Addressing Whiteness in Nursing Education
The Sociopolitical Climate Project at the University of Washington School of Nursing

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This article describes a project designed to change the climate of whiteness in academic nursing. Using an emancipatory, antiracist perspective from whiteness studies, we describe a project that helped faculty and staff to work together to challenge and begin to change the status quo of unnamed white privilege and racial injustice in nursing education. **Key words:** *academic climate*, *academic nursing*, *antiracism*, *antiracist education*, *diversity*, *racism*, *whiteness*, *white privilege*

. . .the question is not "Did racism take place?"

but rather,

"In which ways did racism manifest in this specific context?"[1]

Emancipatory inquiries are defined as "ideologies that seek to understand oppression in society and, through this understanding, transform it."[2] Antiracist education is emancipatory in that it seeks to educate people to identify, name, challenge, and transform the norms, patterns, traditions, structures, and institutions that keep racism and white supremacy in place. Antiracist educators conceptualize racism as a multilayered, multidimensional, ongoing, and adaptive process that functions to maintain, reinforce, reproduce, normalize, and render invisible white power and privilege. Antiracist education deliberately goes beyond the "celebrating differences" approach common to most

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diversity training, and centers the analysis on the social, cultural, and institutional powers that so profoundly shape the meaning and outcome of racial difference. Antiracism education defines *racism* as a multilevel system of inequality profiting white people at the expense of people of color, and recognizes racism as embedded in all aspects of society and the socialization process; no one who is born into and raised in Western culture can escape being socialized to participate in these relations.[3,4] Racism is not fluid within the United States in that it does not flow back and forth, one day benefiting whites and another day (or even era) benefiting people of color. The direction of power between white people and people of color[1] is historic, traditional, normalized, and deeply embedded in the fabric of US society.[5,6] A key aspect of this emancipatory education process is to "raise the consciousness" of white people about what racism is, and how it works. To accomplish this, the dominant understanding of racism as isolated to acts of (bad) individuals, rather than as a system in which we are all enmeshed, must be countered.

"Whiteness" refers to the dimensions of racism that serve to elevate white people over people of color.[7] Since the early 1990s, nursing has been challenged to expose and

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change institutionalized systems of white privilege and dominance, and to include antiracist education in nursing curriculum and diversity work.[8-13] But instead of antiracist education, trainings and course content focusing on "cultural competence" are the norm in nursing, an approach that usually leaves intact institutionalized structures of white privilege and racism.

In an attempt to move an emancipatory framework of antiracism into the nursing mainstream, we developed and implemented a project designed to challenge and transform our climate of unmarked (unnamed) white privilege at the University of Washington School of Nursing. Assisted by a diversity grant from the University of Washington (UW), the School of Nursing (SON), and strong support from (then) Dean Nancy Woods, we designed, implemented, and evaluated a series of antiracist workshops for faculty and staff; we also institutionalized antiracism efforts by obtaining school-wide endorsement of a diversity statement that mandates continuing antioppression action. This project supported 2 goals of the SON 2005-2010 Strategic Plan: to promote high quality of work life and supportive environment and to recruit and retain a diverse student body, faculty, and staff. The overall goal of this project was to improve the sociopolitical climate at the SON by making explicit and changing the way unacknowledged white norms, beliefs, and behaviors inhibited our efforts to be inclusive of "difference." The goal of emancipatory work is social change.

It is important to note that to address racism and whiteness within a program is not to mark the program as particularly racist or as a special case of racism but to acknowledge that the institutional default is racist; to *not* address racism is to actively collude with racism.

BACKGROUND

What I have been proposing is a profound respect for the cultural identity of students—a cultural identity that implies respect for the language of the other, the color of the other, the gender of the other, the class of the other, the sexual orientation of the other, the intellectual capacity of the other; that implies the ability to stimulate the creativity of the other. But these things take place in a social and historical context and not in pure air.

Paulo Freire[14(pp307-308)]

About whiteness

Whiteness scholars define *racism* as encompassing economic, political, social, and cultural structures, actions, and beliefs that systematize and perpetuate an unequal distribution of privileges, resources, and power between white people and people of color.[15] This unequal distribution benefits whites and disadvantages people of color overall and at the group level (although individual whites may be "against" racism, they still benefit from a system that privileges their group). Frankenberg defines *whiteness* as multidimensional:

Whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a "standpoint," a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, "whiteness" refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed.[16(p1)]

Thus, to name whiteness is to refer to a set of relations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced, and that are intrinsically linked to dynamic relations of white racial domination.[17-21] This domination is enacted moment by moment on individual, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels.

Whiteness is both "empty," in that it is normalized and thus typically unmarked, and content laden or "full," in that it generates norms and reference points, ways of conceptualizing the world, and ways of thinking about oneself and others, regardless of where one is positioned relationally within it.[15,17] This definition counters the dominant representation of racism in mainstream education as isolated in discrete incidents that some individuals may or may not "do," and goes beyond naming specific privileges. Whiteness is dynamic, relational, and operating at all times

and on myriad levels. White people are theorized as actively shaped, defined, and elevated through their racialization, and our individual and collective consciousness formed within it.[4,22,23]

Within the current racial construct, white racial comfort and sense of racial equilibrium are rooted in norms and traditions that uphold relations of racial inequality. Bourdieu's[24] concept of habitus may be useful to explain white racial comfort. According to Bourdieu, habitus is a socialized subjectivity; a set of dispositions that generate practices and perceptions. As such, habitus exists only in, through, and because of the practices of actors and their interaction with each other and with the rest of their environment. Based on the previous conditions and experiences that produce it, habitus produces and reproduces thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions. Aspects of whiteness may be conceptualized as a product of the habitus, a response or "condition" produced and reproduced by the continual social and material advantages of the white structural position.

When considering the climate of an institution, it can be assumed that a climate that appears to be supportive or even simply "normal" or neutral for whites will be so because it is rooted in—and thus functions to maintain—white racial advantage. This same climate is often inhospitable for people of color precisely because it reproduces racism via its "normalcy" for whites. This speaks to the failure of so many efforts to "improve diversity" within institutions; we may increase the numbers of people of color, but without addressing the climate produced by whiteness, it is difficult to support or sustain their presence (thus reinforcing white advantage).

"Diversity" and the University of Washington School of Nursing

Despite intensive efforts to address diversity issues over the last 30 years, entrenched structural inequities exist at the SON, inequities that are both subtle and complex.

Institutional goals to recruit and retain underrepresented faculty, staff, and students are explicit, but our recruitment and retention of underrepresented people of color continues to fall far short of goals. When underrepresented faculty and staff of color were successfully recruited, they rarely stayed for long, leaving after a few years citing social isolation and lack of support from the dominant white faculty and staff. Undergraduate and graduate students of color reported distressingly repetitive difficulties in classes, such as failures of white faculty to address racist comments in classes, readings and class materials based in whiteness, and a general lack of understanding of the structural components of racism. Students of color also complained of unfair treatment in clinical rotations, a site where evaluation by faculty and preceptors may be particularly subjective. Staff and faculty relationships at the SON were also problematic, with some faculty unaware of how their privilege impacted staff persons, particularly as grant deadlines approached and faculty tensions increased. The curriculum of the SON included required content on cultural competence and issues of "cultural difference," but issues of power, white privilege, and racism/antiracism were not systematically addressed.

We argue that a fundamental reason longstanding inequities continue at the SON and in nursing as a whole is that "whiteness" is an unacknowledged source of structural advantage. One need only to walk the halls of the SON to see that being white and female is a location of advantage. The nursing faculty is more than 90% white and female, a reflection of national demographics of professional nursing. In the United States overall, 67% of the population is white, but 81% of registered nurses (RNs) are white. Although nearly 33% of the US population is nonwhite, Hispanic, or Latino, only 12% of professional RNs self-identify as nonwhite. According to the 2004 ANA National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses,[25] only 4.2% of US nurses are African American (12.2% of US population),

3.1% Asian/Pacific Islander (4.2% of the US population), 1.7% Latina/o (14.1% of the US population), and 0.3% American Indian (0.8 of the US population).

Professional nursing has recognized for years that racialized women and men who do enter nursing are most likely to attend associate degree or practical nursing programs, and are disproportionately employed in lower-skilled, low-waged areas of nursing. At the time of this project, the SON was able to recruit about 30% undergraduate students of color, but only about one-third of these were underrepresented minority (Hispanic/Latino(a), African American, and American Indian). Men were visible at the SON at 18%, which is about 8% higher than the national average. While men are underrepresented in nursing, and these numbers indicate that the SON is doing well recruiting them, these men in nursing are primarily white. Given the intersection of 2 privileged social locations—race and gender—these men have higher wages, with female RNs earning 87% of male RN wages in 2008.[26] Men are also more likely to rise to leadership or administration positions over female nurses once they graduate.[27] Given that reality of structural privilege, in this article we do not address men as an "underrepresented" group. Rather, the example of white men in nursing further illustrates that power lies in structures and institutions, and not in majorities or numbers. Reflecting the narrowed pool of students of color who graduate from baccalaureate nursing programs, only 11% of our graduate students were students of color.

The SON location as a professional school in the medically dominated health sciences, south of the main UW campus, insulated many nursing faculty from current postcolonial, poststructural scholarship that addressed issues of structural oppression of nonwhites, and the unearned privilege and power that accompanies perceptions of white skin and the white structural position those perceptions grant. As Puzan explained, "The designations

'white' and 'nonwhite' . . . are categories of domination and control, in which skin color usually plays a significant part in the acquisition and retention of unequal distribution of power."[11(p2)] An individual's skin color and resultant location of power in an institution strongly influence how they experience the institution, often determining success. Differing locations of power and structural supports based on skin color have very real consequences for individuals and groups; they also influence faculty, student, and staff feelings of alienation, psychological adjustment, and satisfaction.[28]

About sociopolitical climate and nursing

Sociopolitical climate is unusually difficult to address because it seems intangible and includes normative values, behaviors, priorities, and expectations. In most institutions, a climate of white privilege is unmarked and seen as simply "normal"; lack of strategic efforts to address sociopolitical climate from an antiracist perspective hinders efforts to support racial diversity in recruitment, retention, scholarship, pedagogy, and personal and professional learning. Addressing these issues has been particularly difficult in nursing because our persistent identification of being a "caring" profession inadvertently creates and maintains identity of color blindness[29] (we treat everyone the same; caring nurses do not oppress). As a result of this culture of color blindness, nurses may displace problems of lack of advantage onto the individuals/groups that are different from our white, middle class, female norm.

In recognition of our painful history of racial exclusion, in 2001, Dean Nancy Woods made an exceptional public apology for past institutionalized racial discrimination that occurred at the SON. This gesture can be seen as an emancipatory act, for it demonstrated the institution's willingness to not only *acknowledge* our exclusionary past but also *change* the current situation. The groundbreaking apology, along with an intramural

grant from the UW president, and funding from Dean Woods and Academic Services (AS) of the SON, set the stage for us to develop and implement this project.

THE CLIMATE PROJECT

Our focus on climate evolved out of a larger *Diversity Appraisal Initiative* at the UW.[30] In 2004, the UW president requested that all departments and units submit a report that addresses ways in which diversity is integrated and visible in all activities, how diversity is structured into the curriculum, and how diversity is institutionalized as criteria for success. As a result of that report, in 2005, the president allocated $400 000 of intramural funding to correct identified problems. A major problem identified across the university was the lack of initiatives regarding academic climate. Although climate was the least analyzed category in the department/unit reports, it was also the category most frequently mentioned by faculty, students, and staff as important in retention and success. The reports contained very little concrete information regarding how a welcoming climate is created, evaluated, or interpreted at the UW.[30] Because of the Diversity Appraisal report and SON problems with recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, and students of color, we decided to create a diversity project that directly addressed climate in concrete ways. The 2 major objectives of the project were (1) to implement faculty-staff workshops that address how unacknowledged norms, behaviors, and practices adversely impact climate and (2) to develop and institutionalize a more explicit, inclusive, and accountable statement of diversity at the SON. Each of these aims is briefly discussed now.

The faculty-staff climate workshops

Over fall quarter, we created a formal curriculum for a three-quarter series of workshops addressing white privilege and racism for selected faculty and staff at the SON. Initially, a request for applicants to attend the se-

ries was sent to all faculty and staff at the SON. The applications were carefully reviewed regarding the applicant's ability to use the workshop knowledge to influence and change existing norms and practices in different areas across the SON. One of the expectations of participation was to work collectively to design and enact "action plans" that transform the climate across different SON locations.

Eight faculty and staff members participated in the workshops. Faculty persons were white and female, and included a lecturer, an assistant, an associate, and a full professor. Staff included male and female administrators from academic services and other SON programs and departments. All were chosen because they frequently interacted with students, staff, and faculty and because they were well positioned to influence policies and procedures across the school. Only 2 people self-identified as persons of color. Participants were paid a $2000 stipend for attending the workshops and developing and implementing action plans. They were also required to attend an intensive, 2-day workshop called *Un-Doing Racism.* This antiracist workshop is held by The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond,[31] a national organization that conducts highly effective and often transformative antiracism workshops across the nation.

During the academic year and following summer, participants met for 12 half-day sessions. We created a formal curriculum with required readings, films, and activities for each workshop day. During the workshops, participants analyzed the psychological, behavioral, and structural dimensions of our institutional climate of whiteness from a historical perspective. Using Hurtaldo and colleagues'[28] climate framework, they explored the *institutional context* of the SON and discussed how white beliefs, behaviors, prevailing group norms, processes, and policies negatively or positively impact recruitment, retention, scholarship, pedagogy, and personal and professional learning. They also analyzed *structural dimensions* of climate, such as numerical

representation of people who are "different" from the white, middle class female norm of nursing; *psychological dimensions* of climate, such as the emotional/intellectual impact of individual and group norms of unmarked white privilege and power on individual and group relations; and the *behavioral dimensions* of climate, such as normative actions and intergroup relations at the SON.[28]

Participants analyzed the dynamics of white privilege, engaged in critical self-reflection on whiteness, and examined the role of the individual and cultural, economic, and sociopolitical institutions in maintaining racism and other injustices in the United States. They learned how US socialization, historically driven perspectives, and behavioral norms engender unwitting collusion with racism and other oppressions. While workshop content was centered primarily on racism and privilege, other axes of oppression, such as sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and anti-Semitism, were included to help participants understand the common dynamics of privilege and oppression and how they operate across areas of difference. Various learning approaches were used, such as films, readings, planned exercises, group discussions, scenarios, and guest speakers. Participants also discussed issues of structural advantage and inclusiveness/exclusiveness based on rank and job category in academia.

As diverse representation increases in organizations, conflict increases, and in anticipation of that conflict, participants discussed tools that foster a climate of inclusiveness, respect for diversity, and decreased competition. These tools included confronting issues of leadership/dominance, communication across differences, handling strong emotions/difficult discussions, creating outcomes for diversity, cultural safety, and viewing conflict as necessary for meaningful communities. Active learning techniques that foster a climate of diversity in the work place and classroom were modeled in the workshops, such as small group discussion, participant presentations, problem posing, using readings that represent voices of marginalized groups, encouraging equal participation, and modeling the role of leader/teacher as facilitator.

Innovation-diffusion and sustainable action plans

One of the goals of the project was that participants become more effective change agents, able to work both individually and collectively to change the climate of whiteness at the SON. We decided to teach faculty and staff how to use innovation-diffusion methods to create and implement a series of "action plans" to improve inclusivity at the SON. A sustainability consultant[32] was hired to teach innovation-diffusion methods and sustainability principles that support institutional change. The consultant first led a health sciences-wide workshop on strategic change techniques; about 40 people attended and practiced strategic ways to individually and collectively disseminate innovations in institutions. A second workshop on creating action plans was held for project participants only. Several of the action plans initially developed in that workshop and successfully implemented at the SON are briefly described now.

For example, an action plan developed by participants from AS resulted in the topic of racism/antiracism becoming a standing agenda item at monthly AS meetings; rotating AS staff members were responsible for leading short discussions on the topic. Also, for the first time, AS instituted a policy that provided work release time for staff to attend campus and SON Diversity Committee meetings. The AS also funded several staff members to attend the highly transformative *Un-Doing Racism* workshop offered by The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond.[31]

Another action plan involved eliminating admissions barriers to underrepresented persons. Social science has challenged the legitimacy of standardized tests because of a lack of relationship between high scores and academic performance, and the demonstrated ability of standardized tests to discriminate

among groups of people.[33] During the project, SON faculty, staff, and administrative understanding of the dynamics of systematic privilege and oppression in institutions increased. This wider understanding, coupled with the use of innovation-diffusion skills and the collective efforts of several leaders at the SON, all contributed to the elimination of the GRE requirement for graduate admission.[34]

A plan to disseminate antiracism actions school-wide aimed to integrate the climate group actions with the SON Diversity Committee. Since the project, a faculty person from the project has cochaired the SON Diversity Committee, ensuring that the Diversity Committee goals include school-wide antiracist education and action. We have made extensive changes to the Diversity Committee Web site since the project, updating it with antiracist and antioppression language. We also attach a journal article on antiracism/social justice to the monthly school-wide e-mails announcing the Diversity Committee meetings. We also created and continue to maintain a Diversity Committee bulletin board in a main hallway of the SON. For 2 years, a large purple and gold heading on the board grandiosely (and unrealistically) proclaimed: "The Climate Project: Transforming the UW-SON into an Anti-Racist, Multicultural Institution." Currently, sans heading, this board continues to provide antiracist and other antioppression information to students, staff, and faculty. We also developed and published a Web site that includes climate project workshop syllabi and readings and activities, and linked this site to the SON diversity site. Another climate group action plan was to disseminate SON antiracist activities to key personnel at the SON and the university. To that end, we submitted a comprehensive report to the SON deans and chairs and the UW Office of Minority Affairs, outlining activities and concrete results of the climate project.

We also created a new online, graduate-level antiracism course for the school based on the climate project curriculum. The 3- to 4-credit course, *Nsg 525, Privilege, Oppression, and Social Justice in Health Care,* focuses on white privilege, racism, and antiracism. The course description is explicit: "This course . . . builds skills which dismantle racism and other oppressions in advanced clinical practice, research, and teaching." A popular course well attended by students of color, *Privilege, Oppression and Social Justice in Health Care,* is now a permanent course at the UW. All of these actions contribute to a more welcoming climate at the SON; they also ensure that antiracist discourse remains visible and viable at the SON.

Mandating action: The new SON diversity statement

The second goal of this project was to develop and institutionalize a more explicit, inclusive, and comprehensive statement of diversity at the SON. Work in linguistics and discourse analysis has shown how language is constitutive, not representative; our old statement was 5 years old and did not address faculty and staff accountability for unequal power relations, racism, or other systematic harms based on difference. In addition, the old statement did not explicitly name the groups we targeted in our efforts at inclusivity. For 2 years, members of the climate project worked to institutionalize an explicit diversity statement that used the language of antiracism and privilege. The change process was contentious and sometimes discouraging, but several rewritings of the statement, coupled with skills learned from the innovation-diffusion workshops and support from AS, all contributed to our success. Because the climate project created a small group of allies who were influential school-wide, eventually a vote to change the statement to mandate continuing antiracist and antioppression efforts passed at a high level.

Table 1 includes a section of text from the new diversity statement, language we believe is particularly important as we work toward becoming an antiracist, multicultural institution. See the entire diversity statement at http://www.son.washington.edu/diversity/default.asp.

Table 1. Selected Text From the New University of Washington School of Nursing Diversity Statement[a]

We are committed to fostering a climate that is inclusive and welcoming of all groups. We recognize that this effort is a multi-dimensional one that includes: recruitment efforts, policies, curriculum, pedagogy, norms, practices, faculty/staff promotions, decision making, and continuing multicultural and anti-oppression education for faculty and staff members. We also recognize that nursing education and practice in the United States occurs within the social, cultural, and historical context of institutionalized racism (among other forms of oppression)... We are committed to eliminating all forms of oppression resulting from socially and culturally constructed differences in race/ethnicity, sex/gender identity or orientation, socioeconomic status, language, age, physical characteristics, disability, pregnancy, veteran status, country of origin, citizenship, religious or political beliefs, military status, and others.

Principles of Inclusion:
1. We affirm the inherent dignity of each individual and group.
2. We affirm that group differences are socially, culturally, and historically constructed and hierarchically arranged, resulting in the inequitable distribution of resources among groups. This construction and distribution can be changed and we commit to change it.
3. We affirm our commitment to address difference, privilege and power at the School of Nursing. We will address privilege and power using antiracist and antioppression principles of ongoing education, open dialogue, skill building, challenging the status quo, and accountability to people of color and other social groups.
4. We affirm our commitment to increase the numbers of faculty students and staff from underrepresented groups, and to support their leadership within the school.
5. We affirm our commitment to work toward a climate of inclusiveness on all levels of the School of Nursing."

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[a]See the entire School of Nursing diversity statement at http://www.son.washington.edu/diversity/statement.asp.

Evaluation of the project

By several measures, the project was a success. All the project participants completed the workshop series, attended the *Un-Doing Racism* 2-day workshop, and all learned innovation-diffusion skills to facilitate institutional change. Several action plans were developed and successfully implemented school-wide. By working together and gaining school-wide acceptance of the new diversity statement, for the first time we were able to institutionalize current antiracist and antioppression language at the SON.

Three months into the workshops, we asked participants to return qualitative surveys evaluating their learning; the surveys were repeated near the end of the workshop series. Qualitative comments at 3 months included reflective statements that are seen early in emancipatory work, such as

- "My position as a classroom teacher has become more inquiring, less afraid, I hope more humble."
- "My understanding of institutional racism has deepened most dramatically ... impacting me is how educational institutions reinforce the racism we all learn from the very start."
- "I lapse back to my default (unconsciously White and 'the standard') position all the time still. I have to *work* to move off that position. I was able to do that in several student conversations."
- "I notice when I encounter minority persons ... I make more of an attempt to make eye contact and greet them. I try to focus more on the person now instead of the service being given so I am more engaged and less detached."

The same evaluation form was used after 10 of the 12 workshop sessions. These comments included statements such as the following:

- "I am less complicit with racist comments, attitudes, and jokes by expressing my discomfort at what is said or speaking up. . . ."
- "Working with a Chinese doctoral student, I realize I am taking over her project—acting as a colonial overlord (albeit friendly)."
- "(I am) questioning my sense of mindfulness/intent about ways I do things, ways of interacting with others."
- "Classroom interactions with students of color and international students (are different). Building in their experiences/views and ways of learning into the course as a central approach to learning experiences (new behavior)."

Note that the statements made late in the project are *action oriented*, whereas the statements at 3 months primarily concern feelings and self-reflection. This difference is critical to our assessment of success, for our ultimate emancipatory goal is antiracist *action,* not simply goodwill or personal reflection.

The workshops themselves were considered intellectually stimulating and challenging, as participants noted:

- "It took me on a journey I had no idea I was headed on, both emotionally and intellectually captivating /stimulating," and
- "I was constantly challenged to move to a deeper level."

Several respondents asked that the series be school-wide and continued for a longer period, as one said, "Open this to all, so we have a common language."

SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE

Implementing this project provided some invaluable lessons that will help in future antiracist emancipatory work in nursing. When gaining various committee approvals for the project, we found it better to ask forgiveness rather than permission, and purposely used familiar words such as "diversity" and "privilege" rather than more explicit antiracist discourse when applying for funding and gaining administrative approvals.

In retrospect, it is evident that all the project participants, but particularly people of color, should have been better supported to deal with painful issues as they arose. In future workshops, the racial makeup of the participants should ideally include a cohort of people of color to provide strength in numbers and group support. In this project, only 2 people self-identified as persons of color. White privilege operates in groups, and in groups dominated by white people talking about privilege and oppression, people of color can quickly become isolated and marginalized.

It is well known that to survive in a white institution, people of color understand all too well the dynamics of white privilege and racism (unlike most white people). Separating participants into caucus groups (self-identified groups based on a category, such as race, gender, or work status) for particularly contentious topics would provide group support for nondominant participants and decrease some of their frustration at the level of discourse in the group.

In addition to occasionally meeting separately in caucus groups, we also suggest having faculty and staff groups meet separately during workshops to minimize entrenched power differentials that inhibit group learning, participation, and cohesiveness. Brief individual and group "check-ins" should also occur periodically, for the workshop content was emotionally, socially, and intellectually challenging. Chinn's[35] *Peace and Power: Creative Leadership for Building Community* offers many techniques that would have supported group members during the workshops. *Peace and Power*, based on feminist emancipatory processes, outlines numerous ways to transform conflict, decrease oppressive practices in groups, and build

community. The *Peace and Power* methods are particularly effective in naming and reducing power imbalances and encouraging all voices to be heard and considered.

During workshop discussions, entrenched faculty/staff power differentials were problematic, with faculty members sometimes unaware they were dominating discussions and interrupting or marginalizing the comments of staff persons. Because of the content of the workshop sessions (equality, antioppression, privilege, and antiracism), this behavior is particularly disturbing. In future groups, systems of dominance and inequity should be explicitly named and discussed early in the learning process. They should also be managed using explicit ground rules for participation, and the ground rules should be affirmed at each group meeting.

It is also clear that changing the sociopolitical climate of the SON, or anywhere, requires the diffusion of many antiracist innovations, almost all of which require sustained individual and collective commitment in the face of institutional obstacles. Institutional climate change toward antiracism is difficult to measure, for the changes are often subtle (as the comments of participants demonstrate), and may manifest only after long-term reflection and practice. Such change can and does occur, but requires institutional commitment, innovative leadership, patience, long-term strategies, short-term actions, and strong administrative support.

CONCLUSION

All people define situations as real; but when powerful people define situations as real, then they become real for everybody involved in their consequences.[36(p160)]

White people often believe that multicultural/antiracist education is necessary only for those who interact with "minorities" or in "diverse" environments. However, the dynamics addressed here suggest that it is critical that all white people build the stamina to sustain conscious and explicit engagement with race. When white people posit race as non-operative because there are few, if any, underrepresented people of color in their immediate environments (such as in nursing), whiteness is reinscribed ever more deeply. When whites only notice "raced others," we reinscribe whiteness by continuing to posit whiteness as universal and nonwhiteness as other. Furthermore, if we do not listen to (or comprehend) the perspectives of people of color, we cannot bridge cross-racial divides. A continual retreat from the discomfort of authentic racial engagement results in a perpetual cycle that works to hold racism in place.

Many white people have never been exposed to direct or complex theoretical information about racism, and often cannot explicitly see, feel, or understand it.[37,38] People of color are generally much more aware of racism on a personal level, but because of the wider society's silence and denial of it, may not have a macrolevel framework from which to analyze their experiences.[29,39] Furthermore, dominant society "assigns" different roles to different groups of color,[40] and a critical consciousness about racism varies not only between individuals within groups but also between groups. By addressing the relationship between groups of color as well as between white people and people of color, all parties benefit and efforts are not solely focused on whites (which works to recenter whiteness).

Roman argues that simplistic explanations of racist relations need to be abandoned and that this means focusing attention on the context in which they are articulated. She states:

To ask how race operates in daily practice as a set of complex and changeable meanings is to take one modest step away from the essentialist discourse of race and toward a focus on the *unequal effects of racism* between groups of people. It means drawing attention to the dynamic interconnections between representational practices and discourses of "race" and the power (or lack thereof) of various groups to voice *oppositional difference from or solidarity with* the racialized hegemonic centers of White power.[41(p73)](italics in original)

It is not enough for nursing educators to be aware that whiteness *does* operate interrelationally. We need to understand *how* it operates in ways that are familiar and recognizable, and learn the skills to work collectively to expose and challenge whiteness. If our emancipatory goal is to interrupt the production of racial inequity so that ultimately no one's race affords them more or less access, we must first *speak about the impact* of race on white faculty, staff, and students, their relationships to one another, and on people of color. "Unnaming" whiteness serves to secure its privileged location, whereas naming whiteness interrupts the normalized status that is itself an effect of dominance. Former Dean Nancy Woods' public apology ended the silence surrounding institutional racism at the SON and paved the way for continuing antiracist work such as the climate project. No longer will the old discourse of color blindness and scrutiny of the racialized other[11] operate unchallenged at the SON.

But it would be disingenuous from an antiracist perspective to claim that racism has been seriously interrupted throughout the program, for racism has been deeply embedded in the fabric of US society for centuries; antiracist work is difficult, complex, and oftentimes deeply discouraging emancipatory work. However, with a more widely shared framework for conceptualizing what racism is, supported by an institutionally certified mission statement and a small cadre of allies, we have much more support for our continuing antiracist efforts. These are major and fundamental accomplishments in the ongoing work of antiracism in nursing.

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