

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Lessons Learned Dismantling White Supremacy in a School of Social Work

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Abstract: For the last several years, the Boston College School of Social Work (BCSSW) has worked to deconstruct the hidden nature of whiteness rooted in theories, methods, and practices of education. To that end, the BCSSW created two strategies designed to foster systemic change: the Latinx Leadership Initiative and the Equity, Justice, and Inclusion Initiative. This study uses narrative analysis to examine these initiatives as catalysts of sustainable change. We dive deep into: (1) strategies designed to disrupt a White supremacy approach to the explicit and implicit curriculums; (2) activities to engage stakeholders on dismantling institutional racism. Our ultimate goal is to draw lessons that may be useful to the profession. To that end, we discuss knowledge gained concerning academic innovation, shared governance, and alternatives to an Eurocentric epistemological approach to social work. We also include implications for the profession concerning the incorporation and validation of non-White ways to understand human development, health, disease, diagnostics, and interventions; and present some of the strategies we developed to de-center whiteness and support BIPOC students in a White-majority institution of higher education.

Keywords: White supremacy, academic innovation, positive education disruption

White supremacy is a thought system that advances the attitudes, beliefs, and values of White individuals (Fleming, 2019). White supremacy abounds in social work. This framework of understanding drives pedagogy, curriculum, research and manifests in the profession's practice. Through this approach to the discipline, universal values such as rigor, independence, work ethic, or intelligence suddenly become white. Higher education institutions sustain and reproduce this approach to the profession by normalizing the knowledge, experiences, and values associated with whiteness. Non-white ways of knowing are not only undervalued but perceived as illegitimate, with the resulting penalization of individuals who bring these alternative forms of knowing to the educational system (Almeida et al., 2019; Ayala & Contreras, 2018). When education centers on the experiences of white bodies, histories, cultures, and languages, it overlooks powerful perspectives and communities; leading to an educational system of oppression that betrays social work values, specifically the importance of self-determination and social justice. An example of this white-centering in the social work curriculum is the predominance of the bio-medical health and mental health model that focuses on diagnosis and interventions based on a Western-only understanding of human development (Fennig & Denov, 2019). This model is normative in the profession, making alternative understandings of health, disease, and treatments, such as folk healers or natural remedies invalid, and therefore absent from the curriculum (Figueroa & Calvo, 2018). To disrupt these values, schools of social work must continuously analyze and question the historical, educational, and

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epistemological roots of the profession, the social sciences, and higher education. Critical to this analysis is incorporating and validating non-White ways to understand human development, health, disease, diagnostics, and interventions.

White Supremacy at the Roots of the Social Work Profession

At the inception of its early roots in late 19th century America, social workers, often deemed "friendly visitors," would go from home to home as a means of impacting the poor through moral persuasion and personal example (Rausch, 1978). This moral persuasion against pauperism's character flaws promoted assimilation ideas concurrent with the legally enforced idea that whiteness was valued over all others. Forerunners of the social work profession, like charity organization societies and the settlement house movement, rested upon the pillars of social Darwinism. This philosophy suggests that one group's social dominance over another is due to the dominant group's natural superiority, evidenced by White phenotypic characteristics (Gregory, 2020). Social work has failed to challenge this epistemological approach in which racial inequity and White supremacy are maintained in the profession (Cardoza, 2020). Instead, it ascribes to a cluster of vaguely defined character traits regarding the ideal worker, client, and society intended from the profession's outreach. These vague ideas of whiteness have been encoded into the law and other systems of oppression (Rothstein, 2018), like in professional standards, which use White values of dress, communication, accent, efficiency, perfectionism, and boundaries for hiring metrics and promotions (Gray, 2019). Almeida and colleagues (2019) discuss the colonizing effect of White supremacy over time, and its impact on the social work profession:

The natural intrusion of White supremacy into the initiative of social work, not unlike other social sciences, requires analysis that has eclipsed the profession for generations. The analysis necessitates inquiry and action on social, political, and economic problems that result from White supremacist manifestations of racialization with all of its subjugated markers of gender and calls for interventions organized around deracializing society. In fact, it is an important strategy to uproot coloniality. (Almeida et al., 2019, p. 151)

For social work in the modern era, White supremacy manifests in the enforcement of current laws that strip Black and Brown communities of their fundamental rights. For instance, Black children represent 14% of the total population of children in the U.S. but comprise almost a fourth of all children in the foster care system (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2020). This practice, while state-sanctioned and legally encouraged and admissible, goes against the profession's ethical obligation to promote the right to self-determination as well as the promotion of social justice. Therefore, social work, while publicly promoting racial equality and openly condemning other forms of discrimination, actively teaches these practices to its students. Even unwitting students who believe in social justice and the right to self-determination find themselves replicating systems of white supremacy due to the centralization of western values, including the lack of anti-racist teachings in the curriculum (Hackett, 2019). One way to understand how social work perpetuates systemic racism in education is by examining our curriculum. Rosales and colleagues (2018) analyzed to what extent courses, concentrations, and certificate

programs of 262 MSW accredited programs integrated Latinx content in the curriculum. Findings revealed the dearth of Latinx-focused materials in social work education.

A fundamental organizing principle of anti-racist practice necessitates understanding the history of white supremacy, racism, and race-based concepts co-created to justify the existence of oppression through chattel slavery in the United States. This critical point highlights how racism was designed as economic exploitation and still operates to that effect today. An example of this in everyday life is the overrepresentation of Black and Latinx hourly workers struggling to make ends meet (Martin, 2015). This systemic racism system that promotes unearned advantages for white social workers is also easily found in our profession. We only need to look at the absence of Black and Brown students in our schools (Bowie et al., 2018) and to the challenging careers of non-white professionals and academics across the country, plagued with a lack of opportunities for advancement and promotion (Calvo et al., 2018; Mbarushimana & Robbins, 2015).

Using Narrative Inquiry to Gain Understanding

Narrative inquiry is a dialectic and interpretative research approach. The collection and analysis of qualitative data are informed by how people engage in the process of telling their own stories (Earthy & Cronin, 2008). The main characteristics of narrative analysis are that it focuses on the meaning people assign to their own experiences, that it occurs in collaboration among all the people involved in research, and that stories are informed by their context (Moen, 2006). Narrative analysis has helped analyze change management processes in organizations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). We used narrative analysis to reflect on the process of systemic transformation to dismantle white supremacy at the BCSSW. A myriad of data sources informed our study. For instance, students created their stories in the classroom, particularly Latinx Leadership Initiative (LLI) students who follow a cohort model and take classes independently. Outside the classroom, we engaged students in creating narratives through Advising Pods and Learning Communities, which are integral components of our Equity, Justice, and Inclusion strategic priorities. Students who wish to participate in these spaces engage with faculty in interdisciplinary forums that revolve around various topics, such as the pervasive nature of colorism and its implications for social work or anti-racism and anti-oppressive social work practice. To engage faculty, staff, and alumni in this process, we created a series of focus groups, held town hall meetings, and deployed surveys in which individuals had the opportunity to share their stories and their aspirations to dismantle white supremacy systemically. During these processes, participants often validated other members' accounts and added to them by offering examples of their own stories. We collated and analyzed the BCSSW narratives, focusing both on content and on structure, to determine the presence of common themes. What follows is a summation of the themes that emerged from our analysis.

Disrupting White Supremacy at Boston College School of Social Work

Dismantling white supremacy requires an intentional approach to create systems of decolonization and decoloniality in our profession. Besides a profound analysis of the myriad ways in which white supremacy impacts the education, pedagogy, and practice of

the social work profession; it needs a thorough examination about how the history, policy, and traditions of social work that have promoted whiteness, and as a result, racism as the normative practice within the profession.

Located at Boston College School of Social Work (BCSSW), a team of faculty, staff, and students has endeavored to undertake a transformation concerning how the school approaches researching, teaching, and understanding anti-racist practice in the context of social work. BCSSW provides instruction in support of Master of Social Work and Ph.D. programs. Understanding Boston College's history, a university with the Carnegie designation of R1, or high research activity institution, is a central concept to this article. Its original roots were in the training and support of poor, Irish, Catholic, male immigrants. Today, Boston College has grown to become a top 50 nationally ranked university with a billion-dollar annual budget and a 2.2-billion-dollar endowment. Though Boston College is not the wealthiest institution in America, it certainly ranks among the most affluent. It is reasonable to assume that the very students BC was initially founded to support (poor immigrants) do not comprise most of its student body today. Within this context, the BCSSW designed a strategy to increase the number of Black and Latinx students within its walls and an alternative structure that ensured their success in a white-majority institution of higher education.

The Latinx Leadership Initiative (LLI)

Latinxs account for 18% of the current U.S. population. By 2060 it is estimated that 30% of the total U.S. population, or around one in three Americans, will be of Latinx descent (Vespa et al., 2020). While Latinxs are extremely diverse concerning country of origin, language, race, migratory status, generations in the U.S., socioeconomic status, and degree of acculturation, they tend to share systemic discrimination experiences and the resulting blocked access to education, healthcare, housing, and the job market.

There is evidence that Latinxs are more likely than other groups to report discrimination experiences when dealing with social services (Lauderdale et al., 2006). Latinxs tend to experience a better quality of care when paired with ethnic and language-concordant providers (Ortega et al., 2007; Rodriguez et al., 2009). Yet, social workers are not equipped to work effectively with Latinx communities (Furman et al., 2013). The LLI started in 2013 with two aims, to increase the number of Latinx social work practitioners and scholars, and to equip social workers with the skills needed to work effectively with Latinx communities by deploying a strengths-based educational approach to support their formation as clinicians and scholars.

Departing from a White-supremacists approach to social work education in which the lived experiences of minoritized communities are poorly understood – most often through a culturally competent framework (Almeida et al., 2019) – the LLI proposes a counter-narrative understanding to social work with Latinxs based on Latinxs' cultural capital (Ayala & Contreras, 2018; Yosso, 2005). Cultural capital is the knowledge, skills, and values that allow people to successfully navigate social institutions (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). In traditional higher education institutions, whiteness is the dominant cultural capital that validates access to resources and legitimizes ways of knowledge. As a result,

despite the profession's emphasis on cultural competence or humility, it is difficult for social workers to engage with Latinxs meaningfully unless they understand and appreciate their values, culture, and world views. We expect social workers to engage diversity and difference in practice, yet we do not teach non-white paradigms of understanding human behavior, making this worthy goal challenging to achieve.

While Latinxs' college enrollment has increased in the last few years, they have lower graduation rates than other groups in the United States (Lopez & Fry, 2013). For instance, only 5% of Latinxs received a graduate diploma in the U.S. 2016. That same year, 13% of non-Latinx whites received a graduate degree (Schak & Nichols, 2017). A white supremacy approach to social work understands Latinxs' underperformance in education as a deficit-based perspective that places the responsibility in the individual rather than in systemic inequities. Unfortunately, this deficit-based perspective of Latinxs in higher education permeates much of the educational policy and practices across the U.S. (Ayala & Contreras, 2018).

To dismantle this white supremacist approach, the LLI created a pedagogical model that countered the institutional structures and processes that sustain a deficit-based approach to social work with Latinxs. Understanding that Latinxs are not monolithic and that racially minoritized students bring their forms of capital to the educational setting, the LLI created a paradigm for educating social workers that legitimates Latinxs' ways of knowing (Yosso, 2005) over the normative white approach to social work. A critical component of this alternative paradigm is a cohort model of education that allows Latinx students to feel safe as they navigate a white-majority institution of higher education. LLI students enter the school as a cohort already formed, which increases their support throughout the educational experience. Classes are taught in Spanish, not because students do not speak English, but because it emphasizes and validates students' lived experience and counters the negative impact of Latinxs' racialization based on language. In the White-supremacist American society, colorism or skin color stratification places Latinx, whose skin tones and phenotypic features indicate Black or indigenous ancestries, at the bottom of the racial hierarchy (Hunter, 2007, 2013). Latinxs' racialization, however, occurs via multiple pathways, including language. Racialization in this context "signals the processes by which ideas about race are constructed, come to be regarded as meaningful, and are acted upon" (Murji & Solomos, 2005, p. 1). One of these ideas is that Spanish, an indicator used to racialize Latinxs as non-White, is inferior to English. Since the 1970s, English-only policies have been pushed as a mechanism to facilitate the incorporation of immigrants (Wiley & Wright, 2004), despite evidence that Spanish is a prime indicator of identity and culture and that bilingualism is beneficial for Latinx children's development. In the U.S. White supremacist landscape, policies that discourage Latinxs from preserving their language reposition Latinx identity and culture as inferior. This systemic othering increases Latinxs' risk of exclusion and highlights the need for professionals prepared to work with this population (Calvo et al., 2018).

The LLI paradigm to de-centers whiteness from the curriculum is also reflected in the syllabus, in field education, and in the doctoral program. Concerning content, the LLI curriculum focuses on Latinx cultural capital and evidence-based interventions that teach students to capitalize on Latinxs' assets and ways of knowing when working with diverse

Latinx communities. Regarding field education, the LLI only partners with agencies that appreciate the work that bilingual/bicultural Latinxs do and that support their educational aspirations. The Latinx Research Seminar supported the formation of Latinx doctoral students with shared interest on research topics pertaining to Latinx communities (see Calvo et al., 2018 for further details about the LLI). The LLI has over 180 graduates in 23 states who have partnered with Latinx communities in innovative practices that address complex problems. Another vital element of the strengths-based cultural paradigm that characterizes the LLI is that alumni are actively involved in the formation of current students. Some of its graduates serve as field supervisors of its current students. Others serve as mentors. A student-led initiative called *Unidos* (together), pairs current LLI students with alumni to help them navigate higher education and the job market as Latinx professionals. The LLI received national recognition as an Example of *Excelencia* from *Excelencia!* in Education in cooperation with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. *Excelencia!* in Education is the only national effort that identifies and promotes evidence-based practices for accelerating Latinxs' educational success in the United States.

Equity, Justice, and Inclusion at BCSSW

For the last three years, Boston College has endeavored to enhance the student experience through the Equity, Justice, and Inclusion (EJI) Initiative. This strategic direction was chosen following student focus groups, faculty feedback, and administrative planning to enhance the student experience through curriculum and pedagogy reforms, training, and development, and to create a systematized process for measuring success in this area. This initiative is driven by over 100 faculty, staff, and student volunteers, and focuses on finding creative anti-racist solutions to complex problems that plague social work schools.

Next Steps: Setting New Goals for Social Work Programs

In the wake of the unjust and state-sanctioned murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many more, we found that we could no longer remain quiet about the needs of our Black students and our community. Situated in Boston, a city with a long history of racism, our silence indicated our complacency and our assent to the deadly realities of Black lives. Moreover, leading up until this moment, we had reflected on the need to create a program that would enhance innovation in services to Black Americans and pursue strategic policy changes to support the community—explicitly focusing on criminal justice, economics, and urban development and planning. This radical view of a social work practice crafted by Black social workers and for Black social workers is not new; however, our focus is a cadre of leaders from across the world who might first, using Boston as a laboratory, learn a crucial mix of micro and macro skill sets, return to their homes to pursue careers in advocacy, politics, and organizational management.

And although this is not exclusively a macro social work program, the authors believe that disrupting white supremacy requires an interrogation of all past forms of social work, including the history, tools, and onto-epistemological social work approaches to practice.

A historical perspective allows social workers to perceive trends that affect social work currently. It also allows professional social workers to see how Black social workers created this profession, their original intentions, and the focus we should all take to secure a more equitable profession and society.

Understanding the tools of social work allows professionals to see both the benefits and the disadvantages of historical practices of social work. For far too long, social workers have focused on clients' therapeutic outcomes without an intensive understanding of how racism has framed both therapeutic practices and the directions that clinical work needs to take to de-center approaches that frame white cultural expectations.

Black Leadership Initiative

Since the conceptualization of a professionalized social work, many researchers, activists, and community leaders have speculated on the need for Black social workers and the unique approach those workers could bring to supporting the Black community (Washington, 1935). Among these discussions was first, the needs of the Black community, and second, the idea that training Black social workers creates a ladder into economic mobility for many with college educations. Finally, the idea that Black social workers, as representatives of the communities they serve, might contribute valuable insights into effective interventions in Black communities.

The Black Leadership Initiative will be designed to askew the specific focus on deficits concerning the Black community. This program's focus will be to build a cadre of leaders who focus on understanding and navigating the Black community through an anti-racist and strengths-based approach. The students selected will be expected to move beyond the typical focus of problematizing clients. These future colleagues in training will learn approaches to social work practice that de-center whiteness and promote frameworks of knowledge beyond western thinking, specifically the Afrocentric paradigm, which centers the rich onto-epistemological approaches of Africa. Specifically, this means centering the stories, perspectives, and values of African people and the people of the African diaspora. As Bent-Goodley et al. (2017) note, "Afrocentricity utilizes African philosophies, history, and culture as a starting place of interpreting social and psychological phenomena" (p. 1) A further breakdown of this perspective in social work practice frames individual identity as synonymous with collective identity and positions the import of affective knowledge.

Simply put, in an Afrocentric frame, one cannot exist without one's community, and emotions are an essential and central component to knowing and methods of knowing (Schiele, 1997). This social work perspective is helpful for its ability to help refocus social work pedagogy and practice into non-dominant views in the U.S. context for practice. Students prepared in this innovative new program will be able to identify missteps in Eurocentric paradigms that do not benefit Black clients and reorient their interventions to center the needs of Black communities.

Leaders for Equity and Justice in the Workplace

It has been predicted that by 2060 America will be a majority-minority nation. While the workforce expands to include more Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), issues of fairness and organizational justice will become extremely important to social work practice (Sabbath, 2019). Moreover, in the face of an aging workforce, many firms may seek an opportunity to reduce instances of discrimination in the workplace. These key factors have prompted the creation of academic programs focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.

Given social work's historical involvement in supporting employment through worker assistance programs, management and administration course work, child labor protection, and crisis counseling, the profession has developed a robust set of practice tools that can be utilized to enhance fairness and promote a sense of inclusion at the organizational level. The BCSSW has endeavored to create a unique new program, called "Leaders for Equity and Justice in the Workplace". The focus of this program is on preparing social workers to disrupt white supremacy and other forms of oppression at the organizational level.

Students interested in the program are recruited through various admission strategies and told that the program is meant to situate both micro and macro-focused students on key concepts in organizational change management. Organizational change management is a crucial business tactic that focuses on preparing businesses for the future by assessing all business functions, capacity building, and workforce development. This focus on organizational change and transformation is critical, as the students who embark on this training are prepared to focus on all levels of business practice and decision making. Furthermore, starting in Fall 2021, graduate MSW students will be given a chance to practice these skills in internships throughout New England. The creation of this program seeks to expand traditional diversity, equity, and inclusion work by focusing on key concepts such as social innovation, alternative methods of inquiry and research, and foundational business practices. Moreover, the Leaders for Equity Justice and Inclusion (LEJI) program will support students who are interested in a broad range of equity, justice, and inclusion issues such as disrupting racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, and transphobia wherever they occur. This important group of future practitioners is meant to bridge to a new social work practice that focuses on well-being at work.

Recommendations for Social Work Education: Generalizing our Results

Though one may like to believe that innovation is a process borne out of random chance, the authors take the approach that innovation is a process that must continuously exist to challenge the status quo. These inherited ideas around social work practice and social work education reflect the white supremacist cultures that oversaw the development, professionalization and mainstream acceptance of social work as a form of social control. To undo this reality, it is vital to take the next step of troubling, disrupting, and dismantling the profession as we know it by creating a new curriculum altogether – not merely an evolution of the existing one.

Focus on Administrative Process. A key barrier to disrupting white supremacy at Boston College was the disrupting administrative barriers that focused on process rather than content. The authors found that well-meaning administrators that focused on fulfilling traditional methods of administering social work programs would often conflict with the need to create innovative practices in school administration. This problem, though prevalent, was overcome with high communication and relationship-building across administrative silos.

Deconstructing White Supremacy in Pedagogy. Given the professional nature of social work schools, some instructors did not have formal training in education techniques and pedagogy. Instructors frequently approach BIPOC students from a deficient perspective without viewing their lived experiences as assets in the classroom. Though this problem persists, at the writing of this paper, we have created several pedagogy-focused training experiences designed to prepare instructors to not only view students' experiences as valuable, but also to prepare the instructor to decolonize the classroom through course materials, activities, and experiences that focus on a variety of learning styles. In particular, the authors have focused on reducing an overreliance on the written word and the English language. We provide more details about these actions in the section below.

Focus on the BIPOC Student Experience. For the authors, focusing on the BIPOC student experience has allowed limited resources to flow towards students who need the support. Moreover, this program utilized to support student services, augment learning in the classroom, and enhance the student experience. A significant barrier to this community-building work has been limited resources and staff who are well-trained and prepared to take on the work.

Anti-Racist Actions to the Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Student Mentorship to Dismantle White Supremacy

To implement the above recommendations the authors proposed three main actions to the BCSSW community: decolonize the curriculum, use a pedagogical approach that includes all students while protecting BIPOC students, and create a wide system of support for BIPOC students to process microaggressions. These actions may be adapted to other educational contexts.

Action One – Decolonize the curriculum. Our curriculum relies heavily on a western, Anglo-Saxon understanding of the profession. As a result, our syllabus mostly reflects the experiences of those groups racialized as white and uses a medical model as the main approach for the delivery of services. Some suggestions to decolonize the curriculum are making sure that a variety of epistemological and cultural frameworks are included. The authors encouraged BCSSW faculty that at least half of their required course materials should be focused on historically marginalized communities. They also encouraged faculty to use theoretical perspectives from non-western cultures and to include the work of Black, indigenous, Latinxs and other people of color (BIPOC) authors, artists, and researchers. Questions to facilitate this process that faculty may use are: “What is the epistemological approach of the author?” “What cultural values does it represent?” “Does the content of the curriculum reflect the experiences of historically

oppressed populations?” “Does the content of the curriculum take into consideration theories and perspectives of women of color?” “Do assignments focus on anti-racist competencies?”

Additionally, to help decolonize the curriculum authors suggested faculty to check if their syllabus relied heavily on the written word. While students should strive to have strong writing and reading skills, there are other important methods of learning and communicating knowledge that are valued in other cultures. Diversified methods for students to learn include podcast, documentaries, music, and experiential activities. Some questions that may help faculty to incorporate these innovations are: “How might I use other forms of communication for learning, such as podcasts, videos, movies, songs, or other visual and auditory materials?” “Can my assignments take the form of a public presentation, op eds, poetry, poster, art project or group problem-solving activity?”

Another action to decolonize the curriculum is to use rubrics for grading and providing feedback. The authors encouraged faculty to include rubrics that detail exactly how students will be graded and to provide written feedback on all assignments so students are aware of how they might improve their work. Some questions that help faculty to incorporate these changes are: “Is it clear to students exactly how they will be graded?” “Are you expecting students to just know that certain things are automatically graded (such as APA formatting)?” “Did you tell them in the rubric?” “Do students know students know exactly why points were deducted?” “Do students know how they might improve their grade on the next assignment?” “Are you open to students approaching assignments from a cultural/theoretical approach that is not included in the syllabus, especially those that pertain to BIPOC?” “Do your students know this?”

Action two – Use a pedagogical approach that includes all students while protecting BIPOC students. Engaging in anti-racist work and dismantling white supremacy must include all voices and perspectives. Unfortunately, our students of color are often placed in the position to educate their peers and the faculty on issues that concern BIPOC students. They are also the ones that bear the burden of speaking up when they witness or experience microaggressions.

The authors encouraged the BCSSW faculty and administrators to consider investing in their own formation to ensure that the onus of anti-racist conversations does not fall onto BIPOC students. The Movement for Black Lives and other collectives doing anti-racist work have made available a myriad of free materials related to justice and inclusion. The authors suggested the BCSSW community to consider attending professional development opportunities put on by the university, CSWE, and other groups on issues of racism, discrimination, etcetera. Authors asked faculty not to rely on students to raise these issues, but to be proactive. Some questions authors proposed to faculty are: “Have you recently read on anti-racism and classroom pedagogy?” “Do you rely on your students to do the labor of teaching about the issues of marginalized students, or do you lead discussions in this area?” “Do you put students of color on the spot when race comes up?”

Action three – Create a wide system of support for students of color to process microaggressions. In a white-dominant institution of higher education like the BCSSW, BIPOC students often experience microaggressions in the classroom from faculty and

peers. It is left to the student to communicate to the faculty and to other students what happened or to look for informal systems of support to process such experiences. The authors suggested the BCSSW to consider creating an intentional network of advisors for BIPOC students. While all students are assigned an advisor, the process does not usually consider the intentional matching of BIPOC students with faculty that have an advanced understanding of the needs of students of color in white-dominant institutions. Some questions that helped the BCSSW to implement these actions are: “What are the criteria to assign advisors to BIPOC students?” “What are the criteria to become an advisor in the institution?” “Are advisors of color overtaxed with providing support to BIPOC students?” “Are there system-wide criteria of the advisory role?” “What do the criteria entail?” “How are the criteria monitored?” “Do advisors reach out to BIPOC students to discuss their positionality in the school from an assets-based perspective, or is their role mostly associated to administrative tasks and procedures?”

Conclusions and Limitations

Disrupting White supremacy in the profession is more important now than ever. Achieving disruption requires interrogating all aspects of social work schools’ functions including, but not limited to, curriculum and coursework, support programs for BIPOC students, and addressing research gaps. These areas have direct implications of social work practice, such as the readiness of social workers to address how structural racism impacts the lives of clients and communities. Equally important is to address the on-going needs and histories of marginalized communities through evidenced-based approaches stemming from the very communities that are served by the profession. To that end, it is crucial to legitimize non-white ways of knowing by forming future professionals on epistemological frameworks that challenge the predominant bio-medical model based on a Western-only understanding of human behavior. There are no recipes to dismantle white supremacy in social work institutions of higher education, which is a limitation of this study. Our actions and processes cannot be generalized because they stem and are sustained by the BCSSW community. This stewardship is key to the sustainability of our initiative because the whole community is accountable of its success. Nevertheless, we hope that our experience concerning academic innovation, shared governance, and alternatives to an Eurocentric epistemological approach to social work are helpful to our shared goal of dismantling white supremacy in the profession.

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