Critical Race Theory and Psychotherapeutic Practice: An Intersectional Perspective for Black Clients Living in the US

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What does race have to do with it?
- When were you first aware of yourself as a member of a particular racial group?
- When were you first aware of people from other races?
- When did you first witness or experience someone being treated differently because of their racial group?
- When was a time you realized that you would be treated differently because of your race?
- What is one other significant event in your life related to race or racism?

What does race have to do with it?
- Have you ever had the experience that you lost a client of color and you were not sure why?
About Me
- Graduated from MSW Program in 2003
- Experience in Child Welfare
- Returned to the School of Social Work in 2008
- PhD in 2015 – Educational Studies with concentration in cultural studies

Importance of Talking About Race
- Impact of Colonization
- Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade
- Social Construction of Race
- Systematic oppression of “minoritized” groups in the U.S.
- Historical Trauma
- Genocide
- Relocation
- Destruction/lose of cultural practices

Importance of Talking About Race
- Historically social work used a white lens on how to better humanity
- Communities of color had to create their own mutual aid organizations for self advocacy
- Need to define whiteness and uncover how it operates
Black Clients and Mental Health
- African Americans & Black Caribbeans underutilize mental health and substance use services
- Stigma
- Racial bias
- Cultural incompetence
- Lack of minority representation among mental health providers
- Public mental health facilities developed during the 1960s were not equipped to address issues of race.

Defining Whiteness
- Unearned privilege
- Set of norms that often go unacknowledged and unchallenged
- Causes those who are defined as white to see themselves as more deserving than people of color
- Narrowly defines culture

Cultural Competence Models
- Common models used in many MSW programs
- Emphasized in Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS)
- Emphasized by NASW Code of Ethics
- Focus on self-awareness and personal development
- Criticized for essentializing culture
- Targets change in one’s personal beliefs
- Does little to address change at the institutional/systemic level
**Critical Race Theory: Historical Overview**

- W.E.B. DuBois – Darkwater/1920's
- Gained popularity during the Civil Rights Movement
- Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado
  - Critical Legal Studies challenged traditional legal scholarship
  - Recognized importance of groups in context
  - Analysis of law cannot be neutral and objective

**How Critical Race Theory Relates to other Theories**

![Diagram showing the relationship between Critical Race Theory and other theories](image)

Figure 1: An intellectual genealogy of critical race theory.

**Critical Race Theory**

- Endemic Racism
- Interest Convergence
- Differential Racialization
- Intersectionality and Anti-Essentialism
- Whiteness as Property
- Counter-Narratives
Critical Race Theory and Social Work Practice

- CRT aligns with EPAS competences 2 and 3
- Engage diversity difference in practice
- Advance human rights and social, economic and environmental justice

Critical Race Theory and Social Work

- CRT offers an anti-oppressive framework to challenge institutionalized racism
- Focus on intersectionality allows for conversations about diversity on multiple levels
- De-centers majoritarian narratives in favor of narratives that tell community stories

What are the purposes of CRT?

- To advance social justice ideas to the general public, and scholars, while also aiming to even out social inequalities
- Study the intersections between different groups of minorities. Recognizing that race and racism work with and through gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality and/or nation as systems of power
- Study the significance of mass media and popular culture in the distribution of power and the perception of minorities
Critical Race Theory and Social Work

- Questions to Consider
- What are the theoretical presuppositions applied to services
- How do theses fit with people for whom services are designed
- Are services/interventions relevant culturally and politically and will they make a real difference in people’s lives
- Do services reflect how clients understand their needs
- What questions are not being asked

Assessment Tools

- Perceived Racism Scale (RPS) – 51 items
- The Perceptions of Racism Scale (TPRS) – 20 items
- The Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS) – 46 items
  - Brief Version (IRRS-B) – 22 items
  - Adolescents (IRRS-A) – 32 items
- Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire (PEDQ) – 22 items
- PEDQ Community Version – 70 items
  - Brief version (PEDQ-CV-B) – 17 items
- The Schedule of Racist Events (SRE) – 18 items
- Adolescent Discrimination Distress Index (ADDI) – 15 items

Assessment Tools, cont.

- Workplace Racial Bias Measure (WRB) – 13 items
- Workplace Prejudice/Discrimination Inventory (WPDI) – 15 items

- Asian-American Racism-Related Stress Inventory (AARRSI) – 29 items
- Race-Related Stressor Scale for Asian-American Vietnam Veterans (RRSS) – 33 items
- Measure of Indigenous Racism Experiences (MIRE) – 31 items
Critical Race Theory and Social Work

- Therapist Outcomes
- Awareness/Critical Processing
- Knowledge and Skills
- Action

Critical Race Theory and Clinical Practice

- Be upfront about issues of race
- Don’t assume homogeneity – there is no one “black experience”
- Be mindful of countertransference
- Engage in supervision that encourages conversation about justice and advocacy
- Educate yourself (It is not the client’s responsibility to educate you!)

Critical Race Theory and Clinical Practice

- Expand your view of cultural wealth
- Recognize hope
- Individual agency
- Cultural resilience and competence
- Diversity is a benefit not something to be managed
White Guilt

"I cannot hide my anger to spare your guilt, not hurt feelings, nor answering anger; for to do so insults and trivializes our efforts. Guilt is not a respond to anger; it’s a response to one’s own actions or lack of action. It if leads to change it can be useful, since it is then not longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt . . . becomes a device to protect ignorance . . . the ultimate protection of changelessness."

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Questions to Consider

• How might you use critical race theory in your current practice?
• How might critical race theory by useful during clinical supervision?
• How might using critical race theory impact your practice?