

Re-envisioning social work education policy: Social work students' perspectives on anti-racist curriculum and training

Abstract

The co-occurring pandemics of racial injustice and COVID-19 during 2020 were the launchpad that triggered many professionals, including social workers, to consider the educational and practice opportunities to address structural racism. The shift to anti-racist social work practice requires social workers to explore how social work education helps prepare social workers for anti-racist practice. This exploratory qualitative study used applied thematic analysis to explore responses to this question, "How do you think social work education can improve to include anti-racist practices?". Findings from 363 student participants (N=393) were coded into five themes: 1. Re-envisioning the curriculum; 2. Embracing courageous conversations; 3. Fostering representation; 4. Engaging in advocacy; and 5. Acknowledging resistance and ambivalence. Students emphasized that social workers need to name racism, evaluate how instructors, departments and programs apply anti-racist practice strategies, and intentionally advocate for and actively engage in anti-racism strategies. Implications include governance policies that embed anti-racist competencies, train faculty to facilitate difficult dialogues, strengthen hiring/retention for representation, and tie field/advocacy work to program outcomes; institutions should also proactively manage resistance to protect students, faculty, and program integrity.

Professional social workers are charged with the ethical mandate to address inequities and advance social justice initiatives within myriad arenas that reflect micro, mezzo, and macro intervention levels (Bussey et al., 2015). Social work education has typically operationalized this mandate through cultural competency training—readings, classroom discussion, and field placement—often treating competence as an individual skill that can be achieved. The usage of cultural competence frameworks as an approach to address systemic and structural racism has been critiqued and is often compared to cultural humility (e.g., Author citation). Cultural competence baseline trainings inherently focus on learning about the "other" and promotes that one can know about another culture and its contexts. Cultural competence elevates the ability of the individual to practice from a place of expertise that is exempt from bias or stereotyping. Further, this way of thinking reduces the need for self-reflection as it focuses the

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learning on the “other” (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013). However, scholars and practitioners argue that cultural competency frameworks can depoliticize racism, minimize power and structural conditions, and provide limited accountability for anti-racist practice. This critique raises a policy-relevant question: How do social work students think social work education should change—through curriculum governance, field education requirements, and evaluation practices—to prepare them for anti-racist practice?

Cultural humility is a way of being that required one to honor the experiences of others and self-reflect (McGee-Avila, 2018). When practiced, it can create a space of respectful curiosity (Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington & Utsey, 2013; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998), and from an instructional lens, encourage anti-oppressive pedagogies. Too often cultural competence baseline training has equated culture to race and ethnicity, giving little attention to other components of culture. This greatly reduces and minimizes culture, as well as removes the act of self-reflection to gain a deeper understanding in improve the treatment and interactions of populations affected. Therefore, current educational standards that utilize a cultural competence framework as the sole method to addressing systemic change are not as effective as creating an ongoing process that promotes respect, is based on context, is fluid, and unique to individuals, thus, leading to an ongoing process toward critical consciousness (Danso, 2018; Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013).

Anti-racist practice is the intentional and ongoing commitment to seek out and understand systemic racism and actively work towards rejecting and dismantling the manifestations of systemic racism by naming racism, rejecting complicity, identifying how racism is operating within a given system or institution (examining policies, filling gaps, seeking representation at all tables), and committing to action (Jones, 2018). Jones further outlines eight collective action teams that “harnessed the wisdom and energy of anti-racist activists” (Jones, 2018, p. 232). There were eight collective action teams that focused on the following overarching headers: communication and dissemination; education and development; global matters; history; liaison and partnership; organizational excellence; policy and legislation; and science and publication (Jones, 2018). The overarching outline and guiding questions of the collective action teams can serve as an interdisciplinary anti-racist framework within numerous fields including social work and social work curriculum. As a strategy in increasing, one’s own cultural awareness, self-evaluation is paramount as culture forms the sense of self and influences our interpretations of the world. This self-evaluation also needs to be focused on the field of social work and how social work has been complicit in imposing and implementing racist and oppressive policies and practices (Edmonds-Cady & Wingfield, 2017). However, many social work educators are unable to teach cultural competence through self-awareness and cultural awareness due to the inattention in social work curriculum to address the polarity of social work as oppressor and advocate. In addition, many social work educators are also unable to teach cultural humility, a process of constant self-evaluation and critique while challenging power imbalances, which is a powerful tool for focusing on anti-racism efforts in the classroom (Feize & Gonzalez,

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2018) because one cannot, and should not, create a single course or curriculum with an assumption that it will satisfy the multilevel issues that facilitate such a massive undertaking. The inability to discuss racism in the social work classroom and the history of racism, including within the social work profession, is likely attributed to the instructors' unconscious racism, internalized racism, and the concept of "other" according to participatory findings on teaching anti-racism (Feize & Gonzalez, 2018).

Structural racism within the United States creates a majority narrative that identifies White individuals as the perceptual baseline that illustrates the lived experience of White people. An example of this was the mention of the over identification of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) characters within young adult fiction novels and a disproportionate lack of White character identifiers in *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Race* (Diangelo, 2018). This can lend the reader to assume that all characters are White unless otherwise specified, which can create an "otherness." The dominant culture that was enacted through the continued mandate of this perception forces all BIPOC individuals to be categorized as "other" and subsequently assumes that social workers who are part of the dominant culture are White (Harrison & Turner, 2011). In addition to the prevalence of "other," the co-occurring perception of "good White people" who bolster efforts to be more culturally competent and the separation of "bad White people" who support systemic racism can create further division (Bailey, 2016; Diangelo, 2018). Similarly, concepts akin to "not seeing color," focusing on shame/guilt instead of cultivating more anti-racist approaches, and furthering division among "bad White people" instead of providing education and taking accountability to be anti-racist. It is also discussed that the mindset of "good White people" through cultural competency alone gives permission to blame systemic racism on the past or on "bad White people" instead of taking ownership and accountability to challenge systemic oppression with immediacy (Bailey, 2016). Cultural competence is an ever-changing and evolving concept and is also inherently "intangible" due to the implied potentiality as opposed to action. Negative connotations of "otherness" are sometimes associated with cultural competence and can subsequently invite White students to remove themselves from the need to be culturally competent or, even further, anti-racist as a result (Harrison & Turner, 2011).

There are three tasks outlined to prioritize anti-racist practice: *Naming Racism* is the act of allocating time and resources to the acknowledgement of racism weakening the strength of society as a whole rather than spending time trying to create a divide of "who is racist and who is not;" *Asking How Racism is Operating Here?* or being accountable to filling the gaps of representation within institutions to ensure racism is not implicitly or explicitly being presented within decision making; and *Organizing and Strategizing to Act* which is the purposeful and intentional commitment to establishing a plan of action and committing to act to combat racism (Jones, 2018).

Current Classroom Obstacles & Opportunities

Current classroom obstacles with the aforementioned cultural competency baseline training that has been historically utilized is the innate ability to *separate* from

the discussion. In addition, cultural competency baseline training allows social workers to distance themselves from the role of our profession in perpetuating institution and structural racism, as it “others” fellow helping professions outside of social work and paints a picture that social work is somehow exempt from participating in this dangerous cycle. Abdicating the social work professions from being racist leads to a lack of involvement in dismantling these systems within our own field. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) revealed statistics in 2019, yielded from an annual survey, that highlighted the demographics of social work students within U.S. programs. According to their data, 50.2% of Master of Social Work students in 2019 were White, 20.1% were Black, and 16.3% of students were Latinx (CSWE, 2020). Therefore, over half of the MSW students whose programs participated in the survey in 2019 were White. This illustrates the importance of program and profession-level accountability measures to address students of privilege, such as students from a high social economic status, or White students who are the racial majority, who are given an “out” when discussing race related topics through a cultural competency instructional lens. As such, their lived experiences as the “non-other” often enables them to “check-out” of cultural competency related discussions and lectures. This presents an obstacle because it fosters the barrier of separation between White social work students and their BIPOC colleagues, clients, and community members. Conversely, greater emphasis on the White social work student’s role within the oppressive and racist systems that garner further privilege would be more substantive and cultivate anti-racist practice skills, as it would offer a set of tools with which to navigate complicated discussions to interrupt injustices.

Shifting the mindsets of students and educational institutions to a more anti-racist ideology can be accomplished through establishing anti-racism into action within educational systems, which necessitates an ongoing commitment to deconstructing and reconstructing the complex layers that result from the individual educational system’s policies, procedures, and subsequent institutional culture (Welton, 2018). Additionally, identifying racism as the root issue within disproportionate oppressive systems is vital to combat the widespread denial of the aforementioned in this country.

Shifting mindsets of lecturers within higher education is another essential component to foster anti-racism within the classroom because they shape students’ experiences. White lecturers are at increased risk of failing to recognize their being White as a raced identifier and subsequently fail to acknowledge their responsibility in disseminating anti-racism educational frameworks and speaking out against racist institutions (Ahmed, 2008). This lack of racial awareness and teaching responsibility leaves curricular gaps that are often left to be filled by BIPOC lecturers (Ahmed, 2008). This further misallocates the responsibility of teaching anti-racism to BIPOC individuals. Social work students should foster ownership of their education and must be responsible and accountable for actionable anti-racism. Additionally, White lecturers must be self-accountable and lead by example through actionable anti-racism that is further demonstrated by giving students the tools they need and empower them to

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address structural and institutional inequities within the agencies they work in and within the communities they reside.

Developing actionable anti-racist practice skills is an opportunity, and tool, for social work educators and practitioners to utilize in order to combat oppressive practices and biased learning in the classroom. One way this can be achieved is through the employment of Danso's (2015) Critical-Cultural-Anti-Oppressive-Practice (CCAOP). The CCAOP is a framework that prioritizes anti-oppressive practices and understanding and appreciating human diversity. This framework emphasizes a social justice and social change orientation that will serve to help enable social work educators, practitioners, and researchers to work with the client and/or community with mindfulness and the initially agreed upon collaborative effort to address the identified problem as the foundational framework (Danso, 2015). The CCAOP also highlights the mutually reliant and beneficial nature of collaborative learning and effort in addressing the identified problem between the social worker and the client and/or community served. This subsequently recognizes the importance of self-determination in critically anti-oppressive practice (Danso, 2015). One of the leading principal tasks of anti-racist social workers and social work educators is the need to "unpack" or "deconstruct" White privilege for effective and efficacious professional practice. Additionally, anti-racist social workers assert that professional social workers must explore their own identities and how they are contributing to systems of oppression and subsequently maintain inequity. Though implicit bias training utilized within social work programs initiates this process, the efficacy of these practices alone without the commitment to anti-racist practice that is both active and intentional lead to significant educational gaps (FitzGerald, Martin, Berner, & Hurst, 2019). However, ongoing commitments towards challenging bias and being anti-racist, similar to the anti-racist practice tasks previously outlined above, will foster continued learning and self-accountability outside of the classroom. Social work educators and leaders are encouraged to also confront their own privileges and complicities as part of active social work curriculum and instruction to ensure they are leading by example in the classroom and in the field (de Montigny, 2013).

Unlearning oppression and confronting complex histories require sustained, difficult dialogue between students and educators. Amid concerns that anti-racism content in social work education remains insufficiently actionable, this study examines social work students' perceptions of how curricula should change to better prepare them for anti-racist practice—shaped by the intersecting pandemics that exposed racial inequities. Using qualitative analysis of survey responses, we address the question: How do students think social work education can improve to include anti-racist practice training? This inquiry followed an earlier quantitative study that developed and validated a measure of anti-racism for social work students, educators, and practitioners.

Methods

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Comment [A5]: the authors should add context to current federal legislation which is a competing factor in anti-racist pedagogy. At this time in our history it is a privilege to be able to teach through this lens and difficult for faculty who are tenure earning and NTT. This acknowledgement is critical.

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The design for this study was exploratory descriptive qualitative research. This approach was used to gain an understanding of the perceptions of social work students on the presence, or absence, of anti-racism practices in social work education. This design allowed for descriptions of the students' perceptions.

Sampling Strategy and Design

The study used a purposive sampling strategy, including only students enrolled in accredited social work programs. Participants were recruited via email, through the assistance of Deans and/or Program Directors, or through social media (i.e., Facebook; Twitter). Each potential participant was provided with a brief overview of the study, including approval documents from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Author 2's University, and a link to a Qualtrics survey if they wanted to participate. The first item in the Qualtrics survey was the approved informed consent document, along with the following statement: "Please indicate that you consent to participate in this study." If participants answered "yes" to this item, their responses were included.

Analytical Approach

Descriptive analyses were performed using version 27 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were conducted to describe participants demographic characteristics. Participant responses to the item, "How do you think social work education can improve to include anti-racist practices?" were saved in a separate file. Any respondent who did not respond to this item were excluded from analysis. Responses were analyzed utilizing a step-by-step guide for the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data. The steps to data analysis included: organization, perusal, classification and synthesis (Creswell, 1998). First, the data were downloaded in a word document. During the perusal stage, the first author carefully read through the data and then classified the data using word and phrase reparation. After the data was coded, this researcher utilized the identified codes to create initial themes, which summarized the data. The analysis focused on the perceptions of the social work students and anti-racism practices. The first author reached data saturation when there was enough data collected to replicate the study and when further coding was no longer feasible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure rigor, an audit trail was created, to establish confirmability. Random selection of several responses was selected for the development of the coding scheme and later compared with codes with author 3 (Morse & Field, 1995). Intercoder reliability was established with authors 1 and 4 who carefully read the data for recurrent themes. The first author brought the created themes to the larger research team to discuss results for peer debriefing. Four researchers from the study (authors 1-4) adapted the initial themes and created the final themes based on group consensus, triangulation of the data to check perceptions, understand the data, and to discuss discrepancies of the data. Transferability, authenticity, and credibility were established by collecting data from social work students, drawing from the SWEAR scale, a standardized from, and the year-long engagement with the data (Angen, 2000).

Results

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There were 363 student participants who responded to the item, “How do you think social work education can improve to include anti-racist practices?” Participants ranged in age from 18 to 65, with the average age being 31.1 years ($SD = 11.0$ years). While a majority of participants reported residing in the United States ($n = 358, 98.6\%$), 1.4% reported living outside of the United States at the time of participation ($n = 5$). It is important to note that 38 states were represented in this study. A majority of participants were Caucasian/White ($n = 222, 61.2\%$), with 39.8% identifying as non-White. A majority of participants reported that they spoke English as their primary language at home ($n = 340, 93.7\%$) while 6.3% reported speaking another language primarily in their home. A majority of participants identified as Cisgender Female ($n = 287, 79.1\%$), 15.4% identified as Cisgender Male ($n = 56$), and 5.5% ($n = 20$) identified as another gender. Table 1 presents more detail related to participant demographics.

Table 1 INCLUDED HERE

Table 1 also displays school/program-level characteristics. A majority of participants reported being a MSW student ($n = 187, 51.7\%$), while 45.3% reported being a BASW/BSW student ($n = 164, 45.3\%$) and 3.0% reported being a doctoral (i.e., Ph.D., Ed.D., DSW) student ($n = 11$). While a majority of doctoral students did report having a graduate degree (i.e., MSW) in social work ($n = 9, 81.8\%$), a majority of MSW students did not have an undergraduate degree in social work before beginning their MSW program ($n = 147, 75.4\%$). When asked about what format they typically take courses, 44.6% reported taking face-to-face courses ($n = 162$), 39.4% reported taking online courses ($n = 143$), and 16.0% reported taking hybrid courses ($n = 58$). Participants were also asked how many courses they had taken on cultural diversity at the time of this study. They reported a wide range (0 – 23), with the average being 2.6 courses ($SD = 2.5$).

Themes

The researchers created five overall themes including: 1. Re-envisioning the curriculum; 2. Embracing courageous conversations; 3. Fostering Representation; 4. Engaging in advocacy; and 5. Acknowledging resistance and ambivalence. While not coded as a theme, less than one percent, or 12 participants stated that they did not know. At first glance, this could be coded as ambivalence as in they do not think social work education can improve anti-racist practices. However, the responses directly answer the question; therefore, it was inferred that the student participants did not know strategies or suggestions to include. One participant said, “no input,” while others noted, “I don’t know” or “unknown.” One participant provided a longer explanation, “to be honest, I have just recently been accepted into the MSW program, and my undergraduate education was in social work. I am involved in social work professionally, but I can’t speak on any experiences in social work education.” There was either not enough information provided to code these statements (i.e., the first quotes noted above) or the participant was unsure of how to improve anti-racist social work education (i.e., the second quote).

Re-envisioning the Curriculum

Comment [A9]: Perhaps if the data is available add the types of institutions as a variable- this is important. were there any HBCU's- this might change the conversation- do R1's have more support for academic freedom?

This theme reflected the largest number of responses. Two hundred and forty-six responses or 68% of participants highlighted specific social work educational strategies that could be utilized. The majority of these responses accounted for the creation of new diversity-related content, specifically the call for a stand-alone required course. Participants asked for a specific anti-racism course, while others utilized terminology, such as cultural competency, diversity, privilege and oppression, and/or cultural humility, but still asked for a stand-alone course that focused on these topics.

Some participants listed specific content they would like to see directly addressed in the explicit curriculum. Participants noted that they would like additional education about biases. For instance, one participant noted, “Provide more resources and materials for students to review that can help them recognize their own biases and prejudice attitudes” and another reported the need for “action-based education.”

A small minority of participants mentioned specific resources by name. These included books, assignments, and specific classroom activities. While these comments did not make up a majority of the responses, they suggest that some social work educators and students have already identified resources that can be utilized to teach this content.

Embracing Courageous Conversations and Strategies

Fifty-six items (15%) were coded within this theme. The majority of the responses for this theme focused on the need to increase discussions around this topic specifically within the classroom, among other students in various settings, and with community members. Examples of discussion-based comments included: “direct practice with engaging in difficult conversations;” “foster more conversations about the topic;” and “student led discussion groups and media sharing so multiple voices can be heard.” A handful of participants noted concrete examples of specific courageous conversations they would like to have, such as “monthly or every other month meetings with students, professors, and staff to address any concerns for inequity (open forum, not just class reps)” and “Holding space for open dialog about ‘what’s going on’.” Another participant suggested, “White accountability groups where White students can come together to discuss issues of racism without further traumatizing students of color or making them the token educators on the issue.” Student participants asked for additional conversations that included how to address racism when they are presented with it: “real life scenarios shown in the classroom of how to shut down racist talk/behaviors. Ways to shut down family members, friends, professional coworkers, and future clients. How to remain calm and professional but be firm with what will be tolerated.”

Fostering Representation

This theme highlights the need for racially diverse social work educators and students. Fourteen percent of the responses fit into this theme. The majority of the fifty-one responses coded in this theme discuss the need for more racially diverse faculty in the field of social work education. Examples of the comments coded in this sub-theme include: “diversify instructors and have BIPOC in leadership positions” and “have more

BIPOC professors.” One student participant noted: “I have had solely White professors throughout my social work career. That is fundamentally backwards.”

About one third of responses in this theme suggested including the contributions of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) social workers throughout the curriculum to increase representation. Specifically, a student participant noted, “I hope to learn more about the contributions of POC to the social work field.” Other participants suggested that the field “use educational materials not written and developed by White folks” and “include more theories and practices written and introduced by BIPOC.”

Less participants spoke directly about diversifying the student population; however, five participants directly mentioned it. Here are some of their comments: “We need a much, much greater representation of students from the BIPOC community in our MSW program” and “financial assistance or incentives to increase the representation of people of color in the Social Work profession.”

Engaging in Advocacy

Forty-seven (13%) responses were coded with this theme. The majority of these responses called for general advocacy and did not include specific advocacy strategies. An example of this is the following participants’ quotes: “Policy development” and “Social workers must act in a legal and political role.” More specific responses were coded into two sub-themes: Community engagement and legislative advocacy. One participant noted that social work education should “Require students to engage with activist seeking social/racial justice and require volunteering in a least two ongoing anti-racist initiatives to deepen the students’ education with real world experiences.” Legislative advocacy suggestions included: “write to your state legislators about racial justice-minded legislation” and “changing policies within the school that are racist or uphold racist ideology.”

Acknowledging Resistance and Ambivalence

Twenty-four (7%) responses were coded in this theme and responses were broken into resistance and ambivalence. These researchers’ impression is that both terms reflect a resistance, with ambivalence suggesting a passive resistance and the term *resistance* being used here to describe the more active or direct resistant to anti-racist social work education. Quotes in the direct resistant theme include: “Stop the focus on race and re-focus to teaching skills, knowledge, technique and how to help all people” and “We need to stop sub grouping humans. It [is] like if we are sports team. We have allowed people to divide us into different teams and levels. In reality we all play on the human race team. Yes, we have different roles on the team but if every part doesn’t work right we can’t function.” Additional examples include statements such as: “Promote ‘ALL LIVES MATTER’” and this statement suggesting that anti-racism is not based in science - “It shouldn’t. we should be focused on legit science. There is a reason we are made fun of and not taken seriously. This ‘study’ is one of them.” Ambivalence was suggested by participants who noted that no change was needed. Four participants specifically mentioned that their specific department or school of social work was already doing a good job at this and did not provide any suggestions for how to improve.

This was coded as ambivalence because anti-racist work is lifelong and this suggests that there is nothing else to do surrounding the goal of anti-racism social work education.

Discussion

Jones (2018) highlighted the need for *Naming Racism* as the first strategy to engage in anti-racism practice. For social work educators, stand-alone classes that focused on anti-racism, privilege, power, oppression, and other connected topics would be a start to addressing this. The terminology utilized to describe this type of course was varied by participants. CSWE (2021) proposed 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) that utilize the terms anti-racism and cultural humility. This shift in language suggests that this terminology should be adopted within social work programs and social work education should be actively anti-racist and address these topics directly by dedicating curriculum content. The authors acknowledge that just teaching a class about a topic is not enough to address this, but for many, it would be a starting point and an opportunity for social work to specifically name and focus on anti-racism social work practice. We see this as one potential starting place, but not the end.

Critical multi-culturalism and anti-racism that places emphasis on active engagement and cultivating strong skills oriented in research and subsequently illustrated through practice demonstration will necessitate pedagogical shifts in the educational structure within higher education. The importance and need of this addition to curriculum will provide a platform that fosters transformative thinking among all students. This addition will help create a space for students who are privy from experiencing the consequences of systemic racism to acknowledge their privilege and learn how they can be more actively anti-racist. This is vital to assist in radically addressing the systems that threaten the very lives of BIPOC individuals.

Instructors need to look inward at their own personal role and explore how racism is operating within our own systems (Jones, 2018), including social work education. Participants noted that we need to engage in courageous conversations with students, faculty, staff, and community members. These conversations will take many different forms based on the needs of the educational community, but should first focus on listening. Then we need to utilize the information learned from the conversations to intentionally commit to a plan of action and commit to enacting that plan within social work education (Jones, 2018). Participants suggested advocacy and engaging in action; however, many did not list specific strategies. This suggests that social work education has developed strategies to help us “name racism” but perhaps we are still struggling to determine how to engage in anti-racist action-based practice. One respondent suggested that we “be clear in what steps someone can take to check the boxes of anti-racism.” The authors strongly suggest against a checklist or a one-size fits all approach to addressing systematic racism and anti-racism social work practice. Instead, we suggest that social work educational programs review their own program by listening to students and reflecting, and then commit to intentional actions that address specific concerns in their school community. Some suggestions could include: a standalone anti-

racism course that includes specific action project assignments; town halls hosted by the social work department that ask for feedback around specific topics (i.e., curriculum, student opportunities for engagement, etc.); developing an intentional anti-racist action plan and developing an intentional accountability structure to ensure that the plan is being completed; educators acknowledge the field's historically and current role in systematic oppression; and being intentional about diversifying faculty and student populations by implementing strategies to help diversify faculty.

Social work educators and academic leaders also need to acknowledge resistance to anti-racist practice and adopt policies that limit its influence. As Kendi (2019) argues, it is not enough to change people's hearts regarding racism but that we need to adopt policies that are anti-racist if we want to enact long-term change that challenges current systems. This is true for social work education. Currently, there is resistance, including ambivalence, within the field to adopt anti-racism social work practice. We should continue to provide narratives about systematic racism and the ways that White supremacy has shaped our society and our field, and we also need to enact policies that uphold social work proposed values of social justice and human rights within social work education that do not allow this type of resistance to flourish. Such policies could include a requirement that faculty provide at least a certain percentage of BPIOC authors on their syllabus and require faculty to create professional goals that specifically address anti-racist social work practice. Social work academic leaders should establish support within the larger institution in order to implement some of these policies as well as to serve as a buttress in the event that there is blowback from others. In addition, social work educational programs need to think about how to address resistance, both active and passive, within social work **students**.

Conclusion

More research, dialogue, and program-level policy change are needed to strengthen how social work education confronts White supremacy and prepares students for anti-racist practice. This study centered student perspectives to identify actionable strategies that educators and academic leaders can translate into curriculum, field, and assessment reforms. Findings underscore the importance of explicitly naming racism and moving beyond awareness-oriented approaches toward measurable, practice-based anti-racism training. This study has important limitations. Thematic interpretation is inherently influenced by researchers' standpoints, and the self-selected sample limits generalizability. Even so, the results provide a practical starting point for programs seeking to clarify expectations, reduce variability across courses, and implement accountable anti-racist educational **practices**.

Comment [A10]: given that this is a policy journal -It would be very helpful to discuss the current context in which this discussion lies and the limitations that faculty face. The burden to teach this content often lies with Black faculty members, often seeking tenure. There is a lot of complexity here. This complexity must be addressed including mechanism of support for faculty delivering anti-racist curriculum including emphasis on academic freedom .

Comment [A11]: the content of this research is important- I would like the authors to address policy implications.

Table 1*Sample Characteristics*

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age			31.1	11.0
Race/Ethnicity				
African American/Black	56	15.4		
Asian	6	1.7		
Caucasian/White	222	61.2		
Hispanic/Latino	37	10.2		
Native American/First Nations	2	0.6		
Multi-racial	31	8.5		
Other	9	2.5		
Primary Language Used at Home				
English	340	93.7		
Spanish	17	4.7		
Bilingual	3	0.8		
Other	3	0.8		
Gender				
Cisgender Male	56	15.4		
Cisgender Female	287	79.1		
Gender Non-conforming	12	3.3		
Transgender	5	1.4		
Other	3	0.8		
Program Level				
BASW/BSW	164	45.3		
MSW	187	51.7		
Ph.D./DSW	11	3.0		
Undergraduate Degree in Social Work	48	24.6		
Graduate Degree in Social Work	9	81.8		
Course Format				
Face-to-Face	162	44.6		
Hybrid	58	16.0		
Online	143	39.4		
Courses Taken on Cultural Diversity			2.6	2.5

Statements of Declaration

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We have no known conflict of interests to disclose.

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