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Introduction to the Special Issue: Anti-Racist Counselor Education

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Introduction to the Special Issue: Anti-Racist Counselor Education

Paul C Harris, Erik M Hines, Renae D Mayes

In the United States, race has mattered for centuries. Starting in 1619 when slaves were first brought to Virginia (Hannah-Jones, 2019) and currently in 2020 when George Floyd, a Black man, was murdered by law enforcement over an alleged fake \$20 bill, Black people have endured cyclical trauma because of the color of their skin. The ubiquitous nature of racism has far-reaching, deleterious, and interactive effects. For example, within the health-care field, the assumption that Black women can endure more pain than others has partly contributed to disproportionately more deaths among Black mothers during childbirth (Hoffman et al., 2016; Martin & Montagne, 2017). Those living on the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum in the United States are disproportionately Black, and the challenges related to living in poverty are well documented (Do et al., 2019). In education, the conditions curated by policies all but ensure that Black students have a disproportionately more difficult time accessing and maximizing educational opportunities in America (Harris et al., in press; Hines et al., 2020; Hines et al., in press; Mayes et al., 2019). The need for anti-racist efforts is an urgent one. This special theme issue “Anti-Racist Counselor Education” is both a timely and applicable one given the long-standing relevance of race in America and the current national discussions about how we can repair the damage done over centuries. To start, there must first be a clear understanding of what anti-racism is and what it is not and then how counselor educators can be agents of change in how they structure and deliver program content to future counselors.

Anti-racism is defined as the practice of identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures, and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism and its residual effects (Kishimoto, 2018). Kendi (2019) asserts that one is either racist or anti-racist in that you are either actively upholding racism or actively disrupting and dismantling the racist systems that pervade our society. And while some intentionally maintain racist systems, many can also do so unintentionally. This can be particularly observed in education, where many genuinely desire to see all students excel and thrive but have yet to learn how to see and actively challenge the status quo that privileges some and marginalizes others. Scholars (Bell et al., 2020) have especially called for action against anti-Black racism and white supremacy in the academy. In counselor education, specifically, racism can be upheld and perpetuated unintentionally by the most well intentioned. If counselors, for example, are not trained to dismantle oppressive systems and practices, they can do more harm than good to those receiving their services. For example, counselors who embrace Color ambivalence as central to multicultural competence will overlook the totality of their Black clients’ experience, which is influenced by the ways in which they are raced, gendered, and so forth. School counselors who fail to recognize the policies that perpetuate the inappropriate and disproportionate assignment of Black boys to special education or the gatekeeping mechanisms that keep Black students out of honors and advanced courses will do just as much damage to Black children as the bully who calls another

Black child “nigger” on the playground. It is critical, then, for counselor education programs to move from only being aware of how racism operates to infusing anti-racism themes throughout all their pre- and in-service training to ensure that graduates are well prepared to serve the unique post-traumatic needs of so many who continue to endure racism at every turn.

As editors of this special theme issue, we enthusiastically present 10 theoretical and qualitative articles focusing on anti-racism in teaching and supervision in counseling. In the first article, Erin Mason, Adrienne Robertson, Jan Gay, Nkenji Clarke, and Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy expand on the original Transforming School Counseling Initiative tenets with language that explicitly supports anti-racism. The authors offer a definition of *anti-racism* and align the revised tenets with sample class assignments and experiences to be implemented by counselor educators. In the second article, Jyotsana Sharma and Carlos P. Hipolito-Delgado present a rationale for why a separate course centering critical theories in the counselor education curriculum is beneficial in counselor education programs. The authors present data from student evaluations, instructor reflections, and student focus groups that justify that such a course would facilitate critical consciousness in preservice counselors.

In the third article, Ileana A. Gonzalez and Raven K. Cokley propose another model for an explicit core anti-racist counseling course. The course creates a unique space for processing emotions related to the complexities of race and white supremacy. In the next article, Michelle D. Mitchell and Erin E. Binkley provide a rationale for self-care as an ethical imperative, introduce self-care strategies, and challenge students to build self-care regimens predicated on justice and anti-racist foundations. In the fifth article, Michel'e R. Bertrand outlines key elements of an anti-racist listening praxis in counselor education. Bertrand unpacks how dynamics of colonization echo through racism in relationships of teaching and learning and provides strategies for how to counter the effects of such on racialized populations. Kara Ieva, Jordon Beasley, and Sam Steen, in article six,

offer potential solutions for school counselors to promote anti-racist practices and racial healing engagement. They explicate the rationale for more robust training of preservice school counselors in group counseling such that they acquire the requisite knowledge and skills to eliminate inequities through their practice. In article seven, Angie D. Cartwright, Chandra D. Carey, Huan Chen, Dominique S. Hammonds, Ana G. Reyes, and Mickey E. White explore the supervision experiences of doctoral level supervisors through a qualitative phenomenological study. Counselor educators can use the findings to assist with structuring their supervisory experiences in such a way that ensures that clients are served through an anti-racist lens. Camelia V. Green and Danielle Burton, in article eight, offer a womanist supervision model tailored to suit the needs of Black clients through anti-racist supervisee development. The authors provide specific calls to action for all counselor educators as it relates to their own self-awareness, behavior, and integration of womanist pedagogy into curricula. In article nine, Edwin Hernandez, Enrique Espinoza, and Jewel Patterson present a qualitative exploration of school counselor experiences and how they make sense of the need to divest from harmful practices in schools. The results of the study help inform school counselor anti-racist practice as it relates to dismantling punitive practices that disproportionately harm Black and Brown youth in schools. In the last article, Kara Ieva, Michael Hannon, and Linwood Vereen present a self-study that explores their own experiences in developing school counselors and counselor educators who acknowledge and resist anti-Black racism. Their investigation of the disruption of heteronormative structures inherent in counseling and their resulting thematic analysis provide direction on confronting racism, systemic oppression, and cyclical trauma in counselor education.

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