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Toward a Voice-Centered Relational Anti-Racist Listening Praxis in Counselor Education

M Bertrand

This article outlines key elements of an anti-racist listening praxis in counselor education. It demonstrates how racism in relationships of teaching and learning impacts racialized subjectivities, and the personal, cultural, and ancestral worlds these subjectivities articulate, in a way that limits the capacity of racialized practitioners to be relational subjects and uses them instead to reinforce White/Western normativity. It describes a way of listening to and challenging these impacts by recentering the “I” of racialized speakers and the personal, cultural, and traditional knowledges, identities, and preferred ways of being to which they refer in their stories. Examples of the listening praxis are offered. Practical applications in research and methods of teaching and learning in counselor education are considered.

Keywords: racialized subjecthood; self-alienation; anti-racist listening

This article offers an anti-racist listening praxis for counselors and counselor educators. It defines racism as colonially recursive and describes how originary dynamics of colonization echo through racism in relationships of teaching and learning. It outlines a way of listening that makes this echo explicit and that counters its effects on the subjecthood of racialized people.

Racism and Anti-Racism in Counselor Education—A Critical Postcolonial Lens

In critical postcolonial perspectives in counselor education, racism is an exercise of power that establishes Eurocentric clinical praxis and the bodies seen to hold clinical authority (supervisors, teachers, counselors) as natural and preferred while excluding and marginalizing the bodies, lived experiences and the knowledges and healing traditions of Indigenous and Black people and people of Color (racialized people) (Bowers, 2008; Hernández & McDowell, 2010). This occurs, for example, when the professional judgment of racialized supervisors is scrutinized disproportionately relative to that of their White peers (Hernández & McDowell, 2010). It takes place when mental health theory, research, and curricula routinely center White/Western epistemologies such that the approaches of racialized cultures are invisible (Stewart &

Marshall, 2017) or appear divergent, fringe, and/or suspect (Duran & Firehammer, 2017).

In these and many other ways, the lives of racialized people, and the personal, cultural, and ancestral meanings connected to them, are minoritized in counselor education (Hernández & McDowell, 2010). In tandem, the normativity of White/Western realities perpetuates itself. This normativity is inescapable; it permeates the mental health discourses, structures, and institutions that racialized people must navigate in everyday life, even as it eclipses their experiences and perspectives (Kirmayer et al., 2018). As such, racialized people are pressed into a particular relationship to themselves and others as they encounter those discourses, structures, and institutions; they are separated from themselves—their own subjectivities and the personal, cultural, and ancestral worlds that these subjectivities articulate—and are re-oriented toward White/Western ways of knowing, being, and doing things (see for example, Kirmayer et al. on the internal division [2018, p. 25] of colonized peoples).

Minoritization, separation, and re-orientation repeat originary dynamics of colonization. Eurocentric institutions established themselves outside of Europe by dismantling traditional community structures and relationships of

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Indigenous peoples in many parts of the world and absorbing their fragments (those who had been displaced) into new state systems whose continued existence would simultaneously require and peripheralize them (see, for example, Stewart and Marshall [2017] on forced assimilation of Indigenous children in Canada and the dissolution of Indigenous healing traditions in favor of institutionalized “care”). The people who were being colonized were severed from their ancestral lands, networks of relationships, and associated ways of knowing, being, and doing things in the world and either conscripted as individual (re)moveable parts (as a slave or a worker, for example) into the emerging state machinery or discarded. This marked a primary ontological conversion for them. They were no longer people whose bodies and subjectivities participated in and were extended by the relationships and cultures in which they were embedded; their bodies and subjectivities mattered only insofar as they were useful to the material and psychological systems that oppressed them. They were instrumentalized (or repurposed) to fulfill this utility (Fanon, 1967; Kirmayer et al., 2018; Patterson, 1982).

These are some of the colonial recursions of racism, and they offer two interlinked axes by which it can be defined: racism is the exercise of power that naturalizes and exalts White/Western realities by minoritizing racialized people, and racism is also the experience of this power in which racialized people are alienated from themselves and from their personal, cultural, and ancestral horizons and repurposed to prop up White/Western normativity. By extension, anti-racism is the effort to denaturalize racist exercises and experiences of power and to undo their effects. It does this by unmasking how racism works and by recentring the subjectivities and the personal, cultural, and ancestral horizons of racialized people in the discourses, structures, and institutions in which they live and work.

This article addresses the second definitional axis of racism and the anti-racist practice it implies; it focuses on the ways in which racialized people are alienated from themselves and repurposed to prop up White/Western normativity in their relationships of teaching and learning in counselor

education. It describes how self-alienation and repurposing might occur for racialized practitioners: the ways in which racism slackens or interrupts their connection to their own subjectivities and to the personal, cultural, and ancestral horizons that these subjectivities articulate and orients them toward the service of White/Western ways of knowing, being, and doing things. It then proposes a way of listening to stories that racialized practitioners tell about those relationships that tracks and highlights these processes at work and seeks to counter their effects.

Racism in Relationships of Counselor Education: Self-alienation and Repurposing

Conceptualizing racism as colonially recursive enables particular ways of contouring and naming how racialized people might encounter it in counselor education. The self-alienation and repurposing that marked originary dynamics of colonization echo in moments of White/Western dominance in relationships of teaching and learning. They inflect “who” racialized practitioners become in those moments as they separate from themselves and become useful to the White/Western centrality of others. Hernández (2008), for example, described the dynamic that unfolded in group supervision in which a clinical student from Spain came to explain and speak for another student from Latin America who often fell silent in the room, fading to the background of the group as a result. Conversation and reflection on this dynamic facilitated the first student’s awareness of her belief that “people of Color, especially from Latin America, ‘could not make it’ without her ‘help’” (p. 14), replicating historical “justifications” for the colonization of Latin American peoples. Importantly, it also highlighted how the second student became voiceless as the first student spoke for her. This enacted a silence and self-doubt that appeared to confirm the belief that the first student’s implicit assumptions were accurate and that her help was, in fact, necessary.

Similarly, in their study of racial micro-aggressions in clinical supervision, Constantine and Sue (2007) described the ways in which White supervisors’ racism often played out through a palpable agitation and unease with topics of race in

supervision, coupled with a dismissal of race as clinically relevant. These avoidances enabled them to sidestep exposure while effectively denying admittance to the lived experiences and cultural knowledges of Black students in the room. The Black students responded in part by sifting the kinds of clinical material they would present. In an attempt to keep conversations to a domain in which their supervisors appeared more comfortable, and in which their supervisors' clinical expertise seemed most relevant, they began to exclude their work with racialized clients altogether. Out of strategic necessity, this supported and complied with the implicit relational rule in supervision that White/Western clinical approaches are authoritative and that Black and other racialized experiences, knowledges, and ways of knowing are inessential.

These and similar moments in relationships of teaching and learning require racialized practitioners to separate from something in themselves—their own voice as in the case of the Latin American student or their lived experiences and knowledges as in the case of the Black supervisees—and orient themselves to others in ways that support White/Western normativity. Moments such as these impact racialized practitioners in various ways. They might generate active internal conflict between aspects of the self that are allowed into relationships shaped by White/Western dominance and those that must be estranged from them. They might stun parts of the self into silence altogether, losing them in a momentary haze or for much longer (Fanon, 1967; Gordon & Parris, 2018; Kirmayer et al., 2018). In describing the “White cultural blindness” to Indigenous ways of knowing and being in counselor education, for example, Bowers commented: “Often you have to walk away with an empty feeling inside your gut—what just happened there? We doubt ourselves” (2008, p. 73).

Self-alienation and repurposing can be tracked through particular changes in subjectivity and its connection to the personal, cultural, and/or ancestral worlds of racialized practitioners. These changes limit the capacity of racialized practitioners to be subjects, replete with their own experiences, perspectives, identities, and histories in relation to others. The changes fragment and constrict them and render them instead prosthetic to

White/Western normativity. The stories that racialized practitioners tell about their relationships of teaching and learning reflect this. Hernández (2008), for example, noticed a “cognitive dissonance regarding one’s worth and competence” that often appeared for racialized supervisor trainees: a rift appears or widens between who they know themselves to be and who they become in moments inflected by racism. In that research, an African-American student who had felt secure in her clinical ability and identity reflected on the moments in which this began to change during one training experience as a mental health consultant (p. 13):

I experienced several red flags with the (nonprofit) Staff that indicated their discomfort with me as a mental health consultant-in-training. As a participant observer in this project I had to observe the consultees’ interactions among themselves, with the program participants and with myself as a consultee. I participated in staff meetings, classroom settings and workshops. . . . I found myself hardly acknowledged by the staff . . . the male staff forgetting my name, failing to ask me questions directly, not being informed when meeting times and events were changed and/or canceled, and ignoring my suggestions altogether. It was in these interpersonal interactions I found myself shutting down and feeling frustrated [emphases added].

In this sequence, the unitary “I” who *experiences, has to observe, and participates* suddenly parts: a distinction appears between the self (“myself”) she becomes in interactions with the staff, a self who is “hardly acknowledged” and then *shuts down and feels frustrated*, and the “I” who now *finds* her. The self she becomes in relation to others is defined by a marginality (hardly acknowledged) that serves to manage their “discomfort.” As this self comes forward, an integral connection to who she is (my name) and what she knows (my suggestions) is suspended.

In light of these experiences of racism in relationships of teaching and learning in counselor education, the effort to recuperate the connection to one’s subjectivity and to the personal, cultural, and ancestral worlds that this subjectivity articulates

becomes necessary, intentional, and fierce. As one racialized supervisor candidate commented in the research of Garcia et al., “I have been forced to go outside the supervisory context ... to help stabilize the violent rejection of myself and what I believe and experience to be real” (2009, p. 28).

A Voice-Centered Relational Anti-Racist Listening Praxis

As defined above, anti-racism seeks to unmask the operation and experience of racism and to undo its effects. In this context, anti-racist listening strives to both illuminate and counter the processes of self-alienation and repurposing that racialized people might experience through racism in their relationships. The listening praxis outlined here serves these objectives. It uncovers racist practices and experiences by demonstrating how self-alienation and repurposing occur for racialized people in ways that reinforce White/Western normativity. It does this by following the stories that racialized people tell about those relationships with close attunement to changes in their subjectivities and the personal, cultural, and ancestral worlds these subjectivities articulate in story moments of White/Western dominance. It studies the impact of these changes on the speakers' capacity to be or remain a subject in relation to others in those story moments and whether and in what ways these changes serve to reinforce White/Western normativity. In the course of doing this, listening praxis also counters these effects of racism. Focusing on the subjectivities and personal, cultural, and ancestral worlds of racialized people and tracking how these might shrink, fragment, or otherwise change shape in ways that support White/Western normativity paradoxically recenters, expands, and re-integrates them for the listener, and it does so in the service of racialized perspectives and experience. Listening in this way seeks to connect with racialized speakers specifically as *subjects* within the listener imagination itself.

This listening praxis derives from a narrative research methodology that was developed using the Listening Guide (LG) (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017), which offers a way of focusing on speaker subjectivity through *voice*. Through “I” poems crafted from “I” statements, voice in the LG is

identified through patterned, recurring, or other meaningful distinctions of content or syntax that indicate how the “I” of the speaker is orienting to the self, world, and others at any given moment in their story. This orientation changes in response to various factors such as the speaker's perception or experience of other listeners, both physically present and internally ‘felt’ or imagined; the environment in which speaking and listening are taking place and what it signals about the kinds of discourses that tend to operate there; or the story events that are being described and the relationships that are being enlivened for the speaker within them. The LG creates meaning out of how voices express themselves, as well as the ways in which they relate to each other, in conjunction with these factors (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017).

Listener subjectivity is key to this enterprise. Listeners notice and reflect on how they connect or fail to connect with the speaker and what is being said to become alert to how this influences the meaning that they create. This serves to disrupt the *silent* workings of that influence and to use it instead to guide understanding intentionally and reflexively (Petrovic et al., 2015). Reflecting on one's own reaction enables listeners to attune more closely to what it might indicate about the listening relationship and the context in which listening is taking place, as well as about events in the story or the quality and dynamics of voices as the speaker talks about them. It invites a relationship with the speaker that is defined less by the tendency to project or ventriloquize oneself through another's story but works instead to appreciate another's interiority by consciously recognizing, listening to, and distinguishing it from one's own (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017).

The listening praxis draws on the ethic and method of the LG to identify and listen closely to the voices of racialized speakers. In addition, the listening praxis pays particular attention to the personal, cultural, and ancestral knowledges, identities, and preferred ways of being that voices express (Bertrand, 2020). In doing so, it tracks how voices change in relational moments marked by White/Western dominance; the impact of this change on the meaning and significance of the speaker's personal, cultural, and ancestral worlds;

and the ways in which this voice changes and this impact defines the relational positions of the speaker in their story: “who” the speaker becomes in relation to others and how this is elicited by and contributes to White/Western normativity. The method of this listening praxis is detailed below.

Voice

The listening praxis identifies voice as a primary aspect of subjectivity, such as a *knowing voice* that thinks, opines, makes meaning, and has beliefs; a *feeling voice* that conveys emotion, moods, visceral and physiological responses, and sensation; a *voice of action* that engages physically or interpersonally with the world, as well as with different aspects of the self as if they were external others, as in speaking to oneself; and a *voice of identity* that expresses key statements of who the “I” is, including cultural, vocational, and demographic markers that the “I” claims, as well as characteristics and tendencies that weave in other voices to express something that the “I” considers to be definitive of who they are, such as what the “I” always thinks, never does, or tends to feel. Voice includes not only explicit “I” statements but also other expressions in which the “I” participates directly, such as “we” or an impersonal “you,” or indirectly to convey knowing, feeling, action, and identity, such as “being humble is important to me” (identity), “it was unnerving” (feeling), “my sense of the situation is that ...” (feeling/knowing).

Voice Quality and Dynamics

Listening involves attuning to how the quality of these voices and the relationships between them evolves as a story unfolds. This quality and these dynamics reflect changes in subjectivity and the relational/interactional capacity to be a subject at various points in the story. Does an agentic voice (“I learned, I thought”), for example, start to give way to a passive one that is led by others (“I was encouraged to think”)? Does a declarative voice (“I believe it is important to ...”) start to recede and hedge what it is saying (“I don’t think we can discount the importance of ...”)? How does a voice that feels and senses its way through a situation defy or make way for another voice that has been formally taught something? How and when do the

meaning and rhythm of voices start to amplify, complement, or cancel each other?

The Listener

The listener considers their own evolving reactions to the story as a whole and to particular qualities and dynamics of voices. What might these reactions indicate about the events in the story and/or how the voices are rendering them? Is confusion or irritation arising, for example, when the “I” makes a hasty retreat into abstraction or obfuscation? Is it easier to listen when the “I” becomes more or less assertive? How might any of these reactions and the perceptions that accompany them position the listener relative to the speaker within the story event being told? How might they reflect the listener’s own social location, experience of, and relationship with White/Western normativity more generally?

Personal, Cultural, and Ancestral Horizons

Listening then focuses particularly on the kinds of voice qualities and dynamics that arise in moments marked by White/Western dominance, both within the story and within the micro-exchanges of speaking and listening. How do voice qualities and dynamics in those moments relate to voice patterns throughout the story as a whole? What do the voices convey about the speaker’s personal, cultural, and traditional knowledges, identities, and preferred ways of being throughout the story, and how do they do this? How do voice qualities and dynamics that occur in moments of White/Western dominance influence the presence or meaning of these knowledges, identities, and ways of being?

The following briefly demonstrates this method. Hernández and McDowell (2010) cite the research of Taylor et al. (2007) in which a supervisor of Color finds the value of her decades of experience eclipsed in her encounter with a White supervisee. Through my own experiences and the ways that I, as a racialized (Black and South Asian) listener, have come to understand the power dynamics of racism, I paid particular attention to the moments in which clinical authority was denied or inverted, the ways the speaker’s voice qualities and dynamics changed, and how these pivoted her relationship

with her own knowledges and way of enacting her identity in this excerpt:

I was supervising a White upper middle-class woman and I had questions about what she was doing with this multiracial couple, and she was dealing with it in a very ... you know, not following through on what I had suggested she do and when I challenged her, she would flip it around, she would kind of talk to me about my insecurity. And what was that about? So it was very interesting because she was a White woman and a very wealthy woman and I thought she was using her White privilege and her class privilege to put me in a position, like, wait a minute, my insecurity? How is this working, here? [emphases added] (Taylor et al., 2007, p. 94, as cited in Hernández and McDowell, 2010, p. 32)

A knowing voice (“I had questions”) that holds clinical knowledge about race in relationship (“multiracial couple”) both interweaves with and informs a voice of action that engages her in the relationship and activity of supervision (“I was supervising,” “I had suggested,” “I challenged her”). The voices are agentic; the “I” determines and drives their functions. The voices support and build on each other, enabling her to enact her supervisory identity, to “be a supervisor,” in the relationship. At the story moment where the White, upper middle-class supervisee flips it around (“she would kind of talk to me”), the object position into which the “I” enters defines her through a deficit (“my insecurity”). As a characterization, this deficit threatens identity. At this point, the “I” breaks off from narrating the story events of the relationship itself. The knowing voice that initially “had questions” inside that story space now raises them outside of and as a commentary on it (“What was that about ... it was very interesting because she was a White woman and a very wealthy woman”). The knowing voice and its knowledges about race and class then straddle these spaces, returning to narration of a past moment of thinking (“I thought”) and then re-enacting that thinking out loud in the present moment with the listener (“Wait a minute, my insecurity? How is this working here?”). The voice of action, which had initially mobilized this

knowing and its knowledges within the supervisory relationship, is now silent.

Emergence of the Anti-Racist Listening Praxis: Listening to Counselor Development

This listening method was developed within a study conducted into how beginning counselors experience internal representations of people who were significant to their clinical development (Bertrand, 2020). Through iterative applications of the LG, the listening method in that study came to focus on changes in voice quality and in the dynamics between voices in key narrative moments of contact: moments in which a significant figure entered or became present in the counselors’ stories in a way that influenced meaning. Voice changes in these narrative moments of contact were then tracked for how they influenced the meaning and significance of the personal, cultural, and traditional knowledges, identities, and preferred ways of being expressed in those moments. Listening in this way brought into relief particular changes that took place in racialized counselors’ subjectivity and in their relational positions as subjects when their stories encountered a supervisory figure who enacted particular kinds of White/Western dominance in the relationships they described. In those moments, the supervisees’ voices of knowing, feeling, action, or identity became disconnected from each other and/or began to disappear in their stories in some way, and as they did so, their personal, traditional, and cultural knowledges, identities, and preferred ways of being became doubtful to them, de-familiarized and bracketed from or subordinated to White/Western clinical notions of growth, competency, or development (Bertrand, 2020). Two vignettes of these changes are presented from that research below.

Vignette One

One counselor’s story detailed her conversations with a clinical supervisor in which the meaning and significance of being humble, a value she identified as important to her Southeast Asian culture and country of origin, started to become dubious as she learned how to claim space for herself in relationship in ways that were more legible to Western discourses of selfhood. For the counselor,

being humble was a relational ethic that involved “modesty, not boasting ... giving credit to others” (Bertrand 2020, p. 90) a way of decentering the self in support of others. Translating axiomatic understandings of *being humble* in her language in a Western, English-speaking research setting, she commented:

There’s also this phrase about how - how could I translate it? Oh my goodness ... if you let yourself be taken advantage of, you are actually taking advantage. ... If a person’s butting in front of you ... you’re letting yourself be disadvantaged, but you are the winner still at the end of the day. There’s an advantage to being disadvantaged. (p. 235)

With this translation, being humble begins to dissolve its meaning and purpose: “I don’t know what the advantage is. I don’t think it was ever backed up [laughing].”

When it appeared in supervisory conversations during her clinical training in a similar setting, being humble was again losing ground:

It might have been a conversation about ... me wanting to ask [a client] something that I kind of second guessed myself and didn’t ask it. Later I shared it and [my supervisor] goes, “Well, why didn’t you ask that?” And then I said, I don’t know ... I didn’t - I said something about being humble. And then he goes [laughing] “So what’s that about?” (p. 235)

The meaning of being humble is telescoped (“something about being humble”); its elision from the interaction and the story, as in the translation above, carried by the voice, *I don’t know*.

Not knowing plays a key role in the relationship generally. In one story moment in which the supervisor asked the counselor how she conceptualized growth, she said, “Subconsciously I just thought, should be linear, right? Straight line, no doubts whatsoever” (p. 234). Bracketed within her and from the relationship (“subconsciously”), the knowing that takes place is definitive, agentic (“I just thought ... no doubts whatsoever”). It changes and gives over to the supervisor when it enters conversation with him: “But that’s just never how it works and [laughs] my supervisor actually drew a graph like this and said, ‘this is what growth

looks like’ and I said, ‘oh yeah. That’s right’” (p. 234). The knowing that occurred and was possible elsewhere converts and is corrected inside the supervisory relationship.

With this shift in knowing, being humble is less certain; its value to her becoming a counselor is now in question. In the first story moments of that relationship, the counselor described a moment in which she was “invited to think” differently about being humble: “I really was challenged to reflect on what being humble meant because that is something that my culture ... values ... and so I was really challenged to think about what that meant for the work” (p. 235). Knowing that had been definitive and agentic just moments prior and elsewhere in her story (e.g., “I was totally familiar”) becomes markedly passive—directed by someone other than herself—and deferred (“I was invited to think/I really was challenged to reflect/I was really challenged to think”) (p. 232).

A voice of action punctuates this. With immediacy and paradoxical agency, the “I” tried hard to adopt and integrate the supervisor’s ideas, words, and ways of phrasing things to clients. As an “I” poem, these two voices say: “I was invited to think/ I used/ I borrowed/I really was challenged to reflect/I was really challenged to think”; “I came to learn/I still struggled/I was also challenged to think” (p. 233). Knowing had started to empty itself, and she worked tirelessly to fill it with his ways of doing things.

As the story of that relationship came to an end, the counselor reflected: “I think it could be a multiple kind of thing. ... I could still hold onto the humbleness which I still do value ... but then at the same time it’s like, we try that on also rather than ‘let’s just cast that aside and come here.’ So, I do wish that there maybe could have been a bit more space for that to be held” (p. 97).

Vignette Two

Another racialized counselor described a key supervisory relationship in which she learned to hold space for clients who were distraught, without becoming drawn too closely into interpersonal dynamics with them that conflicted with her role as a clinician. This narrative of learning dovetails with a narrative of compliance; the training took place at a residential addiction treatment center, and clients’

distress in the counselor's story was in response to involuntary removal and other consequences they faced for violating institutional rules set by the counselor and her team as clinical boundaries.

As the story chronicled the early part of the supervisory relationship and the counselor's own transitions within it, the counselor shifted from an agentic subject position "I" into an intermediate position where her subject functions were subordinated to and determined by those of the supervisor: "She would kind of *encourage me to take the next step* ... she would kind of *prompt me, like shaping me* ... kind of take on a different behavior, *a behavior I should take* on in order for the safety of everyone" [emphasis added] (p. 246).

In this intermediate position, the "I" is an object shaped by the supervisor. She turns around and accepts this ("I should take on"), adopting not only the "behavior" that was elicited but an internal orientation that validates and prioritizes it. She is both herself and an extension of the supervisor, and her claim over her own subject functions is attenuated. This was key to the learning that took place in specific moments between them:

[The client] didn't really agree to the discharge but she didn't feel like she had a choice so she just stormed out of the room. And she just like kept walking to the bigger room where the rest of the women were. And so my supervisor ... was like right behind me and she was kind of walking beside me the whole time. And basically she was like looking at me to ... stop her, right from entering in [the] room ... kind of like, "do something." (p. 235)

In this transitional moment of trying not to be overtaken and immobilized by a client's reaction, the "I" disappears from the initial moments of the story ("[The client] didn't really agree ... where the rest of the women were") and then appears in a way that highlights that she had in fact been there all along. The action of the "I" in the events themselves and her appearance in the story she tells about them are directly facilitated by the supervisor who was "right behind" and also "walking beside" her "the whole time," looking at her to "do something." It is in conjunction with what the supervisor wants and urges that the "I" and her subject functions are

mobilized: "Because she wanted me to be the one to step up, right? I was like the team leader" (p. 245). From that intermediate position between herself and the will of the supervisor, an identity emerges, becoming "the one to step up" pivots the "I" into an autonomous expression where she fully claims this identity and its attendant duties as her own: "I was the team leader," "I just called out to the woman," "I just said to her, 'can you please come with me?'" (p. 245).

The "I" reclaimed her voices differently in story moments away from the supervisor. In a hypothetical scenario where she could envision responding to a situation by herself, she said: "Sometimes I get drawn ... I feel like I want to help the person ... so I would probably by myself want to advocate, you know, for the client because I see that they're really struggling" (p. 248). Through *feeling*, the voices express a certain way of seeing things that extend into a different type of action: advocacy. Expanding on the meaning of advocacy brought the story to a core value of compassion that she had learned growing up—a key to her connection with her mother who taught her not to "react to things on the surface" or "judge people when they say things or when they do things because there's always something deeper" (p. 154). Compassion was important to the counselor's identity and how she wanted to enact that identity in practice: "I don't believe somebody ... with all these ways of coping when they come into a place and suddenly be okay and be able to manage in a quote, unquote, normal way or the way that we would like them to behave" (p. 153).

These meanings appear outside of stories that detail her relationship with the supervisor. The introduction to that relationship demonstrates the moment of induction into the positions it extended to her. The counselor begins that introduction: "When I joined the agency ... I was working under another person whom I also deeply admire ... we are still friends today." The supervisor, returning from maternity leave, then enters the story for their first meeting and the "I" is "struck": "I just noticed how blue her eyes were, like just really beautiful ... kind of piercing ... eyes that really could speak ... when she looks at you, you know she really sees you kind of eyes" (pp. 242-243). Through the

blueness of the eyes, the subject function of seeing is transferred from the “I” (“I just noticed”) to the supervisor, (“she really sees you kind of eyes”) in relation to whom “I” becomes an impersonal object “you.” This continues as the story chronicles the early period of their relationship together. The supervisor in those story moments would, for example, “make comments about something maybe you never thought about” (p. 243) as a way of “helping you to see what might be going on internally”; “supporting you in being able to ... develop maybe more of a confidence or to overcome certain things” and “building you up to do the job” (p. 243).

In this relational position and this relationship to her own subjectivity, the bracketing of personal and cultural meanings, values, and identities is as subtle as it is strong. It is amplified by an institutional context in which one’s subjectivity appears autonomous and yet is overwhelmingly shaped from without: “you’re the one in charge ... and what the managers or the supervisors do would be just to reflect back [to] you what you should do ... coming from your own judgement.” Amid the intimate asymmetry of supervision, the entrancing power of a White gaze, and the weight of the institution, “you feel like you’re a part of something, but then you don’t really have control” (p. 248).

Applying the Listening Praxis in Counselor Education

The anti-racist listening praxis was developed through data analysis of interview transcripts (Bertrand, 2020). As such, its immediate domain in counselor education is research, where it can be further developed as a method to listen to the experiences of racialized practitioners in their clinical and professional relationships. The praxis can also be integrated into teaching methods in counselor education through text-based exercises that enable practitioners to become familiar with it and ultimately incorporate it into how they listen to others in the room.

Text-based practice can take place in numerous ways (see, for example, Petrovic et al., 2015). As a key element of developing cultural competency in general and anti-racist awareness in particular, students and other practitioners of counseling and supervision might use the praxis to listen to text-

based first-person stories of racialized people in fiction, autobiography, or published excerpts of research interviews. This would enable them to develop a way of thinking about how relational forms of racism might be operating in those stories and how the speaker might be encountering and internally responding to them. Specifically, it would attune practitioners to process markers that signal key shifts in the subjecthood of racialized speakers as they encounter White/Western dominance. These might include shifts in the quality and dynamics of speakers’ knowing, feeling, action, and identity voices that indicate they are retreating from what they are expressing or losing strength or connection to each other in some way; attendant change in the meaning and significance of the speaker’s personal, cultural, and ancestral frames of reference where these fall silent becomes empty or more dubious and a corresponding dynamic with others in the story who represent or enact White/Western dominance, one in which the speaker’s position as a subject in relation to them has been diminished. Process markers would alert the listener to key interventions that could be made with the speaker as a hypothetical client or supervisee: conversational prompts to explore and expand the personal, cultural, and ancestral terrains of robust and diminished voices, for example, or the dynamics of the story relationship that impacts them. The use of process markers and their associated interventions in general, and of voice quality and dynamics in particular, has been a key part of training in experiential therapies elsewhere (see, for example Elliott et al., 2003).

With practice identifying these process markers and hypothetical interventions, students and other practitioners might then listen to transcriptions of select sessions with clients and supervisees. This would enable them to attend more closely to shifts within the speakers’ voices—their associated personal, cultural, and ancestral terrains—and importantly, in the dynamics the listeners themselves are creating with them. Using the video/audio and the transcriptions as a method of tape-assisted recall that Rober et al. studied (2008), listeners might also be invited to record what they were thinking and feeling at key moments in a session and track changes in their own subjectivity and how they were negotiating being a subject with

clients and supervisees in the room. This would enable them to envision interventions of relationship to support the subjecthood of racialized speakers, judicious use of immediacy, curiosity, or silence, for example, and to begin attempting these in their work.

Relational safety is key to any of these applications (Hernández & McDowell, 2010). Without it, the listening praxis can become intrusive, subjecting racialized vulnerability to scrutiny or enabling the presumption of distally knowing what someone might be thinking and feeling without validating this knowledge directly with them in live listening relationships, or otherwise bracketing it, making it more tentative and transparent in its contingency on listener subjectivity and the ways in which social location shapes it. In live listening relationships, relational safety also includes *dialogue* in the interest of “mutual challenge and collaboration” (Hernández & McDowell, 2010, p. 33), *interpersonal care and responsibility*, and *critical consciousness*. Dialogue in this sense is a practice of relationship in which all are encouraged to challenge and confront perspectives and express opinions, ideas, and concerns. It ushers practitioners and researchers into a new way of relating in dynamics that typically have been starkly hierarchical, where the expression of thought and the exercise of meaning making have traditionally been asymmetrical. Dialogue relies on interpersonal care and responsibility developed and demonstrated throughout the course of a relationship. This involves anticipatory empathy—appreciating the risks of open communication and its impact on the other, as well its implications for missteps, rupture, and repair. Finally, the thrust of dialogue and interpersonal care and responsibility must emphasize critical consciousness—a willingness and ability to understand how power works within and across political, economic, and social systems (Garcia et al., 2009) and to track how this power echoes within the microprocesses of relationship itself (Hernández & McDowell, 2010).

Conclusion

Racism alienates racialized people within themselves and from their own personal, cultural, and ancestral horizons and orients them to others in

a way that reinforces White/Western normativity. It therefore voids or limits the possibility of establishing oneself as a subject in relation to others, as part of being *a person* more generally (Fanon, 1967; Gordon & Parris, 2018). The listening praxis seeks to address this by centering the “I” of racialized speakers and attuning to how this “I” changes moment to moment in interactions with others marked by White/Western dominance. The listening praxis focuses on how the meaning and significance of speakers’ personal, cultural, and traditional knowledges, identities, and preferred ways of being are influenced by these changes. A central dialectic is at work in this method: focusing on the speaker’s “I” momentarily renders it interchangeable with, and therefore ontologically equal to, one’s own; at the same time, the listener recognizes the specificity of the speaker’s personal, cultural, and ancestral contexts and the impact on relational positioning and access to power this creates for them. By listening in this way to racialized counselors, the praxis seeks to subvert some of the very processes by which racism operates in their relationships of teaching and learning.

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