Black racism in the learning environment of a Predominantly White Institution. Data was analyzed through a collaborative, inductive approach. Analysis revealed four interrelated themes: 1) racial microaggressions directed at Black students; 2) the perceived complicity of school administration in maintaining a racist environment; 3) the harm that an anti-Black racist learning environment caused to Black students; and 4) a relational approach to challenging anti-Black racism in the learning environment. Findings underscore the need for increased attention to racism in the implicit social work curriculum.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Accepted: March 2022

Within the field of social work, a mission-driven profession committed to social justice and guided by an ethical mandate, there has been a recent revitalization of discourse around racism and antiracist practice, “a form of practice that aims to eradicate racist social relations, racialised dynamics and racial disparities from society, and within the profession” (Aldana & Vasquez, 2019, p. 136). As national attention finally turned to the racialized violence that Black Americans disproportionately face at the hands of police after the killing of George Floyd in 2020, social work has become increasingly concerned with recognizing its role in perpetuating racism and White supremacy and advancing its commitment to dismantling these oppressive systems to create an antiracist society (National Association of Social Workers National Committee on Racial and Ethnic Diversity, 2020). Social work education is considered an important venue for enacting these antiracist efforts as evidenced by a number of educational initiatives aimed at moving toward explicitly antiracist practice in the wake of mass mobilizations in support of Black lives (Council on Social Work Education, 2021a; Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work, n.d.; University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work, 2020).

We appreciate the value and urgency of these efforts to envision and move toward antiracist social work education and practice through sustained reflection and action. At the same time, we believe greater attention is needed to the social environments in which these antiracism initiatives are enacted if social work is to fulfill its mission of promoting racial justice. We contend that developing, teaching, and practicing antiracist social work must begin with a frank and transparent assessment of how racism and intersecting forms of oppression manifest in the educational environment (i.e., implicit curriculum), and propose centering the experiences of Black students as a vital starting point for doing so. Surprisingly, Black students' perspectives are rarely considered within the scholarly discourse on racism in social work (Brown et al., 2019)—a gap this study begins to fill. To contribute to social work knowledge on effectively fostering antiracist educational environments, this study explores Black social work students' experiences of anti-Black racism within one predominantly White institution (PWI) in a majority Black metropolitan area in the U.S. south.

Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue

To help understand Black social work students' experiences in the social work learning environment, we interpret our findings through the lens of critical race theory (CRT). In alignment with the aims of this research, CRT is an interdisciplinary framework that centers the knowledges and experiences of people of color to analyze and understand race and racism within historical and contemporary contexts, with a commitment to ending racial and other forms of oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Frequently employed in educational research, CRT is both a theoretical framework and a methodology that holds five basic tenets: (a) the view that racism is permanent, endemic, and intercentric with other forms of oppression in the United States; (2) the need to challenge the dominant ideology's claims of objectivity, meritocracy, race neutrality, color-blindness, and equal opportunity; (c) a commitment to advancing social justice; (d) recognition that people of color have uniquely valuable experiential knowledge; and (e) an interdisciplinary and historical approach to analyzing racism and other forms of oppression.

To appreciate the toll that everyday experiences of racism take on Black social work students, it is useful to understand race-related stress through the CRT concepts of racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue (RBF). These concepts were developed by Smith et al. (2006), CRT scholars who examined the experiences of Black faculty and students on historically White campuses. According to Smith et al. (2006), racial microaggressions are:

- 1) subtle verbal and nonverbal insults directed at people of color, often automatically or unconsciously; 2) layered insults, based on one's race, gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname; and 3) cumulative insults, which cause unnecessary stress to people of color while privileging whites. (p. 300)

Exposure to racial microaggressions causes stress that can result in psychophysiological symptoms and illnesses (Smith et al., 2006). Indeed, race-related stressors are injurious to people of color, resulting in adverse mental and physical health consequences including depressive symptoms (Nadal, Griffin et al., 2014), low self-esteem (Nadal, Wong et al., 2014), low energy, higher levels of pain, impaired social functioning, and poorer emotional well-being and general health (Nadal et al., 2017). Smith et al. (2006) theorized the accumulative effects of racism and racial microaggressions on people of color as RBF, arguing that "the stress of unavoidable front-line racial battles in historically white spaces leads to people of color feeling mentally, emotionally, and physically drained" (p. 301.) RBF elucidates the enormous amount of energy that people of color expend in negotiating and coping with racial microaggressions, drawing attention to the far-reaching health consequences of educational environments rife with race-related stressors.

The effects of racism in the learning environment

Our focus on Black social work students' experiences of anti-Black racism in their learning environment is motivated by a growing body of research evidence demonstrating that experiences of racism are emotionally and educationally damaging to Black students (and other students of color). While research examining the experiences of Black social work students is limited (Brown et al., 2019), studies examining minority students' experiences in other disciplines have consistently revealed acts of discrimination and racial hostility (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2009), racial microaggressions, racism-related stress, and racial trauma (Franklin, 2016), and other negative race-related experiences (Clark et al., 2012) as frequent and salient features of their learning environments in higher educational institutions. These experiences have been linked to mental health concerns and other illnesses (Anderson, 2013; Nadal, Griffin, et al., 2014; Nadal et al., 2017), and act as barriers to students' academic progress (Clark et al., 2012; Griffith et al., 2019). Evidence suggests that racial microaggressions are more frequently directed at Black students than other students of color (Lilly et al., 2018). Particular attention has been focused on Black students and other students of color who attend PWIs, where social isolation may further compound the negative consequences of racism (Guiffrida &

Douthit, 2010). These studies attest to the negative effects of racial microaggressions and RBF on Black graduate students' mental health and well-being and educational advancement across disciplines, schools, and geographic areas (Brunnsma et al., 2017; Griffith et al., 2019; Haskins et al., 2013; Ogunyemi et al., 2020).

Despite growing recognition of and research interest in racial microaggressions and RBF in educational environments, these topics have been largely neglected in research on Black social work students' experiences. Focusing on a PWI, Hollingsworth et al. (2018) offered the first empirical evidence of Black social work students' frequent encounters with and responses to racial microaggressions, providing insight into their socioemotional ramifications. Among the many important conclusions drawn from their examination of the racial microaggressions Black social work students experienced, we want to highlight three important statements that emphasize the importance of attending to social work learning environments:

that left unresolved, racial microaggressions contradict the mission and core values of the profession; that racial microaggressions detract from, rather than support the well-being of Black students; that allowing such an environment to persist ultimately fails to properly educate students for culturally competent social work practice. (Hollingsworth et al., 2018, p. 9)

As these authors emphasize, it is especially important to examine and redress racism in the social work learning environment if we are to advance the goal of educating students to be competent, antiracist practitioners in fulfillment of social work's mission.

The importance of the social work learning environment

In the United States, where this research is situated, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is responsible for developing and assessing Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) for social work graduate and undergraduate programs. Accreditation is defined by the CSWE (2021b) as "a system for recognizing educational institutions and professional programs affiliated with those institutions as having a level of performance, integrity, and quality that entitles them to the confidence of the educational community and the public they serve" (p. 1). The accreditation process helps ensure that social work graduates achieve professional competence as a result of the educational process. In response to our dynamic society and students' changing educational needs, the EPAS undergo a rigorous review and revision process at least every 7 years, encouraging social work education programs to continually improve and respond to changing circumstances.

Since the 2008 EPAS (Jani et al., 2011), CSWE has formally recognized the importance of both the explicit curriculum, or "the program's design and delivery of its formal education to students" (CSWE, 2021b, p. 11) as well as the implicit curriculum, defined as "the student learning experience and the program context or environment" (CSWE, 2021b, p. 17). This dual focus is rooted in the idea that social work students learn through what is taught, how it is taught, and the environment in which it is taught. As the CSWE explains in the recently released (as of this writing in spring 2021) draft of the 2022 EPAS: "The student learning experience and environment is as important as the academic curriculum in shaping the professional character and competence of the program's graduates" (CSWE, 2021b, p. 17). When the CSWE introduced the concept of the implicit curriculum in 2008, it reflected the CSWE's efforts to integrate "standards regarding nondiscrimination and the creation of a supportive learning context" in response to an increasingly diverse social work student body (Jani et al., 2011, p. 291). Hence, the inclusion of the implicit curriculum in social work EPAS was rooted in concern for the educational experiences of diverse students.

Social work scholarship examining the experiences of diverse students emphasizes the importance of the learning environment on their academic success. Several scholars have examined factors influencing Black students' enrollment decisions, educational persistence, and career choices so that social work programs can improve recruitment and retention strategies to increase student diversity (and institutional revenue), offering empirical evidence that discrimination and marginalization act as

barriers to their success that have serious implications for their recruitment, enrollment, and retention (Daniel, 2007; Ghose et al., 2018; Howard, 2017; Rasheem & Brunson, 2018; Weng & Gray, 2017). This research underscores the influential role that the implicit curriculum plays in shaping Black social work students' educational experiences and trajectories, demonstrating the need to create antiracist learning environments in social work that support Black students and promote cultural competence and antiracist practice among all students. As social work programs strive to “integrate antiracism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) approaches across the curriculum” (CSWE, 2021b, p. 10), emphasis on fostering a safe, supportive, equitable, and inclusive learning environment for Black students and other students of color is imperative. To advance toward that goal, this study uses a CRT methodology to center Black social work students' experiences of racism within the implicit curriculum of one Master of Social Work (MSW) program in a PWI.

Methods

Research design

This research was a collaborative endeavor involving one White female faculty member (the first author: Jenn) and three of her former students (Authors 2: Jasmine; 3: Eboni; and 4: Kayla)—three Black females who all attended the same MSW program at a PWI in the fall of 2020. The goal of this project was to use CRT to center Black students' lived experiences of anti-Black racism in social work education as a means of inciting change. We embarked on this project together in full recognition of and resistance to the ways that power is distributed in our society, acknowledging the power differentials that exist between White women and Black women, and between faculty and students. The fact that Jenn is a White woman and full-time faculty member working with three Black women who are her former students creates a power imbalance in the research relationship that we sought to disrupt through a critical, collaborative approach. We also felt it was important to acknowledge and be transparent with one another about the effect of Jenn's Whiteness on our work together, and did so through explicit, intentional discussion of how White allies can contribute to antiracist research.

This research employed a collective autobiographical (CA) case study methodology (Busse et al., 2000; Soklaridis et al., 2020) to explore Black social work students' perspectives on anti-Black racism and efforts to challenge it within the social work curriculum. This methodological approach can be defined as “a qualitative method of working on autobiographical text materials (interviews or written episodes and stories) in a research group” (Busse et al., 2000). A move toward autobiographical forms of self-study research emerged within critical psychology and educational research in the 1980s, as researchers embraced naturalistic forms of inquiry and recognized their own subjectivity within research endeavors (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Busse et al., 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). CA approaches have since been taken up by critical scholars working toward social justice in a variety of disciplines, including education (Ashlee et al., 2017; Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2012; Harris & Watson-Vandiver, 2020; Lapadat, 2017) and social work (Gant et al., 2019).

We describe this research project as a CA case study because we used collective autobiographical methods to provide in-depth examination of each coresearcher's experience as a particular case (Soklaridis et al., 2020). We followed the four methodological research steps outlined by Busse et al. (2000), which are: (a) producing and interpreting autobiographical material related to a particular theme, (b) analyzing the conditions and contexts in which the stories and actions are situated, (c) reconstructing the explanations and meanings assigned to stories and actions by coresearchers, and (d) abstracting the findings as individual case theories and comparing individual cases to generalize findings across the group. Each step was carried out collectively with the involvement of all coresearchers, using the group as a valuable instrument of research (Busse et al., 2000).

Well-suited to CRT, CA co-researchers collaboratively analyze their own stories, interviews, and correspondence as data, providing access to rich, in-depth personal experiences, while ensuring

participants maintain control over the representation of their voices and perspectives (Chang, 2016; Lapadat, 2017). In this CA project, we were specifically guided by the tenets of CRT, as previously described. A collective approach to autobiographical research was chosen because it enhances methodological rigor by engaging multiple perspectives and leveraging the group as a research instrument and creates opportunities for relationship-building, flattening hierarchies, self-enlightenment, and mentorship (Bhattacharya, 2008; Busse et al., 2000; Chang, 2016; Lapadat, 2017), all of which articulate with the methodological tenets of CRT.

Research context

This research was conducted in the spring of 2021 with three Black women who attended the same Master of Social Work (MSW) program and one White faculty member who taught at the same PWI in the U.S. South. According to 2020 Census data, the PWI is in a midsize city (total population approximately 400,000) with a majority Black population (nearly 60%). Approximately 87% of the population has earned a high school diploma, and 38% has earned a bachelor's degree or higher. The median household income in this city is approximately \$41,000 with approximately 24% of the population considered to be living in poverty.

The PWI is a private university with an acceptance rate of 13%. The university enrolls approximately 8,000 undergraduate students and 5,000 graduate students. Approximately 60% of the student population is White, 8% Black, 7% Hispanic/Latino, 6% Asian, 3.5% two or more races, and 3% unknown/other. The university boasts several resources and initiatives related to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), including an Office of Human Resources and Institutional Equity, an Office of EDI, a chief diversity officer (appointed for the first time in 2020), and a strategic plan for EDI released in late 2020 that instituted an EDI funding initiative and a President's Commission on EDI.

The MSW program at this PWI is described as a clinical/community program with an acceptance rate of 80–85%. It offers both an on-campus and online MSW program requiring 60 credit hours and 900 hours of field education with full-time, part-time, and advanced standing options available. According to the school's website, the estimated cost of attendance for on-campus MSW students is \$43,000–\$62,000 per year; costs are somewhat less for online MSW students due to a reduction in required fees, but the online program charges \$1,180 per credit hour (the same as the on-campus rate). According to 2020 data from the school, approximately 29% of its faculty are Black (up from 11% in 2016), and 43% of administration are members of “under-represented groups”—a term that is not defined. Of the 469 students enrolled in social work programs in 2020, 247 (53%) were White, 124 (26%) were Black, 44 (.09%) were Hispanic, 42 (.09%) were Other, 11 (.02%) were Asian, and one was more than one race.

Regarding student conduct, the School of Social Work Student Handbook requires all students to abide by the National Association of Social Workers' *Code of Ethics* (2017) with informal and formal resolution procedures for violations, and includes a specific section related to university-wide policies on nondiscrimination. All students are required to take a Diversity and Social Justice course in their first year. The School of Social Work website includes a Diversity and Inclusion statement focused on culturally relevant social work practice. In spring 2020, a workgroup of faculty and administrators within the School of Social Work released a Student Diversity and Inclusion Report that highlights students' concerns related to EDI, reports results of a 2017–2018 diversity survey focused on student satisfaction with various aspects of the program, and outlines an action plan for addressing students' EDI concerns. In June 2020, an EDI task force was established.

Data collection

We collected autobiographical data for this study through interactive interviews (Mitropolitski, 2015) and recorded autobiographical narratives. Interactive interviews bring together two or more researchers to ask questions of one another and share narratives in response, allowing for exploration of multiple perspectives and experiences with a particular issue or phenomenon (Mitropolitski, 2015). Prior to each interactive interview session, we worked together via e-mail correspondence to come up with a list of questions and topics to explore, and each coresearcher could ask questions at any time. Questions and topics centered on personal experiences of anti-Black racism in graduate school (see the Appendix). In addition, each of us recorded individual narratives in response to specific prompts (included in the Appendix). Although Jenn is White and did not experience anti-Black racism directed at her, she also participated in the production of autobiographical data, responding to the same questions and prompts, sharing her observations of how anti-Black racism manifested in her experience as a faculty member at the PWI.

We conducted three interactive interview sessions, which were audio-recorded and lasted 1 hour 50 minutes on average. Individual narratives were also audio-recorded and averaged 16 minutes in length. After recording individual narratives, we uploaded them to a shared folder and all coresearchers listened to each one at least twice and then offered responses to one another via e-mail. All recordings were transcribed using NVivo software. For interactive interview transcripts, accuracy was checked by Jenn and then reviewed by the other authors. For individual narrative transcripts, each coresearcher checked the accuracy of her own transcript and was able to revise or extend on it during that process.

Jasmine, Eboni, and Kayla received gift cards for participating in each interactive interview session—this was approved by the Institutional Review Board and deemed an appropriate way to redistribute power between the White faculty member and Black former students who participated in this project by using the faculty member's resources to compensate the former students for their invaluable contributions to this research. Although Jasmine, Eboni, and Kayla did not ask to be compensated for their involvement, they expressed their appreciation for this gesture and felt it was a welcome corrective to the unpaid diversity, equity, and inclusion-related labor that Black students often perform.

Data analysis

We used an inductive thematic analysis approach to analyzing our data, appropriate for describing and interpreting shared experiences (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This process was performed collectively using shared Google documents and proceeded in six steps: (a) familiarizing ourselves with the data by listening to each recording several times and actively reading transcripts as we checked them for accuracy; (b) generating initial codes to organize the data until we arrived at a coding scheme that was applied across the data set; (c) searching for themes through an inductive, interpretive process, using thematic maps to organize emergent themes; (d) reviewing themes by coming together to discuss our interpretations and refine our thematic map until we achieved consensus; (e) defining and naming themes by writing narrative definitions and descriptions of each identified theme and subtheme and selecting data extracts to illustrate them; (f) producing the report by writing up our final analysis and organizing findings into manuscripts addressing distinct research questions. Conducting these activities collectively as a group helped enhance the rigor of this project, as we were able to check our interpretations and critically interrogate our thematic categories and descriptions through dialogue with one another. This article focuses on Black social work students' experiences of racism in the learning environment (i.e. implicit curriculum). Another planned article will report our findings related to Black social work students' experiences of racism in the explicit social work curriculum.

Rigor

Autobiographical research scholars suggest that because it is an alternative, creative, postmodern research method, the rigor of autobiographical research must be assessed according to criteria specifically tailored to this approach (Roux, 2017). We followed guidelines for quality autobiographical research suggested by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) that focus on establishing the trustworthiness and meaningfulness of the findings “by asking that interpretations be checked, that themes be critically scrutinized, and that the ‘so what’ question be vigorously pressed” (p. 20). In writing up our findings, we followed Bullough and Pinnegar’s (2001) guidance, specific to recorded conversations in autobiographical research, that “to be scholarship, edited conversation or correspondence must not only have coherence and structure, but that coherence and structure should provide argumentation and convincing evidence” (p. 19). In accordance with this suggestion, we chose to present our research in article form using a logical organizational structure typically found in qualitative research publications. We also practiced critical reflexivity throughout the project through self-examination and collaborative discussion of personal experiences and sought to enhance the validity of our research by using an established analytic method to interpret our empirical data (Roux, 2017). We chose not to identify individuals by name and to deidentify the specific school context in our writing.

Findings

Our collective autobiographical exploration of Black social work students’ experiences of anti-Black racism in the learning environment revealed four interrelated themes: (a) racial microaggressions directed at Black students, (b) the perceived complicity of school administration in maintaining a racist environment, (c) the harm that an anti-Black racist learning environment caused to Black students, and (d) a relational approach to challenging anti-Black racism in the learning environment. Each identified theme was evidenced within all four coresearchers’ narratives, attesting to shared or common experiences and perceptions.

Racial microaggressions directed at Black students

Our findings add to the empirical evidence demonstrating that Black MSW students experienced racial microaggressions in graduate school, which negatively affected their perceptions of the learning environment. Jasmine conveyed a sense of this theme within Black students’ educational experiences during our conversations. Jasmine related:

We actually had a lot of racial instances . . . [I]nstances where a white female student said in class that she had more in common with a wounded animal than a person of color. . . . We had a white female professor say that black stuff wasn’t her thing. Another one said that she understood being a person of color because she was vegan. . . . We had a white female student tell one of the Black ladies who had braids that she had “cat hair,” and then when the Black lady told her that was a rude thing to say, the white student started crying like she’s the victim.

Jasmine’s narrative shows her perception that racial microaggressions were frequently directed at Black students by White peers and professors. Racist statements made by White students and faculty members, like those described by Jasmine, are part of a long tradition of racist ideas that dehumanize Black people by comparing them to animals or minimize Black peoples’ experiences of racialized oppression by equating them to lifestyle choices. In our narratives, we found that not only did social work professors commit racial microaggressions, students felt that some professors consistently failed to recognize, intervene, or redress racial microaggressions that occurred within their classrooms. Students who committed racial microaggressions seemed to face no appreciable consequences. As Jasmine shared when asked about how professors responded to such incidents:

Some professors on ground stayed as far away from racial anything that they could. In classes, it's kind of glossed over and professors say, "Hey, you know, you got to be aware of your own bias, we all have them," but then they never fully address what that looks like. They never fully address the privileges that the white students in the class have and the reality of what being racist does to your client population. They never address the trauma that you can impose.

When Jasmine brought up these incidents in our dialogue, it caused Eboni to remember similar incidents that, due to experiencing them as traumatic, she had suppressed. The conversation went as follows:

Eboni: Man, you know what? You're making me think of some incidents that I actually think I blacked out. . . . But I remember one person who has been so problematic over the course of these past two years. . . . [S]he's a white woman from Mississippi and she just kept saying "White privilege? White privilege? Why do y'all keep blaming everything on white privilege?" And then she, like, starts crying as if . . .

Jasmine: Weaponization of tears.

Eboni: You [White woman from the story] don't understand. You just made it clear you don't get it. Why are you here? You are not going to make a good person to promote any kind of diversity, equity, and inclusion if you don't understand your role in white privilege. And then you start crying as a distraction? I'm sorry, but you get no tears from me. You're trying to distract us from the issue right now with your tears, and I can't do this. This is grad school, not high school.

Eboni's story demonstrates the failure of one White student in the program to recognize and contend with her White privilege, and the use of tears as a weapon against Black students when a conversation around White privilege arose.

Jenn also shared her observations of racial microaggressions in the classroom, which in her experience, often took the form of unfair generalizations and stereotypes made by White students about Black people:

As a White woman, I have not experienced anti-Black racism in the way that a Black person has because it's not something that is ever directed at me or my identities or the group to which I belong. So, when I think about how I have experienced anti-Black racism, it's really about how I have witnessed it or how I have seen it show up or how I have felt its presence. I think what I most often see is a White student will share an experience from their own personal or professional experiences, but they generalize and they stereotype in sharing what is probably actually a specific story. A story about a person of color who oftentimes is a client is shared in such a way that conveys the student's racist beliefs about not just that client, but the racial group to which they belong as a whole. And I can feel or sense a kind of shift in the people in the room who are negatively impacted by those statements because it's making a sweeping generalization that's negative and rooted in racist beliefs about a group to which they belong. So, it's just shy of a personal insult.

These forms of subtle verbal insult can contribute to Black students' race-related stress as they are rooted in bias and send demeaning messages about Black people, regardless of whether the person making such statements does so consciously. Although this is but a small sampling of the racial microaggressions levied at Black students by some social work students and educators within one university, it helps dispel the myth that students admitted into social work programs and educators within them are informed about and committed to antiracist ideals simply by virtue of their chosen profession.

Perceived complicity of school administration in maintaining racist environment

It is equally important to acknowledge that within this institutional context, racial microaggressions were but one facet of the racist climate that Black students experienced, as Jasmine went on to explain:

Three white girls were trying to get one of the Black women kicked out of the program. They went to the dean and some other administrators and talked about her and how they did not think she was suitable for [school name]. So we [other Black students] had her back with that, too, because how dare you in your white privilege think that you have the power to kick one of us out because she's too vocal for your liking about Black issues in class? That's what it was. They did not like how vocal she was in class about black issues, so they decided to go speak to the higher-ups about getting her put out of the program . . .

Jasmine's story shows that within this social work program, a group of White students felt entitled to police Black students' behavior by reporting them to authorities in the hopes of removing them from the educational environment. Such behavior conveys several detrimental messages that run counter to the social work ideals of antiracism, equity, diversity, and inclusion. These messages include: (a) Black issues are not an important, valued part of class discussions, (b) White students have the exclusive right to shape classroom discourse, (c) Black students face penalties for being too vocal about their racialized experiences, and (d) school administration is complicit in upholding all of the above.

Some Black students self-organized around the issue of anti-Black racism in the program environment, attesting to the gravity of the issue, as Jasmine shared:

We actually had to do a walk-out, a virtual walk out during the class over the summer because so many issues had been brought to the dean . . . and nothing was ever done. And so we did a virtual walk-out one morning when he was set to speak to the classes. . . . We formed an Antiracism Coalition amongst the School of Social Work because these instances kept happening. We [the Antiracism Coalition] submitted a list of demands [to administration]. . . . We said they [faculty, staff, and administrators] need more training. They are not trained on how to deal with students who are not White. And this is something that needs to happen. So they tried to pacify us and say, "Oh, we have one training." . . . So, there were to be no real solutions. There was to be nothing to come out of it other than, "Okay, some students just got mad because racial stuff was happening." . . . When your administration is okay with it, imagine the message that it must send the students who follow. . .

In this institution, Black students felt that a learning environment characterized by racism was perpetuated by the actions of White students and faculty and tacitly accepted by school administrators, who were perceived to show a lack of attentiveness to supporting Black students in the wake of racist experiences. Despite Black students' efforts in organizing with their White peers with the goal of working with administration to counteract the racism they had experienced, Black students felt that school administration largely failed to respond to their demands, leaving Black students frustrated and unprotected. Although the coalition was able to meet with the dean to discuss their concerns, they were reportedly dissatisfied with the proposed solutions which were perceived to be merely attempts to pacify them.

Harm caused to Black students

Without feeling protected or supported by the school, the racism experienced in the learning environment caused further harm for some Black students. As Jasmine explained:

And it's like, you know, if you do it [attend school] full-time, it's seven classes the first semester and having seven classes full of racists day in and day out, it was just too much . . . And when COVID hit, three of the black students actually left the on-ground [program] and they went home because they said they didn't feel safe at [school name]. They said [school name] school of social work was not a safe space for them. And they were tired of the racism, the microaggressions, the normalization of it within the staff and faculty, and that they just couldn't take it. And I felt so horrible, like you don't start grad school expecting that to be your experience, you know? That you have to go home in order to feel safe.

The program context reportedly damaged the well-being of some Black students, who reported that they were subjected to a daily barrage of racist remarks and felt unsafe in the school's predominantly White environment. In the absence of support, some Black students felt they had no choice but to protect themselves from the racism of the learning environment by removing themselves from it. Despite their experience of race-related stress, these students demonstrated remarkable persistence in

turning instead to the perceived safety of the online environment to complete their degrees while protecting themselves from racial harm.

According to Jasmine, Black students' experiences in the MSW program caused repeated harm that negatively affected their well-being over time:

Our populations are very fragile. And having students, Black students who are very fragile and who were not as fragile when they entered [the program]. They really only became fragile once school got going and they got to meet the other students and see that this was not a comfortable place for them. So, yes, so the fragility of Black students in the South, that is something that I don't think should be ignored. But then the irony is, because Black people are always looked at as being so strong, I wonder, was there ever any thought put into the harm that was done to the Black students?

As Jasmine noted, racial microaggressions take a serious toll on Black students, causing psychological and physical harms that accumulate over time (Nadal et al., 2017; Nadal, Griffin et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2006). Reported harms caused to the Black students involved in this study included feelings of pain, marginalization, fatigue, and vulnerability. Kayla shared how racial microaggressions affected her educational experience:

You would think in 2020 or 2021, you wouldn't have to deal with certain things like [racial microaggressions], but because you're still dealing with it, it still hurts, it still bothers you. I'm still feeling like a second-class citizen. I'm paying the same amount as my White counterpart, but I can still be subjected to snarky comments about racial inequities.

Eboni conveyed the fatigue and stress she felt as a Black student at a PWI:

It can be super exhausting. It can be so exhausting because if I corrected everything, I would be so tired, and I'm tired already. Microaggressions and racism affect people of color throughout their life, especially when it comes to stressors. Other people don't have to have that experience. They're not thinking, "Oh, what do they think about me talking about my mom being a single mother? What do they think about me talking about my absent dad?" You know, it's like even that speaks to the point of the burden and the stressors that just aren't there for other people sometimes.

Jasmine expressed her feelings of exhaustion and vulnerability within an institutional environment that she perceived as not caring about her well-being as a Black student:

Talking about education, once again, the onus is put back on us who are exhausted and who are tired of having to do it and explain once again, but it's not going to get done if we don't do it. So, you know that's almost expected, like the school system, our employment system, we're expected to do that. There is no responsibility and no accountability put on the higher ups, we have to fill that void. And no one cares if we don't get any rest. You know, no one cares about that, and that's why I think this black girl magic in theory is cute. However, we're not magic, you know? We make things happen, but it's exhausting. We are humans. We bleed. We get tired. We need a break. We need a bubble bath. How come no one pampers us? Why aren't we nurtured? Why aren't we protected?

These accounts make clear the damaging effects of racial microaggressions for Black students within this school of social work, and the lack of support they felt from the program.

Relational approach to challenging anti-Black racism

In this vulnerable state where Black students were subjected to racial harm, Jasmine shared that the Black women in the program felt they could only rely on one another for support: "We were really all we had. We were really close. And I liked that. I liked that because we are in this totally acceptably racist environment, we had each other's backs." These relationships of solidarity between Black women were seen as a means of challenging the anti-Black racism they experienced. Similarly, Eboni shared that in her experience, anti-Black racism was most effectively challenged in the context of interpersonal relationships with non-Black students:

When anti-Black racism was effectively challenged in graduate school, honestly, I feel like that has happened in more of the side relationships that I've built with some people in the program. I feel like so many people had no idea where they stood on so many different issues when they first came to the program. So, again, they're relying on the people of color, specifically black people, to let you know what's what. Again, it's exhausting, but sometimes there will come a time where I see a certain genuineness in a person and I want to be that person, or I want to help them understand. . . . So I truly think that when it comes to effective change and effective challenging, it has come in the personal relationships.

These experiences highlight the salient role of the implicit curriculum in Black students' experiences of being subjected to anti-Black racism as well as effectively challenging it. Within this racist school climate that harmed and marginalized Black students, they focused on forming relationships of solidarity that provided the foundation for peer support, meaningful interaction, empathy, and for non-Black students, transformative learning around race to take place.

Discussion

Consistent with research examining the experiences of students of color in other disciplines (Franklin, 2016; Lilly et al., 2018; Nadal et al., 2014), our findings offer empirical evidence that racial microaggressions and a racist school climate negatively affected Black social work students' experiences in graduate school. Interactions with others played a crucial role in shaping the learning environment for Black students, and those interactions were frequently characterized by racial microaggressions and denials of White privilege. The everyday onslaught of such experiences and perceived complicity of the school administration in allowing them to persist caused significant harm to Black social work students, in some cases leading them to remove themselves from the on-ground learning environment as a means of self-protection. The racism-related stress and trauma experienced by Black social work students can be interpreted as RBF as evidenced by the extreme exhaustion these students experienced as a result of constantly expending mental and emotional energy to cope with and resist racial oppression in the school environment (Smith et al., 2006).

For Black students in this PWI's school of social work, relational approaches were seen as the most effective way of coping with and resisting the racism of their learning environment. However, it is important to consider that these relationships were necessary in the absence of formal supports for Black students. Additionally, both in the case of Black students being there for one another and Black students offering White peers insight into their experiences, Black students were providing unpaid emotional and intellectual labor to redress the racism (and its effects) they experienced in school.

Limitations

This exploratory study of anti-Black racism at a PWI provides evidence of one groups' perceptions of how racial microaggressions affected Black students' educational experiences. While this study offers important empirical insights into an underresearched area, it is not without limitations. The findings and interpretations provided are based on autobiographical narrative data from a small sample of four individuals. These findings are contextually specific and not intended to be generalizable, although they may have theoretical relevance for other educational settings. The inductive, collaborative approach to data analysis, while rigorous, did not allow for interrater reliability testing. The interactional interviews conducted used a semistructured interview guide that was not pilot-tested or checked for validity. Future research can help to validate and extend these findings by inquiring further into the harms caused by racial microaggressions, involving a larger number of participants, triangulating data sources, and complementing qualitative findings with quantitative methods using validated measures.

This study is further limited by power differentials that may have affected the research process. Although we used critical, collective methods as a means of balancing power throughout the research process, dominance hierarchies that privilege Whiteness and social status (i.e. professor over student) were in tension with the goals and focus of our inquiry. In our many conversations, we directly

addressed the question of how Jenn's Whiteness functioned within the context of this research and considered how arrangements of power within our project may have replicated, rather than resisted, White supremacist power structures and thereby influenced the autobiographical data we coproduced. The intention of this project was to center the experiences of Black students; however, having a White faculty member involved in coproducing and analyzing the data from her particular social location may have influenced our collective interpretations presented here. While we acknowledged these tensions and the potential limitations they introduced, we agreed that the best way to resist them was by addressing them in our write-up, as articulated by Eboni:

I think we make it [this research] different by addressing it [power differentials]. Adding it as a point in our . . . [writing]. Adding it as one of those talking pieces, you know? This is something that we did address during this process. This is something that we did all collectively sit down and give our input and our thoughts about and how we can work to change that stigma or that ideal that's been perpetuated through all of these different research projects or whatever. How we can change it, how we can be very intentional about trying to change what that looks like. So, I guess just highlighting the fact that we actually did talk about it, address it, and we're being intentional about being those change agents moving forward.

Implications for social work

This study bears important implications for the implicit social work curriculum, which is considered "as important as the explicit curriculum in shaping the professional character and competence of the program's graduates" (CSWE, 2015, p. 14). To be accredited, social work programs are expected to promote "an educational culture that is congruent with the values of the profession and the mission, goals, and context of the program" (CSWE, 2015, p. 14). However, our findings suggest that assessment of racism within the educational culture is limited or neglected, leaving Black social work students vulnerable to RBF and its associated consequences on well-being and educational progress. If racism within the implicit curriculum continues to go unrecognized, unmonitored, and unaddressed without consequence, Black social work students will continue to suffer harm and schools of social work will fail to embody the antiracist principles the profession is currently endorsing. Recognizing this, the 2022 draft of the EPAS calls on social work programs to recognize "the important role of the learning environment in the education of program participants, especially with respect to the value and meaning of antiracism, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the development of cultural humility" (CSWE, 2021b, p. 10). A notable change in the 2022 EPAS is the inclusion of an ADEI accreditation standard requiring programs to demonstrate "specific and continuing efforts" to incorporate ADEI into both the explicit and implicit curriculum to be accredited (CSWE, 2021b, p. 10). By including this new requirement, the CSWE has taken an important step in promoting antiracist learning environments in schools of social work, but only if this accreditation standard is effectively and thoroughly assessed. We hope that once finalized and approved, the 2022 EPAS will offer specific guidance for schools to demonstrate not only the efforts they are making to incorporate ADEI, but also the effectiveness of those efforts in fostering an antiracist learning environment. We believe ADEI efforts in social work can be further strengthened by requiring schools to meaningfully include the voices and participation of Black students and other students who are members of racialized or oppressed groups in their ADEI work.

While it might be expected that schools of social work, including their students, faculty, and administrators, share a common commitment to racial justice in alignment with the profession's mission, our findings demonstrate the danger of such assumptions, and underscore the need for increased attention to racism in the implicit social work curriculum. Based on these findings, we propose the following recommendations for challenging racism in the social work learning environment:

- (1) Mandatory trainings for faculty and administrators to: (a) recognize racial microaggressions; (b) understand the harm they cause; and (c) learn and practice effective strategies for intervening to redress them when they occur;

- (2) A Code of Ethics to which all students are held accountable upon admission to a social work program that includes specific behavioral guidelines and consequences around racial microaggressions and other forms of racist conduct;
- (3) Increased support for Black students and faculty to buffer them from RBF and other racism-related stressors, such as the wrap-around self-care model proposed by Brown et al. (2019);
- (4) Regular evaluations of the effectiveness of ADEI initiatives in schools of social work in which Black students and other students of color can meaningfully participate;
- (5) Creation of and active participation in interdepartmental coalitions, task forces, committees, or initiatives at the university to identify and challenge racist practices, policies, and structures that transcend but influence schools of social work.

It is our hope that implementing the proposed strategies will help buffer Black students from harm by holding people accountable for racial microaggressions and other forms of racism within the social work learning environment.

Conclusion

While the profession of social work has recently issued calls for antiracist social work education and practice, schools of social work in the United States are not free from racism in their learning environments. This study revealed that racial microaggressions create unsupportive and potentially harmful learning environments for Black social work students, which can lead to long-term, negative health consequences associated with RBF. The empirical evidence presented in this article suggests that increased efforts are needed to recognize, understand the consequences of, effectively redress, and proactively prevent racial microaggressions and other instances of racist behaviors, practices, and policies in schools of social work. If social work education is committed to advancing antiracism, schools of social work must be attentive to the unique experiences and needs of Black students and place greater emphasis on challenging racism in the implicit curriculum. An antiracist vision of social work education must include antiracist learning environments in which Black students can thrive.

Acknowledgment

Author order is not indicative of the magnitude of contribution.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by the Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service Faculty Research Expense Program.

Notes on contributors

Jenn M. Lilly is an Assistant Professor at Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service. *Jasmine Hillyer* is a certified rehabilitation counselor and macro social worker. *Eboni Jagers* is an educator and MSW graduate. *Kayla Garnigan* is a Licensed Master Social Worker.

ORCID

Jenn M. Lilly  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2485-943X>

References

- Aldana, A., & Vasquez, N. (2019). From colour-blind racism to Critical Race Theory: The road towards antiracist social work in the United States. In G. Singh & S. Masocha (Eds.), *Anti-racist social work: International perspectives* (1st ed. 2020 edition) ed., pp. 129–148. Springer.
- Anderson, K. F. (2013). Diagnosing discrimination: Stress from perceived racism and the mental and physical health effects*. *Sociological Inquiry*, 83(1), 55–81. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682X.2012.00433.x>
- Ashlee, A. A., Zamora, B., & Karikari, S. N. (2017). We are woke: A collaborative critical autoethnography of three “womxn” of color graduate students in higher education. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 19(1), 89–104. <https://doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v19i1.1259>
- Bhattacharya, H. (2008). New critical collaborative ethnography. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Handbook of emergent methods* (pp. 303–324). Guilford Press.
- Brown, S. L., Johnson, Z., & Miller, S. E. (2019). Racial microaggressions and Black social work students: A call to social work educators for proactive models informed by social justice. *Social Work Education*, 38(5), 618–630. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2019.1594754>
- Brunsmma, D. L., Embrick, D. G., & Shin, J. H. (2017). Graduate students of color: Race, racism, and mentoring in the white waters of academia. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 3(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/232649216681565>
- Bullough, R. V., & Pinnegar, S. (2001). Guidelines for quality in autobiographical forms of self-study research. *Educational Researcher*, 30(3), 13–21. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X030003013>
- Busse, S., Ehse, C., & Zech, R. (2000). Collective research in autobiography. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.2.1073>
- Cann, C. N., & DeMeulenaere, E. J. (2012). Critical co-constructed autoethnography. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 12(2), 146–158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708611435214>
- Chang, H. (2016). Individual and collaborative autoethnography as method: A social scientist’s perspective. In S. H. Jones (Ed.), *Handbook of autoethnography* (pp. 107–122). Routledge.
- Clark, C. R., Mercer, S. H., Zeigler-Hill, V., & Dufrene, B. A. (2012). Barriers to the success of ethnic minority students in school psychology graduate programs. *School Psychology Review*, 41(2), 176–192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2012.12087519>
- Council on Social Work Education. (2015). *2015 educational policy and accreditation standards for baccalaureate and master’s social work programs*.
- Council on Social Work Education. (2021a, February 2). Advancing antiracism in social work education. *CSWE News*. <https://www.cswe.org/News/General-News-Archives/Advancing-Antiracism-in-Social-Work-Education>
- Council on Social Work Education. (2021b). *2022 educational policy and accreditation standards for baccalaureate and master’s social work programs (draft #1—Spring 2021)*.
- Daniel, C. (2007). Outsiders-within: Critical race theory, graduate education and barriers to professionalization. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 34(1), 25–42. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/jrllsasw34&i=21>
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2012). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (2nd ed.). NYU Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qg9h2>
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 733–768). Sage.
- Franklin, J. (2016). Racial microaggressions, racial battle fatigue, and racism-related stress in higher education. *Journal of Student Affairs*, XII, 44–55. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50ccaa7ee4b00e9e60845daa/t/5768045be58c628d3598f632/1466434651823/Franklin.+J.+Racial+Microaggressions,+Racial+Battle+Fatigue,+and+Racism-Related+Stress+in+Higher+Education.pdf>
- Gant, V., Cheatham, L., Vito, H. D., Offei, E., Williams, G., & Yatosenge, N. (2019). Social work through collaborative autoethnography. *Social Work Education*, 38(6), 707–720. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2019.1570109>
- Ghose, T., Ali, S., & Keo-Meier, B. (2018). Diversity in social work doctoral programs: Mapping the road ahead. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 28(3), 265–271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731517710725>
- Griffith, A. N., Hurd, N. M., & Hussain, S. B. (2019). “I didn’t come to school for this”: A qualitative examination of experiences with race-related stressors and coping responses among Black students attending a predominantly White institution. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 34(2), 115–139. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558417742983>
- Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work. (n.d.). *Anti-racist pedagogy*. Retrieved May 5, 2021, from <http://www.gadephd.org/Resources/Anti-Racist-Pedagogy>
- Guiffrida, D. A., & Douthit, K. Z. (2010). The Black student experience at predominantly White colleges: Implications for school and college counselors. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 88(3), 311–318. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2010.tb00027.x>
- Harris, L., & Watson-Vandiver, M. J. (2020). Decolonizing race and gender intersectionality in education: A collaborative critical autoethnography of hope, healing and justice. *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.20897/jcasc/9321>

- Haskins, N., Whitfield-Williams, M., Shillingford, M. A., Singh, A., Moxley, R., & Ofauni, C. (2013). The experiences of Black master's counseling students: A phenomenological inquiry. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 52*(3), 162–178. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.2013.00035.x>
- Hollingsworth, L., Patton, D., Allen, P., & Johnson, K. (2018). Racial microaggressions in social work education: Black students' encounters in a predominantly White institution. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 27*(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2017.1417942>
- Howard, S. (2017). Black first-generation social work doctoral students. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 37*(5), 513–527. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841233.2017.1370431>
- Jani, J. S., Pierce, D., Ortiz, L., & Sowbel, L. (2011). Access to intersectionality, content to competence: Deconstructing social work education diversity standards. *Journal of Social Work Education, 47*(2), 283–301. <https://doi.org/10.5175/JSWE.2011.200900118>
- Johnson-Bailey, J., Valentine, T., Cervero, R. M., & Bowles, T. A. (2009). Rooted in the soil: The social experiences of Black graduate students at a southern research university. *The Journal of Higher Education, 80*(2), 178–203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2009.11772138>
- Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher, 42*(8), 846–854. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030>
- Lapadat, J. C. (2017). Ethics in autoethnography and collaborative autoethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry, 23*(8), 589–603. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800417704462>
- Lilly, F. R. W., Owens, J., Bailey, T. C., Ramirez, A., Brown, W., Clawson, C., & Vidal, C. (2018). The influence of racial microaggressions and social rank on risk for depression among minority graduate and professional students. *College Student Journal, 52*(1), 86–104. <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/prin/csj/2018/00000052/00000001/art00009>
- Mitropolitski, S. (2015). Interactive interview: A research note. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 16*(1). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-16.1.1963>
- Nadal, K. L., Griffin, K. E., Wong, Y., Davidoff, K. C., & Davis, L. S. (2017). The injurious relationship between racial microaggressions and physical health: Implications for social work. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 26*(1–2), 6–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2016.1263813>
- Nadal, K. L., Griffin, K. E., Wong, Y., Hamit, S., & Rasmus, M. (2014). The impact of racial microaggressions on mental health: Counseling implications for clients of color. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 92*(1), 57–66. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00130.x>
- Nadal, K. L., Wong, Y., Griffin, K. E., Davidoff, K., & Striken, J. (2014). The adverse impact of racial microaggressions on college students' self-esteem. *Journal of College Student Development, 55*(5), 461–474. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2014.0051>
- National Association of Social Workers. (2017). *NASW code of ethics*. <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>
- National Association of Social Workers National Committee on Racial and Ethnic Diversity. (2020, June 10). Anti-racism now and forevermore. *NASW News Releases*. <https://www.socialworkers.org>
- Ogunyemi, D., Clare, C., Astudillo, Y. M., Marseille, M., Manu, E., & Kim, S. (2020). Microaggressions in the learning environment: A systematic review. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 13*(2), 97–119. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000107>
- Rasheem, S., & Brunson, J. (2018). She persisted: The pursuit, persistence, & power of African American women in social work graduate programs at historically Black institutions (HBI). *Social Work Education, 37*(3), 378–395. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2017.1401603>
- Roux, C. S. L. (2017). Exploring rigour in autoethnographic research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 20*(2), 195–207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2016.1140965>
- Smith, W. A., Yosso, T. J., & Solorzano, D. G. (2006). Challenging racial battle fatigue on historically White campuses: A critical race examination of race-related stress. In C. A. Stanley (Ed.), *Faculty of color: Teaching in predominantly White colleges and universities* (1st ed., pp. 299–327). Jossey-Bass.
- Soklaridis, S., de Bie, A., Cooper, R. B., McCullough, K., McGovern, B., Beder, M., Bellissimo, G., Gordon, T., Berkhout, S., Fefergrad, M., Johnson, A., Kalocsai, C., Kidd, S., McNaughton, N., Ringsted, C., Wiljer, D., & Agrawal, S. (2020). Co-producing psychiatric education with service user educators: A collective autobiographical case study of the meaning, ethics, and importance of payment. *Academic Psychiatry, 44*(2), 159–167. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40596-019-01160-5>
- University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. (2020). Social work, White supremacy, and racial justice: Reckoning with our history, interrogating the present, and reimagining our future. *GCSW Stories*. <https://www.uh.edu/socialwork/news/news-releases/2020-social-work-white-supremacy-and-racial-justice/index>
- Weng, S. S., & Gray, L. A. (2017). Advancement in social work education: Fostering a supportive environment for students of non-dominant racial and ethnic backgrounds. *Social Work Education, 36*(6), 662–677. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2017.1335700>

Appendix: Interview questions and prompts

Questions:

- How did anti-Black racism manifest in your experience?
- What have been your experiences with white students in the classroom?
- Can you recall experiences with faculty, administrators, or students reifying, perpetuating, ignoring, or reproducing anti-Black racism?
- How did experiences with racism impact your learning experience?
- What have professors done to hold students accountable for racist ideas, in your experience?

Prompts:

Share an experience you have had with anti-black racism during graduate school. What does it mean to challenge anti-black racism in social work education? Share an example of when anti-black racism was effectively challenged in your graduate school experience. Share your vision for what challenging anti-black racism in social work education should look like.