Social Work Educators as White Allies? An Integrative Literature Review

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Abstract: *White educators represent the majority of social work faculty. Current research suggests that many White social work educators are not prepared to address racism in classroom discussions and model antiracist behavior. An integrative literature review was conducted by the co-authors—a White man and Black woman, both social work educators—to examine how recent literature characterizes the "White ally" educator and explore concepts designed to prepare White faculty for purposive action to dismantle White Supremacy. Integrative review is a methodology used to summarize empirical/theoretical literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. Twenty-two articles met inclusion criteria for this review. The analysis involved two steps: First, a synthesis and integrative model of the literature on educators as White allies. Second, an application of the critical race theory concepts interest convergence and anti-essentialism. The integrative model of the White ally educator suggests a White identity process; necessitating critical self-reflection and multi-level, antiracist action. Critical examination of the literature troubles the concept of "White ally," pointing to the potential re-centering of Whiteness. Further research is needed to help social work educators recognize racism in their work and prepare future social workers to engage in antiracist social work practice.*

Keywords: *White allies, social work education, anti-racism*

Social work literature devotes significant attention to helping social work students become more culturally competent (Bender et al., 2010; Boyle & Springer, 2001; Bubar et al., 2016; Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), 2015; Johnson & Munch, 2009). Additional attention has been paid to preparing students to address racism in social work programs (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Kindle & Delavega, 2018; Wagaman et al., 2019; Wahler, 2012). Much of this work presumes that social work educators are prepared to address racism in their classrooms and model antiracist behavior. Little evidence supports this presumption. This is troubling considering that White educators represent the majority of social work faculty (CSWE, 2020) and benefit from White Supremacy. So, while it is no doubt helpful to explore educational strategies and pedagogies that facilitate student learning around White Supremacy and racism, more attention is required to prepare faculty, particularly White faculty, to implement these approaches with commitment and fidelity.

White Supremacy is more than overt racial bigotry and discrimination. Rather, as Ansley (1997) states, White Supremacy is a system in which "whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings" (p. 592). To understand how better to prepare White social work educators to address issues

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of racism and dismantle White Supremacy, we employed the methodology of an integrative literature review to conceptualize educators as "White Allies." Though the concept is not new, "White ally" has become part of the popular vernacular through the work of White identity development scholarship (Helms, 1990; Sue, 2017; Tatum, 1994), along with the growth of contemporary Black-led activism movements such as the Movement for Black Lives. That being said, White ally is difficult to define and remains a contested concept. White identity development scholarship focuses on how White people come to understand themselves as having a racialized identity, form a positive sense of self, and reconcile their unearned relationship to privilege and their capacity to utilize that power for antiracist social change (Sue, 2017 Tatum, 1994). In contemporary antiracist movements, the White ally is seen as someone who stands with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in resisting discrimination and fighting for racially equitable systems (Dismantle Collective, 2019).

The purpose of this review was to synthesize recent literature on the White ally educator to inform the development of White social work educators ready to commit to racial justice. We also sought to explore the tensions and potential of the White Ally educator identity. Using critical race theory (CRT) concepts of interest convergence and anti-essentialism, we critically examined the literature to identify areas for future research and ways that the concept may unintentionally center Whiteness and reinforce White Supremacy.

Background

CSWE Position

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2015) mandates that schools of social work prepare students to "engage diversity and difference in practice" and to "advance human rights, social, economic, and environmental justice" (p. 7). Further, CSWE requires that social work programs create an inclusive environment that "models affirmation and respect for diversity and difference." In light of recent events, CSWE (2020) appears to be evolving from an emphasis on engaging diversity to one of racial justice, recently asserting that it is time to "honestly examine how social work curricula go beyond teaching an appreciation for physical or cultural diversity and empower the next generation of social work practitioners to dismantle institutional racism" (para. 6).

Role of White Social Work Educators

White faculty make up over 60% of full-time social work faculty members in the United States (CSWE 2020), a share that is presumably higher at predominantly White universities (PWIs). While we support a more diversified faculty composition, it is clear that White social work faculty have a critical role in dismantling racism in social work education. However, the current evidence points to several ways in which White social work educators are not prepared or resistant to taking up this challenge.

In many cases, faculty identified as BIPOC are overburdened with the responsibility for teaching courses focused on diversity and social justice (Larke & Larke, 2009; Ledoux & Montalvo, 1999). Often, the majority of such content is relegated to one or two designated courses. This arrangement suggests that issues of racism, privilege, and oppression are the concern of only BIPOC, and may marginalize this important content and the faculty teaching it (Larke & Larke, 2009; Ledoux & Montalvo, 1999).

When White faculty are responsible for teaching diversity and oppression content, they may not be ready to do so effectively. Deepak et al. (2015) contend that to effectively teach about racism, power, and privilege, instructors must be willing to "go there"—deeply explore uncomfortable issues, face student resistance, and reflect on their own status and positionality (p. 116). In many cases, White faculty members are resistant to doing so, perhaps due to personal or professional risk (Deepak et al., 2015), internalized bias, and normative feelings of discomfort or guilt (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Sue, 2017; Tatum, 1994).

Even more concerning is that some White faculty may avoid addressing racism and oppression not because of discomfort, but because they think it unnecessary. In their qualitative study of U.S. social work educators who have taught cultural competency classes, Feize and Gonzales (2018) explore the ways that social work educators approach cultural competency, which is itself a highly contested concept (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Azzopardi & McNeil, 2016; Feize & Gonzales, 2018). They distinguish between those who teach cultural competency through the lens of multiculturalism, which focuses on inclusion, tolerance, and cross-cultural perspectives, and those who teach through a critical lens, which directly addresses racism, privilege, and power and focuses on antiracist practice. They found that 11 of the 16 educators did not think it was necessary to teach about antiracism and discrimination, believing that "racism will diminish gradually on its own when minorities are fully included and embraced in society" (Feize & Gonzales, 2018, p. 484). Only one of the five faculty members that did include antiracist and oppression content was White.

Of course, disrupting White hegemony in education requires extracurricular work as well. The CSWE mandates that social work educators create inclusive and diverse programs actively engaged in dismantling oppression. To do so, educators must address institutional racism and the broader systems in which they are situated. Again, the scholarship suggests much to be done and documents numerous ways that educational institutions, particularly PWIs, are hostile to Black and Brown students and faculty alike (Logan et al., 2017; McCoy, 2020; Mills, 2020; Von Robertson & Chaney, 2017). White educators have a crucial role in challenging these injustices.

White Identity Development

Teachers must recognize—before challenging or complying with—systemic educational oppressions. A social-justice oriented approach demands acknowledgment of teaching's inherent social responsibility, which includes challenging teaching's neutrality, recognizing its inherent politics, and critically analyzing its systems by considering what counts as knowledge (Cochran-Smith, 1995). The question, then, is how do White

educators engage in such analysis, acknowledge their roles in upholding Whiteness, and commit to dismantling it? Exploring White identity development may provide insights.

White Identity Development Models

According to Giroux (1997), the visibility of Whiteness as a racial identity emerged in the 1980s and '90s, largely through the consciousness raising of BIPOC, including Black and Latina feminists. This broadened understanding of White as a race—rather than its absence—is reflected in Helms' six-stage model of White racial identity development (Helms, 1997; Tatum, 1994). According to Helms (1997), racial neutrality reflects an early stage of White identity development. At the first stage's onset, individuals see White culture as neutral and normative, and are unaware of their internalized prejudices and assumptions (Tatum, 1994). However, Helm's (1997) model indicates that White people can move "from a racist identity to a positive White consciousness" (p. 211).

In a parallel conceptualization, Tatum (1994) outlines three common models of Whiteness: (1) actively racist (embracing "White superiority"), (2) colorblind perspectives, and (3) the "guilty White model." According to Tatum, each model hinders development of a positive White identity resulting in anti-oppressive action. For instance, the latter model, characterized by "shame and embarrassment" as one develops an increased awareness of racism, leads either to immobilization or to over-sensitivity and self-indulgence, which is deeply frustrating to BIPOC (p. 471). Alternatively, Tatum (1994) posits that the White ally model of "whites who have resisted the role of oppressor and who have been allies to people of color" provides the template for developing a "pro-active white identity" (pp. 471-472). For Tatum, the White ally has moved past guilt to internalize a new vision of what it means to be White in a racist society.

In Sue's (2017) configuration, the four elements of White Identity include (a) active racists, (b) unintentional racists, (c) nonracists, and (d) ***antiracists***. The fourth identity, the White ally identity, reflects White people who have moved beyond guilt toward social action to dismantle institutional racism. We sought to understand this identity as applied to educators.

While there is ample popular and scholarly literature broadly addressing White allies (e.g., Juarez, 2013; Kivel, 2006; Michael & Conger, 2009; Sue, 2017), there is significantly less about educators in this role. What exists, primarily in the discipline of education, focuses on training future White teachers to be White allies (e.g., Lynch, 2018; Page, 2009; Tatum, 1994). However, as with comparable social work literature, much of this scholarship fails to examine current educators' roles. We are attempting to start the process of filling the gap with this review.

Methods and Sample

Integrative Literature Review

An integrative literature review is a valuable form of secondary research (Ganong, 1987; Torracco, 2005; Thomas & Harden, 2008) contributing to a topic's knowledge base

by synthesizing known information regarding theory and practice (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006; Souza et al., 2010; Torracco, 2005; Whittmore & Knafl, 2005). Through this process of review and critique, new understanding and frameworks are generated (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006; Thomas & Harden, 2008; Torracco, 2005; Whittmore & Knafl, 2005).

An integrative literature review can be applied to mature or emerging topics (Torracco, 2005). For emerging topics, such as this one, integrative reviews often lead to an "initial or preliminary" conceptualization of known information, creating a clearer pathway for future research and scholarship (Torracco, 2005, p. 357). Translating key concepts and descriptive themes in extant scholarship is integral to this process (Thomas & Harden, 2008), as is addressing contradictory information (Torracco, 2005).

Sample Characteristics

Database searches of Academic Search Complete, J-Stor, Google Scholar, and Google—using the search terms "White Ally Educators", "White Ally Social Work", and "White Allies" (including Boolean combinations)—were conducted to identify articles for this review. In order to expand our literature base and allow for perspectives on the topic outside of academia, we reviewed peer-reviewed articles and monographs in addition to gray literature, which is inclusive of, but not limited to, unpublished reports, online journals, blogs, and white papers (Conn et al., 2003; Pappas & Williams, 2011). To be included in the review, articles had to a) contain the term "ally" or closely related content, b) focus on K-12/university educators, and c) have a publication date between 2004-2019. Exclusion criteria included books, dissertations, and articles focused solely on training future educators. Since the social work literature on this specific topic is sparse, we searched across disciplines, with the hope that social work scholars will build on this to address social work education more specifically. Similarly, we included literature on K-12 educators to expand our base and because college faculty have much to learn from those who teach younger students (Quay et al., 2006). The time frame was selected to survey recent literature based upon the second-wave White identity research starting in 2004 (Jupp et al., 2016).

Twenty-nine articles met our initial criterion. Upon review, seven articles were deemed incompatible and excluded. Of the twenty-two articles included in the final sample (Table 1), thirteen were conceptual papers and nine were empirical publications, including one quantitative and eight qualitative analyses. Qualitative analyses ranged from critical hermeneutic, narrative inquiry, critical interpretivist, semi-autoethnographic, and counter-storytelling methodologies. Fourteen of the articles identified CRT, including the subcategory of critical white studies (CWS), as the theoretical perspective. Fifteen of the articles came from the discipline of education, two from social work, one from a dual social work and teacher education perspective, and three from other disciplines. Of the fifteen articles directly addressing the author's racial identity, nine were from White authors, five were from BIPOC, one who identified as a "Latina with white skin privilege" (Charbeneau, 2015, p. 661), and one was written by a Person of Color and a White person.

Table 1. *Selected Articles*

Author and Title	Theoretical Perspective (if stated)	Conceptual (C) or Empirical (E)	Racial Identity of Author(s) (if stated)
Akamine Phillips et al. (2019)	Critical Whiteness	E	
Aveling (2006)	Critical Whiteness	C	White
Boucher (2016)	Critical Race Theory	E	White
Boutte & Jackson (2014)	Critical Race Theory	E	BIPOC (both)
Charbeneau (2015)	Critical Whiteness	E	"Latina w/white skin privilege" (p. 661)
Chiariello (2016)	Critical Whiteness	C	White
Davis et al. (2015)		C	White (all three)
De Lissovoy & Brown (2013)	Critical Whiteness; Decolonialism	C	
Denevi (2017)		C	White
Desnoyers-Colas (2019)	Racial Battle Fatigue	E	BIPOC
Diangelo (2012)		C	White
Gaffney (2016)		C	
Han & Leonard (2017)	Critical Race Theory	E	BIPOC
Martin (2008)	White Racial Identity Model	E	
Matias (2013)	Critical Race Theory; Critical Whiteness; Black Feminism	C	BIPOC
Miller & Harris (2018)	Critical Race Theory	C	White (first); second author not stated
Moss & Singh (2015)	Critical Race Theory: Relational Cultural Theory	C	
Patton & Bondi (2015)	Critical Race Theory	E	BIPOC (first); White (second)
Powell & Kelly (2017)	Critical Race Theory; Critical Whiteness	C	White (both)
Reason & Broido (2005)		C	
Spencer (2008)		C	BIPOC
Utt & Tochluk (2020)	Critical Whiteness; White Racial Identity Model	E	White (both)

Findings

Our findings will be presented in two main sections. The first, an integrative model of the White ally educator, synthesizes the literature's common themes and offers a comprehensive picture of the major characteristics encompassing this identity. The second offers a critical analysis of the concept of the White ally educator through the lens of two ideas from CRT—interest convergence and anti-essentialism. We will use these ideas to examine key tensions in the literature and problematize the White ally educator identity.

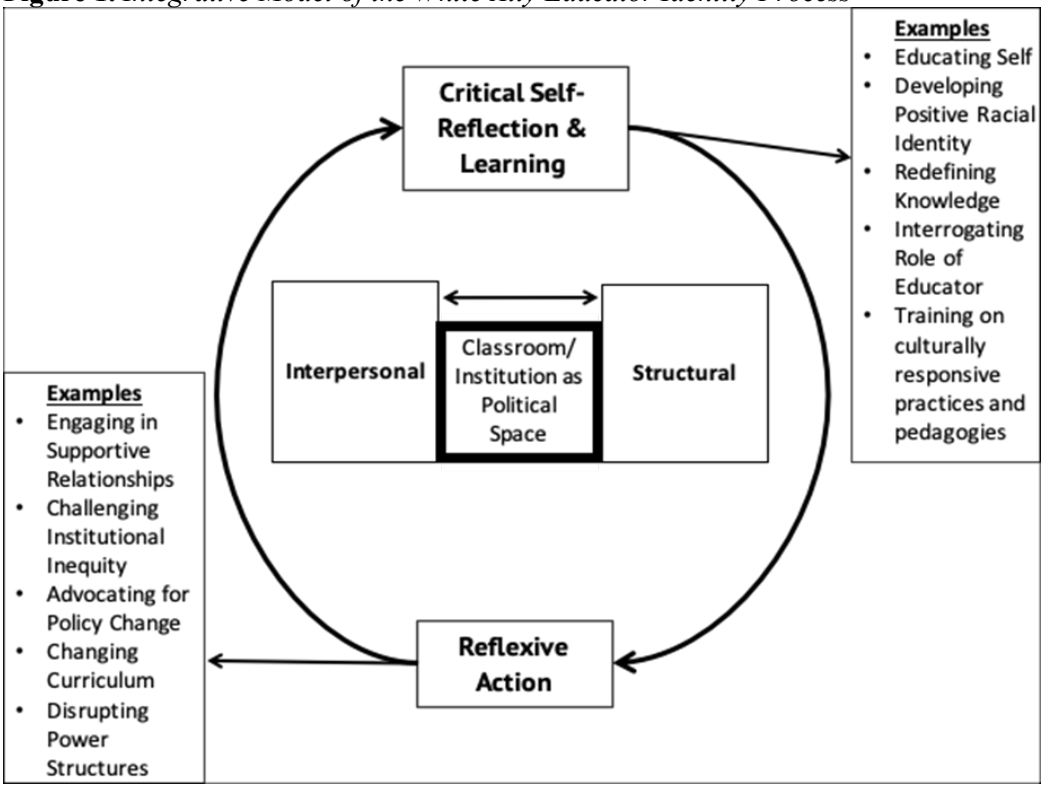
Integrative Model of the Literature

An integrative reading of the literature suggests that being a White ally educator is an iterative identity process consisting of critical self-reflection and reflexive action in and

out of the classroom (Figure 1), represented by the figure's curved arrows. Because White Supremacy exists at the intersection of mutually reinforcing micro and macro level processes, it requires attention to the continuum between interpersonal interactions and structures that reinforce and maintain oppression, represented by the "Interpersonal" and "Structural" boxes flanking the double-sided arrow. Within this continuum lies the classroom and the institution, both of which should be seen as inherently political spaces. Critical self-reflection for White educators includes but is not limited to self-education about White Supremacy, self-recognition of racialized identity, redefinition of knowledge centering marginalized voices and experiential wisdom, and an interrogation of the educator's traditional role. Reflexive action takes place at multiple levels, including the interpersonal, classroom, and structural.

In what follows, we will detail each aspect of the model, summarizing the literature's recognition of educational institutions as inherently political spaces and the importance of understanding and attending to racism at multiple levels. Next, we will provide more detailed explanations of the two major components of the White ally educator process: critical self-reflection and reflexive antiracist action.

Figure 1. *Integrative Model of the White Ally Educator Identity Process*



Classrooms/Institutions as Political Spaces

One key aspect in the White ally process is to recognize that schools are not neutral spaces. Institutional oppression and White privilege are often unnamed, therefore unaddressed. The literature suggested that White ally educators must identify and name them in order to upend them. Working with Black and Brown students and faculty, White allies should "focus unwaveringly on how power and privilege function in the school environment and beyond" (Gaffney, 2016, p. 36). Educators who understand that teaching, research, and service are inherently political more clearly see how their actions, or lack thereof, contribute to or resist racism.

Micro/Macro Racism

Much of the literature warned that ally work cannot be focused on solely the micro or the macro level. Many authors suggested that White educators often situate ally work predominantly at the interpersonal level, believing that supporting their Black and Brown students or colleagues is enough (Miller & Harris, 2018; Patton & Bondi, 2015). As a result, as De Lissovoy and Brown (2013) point out, many White educators fail to see that racism and its pernicious consequences will persist despite kind acts or good intentions:

> The consciousness of whiteness as a structural and global phenomenon can move the conversation of whiteness beyond the idea that White activism is an individualistic endeavor bound to a moralistic predilection to be an agent of change . . . White teachers must understand that whiteness entails much more than their individual privilege or their individual agency—a common theme in the educational literature about White teachers (Bell 2002; Johnson 2002; Swartz, 1992). White activist-oriented teachers must understand that whiteness will operate whether they choose to act or not. (pp. 553-554)

Indeed, not only will Whiteness continue to operate, but working only on an interpersonal level is "futile if efforts do not address overarching inequities" (Patton & Bondi, 2015, p. 505).

Critical Self-Reflection

The White ally educator identity process is an "unending cycle of reflection-action and action-reflection" (Martin, 2008, p. 166). Ongoing critical self-reflection is the bulwark against action that marginalizes BIPOC and reinforces Whiteness. Charbeneau (2015) asserts that implicit in any discussion of White educator allyship and antiracist action "is the requirement for white faculty to gain greater clarity about their own racial identity, their understanding of racial issues, and the role they themselves play in maintaining the racial structure – even as they may work to alter it" (p. 669). Two themes, motivation and stamina, highlight the importance of the self-reflection process.

Motivation. When White educators involved with antiracist causes discuss diversity and oppression without ongoing critical self-reflection, they may not interrogate their motivations. Being driven by superiority, guilt, or shame can undermine the work and leave

BIPOC to address the damage. Many activists have experiences with self-determined allies who carry "romantic notions of oppressed folks they wish to 'help.' These are the ally saviors who see victims and tokens instead of people" (Indigenous Action Media, 2015, as cited by Powell & Kelly, 2017, p. 46). Motivation based on these essentializing notions of White superiority and racial hierarchy will be discussed in more detail in the anti-essentialism section.

In addition to being motivated by superiority, some White educators may be motivated by shame or guilt. Utt and Tochluk (2020) problematize this:

> The difficulty many White people have in conceiving of themselves in a positive way while *also* recognizing being entrenched within a system that privileges them leads many White people to simply reject association with White identity. This rejection, leading to a limited self-reflective process, results in less awareness of subconscious displays of privilege and the ways social conditioning regarding race penetrates White people's psyches. (p. 133)

Boutte and Jackson (2014), speaking from the perspective of Black faculty members who have experienced frustration with so-called White faculty allies, observed that White faculty members who have not fully examined their own motivations often complain about "feeling attacked" (p. 626) or retreat into color-blind perspectives during difficult conversations about diversity and racism. Akamine Phillips et al. (2019) suggest that guilt-motivated White allies often seek affirmation from BIPOC, which can put "undue pressure on a colleague of color to constantly affirm allyship" (p. 9). These actions protect White self-interest and deflect attention from dismantling White Supremacy.

Stamina. The process of being a White ally educator is "ongoing, requiring continual reflection, and perseverance" (Patton & Bond, 2015, p. 489). Han and Leonard (2017) express the need to enter partnerships with White ally colleagues to make necessary changes promoting justice and equity. To facilitate this, White colleagues must establish themselves as persistent potential partners committed to antiracist work.

Reason and Broido (2005) argue that education and self-reflection is key to developing the stamina to meaningfully engage in antiracist action. They point out that while a "critical understanding of one's role as a member of one or more dominant groups" is not a requirement for action, it provides "the foundation on which sustainable ally identity and actions are built" (p. 82). Similarly, Matias (2013) reflects on her work with White teachers and those in training, observing "they are not aware of, nor [...] prepared for, how emotionally draining, mentally taxing, and vulnerable they must make themselves in order to be true White allies" (p. 73).

Reflexive Action

A recurring discussion in the literature centered around who determines if someone is an ally. Not all authors agreed on this point: some highlighted self-identification as a catalyst for antiracist action, while others reflected upon the importance of oppressed groups identifying allies to establish partnership. Collectively, the authors recognized that credibility in allyship is earned through consistent multi-level action that disrupts racism

and shares the risk of such disruption with BIPOC. Actions can include engaging in supportive relationships with marginalized students and faculty, making curriculum culturally responsive and representative of marginalized perspectives, pushing for policies that promote justice, and taking risks to challenge power structures.

Disruption. White ally educators must determine "how willing they are to personally disrupt the powers of whiteness in their jobs and lives in order to keep people of color safe from any form of abuse" (Desnoyers-Colas, 2019, p. 104). White educators have unique positionality to privilege that allows for the disruption of social order. Denevi (2017) highlights that teaching is not a neutral endeavor. This identifies space to act by disrupting methods and curricula that reinforce White Supremacy.

Ally educators model acknowledgement of privilege and complicity, disrupting the "invisibility" of White Supremacy (Davis et al., 2014). Antiracist curriculums acknowledge identity within the classroom setting, ensuring the inclusion of White identity in analysis (Denevi, 2017). Antiracist practice requires moving beyond uplifting cultural and ethnic "variety," critically analyzing power and equity (Akamine Phillips et al., 2019). This includes identifying "master narratives" within curricula aiming to justify subjugation (Han & Leonard, 2017, p. 117).

Additionally, identifying and interrupting microaggressions is a way of leveraging privilege (Denevi, 2017). Decentering Whiteness includes creating space for personal narratives within the classroom. This approach creates space for cultural experiences and understandings (Boucher, 2016). Notably, classroom storytelling includes creating space for instructors themselves to "come out as White" (Maxwell, 2004, as cited in Charbeneau, 2015, p. 658). Collectively, this moves beyond what Freire (1968/1996) deems the banking model of education, to a liberationist practice (Charbeneau, 2015).

Risk. Though maintained through individual action, White Supremacy is pervasively institutional. This necessitates social action beyond interpersonal engagement. "On the institutional level, this 'hidden curriculum' is often manifest in admissions criteria, curriculum requirements, graduation standards, residence hall arrangements, and other formal and informal policies and practices" (Charbeneau, 2015, p. 656). Institutional engagement occurs when White faculty publicly identify and denounce White Supremacist practice, aiming to expose invisible structures that perpetuate and even strengthen White hegemony (Akamine Phillips et al., 2019).

Often, antiracist practices have social and professional repercussions. The literature consistently identified the racial threat directed toward Black communities fighting for social equity. Thus, the ability to leverage White privilege in pursuit of equity emphasizes the value of allyship. White educators engaged in social action are more likely to be praised for their efforts, whereas their colleagues of Color are more likely to be denounced (Patton & Bondi, 2015). White educator allies can utilize this reality to shoulder the burden of the antiracist struggle in partnership with Black and Brown students and colleagues. Despite their privilege, White allies are still likely to face social ostracism for their efforts - especially when engaged in antiracist action within their own White communities (Boutte, & Jackson, 2014). Taking this action, despite risk, is central to the White ally educator identity.

Critical Analysis

Interest Convergence: White Ally Motivation - Help or Hindrance?

Scholars such as bell hooks (1989) note that due to pervasive, institutionalized White Supremacy, White people have the power to invalidate and sacrifice the interest of BIPOC. Thus, vested interest in a social justice issue from those in power is crucial to change (Miller & Harris, 2018). From a CRT lens, this vested interest is known as interest convergence, a term coined by scholar, and civil rights activist, Derrick Bell. Interest convergence is defined as self and systemic-interest as a main source of motivation contributing to support of social justice and equity (Milner, 2008). Specifically, this concept acknowledges that White people will only support racial justice to the extent that it positively impacts White communities (Akamine Phillips et al., 2019; Utt & Tochluk, 2020). It is crucial to acknowledge that current policy, practice, research, and theory within educational institutions serve the interests of White communities (Milner, 2008). Utilizing interest convergence as an analytical tool, this section briefly explores the extent to which White allyship serves the White educator's interests, ultimately reinforcing Whiteness and White Supremacy. We additionally explore the possibility for interest convergence to serve the mutual interests of White educators and BIPOC, advancing the cause of antiracism.

Collectively, the literature acknowledged that lasting social change is not likely to occur without true engagement from White communities. De Lissovoy & Brown (2013) critique the attainability of effective "allyship," pointing to centuries of oppression against Black communities with minimal social change. School desegregation - where some progressive White communities invested ideologically, and yet racial order was not transformed - illustrates this tension. Akamine Phillips et al. (2019) liken ideology without action to "being an ally performer" (p. 15). Moving beyond performance to disruption requires undermining pervasive, deeply embedded privileges of Whiteness - something many White educators may not be prepared to do.

Notably, tension emerged in the literature over the legitimacy of mutual benefits (Boutte, & Jackson, 2014). For example, Han and Leonard (2017) discuss how White homogeneity of school leadership in rural PWIs creates an interest-convergence vacuum. In the absence of White communities engaging in equity work for their own edification, de facto racial segregation maintains White Supremacy. Charbeneau, (2015) highlights how racial equity necessitates significant sharing of status and power. This "sharing" can feel like a loss to White educators who have benefited from being privileged over other racial communities.

Interest convergence conveys "the belief that Whites will tolerate and advance the interests of people of color only when they *promote the self-interests of Whites*" (Lopez, 2003, as cited in Milner, 2008, p. 334). However, it may be possible to see interest convergence as a vehicle for positive change if we see self-interest beyond the win/lose binary (Patton & Bondi, 2015). For instance, self-liberation and the restoration of humanity is a fundamental element of self-interest (Moss & Singh, 2015). Ally educators may see themselves answering a spiritual or moral calling (Denevi, 2017), understanding that dismantling White Supremacy benefits everyone. The approach of social action for "us" is

reflected in the work of Paolo Freire (1968/1996). The Freirian approach creates space for authentic, humanizing relationships (Utt & Tochluk, 2020). Collective action for collective benefit can also protect against motivations that are counterproductive to true allyship.

Anti-Essentialism

Anti-essentialism, closely related to intersectionality, was initially conceptualized by critical race feminist scholars, who critiqued the feminist movement for emphasizing the experiences and aims of White women over those of Women of Color (Grillo, 1995; Harris, 1990; Houh, 2005). They argued that feminists were ignoring the socially, historically, politically, and personally contingent nature of identity and the salience of multiple, intersecting group memberships. The realization by early Black feminists that White feminist leaders "intended to take neither issues of racial oppression nor black women themselves seriously was instrumental in destroying or preventing political alliances between black and white women within the movement" (Harris, 1990, pp. 586-587).

Like gender essentialism, racial essentialism ratifies the social construction of race as an objective and static biological or cultural characteristic—a construction created as a tool for oppression and social hierarchy. Essentializing race ignores vast within-race diversity and the socially and historically contingent nature of race as a construct (Lopez, 1994).

An analysis of the literature on White ally educators through the lens of anti-essentialism problematizes the White ally concept. When White educators see White ally as a fixed or essential identity status, they risk becoming inauthentic partners to BIPOC and playing a counterproductive role in fighting against White Supremacy, setting up White educators to see BIPOC as objects of White good will rather than co-subjects in struggle. This tokenism can mask racism under the guise of good intent (Greene, 1990).

Desnoyers-Colas (2019) asserts that "today's white allies seem to spend their time spouting 'I am your savior' banalities and equally meaningless mantras that they actually believe bring about a sufficient modicum of authentic social justice disruption" (p. 104). This critique represents a common concern: in positioning themselves as allies, many White educators reinforce the destructive helper/helpless binary that, grounded in good intentions, maintains White Supremacy. This reifying dynamic, in which White allies construct themselves as saviors of the helpless Other, has deep, historical roots. For instance, the relationship between Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison "illustrates a common narrative of Black-White abolitionist alliances in which White elites often mobilized the meta-narrative of the hapless Black slave to shape the political discourse of this time" (De Lissovoy & Brown, 2013, p. 543). De Lissovoy and Brown (2013) pose an important question: Given the often exploitative and disappointing history of Black/White alliances, "Where is the impetus for African Americans to be in solidarity with Whites?" (p. 545)

In response to this question, De Lissovoy and Brown (2013) suggest an urgent need for cross-racial solidarity projects to challenge White Supremacy in education, suggesting that projects thus rooted undermine the essentialist White/Black division crucial to upholding White Supremacy. These projects are possible, they argue, in a space somewhere

between the naive hope of re-forming White identities away from Whiteness, and the hardened skepticism that White people can authentically engage in antiracist action. Citing Leonardo from 2009, Utt and Tochluk (2020) call this the "third space" (p. 127), in which White educators can see themselves "outside of the problematic, fixed construction of the 'ally' (Boucher, 2016) and move past feelings of insurmountable guilt (Tatum, 1994)" (p. 3).

Miller and Harris (2018) also warn against the White "messiah syndrome" (p. 5), but see White allyship as the potential third space in which educators engage in authentic antiracist work. When White educators see themselves as works-in-progress, they can avoid essentialized binaries and self-congratulation: "Rather than checking off a cultural competency list, we are transforming ourselves, our students, and the community around us" (p. 10).

The lens of anti-essentialism brings focus to a tension in the White ally educator literature. The concept of a White ally identity is an attempt to conceptualize a way for White educators to dismantle Whiteness while simultaneously being deeply implicated in it. As the literature points out, there are examples of cross-racial alliances, past and present, that have been undermined by White people's inability to escape from essentialized notions of race and hierarchy that underpin White Supremacy. For some, the White ally, particularly defined as an ongoing process, is the way to enter a space "beyond guilt and resentment" (Aveling, 2006, p. 271) that pushes us beyond this conundrum and allows White educators to play a crucial role in dismantling racism in education. For others, the jury is still out.

Discussion

The analysis and integrative conceptual model capture concepts and tools on how White educators can contribute to dismantling racist systems. Moving beyond racial consciousness and good intentions, the model suggests an iterative White identity development approach, necessitating critical self-reflection, learning, and**,** most importantly, consistent multi-level, antiracist action. While much of the literature in this review did not specifically focus on social work educators, we hope it encourages more scholarship in this area. It is possible, though, to extrapolate from this review to inform the practice of social work educators right now. We will start our discussion by offering a few examples of work we are doing that seem to align with our integrative model.

Changing Curriculum: I (Michael) recently volunteered for the opportunity to take a leadership role in developing a new required MSW foundation year course as part of our curriculum revision. I and two of my colleagues designed a course that builds upon the first semester diversity and oppression content to critically examine racism and oppression in past and current social work and apply antiracism and anti-oppressive lenses to assess and inform social work theory, research, and practice. We see this is a step towards more fully integrating antiracist and anti-oppressive perspectives throughout the curriculum.

Interrogating the Role of Educators: As a Black woman who attended a PWI, I (Kynai) can reflect on the many times a White instructor responded with defensiveness when I

brought up an alternative perspective in the classroom. As a social work educator, I encourage students to lean into discomfort, critique, and disruption. I reject an approach to teaching where I as the educator feel the need to be the universal "expert." I see my role as a facilitator of discussion in the classroom—recognizing different types of expertise (personal, professional, and academic, for instance) and intentionally creating a space that values the exchange of diverse perspectives and critical thinking.

Taking antiracist action: As a White, early career social work educator, I (Michael) am working to walk the walk and talk the talk. I still have a long way to go, but I have tried to be intentional about building in activism as part of my pedagogical approach. Antiracist activism can take many forms. Some examples include planning or attending political demonstrations with students, collaborating with students to write letters to local representatives or members of Congress, and partnering with and/or supporting students/colleagues who are pushing schools of social work to be more inclusive and equitable.

Disrupting Whiteness in the social work classroom: I (Kynai) have seen the utility of addressing classroom dynamics and the manifestation or White Supremacy and centering of Whiteness that can occur in all spaces - including the classroom setting. Too often, discussions of cultural competency are externalized. Educators and students talk about what we can do "out there" in our future social work practice. These discussions become more meaningful when we reflect on how we internalize and engage in White Supremacy in the classroom. Noticing and naming when a White student or educator cuts off or minimizes the comments of a Student of Color. Naming and addressing microaggressions. Noticing the racialized identities of the "experts" providing content for the course work.

Problematizing the White Ally Identity

A critical examination of the literature identifies limitations of the concept of "White ally," which include the potential re-centering of Whiteness and the essentialization of racial identity and racial hierarchy. The concept of White ally, similar to the idea of being "woke", may be problematic for ongoing development, since it suggests some sort of "threshold" to be crossed or credential to achieve. Once the threshold is crossed or credential is achieved, the work is done. This point is reinforced by Kendi's (2019) conceptualization of racist and antiracist not as permanent labels, but as temporally bound descriptive terms. One can be an antiracist ally one day and a racist impediment the next, underscoring the point that White Supremacy is most often enacted and reinforced by well-intentioned people rather than overt bigots. One "can only strive to be" antiracist, but there is no finish line (p. 23). Identity and developmental scholars have taken pains to suggest that ally identity development is similarly iterative and processual, but thinking of identity in progressive stages nevertheless contributes to the idea that there is some sort of desirable end-point or ideal developmental pathway (Rowe & Atkinson, 1995).

It is possible that conceiving of a positive, antiracist White identity is challenging because such an identity does not exist. From this perspective, because Whiteness was constructed as a tool of oppression, then any White identity ultimately is rooted in hierarchy and inequality (Garvey & Ignatiev, 1996). According to Garvey and Ignatiev (1996), for

White people to truly be part of the antiracist project, it would require the " . . . unmaking of whiteness" (p. 107). This unmaking moves beyond thinking about individual identity and pushes us to "blow apart the social formation known as the white race, so that *no one* is 'white'" (p. 106). To do this in education, Leonardo (2015) calls for White teachers to be "epistemological traitors" who reject Whiteness and "follow a pedagogy of racial disruption" (p. 96). These educators should not merely be an ally, but a "concrete subject of struggle" (Leonardo, 2002, p. 46). While this is risky work for White educators, Leonardo (2015) asserts that failing to do so puts them "at a different risk as they are dehumanized by racism" (p. 96).

The common thread connecting these perspectives is that White educators have a profound responsibility to do more to dismantle White Supremacy. The literature on educators as White allies provides an important contribution to understanding how White social work educators can be a persistent and authentic part of the antiracist struggle, in partnership with their Black and Brown colleagues and students.

Implications for Social Work

This literature review suggests several implications for research and practice. First, we found only two articles from the social work discipline, suggesting a need for social work to examine the role of White social work educators in dismantling White Supremacy and their readiness, or lack of, to do so. It is possible that the lack of social work research on this topic is due to a sense of complacency, assuming that social workers are already committed to and prepared to fight racism (Corley & Young, 2018). As we have noted, recent scholarship does not support such an assumption. Additionally, most of the authors of the articles in our review identified as White. Obviously, White social work educators are responsible for continued research and self-reflection in this area. However, the perspectives of Black and Brown scholars and educators adds a new level of depth and dimension. For instance, scholarship from the perspective of Black and Brown faculty's experiences with White faculty can help clarify the distinction between "authentic" allies and "ally performers." It is also important to note that much of the work on this topic is conceptual. Further empirical research would help assess key concepts and illuminate the barriers and potentialities of the White educator ally model. For example, as we discussed in the section regarding motivation, much of the literature suggested that White guilt can undermine White educators' antiracist efforts in a variety of ways. However, guilt mostly went undefined and was often conflated with shame, which is a related but different construct (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2018). It would be useful to have more empirical work that could tease out the differences and offer more nuanced understanding of when guilt may be a useful motivator or when it might recenter Whiteness (Grzanka et al., 2020).

More research is needed to understand how White social work educators reach a point where they are ready to engage in the reflection-action process that characterizes the integrated model. Or, perhaps more importantly, if social work educators are not at this point, questions need to be asked about why. Why, for instance, are social work schools hiring educators who are not ready to address issues of critical diversity and oppression in the classrooms, work in partnership with Black and Brown colleagues, and challenge

institutional racism? Further, future research should seek to examine the dynamics of cross-racial coalition building in education (De Lissovoy & Brown, 2013). Indeed, the concept of the ally implies partnership and mutuality. A deeper understanding of the challenges to developing sustainable educational partnerships that decenter Whiteness is needed (Droogendyk et al., 2016).

Ultimately, social work educators are responsible for preparing future social work practitioners to live up to the values of the profession. As social work continues to grapple with its racist past and present (Corley & Young, 2018; Craig de Silva et al., 2007; Dominelli, 1989), educators are called to interrogate themselves and their institutions and engage in educational practice that rejects White Supremacy and equips future social workers with the tools to dismantle it.

Conclusions

> *The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it-at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change.* (James Baldwin, "A Talk to Teachers", 1963/1998, p. 679)

On one side of the most recent iteration of the culture war—where most social workers and social work schools reside—there is economic, political, and social capital to be gained by individuals or institutions who declare that "Black Lives Matter", appoint a diversity, equity, and inclusion task force, or label themselves an "ally." On the other side, terms like "wokeism" and critical race theory have been weaponized in the fight to uphold the status quo and stoke racial resentment. In reality, the actual meaning and impact of these terms and labels varies greatly depending on who is using them and how they are acted upon. This analysis and integrated model suggest that to challenge and upend Whiteness in social work education, White social work educators must move beyond labels and commit to intentional, disruptive action.

Social work educators are responsible for preparing future social work practitioners to live up to the values of the profession. As social work continues to grapple with its racist past and present (Corley & Young, 2018; Craig de Silva et al., 2007; Dominelli, 1989), educators are called to interrogate themselves and their institutions and engage in educational practice that rejects White Supremacy and equips future social workers with the tools to dismantle it.

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