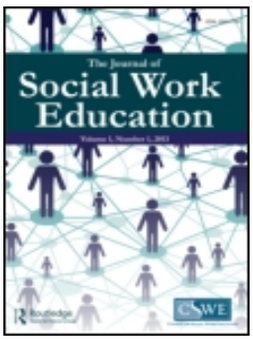

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CRITICAL RACE THEORY: A TRANSFORMATIONAL MODEL FOR TEACHING DIVERSITY

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Rapidly changing demographics in the United States, the 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards, and recent developments in the literature that question the effectiveness of multiculturalism and cultural competence suggest social work education, research, and practice are in need of a new approach to diversity. In conceptualizing diversity, social workers need to address a broad social context that includes institutional/structural arrangements, recognize the intersection of multiple identities, and integrate an explicit social justice orientation. This article presents critical race theory as a paradigmatic framework that focuses on both institutions and the pain they create for marginalized people. The critique is multidimensional, addressing root causes and personal distress while pursuing transformational change.

IT IS WIDELY ACCEPTED that social work education has not found its stride when it comes to teaching diversity in social work programs (Abrams & Gibson, 2007; Abrams & Moio, 2009; Snyder, Peeler, & May, 2008; Van Soest, Canon, & Grant, 2000). Models of teaching diversity in social work education vary but have tended to follow a multicultural approach that emphasizes either cultural sensitivity or cultural competence. A multicultural approach embracing cultural diversity stresses tolerance for diverse persons, understanding of cultural norms, and cross-cultural strategies. This approach emphasizes the importance of practitioners' ability to adjust to client needs in order to meet them (Sisneros, Stakeman, Joyner, & Schmitz, 2008).

Although this approach represents an advance over previous conceptualizations of practice, we assert that contemporary social work practice remains in need of an approach that addresses diversity issues within the broader social context, one that recognizes social location as a function of institutional

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arrangements, considers the intersection of multiple subordinating identities, and acknowledges that theories based on broad generalizations do not adequately address the rapidly changing nature of diversity in the United States. Social work practitioners, faculty, and students would benefit from the use of a paradigm that is more effective in addressing the "moving target" nature of diversity, that is applicable to more than a single dimension of social work (i.e., not only direct practice), and that is explicitly oriented toward social justice.

In this article we propose the introduction of critical race theory (CRT) as a paradigm to critique and enhance the manner in which the subject of diversity is conceptualized and implemented in social work curricula, in the classroom, in the institutions, and in the construction and application of a research method or question. We believe that teaching about diversity in higher education involves more than merely presenting a mosaic of different peoples on the faculty and in the student body. In addition, it cannot be taught as the sole enterprise of the curriculum in isolation from the overall ethos of its host institution, or as a single add-on course saddled with the responsibility of teaching students everything they need to know about the topic (Lee & Greene, 2003). Rather, diversity education requires attention to the institutional and social context because of the centrality of race in U.S. society (Parker & Villalpando, 2007). The teaching of diversity content in social work, therefore, is more effective when institutional arrangements and the social location of researchers, teachers, learners, and clients are considered. In other words, attention to diversity needs to be integrated throughout both the implicit and explicit curriculums. We believe that the CRT paradigm adequately responds to this need.

Critical Race Theory

CRT belongs to the family of critical postmodern theory (see Figure 1) that "attempt[s] to understand the oppressive aspects of society in order to generate societal and individual transformation" (Tierney, as cited in Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 311). It does not assume the existence of universal truths and rejects master narratives that attempt to encompass all phenomena or dictate the construction of lives. Instead, it is based on the following assumptions: race is a social construction, race permeates all aspects of social life, and race-based ideology is threaded throughout society. Proponents of CRT are also committed to social justice, locating the voice of the marginalized, and employing the concept of intersectionality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

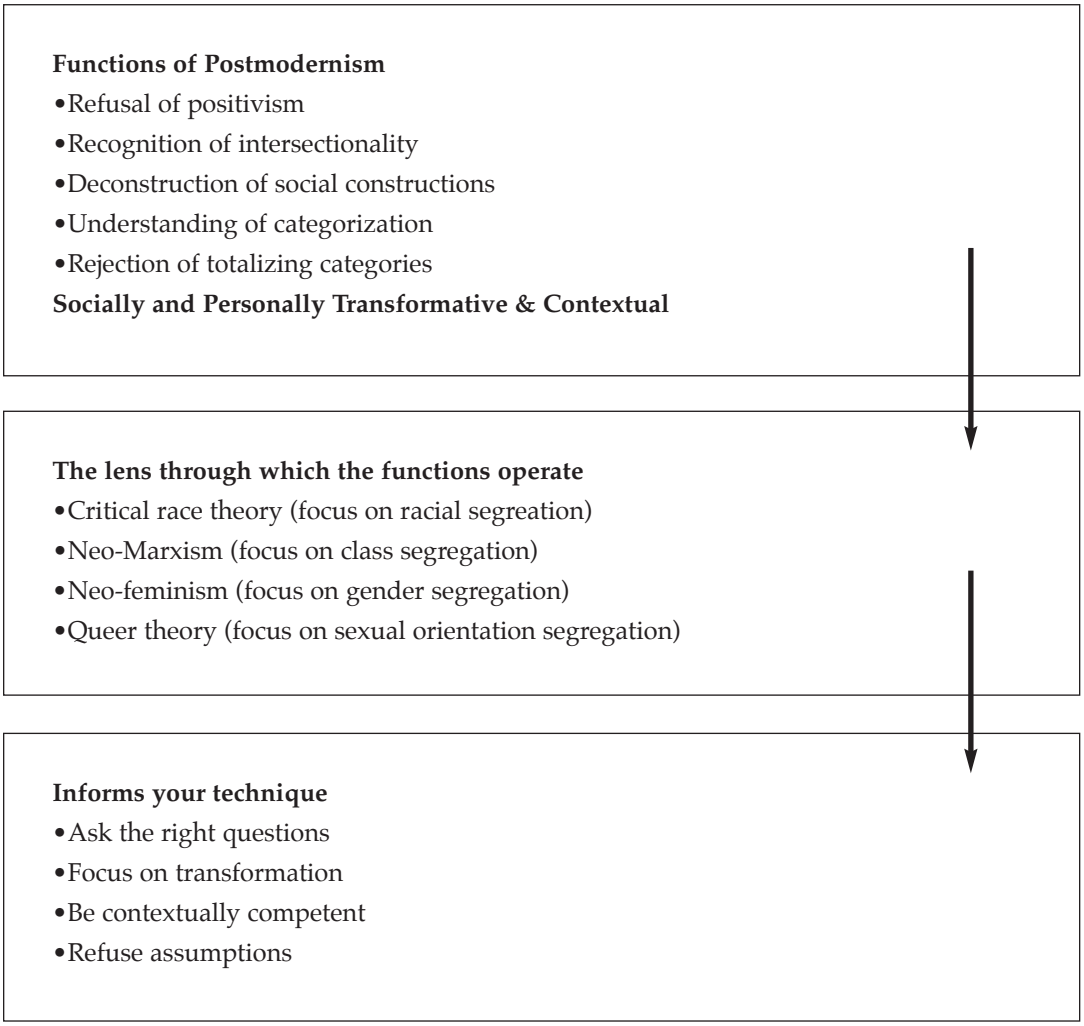
In addition, CRT is a way of thinking and being in the world that needs to be taught as a distinct paradigm, not as an attachment to another theoretical approach. As a critical theory, it promotes a structural approach to addressing the problems of a diverse society, rather than merely expanding access to existing resources and opportunities. By promoting changes in institutional arrangements while simultaneously recognizing personal distress and resistance, CRT works bidirectionally and thereby rejects the bifurcation of micro and macro social work practice (Park, 2005). Thus, this framework allows for a transformation of social relations through dialogue

and social relationships (Pease & Fook, 1999). These assumptions are further explicated in the following discussion with accompanying suggestions for their applications to the structure and content of social work education, and to social work research and practice.

Race: A Social Construction

CRT assumes that race is a social construction without a fixed or inherently objective definition and exists primarily for purposes of social stratification. As a social construction, race is first determined through the use of a set of criteria believed to be external to the concept. The foundation for racial definitions has been based on folklore (Masko, 2005); the legislative and judicial process (Russell, 2006); or, in most cases, a combination of the two. Haney-Lopez (2000) points out that race is typically determined by the dominant group using

FIGURE 1. Critical Postmodern Theory



socially constructed mechanisms such as "empirically based knowledge" and law to promote and protect its interests. This definition subsequently becomes accepted as "common sense" or "common knowledge" (Berger & Luckman, 1966).

Throughout U.S. history, definitions of race and racial groups have evolved in order to determine who is "in" or "out" of the dominant group. Inevitably, those placed outside of the dominant group are afforded fewer social resources and opportunities and less access to social goods. Historically, the race issue in the United States has been viewed in terms of the "Black-White binary" (Masko, 2005). Today, this limitation fails to embrace the full complexity of race in the United States as a consequence of the massive immigration of Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders and the population explosion of Latinos (Alemán, 2009). Racial definitions have been redrawn to fit these newcomers into existing socially constructed categories. This redefinition has determined which of these groups' traits are more desirable (e.g., defining Asian Americans as a "model minority") and which are less desirable and more likely to lead to social marginalization (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Because race is a relational concept, its primary societal function has been to classify people for the purposes of separation and stratification. As a social construct, its impact is widespread and permeates all elements of social life. Thus, in education about race and diversity it is important to stress its social, rather than biological, nature. Racial categorization is, however, a moving target. For example, Haney-Lopez (2000) cites the case of *Hudgins v. Wright,* a landmark 19th-century court decision that defined the racial features of African Americans, to illustrate how the dominant culture constructed racial categorizations. Although such depictions would now be considered preposterous, the same process continues to exist through the current racialization of Mexicans and most recent immigrants (Romero, 2008).

Johnson (2004) connects the social construction of race and immigration status through an analysis of the concept of the "alien":

> Fabricated out of the whole cloth, the "alien" represents a body of rules passed by Congress and reinforced by popular culture. It is society with the assistance of law that defines who is an "alien," an institutionalized "other" and who is not. . . . [S]ociety through Congress, and the courts, . . . determines which rights to afford "aliens." . . . Like the social construction of race, which helps to legitimize racial subordination, the construction of "alien" has helped to justify the limitation on non-citizen rights imposed by our legal system." (as cited in Romero, 2008, p. 154)

Contemporarily this example is evident in the treatment of Mexican and Central Americans, those with and without documentation; and of Muslims, from anywhere in the world. Both examples are rooted in fear and become part of a preventive paradigm (Cole, 2008) adopted by the United States and invented to eliminate the perceived threat by the alien other, be it economic in the former sense or security in the latter. Through a com-

bination of both media hype and social and political hype, "threat" profiles are created (socially constructed) based on physical characteristics; country of origin; language; and, in the case of Muslims, religion. Thus, a race is created that differentiates "they" from "we" and becomes the basis for social, political, and other kinds of actions designed to protect the homeland. In this example, the U.S. government continues to spend billions of dollars to build walls and to boost patrols on the borders and throughout the country to root out, arrest, and deport "illegal aliens" and also use "racial" profiles as the basis for violation of constitutional and human rights to imprison without cause and torture people as a means of controlling a perceived threat to American freedom.

The Pervasiveness of Race in Social Life

As a social construction, the concept of race is internalized and integrated into social life (Sue et al., 2007). "Race and racism are endemic, permanent, and in the words of Margaret Russell (1992) 'a central rather than marginal factor in defining and explaining individual experiences' " (as cited in Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 312). Internalization, the last step in social construction (Berger & Luckman, 1966), becomes embedded in the psyche of society and its members and serves as an internal and social measuring stick to evaluate oneself and others in terms of various social "norms." This process occurs on four dimensions: in all micro and macro social relations, via institutional arrangements, at the level of the unconscious or the development of psyche, and through its cumulative social effects (Sisneros et al., 2008).

Micro and macro social relations are best discussed through the use of examples, most tellingly through an examination of "micro aggressions." As discussed by Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) and Sue et al. (2007), micro aggressions refer to covert and not so covert actions directed at persons usually without overt malicious intent. Most often they are comments or behaviors directed at people of color from members of the dominant group that reflect stereotyped beliefs and reference values or behaviors that reinforce the social location of the group. For instance, the assumption that students of color in Ivy League or other top-ranked universities were admitted because of affirmative action policies is a form of micro aggression. Another example appears in the case of a student who approaches a faculty member and says, "I am learning so much in your research class. . . . I have never had a Latino professor before." The subtext of both messages reinforces racially based generalizations, even when they are intended as compliments, because they underscore the perception that a particular minority person is an "exception" to the "everybody knows" rule.

Another example of a micro aggression is the conspiracy of silence that often appears as a means to avoid obvious racially charged situations in racially integrated interactions (Daniel, 2007). Not infrequently, racist and/or classist remarks are overtly or covertly made in the classroom, wittingly or unwittingly by faculty or students (Mildred & Zuñiga, 2004). These statements about race, rooted in overgeneralizations, are stereotypes that are essentialist in nature. To many students, particularly students of color, what has just occurred is

frequently apparent, but the distrust between the racial groups promotes the preservation of an environment wherein no one dares to comment on what happened. In effect, the situation is ignored and becomes invisible. It is not lost on students of color, however, who are often left to wonder if their observation about the racial implications of the discussion or behavior is "just them." If a student (or students) of color raises objection, the ensuing racially charged discourse often is interpreted as a particularistic issue rather than a social or structural issue that it more accurately represents.

In these situations, students of color often remain silent. They internalize and adapt to the situation because they are afraid to speak a truth they know is not likely to be received well. Those who speak out become marginalized or are identified as racial or ethnic "spokespersons," now saddled with the overwhelming responsibility of speaking for their entire race. In the end, both students of color and faculty of color learn to live with "stereotype threat" (Steele, 1999), navigating in and through a structure that has neither been created for their benefit nor attends to their needs. In short, it is not relevant to the intersection of their academic interests and lived experiences.

By contrast, macro aggressions are affronts that are not necessarily directed at a specific person but at a group. For example, racial profiling by police is not directed at particular African Americans as much as "Blackness" (Russell, 2006). Similarly, the profiling of undocumented immigrants is not directed at them as individuals but in broad terms, such as "securing the borders" from "enemy combatants" (Romero, 2008, p. 29).

Against this backdrop, institutional arrangements can, therefore, be explained as socially constructed mechanisms that regulate and set norms for social interaction. They reflect the beliefs and values of the dominant society and inherently reflect a racial bias. Delgado and Stefancic (1997) state, "The color line is not the work of a few racist individuals but a system of institutions and practices" (p. 616). CRT asserts that human actions cannot be separated from the institutional arrangements of society. According to Guinier and Torres, these "current institutional arrangements do not work for people of color [because they were not created with their assumptive worldview] and it is not possible to address the present racial hierarchy without addressing these institutional arrangements" (as cited in Vaught, 2008, p. 578). Nor is it possible to understand individuals' personal narratives outside of these arrangements. In other words, it is natural and effortless for most members of the dominant group to fit into existing institutional arrangement; this is not so for members of nondominant groups.

Higher education is an excellent example of this institutional–individual interaction. Universities are the bastion of Euro-American values. They are "vestiges of White privilege [and] continue to promote mediocrity on the one hand and demoralization on the other" (Mohan, 2009, p. 117). Institutional design, governance, approaches to teaching based on assumptions about styles of learning, course content, and preferred methods for the discovery of knowledge reflect Euro-American ways of knowing and interpreting the world (Parker & Villalpando, 2007).

In this context, faculty of color and students of color are confronted with several dilemmas: (a) Should they accept the status quo in exchange for gaining access to academic and professional success? (b) In the case of students, how can they maneuver through the educational program without mentors with whom they can identify or trust, and overcome feeling isolated? (c) While being marginalized, how can they struggle to get through the program without creating "too many waves"? and (d) How can they learn material that is not an accurate reflection of their lived experiences and may be of little relevance to their communities? (Daniel, 2007; Ortiz et al., 2007). The end result is that these faculty and students encounter a form of ideological dislocation, in which their interests and passions are neither consistent with Eurocentrically based curricula nor fit well as acceptable research questions (Carillo, 1990; Hernández & Fitch, 2004).

The invisibility of minority faculty produced by this ideological dislocation has ramifications on three levels. First, for all students, it results in the lack of curriculum content that speaks directly to the experiences of people of color. Second, students of color lack mentors who can assist them in successfully navigating the learning environment. Loneliness is not an uncommon feeling among faculty of color, whose scholarly interests are often not valued by colleagues. In these instances, both students of color and faculty of color feel invisible at best, if not outright dismissed. Finally, having few faculty of color likely affects the overall research agendas of universities. Researchers' values and ways of knowing and understanding are reflected in all stages of the research process: design, methods, questions posed, and implications drawn. The presence of limited numbers of faculty of color skews issues of diversity in the research process and most likely allows critical questions, such as how to promote social justice in communities of color, to go unanswered. The interconnection between social location (of people of color) and social structures is simply outside the assumptive paradigm of many, in part because faculty from the dominant culture may not even be aware of the right questions to ask (Garcia & Van Soest, 2006).

Consequently, racial assumptions become a part of the development of the psyche for members of all groups through internalization, the phase of social construction by which "facts" become a part of the conscious and unconscious. For example, in the psyche of the dominant group there is no challenge to the idea that the world belongs to them, resulting in White privilege (Abrams & Gibson, 2007). Non-Whites, however, seldom assume privilege. The conscious awareness of their role as a part of a marginalized group in society is often reflected in feelings of inferiority, lower self-esteem, and muted aspirations (Romero, 2008). Masko (2005) makes this point effectively:

> Although it seems illogical to ignore the relationship between racism and the psychological experience of its victims, this is often precisely what happens in studies of human development and adolescent behavior. Often when research in this area is conducted with ethnic minority groups, neither sociocultural variables (e.g., racism or oppression)

> nor psychocultural variables (e.g., chronic stress) are considered. (p. 333)

Besides threats to self-esteem, Romero (2008) notes the ongoing fear and humiliation experienced daily by Latinos as a result of the aggressive stance toward policing illegal immigration and the targeting of people who look Latino. Even Latinos who are legally in the United States have undocumented friends and/or family members, which increases a level of tenuousness and fear in these relationships. Related to this phenomenon, Romero discovered that Latino children who observe their parents being humiliated by aggressive law enforcement officers regarding their documentation are at risk of higher rates of posttraumatic stress disorder.

The cumulative effect of race-based social stratification and the ensuing institutional arrangements and social interactions is further reflected in the disparities that are often discussed in the health and social welfare literature. Notably, marginalized social groups suffer from restricted access to resources and opportunities, which results in decreased levels of educational attainment, poorer-quality health care, lack of affordable housing, lower income levels, and lower general welfare (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2009).

Race-Based Ideology: A Common Thread in Society

Race-based ideology is woven into the fabric of the dominant culture, so it is also reflected in its epistemologies and heuristic methods. This suggests that research methods, theories, and practice techniques taught in social work education rest on the assumptions and values of the dominant culture, which, unless subjected to critique, will have questionable applicability to non-Euro-American populations (Jani, Ortiz, & Aranda, 2009; UCLA School of Public Affairs, 2007). To its credit, the social work profession has historically promoted access to existing structures of helping. However, this strategy falls short of changing structures that are inherently biased and marginalize members of the nondominant cultural group.

For example, knowledge generation in the social sciences follows a scientifically based, empirical approach of isolating variables and hypothesizing their relationship using a sampling procedure that is believed to increase the probability of the representation of all known characteristics important in the population. Yet, by isolating perceived important variables, this approach decontextualizes the social experience of the individuals and groups being studied by assuming a dualism that reflects Euro-American cultural beliefs about individualism (Anzaldua, 1999). As a result, methods of knowledge generation founded on this approach "potentially reify a positivistic, universalist, dominant epistemological stance" (Vaught, 2008, p. 570) that excludes social context or recognition of social location.

Although knowledge generated from such research methods is not inherently useless when applied to people of color and other marginalized groups, this knowledge needs to be subjected to critique, analysis, and contextualization before it can be employed to develop effective strategies designed to intervene on behalf of and empower marginalized groups. In other words, social work practice

based on traditionally derived Euro-American "evidence" will fail to be relevant when applied to people or groups whose social experiences are not properly contextualized. At best, such "evidence"-based practices will merely improve access to existing services and institutions. These approaches lack transformative abilities and, consequently, serve to systematically disadvantage those who do not fit into the prevailing norms of the dominant culture (Trinder, 2000).

The use of individual therapy is another example of this phenomenon. Social workers employing this approach to intervention often fail to consider that on the whole "the theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy have served the dominant groups in society and largely ignored the problems of people who are discriminated against" (McLeod, as cited in Chantler, 2005, p. 239). The consequence is that therapy becomes a tool that assists people to fit into their existing social locations while ignoring the inherent structural inequalities that placed them in that location. "Clients caught up in such process may find that therapy helps to reinforce the message that it is their 'responsibility' that they happen to be subjugated" (Waterhouse, as cited in Chantler, 2005, p. 247) and that their personal distresses are a result of their character flaws. This inherently works at cross purposes with social work's longstanding premise of person-in-situation.

Commitment to Social Justice

Like social work, CRT is founded on a set of values that reflect a commitment to "social justice and offer a liberatory or transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression" (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 313). Thus, both social work and CRT express explicit ideological preferences and pursue activities that lead to transformative social justice. Social work's ideological commitment to promoting human well-being (Albers, 2001) has drawn increasing criticism (Sowers & Dulmus, 2009; Stoesz & Karger, 2009; Will, 2007), but it is as much a part of the fabric of the profession as Jane Addams and Mary Richmond. It can be argued that the critics of "ideological" social work are themselves promoting an ideological agenda through their support of positivism, although not all critics of social work are supporters of positivism or base their criticisms of social work on positivist grounds.

In addition, CRT is unabashedly and unapologetically ideological and does not hide its intentions. Perhaps this reflects its roots in law and its underlying assumption that race-based stratification is unjust (Ross, 1996). From this premise, the CRT paradigm reflects a clear commitment to the pursuit of social justice for those encountering oppression. Based on this commitment to changing social institutions, CRT seeks to uncover the mechanisms and structures that actually disadvantage people, even those ostensibly designed by social institutions to serve the needy. Those who profess CRT principles view with suspicion approaches to intervention that merely assist marginalized persons, families, groups, or communities to acquiesce to a racist structure. Rather, CRT-oriented practice endeavors to change structures that are the source of the original problem.

Social workers using a CRT paradigm in direct practice might be inclined to explore access issues during assessment to identify the

barriers that clients perceive keep them from obtaining needed services. These barriers could include the persistence of political, cultural, or social assumptions regarding delivery and use of services. These assumptions often fail to recognize that services developed by "professionals" without consulting the people who actually might use the services create an inherent access barrier because by design they do not reflect the perceived needs of those for whom services are intended. In assessment and treatment, CRT practitioners may move well beyond the tenets of modernistic theories to explore the role of social location and race, the dynamics of culture and the role it plays in explaining the etiology of problems, the course of an illness or distress, and plausible mechanisms for healing the experience encountered as a problem (Kleinman & Benson, 2006). Honoring and working with the subjective truth of the "other" is of paramount importance. Furthermore, engagement at this level uses the long-established strategy of the facilitative use of self, as the worker allows the client to direct the course of intervention, becoming a learner/teacher engaging in social critique as a complement to using his or her knowledge of theory (Chantler, 2005; Masko, 2005). Thus, CRT practice attends to the voice of the marginalized by placing it in social context, translating personal pain into a social justice agenda at the direct practice level.

Advancing the Voice of the Marginalized

Locating and advancing the story of the "other" is a central tenet of CRT. This involves adapting various practice and research methods to capture the lived experiences of those marginalized in society. Typical methods of identifying, acknowledging, understanding, and sharing the experiences of those outside the dominant culture need to be rethought and new approaches developed to capture and incorporate their contextual or lived experiences as members of a marginalized group participating in existing institutional arrangements (Kerl, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As noted in the previous section, the challenge is not only to develop practice approaches and research questions that are not founded solely on Euro-American-based theories or methodologies but also to attend to the assumptive position of "the other," reflecting the voice of marginalized persons.

More than a set of prescriptions, this approach would most certainly begin with a critique that asks the following questions:

- What are the theoretical presuppositions applied to the services?
- How do these fit with people for whom these services are designed, particularly in relation to their culture and social location?
- Are services relevant, culturally and politically, and will they make a *real* difference in people's lives?
- Do services reflect what the client understands to be his or her needs?
- What questions are not being asked?

Next in this example, assessment of the client system needs to be cognizant of the social context and attention given to the manner in which intersecting variables shape identity; the social conditions in which the problem/

crisis is located; the degree to which political, economic, and cultural barriers block access to services; and a consideration of whether services function as an asset for clients transforming their social situation. Finally, engaging with the "other" assumes that the social worker take on the role of learner/teacher, with a willingness to follow while leading, keeping in mind questions asked are as important—or sometimes more important—than answers provided, all the while finding ways to mold existing practice theories to fit the social location of client systems.

Practitioners of CRT recognize that research can also serve multiple purposes beyond the discovery of truth. It can also serve to heal and empower. Vaught (2008) suggests that a "central tenet of feminist methodology is to listen" (p. 572). She maintains that capturing the story of marginalized persons has healing and empowering properties that ultimately lead to an "axial" relationship that is both collaborative and explanatory (p. 573). As researchers, social workers often look only at aims and outcomes. This leaves out the most crucial part of the helping experience: the process. Only by understanding the how and why can the goals and products of any intervention be fully understood and utilized. How someone has arrived at a certain outcome drastically affects what has or will happen to that person. Thus, thinking and discussing someone's process of decision making—the means that got the person to an end, and not merely measuring the end itself—opens up the possibility for personal transformation and change. Hope for future change depends not merely on the results of a person's past and present behaviors, but also on the process of how the person got there. CRT social work researchers, therefore, are more likely to develop methods that locate the voice of the marginalized and consider their social location by embracing their assumptions of etiology, causation, and healing rather than imposing Euro-American ways of knowing (Kleinman & Benson, 2006).

Locating the voice of the other may also include identifying resistive behaviors (Yosso, 2005) and using counter-storytelling (Vaught, 2008). Resistive behaviors usually refer to beliefs and behaviors that protect marginalized people from the social assaults they encounter in dominant society. These protective factors are often cultural adaptations designed to cope, survive, or prevail in a social context that is unwelcoming or downright hostile. These behaviors are not always productive and can sometimes be viewed by society as unlawful or pathological. Yet, cultural and personal strength is also inherent in these behaviors. Understanding different types of resistance helps to delineate destructive from transformative resistance.

Solórzano and Bernal (2001) present a model that includes four types of resistive beliefs and behaviors that protect marginalized people from the social assaults they encounter in dominant society: reactionary behavior, conformist resistance, self-defeating resistance, and transformative resistance. These behaviors reflect cultural and personal strength and are often protective adaptations designed to help individuals and communities cope, survive, or prevail in a social context that is perceived as unwelcoming.

Solórzano and Bernal (2001) suggest that reactionary behavior is actually not resistance.

It occurs when a person from an oppressed group adopts the values and behaviors of dominant society and fails to see how its institutional arrangements create and maintain oppression. Conformist resistance also lacks a critique of social oppression, but it is motivated by a sense of social justice. It is typical of a person who is conscious of and uses the rhetoric of oppression yet continues to conform to the demands of oppressive structures. This could be said of many social work activities.

Self-defeating resistance occurs when persons who have been marginalized consciously resist the system but do so in ways that end up being personally harmful, such as breaking a law that leads to their incarceration. The final form of resistance, transformative resistance, occurs when persons who have been oppressed resist the dominant institutional arrangements by trying to change existing structures while simultaneously attempting to create a better situation for themselves.

An example of the difference between self-defeating and transformative resistance can be found in a social work setting when a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) client who is a person of color is conscious of the impact of dominant institutional arrangements on her community and wants to resist these arrangements as a result of this heightened consciousness. If she is self-defeating, she might do this by not showing up for appointments and thereby losing her benefits, or turning to illegal behavior, which could lead her to involvement with the criminal justice system.

However, if the client is in the stage of transformative resistance, instead of failing to appear for an appointment, she might show up, be timely and motivated, thus disproving stereotypes, but also negotiate with her TANF social worker to create a change in TANF rules, allowing her to waive the work requirements to go to school full-time to finish her education while receiving benefits. Her logic would be that if she is able to get a higher education, she will no longer need TANF in the future. In essence, she then has altered the social structure of the cycle of poverty while bettering herself. The process and levels of consciousness of resistance are important in understanding the process of populations who have been oppressed and can be an important part of their agencies. In addition, her insistence on changing TANF rules has implications for others who share her social location.

Another way of enhancing the agency of oppressed populations is through counter-storytelling. This is a method of capturing the narratives of people of color that highlights their voices and experiences. Thus, it challenges the characterization of the dominant culture's master narrative as the norm (Vaught, 2008). In research this can be accomplished by using the questions of "subjects" and including them in the development of research methods, procedures, and analyses.

As discussed, locating the story or capturing the "voice" or the "lived experience" of marginalized individuals and groups is the essence of contextually competent practice. This becomes the basis for understanding the multidimensionality of personal troubles within the social structural milieu. This relationship can be illustrated by a case study on the personal and structural transformations experienced by a group of Latinas who had

been trained to serve as *promotoras* in a *colonia* in south Texas. The study (Arizmendi & Ortiz, 2004) followed a group of mothers whose organizational strategies resulted in both personal and community transformation as they organized to bring essential utilities to their poor rural community. Such stories help to identify the objects of transformation (institutions and processes) that, in turn, will alleviate the distress of personal, familial, group, or community suffering, and can help to identify common themes of marginalization among nondominant people (Masko, 2005).

Locating the voice of the "other" requires social workers to assume the position of learner/teacher regardless of their particular professional roles. Social workers need to be aware of the nature of the questions they pose, to develop a genuine rapport with clients, to be open to exploration, and to adapt the humility of a learner to facilitate the emergence of these voices (Adams, Dominelli, & Payne, 2009). These qualities are important because an approach founded on a strong theoretical commitment may often close out the emergent voice or filter in only the concepts that resonate with the theoretical position. This suggestion does not imply that practice ought to be atheoretical; rather, it suggests that theory informed by critique and knowledge of social location and culture should inform the questions the professional asks (see Figure 2).

Intersectionality: Recognizing Multiple Subordinating Identity Variables

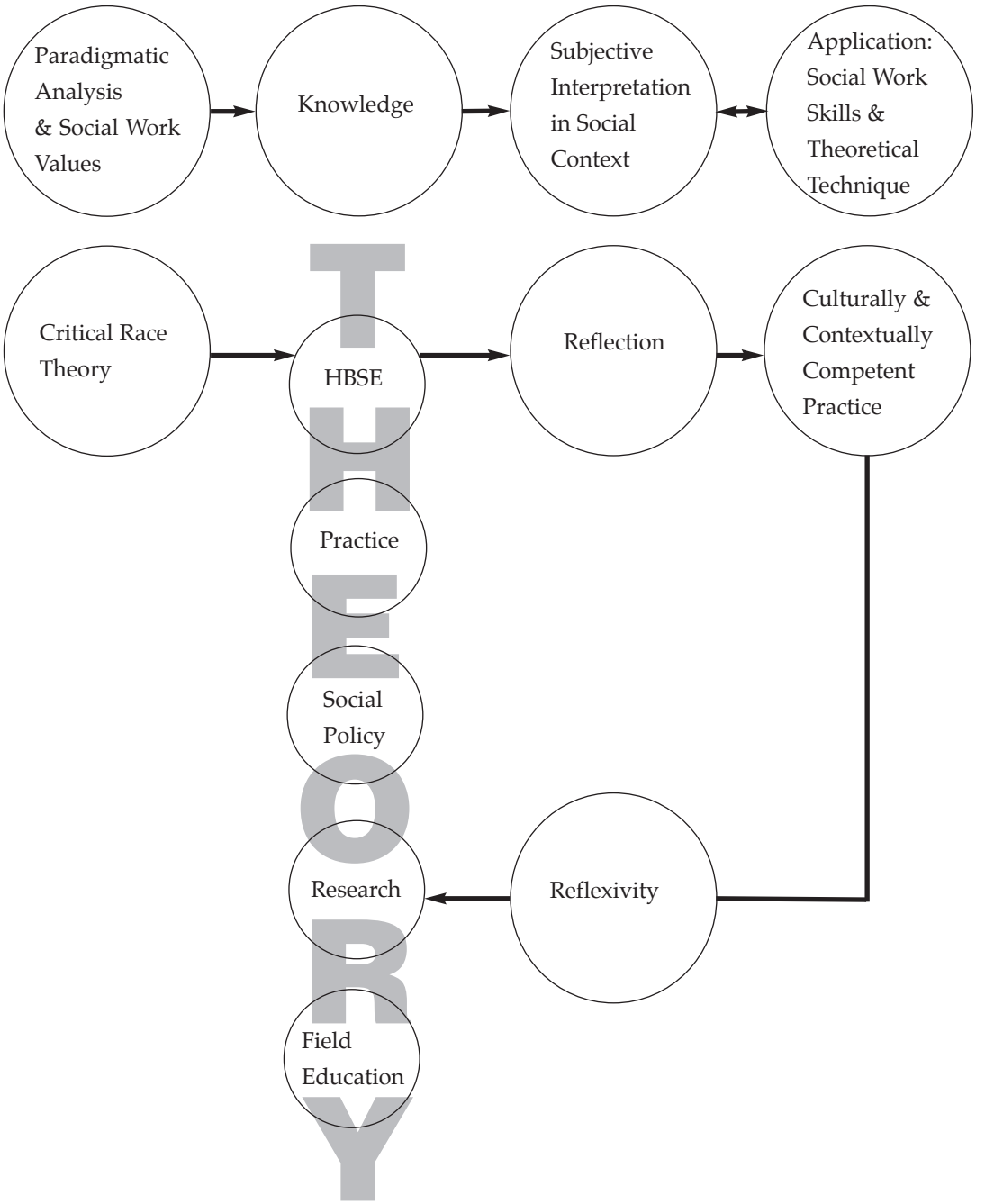
Race, CRT recognizes, is a major subordinating variable but is not itself sufficient to tell the whole story of a person's experiences. Therefore, the concept of intersectionality, as advanced by third-wave feminist writers, is integral to the CRT paradigm. Intersectionality recognizes that gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, educational achievements, resident status, ethnic regionalism, and other subordinating variables contribute substantially to social life and shape identity, behavior, opportunities, and access to resources within and between societies.

By considering the intersecting variables in each person's life, social workers are forced to challenge single-theory explanations of race and gender that are historically taught in social work curricula. Thus, the whole person and his or her complete situation can be analyzed without placing people into preconceived constructed categories that promote generalizations (Anzaldua, 1999; Collins, 2004; Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Finn & Jacobson, 2003; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Thus, intersectionality goes beyond the concept of cultural competence by recognizing that a person is more than his or her culture. The mere phrase "cultural competence" assumes that culture creates a person's entire being when other factors must be considered for contextually competent and socially just practice (Abrams & Moio, 2009).

Discussion

With the passage of the revised Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2008), which reflect a less prescriptive approach to curriculum content, social work programs are faced with a new challenge in their efforts to teach about diversity. Prescribed content on diversity is no longer required,

FIGURE 2. Critical Race Theory: Culturally and Contextually Competent Practice



although students are expected to meet one diversity competency. For some programs, this may seem like a reprieve from the long list of groups specified in the curriculum requirements of previous EPAS. Yet, the challenge of preparing students to work in an increasingly diverse society has not disappeared. In fact, as shown social work programs now need to *demonstrate* how their students are competent to engage diversity and difference in practice, as noted in Educational Policy 2.1.4 (CSWE, 2008). Owing to the pervasiveness of race and racial relations in all of social life and the commitment of the social work profession to social justice, it is the responsibility of social work professors to promote discussions on the reality of racism in U.S. society.

Often, such open and forthright discussions are curtailed or outright avoided because faculty are concerned that the topic is too sensitive or that such discussions will consume too much time (Irving & Young, 2004; Mildred & Zuñiga, 2004) or get out of hand. We believe, however, that incorporation of CRT into social work curricula will enable schools of social work to promote the diversity practice competencies called for by the 2008 EPAS.

In sum, CRT provides social work educators with an opportunity to employ several different ways to enhance the teaching of diversity and to conceptualize transformational social work practice. It addresses both the explicit and implicit curriculum requirements outlined in the 2008 EPAS. In the explicit curriculum there is room to teach content about race and culture and their powerful effect on society at all levels—from institutional and social relations to the role of culture in shaping the individual psyche.

By comparison, the implicit curriculum underscores the power of institutional arrangements to shape the way learning occurs and the means by which it is regulated. Essentially, the manner in which faculty teach about diversity is in itself a message about how the institution regards the subject. In other words, does the program consider diversity content merely an appendage to the "real curriculum"? Is such material integrated throughout the curriculum? Who teaches the content? What are the roles of faculty and researchers of color in the program? More specifically, is their work valued as real scholarship even when unconventional methods are employed? Are students of color welcomed and affirmed? Or are they somehow expected to adapt to dominant culture to succeed academically? Effective teaching of diversity requires a sense of institutional congruence founded on a critique that assesses the institutional ethos, its organizational structure, and the curriculum.

In addition, CRT can make a significant contribution to curriculum content itself. More than merely teaching students about culture, it requires them to analyze the institutional arrangements of society, assess how they are shaped by dominant cultural assumptions, and recognize how they may disadvantage members of nondominant cultural groups. Effective teaching of diversity, therefore, requires a thorough examination and critique of social institutions. Such an evaluation needs to be applied to all areas of the curriculum; otherwise, diversity content runs the risk of being ghettoized and having its institutional nature denied (Abrams & Moio, 2009).

Merely appreciating and understanding marginalized and nondominant group culture,

however, is not sufficient in CRT. Transformative social action in pursuit of social justice is a critical objective in this paradigm. CRT is value based and is committed to social change for individuals, families, groups, and communities by "leveling the playing field" through various legal, political, collective, or personal means. Its critique is designed to uncover racism and other patterns of injustice at the assumptive as well as overt levels. Examples of assumptive disadvantaging in higher education include the analysis of social interactions, patterns of teaching, and the evaluation learning outcomes, which are based on dominant-group ways of knowing. By contrast, racial profiling and discrimination reflect overt patterns of hindrances to marginalized peoples.

CRT also advances the idea that a person is much more than just culture. Although it recognizes that culture is a powerful influence on forming a person's identity, it asserts that it is equally important to assess the social location of the culture because it helps explain how culture affects an individual's life chances. Similarly, CRT recognizes that marginalization is much more than a product of racial or ethnic identity; this underlies its embrace of the notion of intersectionality. By assessing the range of subordinating identities that serve as multiple levels of oppression and/or privilege, a clearer picture emerges of the differential impact of variables such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or educational achievement.

Finally, CRT is not prescriptive. By its very nature as a worldview or paradigm, it eschews a "way of acting," as this is contraindicated by its emphasis on social context. In addition, its use of socially conscious indicators, the nature of questions it poses, and the patterns of interaction it promotes can be conceptualized as social work competencies and concretized into practice behaviors. This requires some creativity, but social work educators who are interested in adapting CRT in their program objectives and their curricula can find ways to write competencies and practice behaviors consistent with the 2008 EPAS.

Conclusion

CRT is a race-based critical paradigm that assesses power differentials at all levels. One lesson social work educators can take from its critique is that teaching diversity is more complex than trying to attend to the various differences among people in society and the resulting "isms." Effective teaching of diversity in the profession requires an examination of social structures, institutions, and ways of knowing and being. Without such an examination, discussions of diversity evolve into polite (or, in some cases, impolite) conversations that do little to transform the institutions that perpetuate diversity largely as the basis for maintaining differential access to societal opportunities and rewards.

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