Article

Using Critical Race Theory to Analyse Community Engagement Practice in a Graduate Social Work Course

Delores V. Mullings
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6802-0735
St John's College
Canada
dmullings@mun.ca

Karun K. Karki
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8712-6831
University of the Fraser Valley
Canada
karun.karki@ufv.ca

Sulaimon Giwa
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8076-0277
Memorial University of Newfoundland
Canada
sgiwa@mun.ca

Sandra Garland
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6905-9524
University of Tasmania
Australia
sandra.garland@utas.edu.au

Lisa Brushett
The Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Work, Canada

Jordan Thomas
Ontario Association of Social Workers
Canada

Abstract

Post-secondary institutions are increasingly encouraging partnership engagement with the community; however, community engagement from an academic perspective does not necessarily benefit the community. This is partially due to the power differential in this relationship and the emphasis on students' learning at the community's expense. The content of this article is drawn from experiences gleaned from 11 students of the "Perspectives with Diverse Communities" (institute component) course at Memorial University, Canada. Of the group, eight identified as cisgender, heterosexual, white females. The professor—a Black woman—and two students deviated from this in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation, and race. During a week of on-campus education, the students participated in community engagement activities prompted by the 2017 United States ban on immigration and refugees. Through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens, the students acknowledged their own identities as mostly white cisgender women, given the institutional racism surrounding them. As graduate students, they are taught self-reflexive practice, but question whether this is enough to effectively work with Black, Indigenous,

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and racialised groups. During the course institute, they steered towards a course of action that was familiar to them instead of developing deeper levels of understanding in working with Black, Indigenous, and racialised populations. This article details one aspect and the process of community engagement undertaken by the class and provides a critical reflection on how the students could have better engaged the community and challenged power dynamics and epistemology while using CRT.

Keywords: Quebec terror attacks; racism; student-centred learning; university-community partnerships

Introduction and Research Intent

The events described in this article took place at Memorial University in St John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, from January 28 to February 2, 2017. The population of St John's (capital of Newfoundland and Labrador) is approximately 217 454 people (Statistics Canada 2017). Memorial University is the only university in the province and offers its Master of Social Work (MSW) programme through distance education, with several on-campus "institutes" throughout the programme. The institute component of the "Perspectives with Diverse Communities" MSW course was designed to give students opportunities to integrate theory with practice in the classroom and through community engagement. Eleven social work graduate students were enrolled in the course, travelling from their homes in Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and other parts of Newfoundland and Labrador to St John's to attend. Most of the class consisted of cisgender, white, heterosexual individuals, with only two students not belonging to this dominant group. The institute's primary focus was to gain knowledge about community work through a discussion of the online course material and applying the principles through meetings and interactions with local community-based organisations. Students and Dr Mullings, the educator, facilitated the class in a student-centred learning (SCL) environment, which allowed the group to steer the direction of their learning. This article describes the global and national feelings following the Trump administration's ban on Muslim-majority countries, and the Quebec Mosque terror attacks. The article presents the experiences of the students, from their own viewpoints and as related by them, giving more insight into the outcome of this learning experience, and describing the class's attempts to engage with the community in response to these acts of violence, racism, and xenophobia.

Global Political and Social Climate

World events significantly affected our class's desire to proceed with community work focused on Islamophobia, xenophobia, and the larger issue of anti-immigrant sentiments and racism. On January 27, 2017, the Trump administration issued an executive order banning people from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States. The order was far reaching and proposed banning citizens from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen from entering the US for a period of 90 days. The

order further banned all refugees for 120 days, and all Syrian refugees indefinitely (Executive Order EO 13769). Those with green cards, visas, and security clearance, including permanent residents, refugees, students, visitors, and immigrants, were also included in the ban.

This controversial political action caught the attention of media outlets worldwide, spurring direct action from many established social justice organisations, social movements, and local citizens. One social movement that reacted, in particular, was No One Is Illegal (NOII), an international network of anti-racist groups advocating for the rights of non-resident immigrants in many countries around the world (NOII Toronto 2021). The social justice movement (at the time called “No Person Is Illegal”) was founded in Germany in 1997 to help all immigrants maintain their human rights regardless of their immigration status. The movement gained momentum in 1999 following the homicide of Aamir Ageeb, a Sudanese tortured by police with ropes, bands, and a helmet while being deported from a German airport (Rabble.ca 2021).

“Movements organized under the banner ‘No One Is Illegal’ emerged in Canada as a response to the increased border securitization, tightened immigration policy and increased racial profiling that occurred in North America following the attacks of September 11, 2001” (Fortier 2013, 6). There are currently Canadian chapters in Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver. Each chapter is dedicated to organising efforts that create tangible support for refugees, undocumented migrants, and immigrant workers to live with dignity and respect (NOII Toronto 2021).

Following the Trump immigration ban, NOII chapters in Canada began urging the Canadian government to rescind the Canada-US Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA), signed December 29, 2004, “requiring refugee claimants to request refugee protection in the first safe country they arrive in, unless they qualify for an exception to the Agreement” (Citizen and Immigration Canada 2016, Para 2). The STCA only includes Canada and the US, and it prevents refugees who arrive in the US from seeking asylum in Canada. Refugees and asylum seekers who feared persecution and imprisonment in the US or deportation to their countries of birth, based on the proposed travel ban, were officially barred from seeking refuge in Canada or would likely be returned to the US if they entered Canada.

The Trump administration’s proposed ban was not the only global social justice-related occurrence during our time at the institute. While we discussed the proposed ban, analysed the potential racist impact it would have on certain groups worldwide, and strategised how to respond as a group, a terrorist shooting in Quebec reminded us that Canada has its own problems with Islamophobia, xenophobia, and racism.

National Context: Quebec Mosque Terror Attacks

Considering the significant global turmoil unfolding, the class decided to get involved in community engagement during the institute to increase community awareness and

support actions aimed at rescinding the Canada-US STCA. NOII had begun an online petition urging the Canadian government to end the Canada-US STCA and open the border to asylum seekers and refugees fleeing the US. While Canadians concentrated on and participated in national activism, the attempted collectivism was shattered when a 27-year-old Canadian white man from Quebec launched a terror attack in the form of a mass shooting. At approximately 8 p.m., after prayers on January 29, 2017, the man, armed with a semi-automatic rifle and hand gun, opened fire for almost two minutes at Centre Culturel Islamique de Quebec in Quebec City's Sainte-Foy neighbourhood, murdering six Canadians of Muslim background and injuring up to 19 others, five seriously, who had attended prayers at the mosque (Montpetit 2017; 2019).

This Canadian event further ignited the class's motivation to continue its activism and help bring awareness of the Trump administration's policy, and ultimately end it. However, while they felt it was important to continue with their community awareness agenda regarding STCA, they also felt the urgency to address racism, hate, and the terror attacks that ended in murder. Mullings challenged the students that, as social workers, they were obligated to respond to the act of terrorism against their fellow Canadians. They, therefore, created an opportunity to bring the community together to discuss, plan, and implement meaningful and lasting actions in response to the terror attacks.

Initiating Community Engagement: Response to Quebec Mosque Terror Attacks

During the institute, the class completed two distinct activities: one focused on the STCA and the other was in response to the Quebec Mosque terror attacks, which is the focus of reflection in this article. The article describes the community engagement process and end results, beginning with the use of social media to connect with community members and organisations.

Harlow (2012) outlines how social networking sites can be mobilised from online movements to offline actions, suggesting that the Internet can both strengthen and create political activism. The class created Twitter and Facebook accounts designed to connect with the broader community and social justice activists. One challenge was the lack of connection with the community, as many of the students, even those who resided in the province, were unfamiliar with St John's social and political activist landscape. While posting on several social media sites, they focused their in-class attention on brainstorming potential activities, such as letter-writing campaigns, demonstrations, sit-ins and marches. However, individuals were concerned about the potential impacts on their jobs and backlash amongst colleagues. Their job concerns centred around possibly violating employment policies as workers (e.g., child welfare or hospital workers posting on social media or demonstrating). A few members of the class challenged this notion of consequences, especially given that white, middle-class, professional women comprised the majority of students. Tensions also arose as some students felt that the white, middle-class women social workers were comfortable in their jobs and were not committed to community-based activism.

In an attempt to move forward, the class reached out to local organisations offering services either directly or indirectly to Muslim communities in Newfoundland and Labrador to inquire about the kinds of activism underway in the province and communicate their eagerness to become involved. They also searched online to identify community organising and actions that were underway. Mullings and a few students had community contacts; the group used these connections to network with community members. They learned that community members were speaking to each other about a response to the terror attacks but that there was not as yet a firm plan. This was an opportunity for the students to help with the planning process. The class invited the larger community and representatives from community-based organisations to a meeting to discuss what action could be initiated collaboratively. Calls were placed to several organisations both within the university and the general community, including the Muslim Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Council, Association for New Canadians, Social Justice Co-operative of Newfoundland and Labrador, Religious Social Action Coalition, Native Friendship Centre, Memorial University's Muslim Students' Association, Memorial University's Black Student Association, Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador, several local women's shelters, and the St John's Status of Women Council. The meeting was scheduled for shortly after lunch on February 1, 2017.

Community Meeting

In preparation to host the meeting, the class used personal funds to purchase snacks and organised guest parking for meeting attendees. They also rearranged the room (moving desks to one side of the room and borrowing additional chairs from neighbouring classrooms) to create an open space where chairs formed a circle to accommodate the community in their classroom at the university campus. The large space was filled to capacity. Individuals from several organisations and institutions, including student associations, local community-based organisations, and formal institutions attended.

The intent of this meeting was to come together, share anti-racist initiatives currently underway, generate ideas for anti-racist activism, and seek opportunities for community involvement. In essence, the students wanted to take immediate action to show solidarity with fellow Canadians who had been violently attacked and denounced hate, racist violence, and xenophobia, but they also wanted to plan for the long term. They did not create an agenda but rather created the space for those present to introduce themselves, express their interest in being present, share ideas about social justice activism in the province and decide what actions to take in response to the Quebec terror attacks. Some attendees, including Black and racialised individuals, spoke about the need for anti-racist organising in Newfoundland and Labrador. Attendees also felt that a coalition needed to be formed immediately and that organising activities be spearheaded under said coalition. As the conversation continued and ideas were being generated, the focus of the activism shifted from racism to social justice. Black and racialised attendees exerted considerable efforts to refocus the conversation on racism.

The meeting exposed the lack of anti-racist social activism and understanding in the province. Aside from various student associations, social justice organising in St John's appeared to be done by a small group of local activists who use social media as their primary way of communicating ideas for immediate action, demonstrations, or rallies with each other and the wider community. As the discussion unfolded, a suggestion was made to notify the police for protection, should a public rally be organised. This idea was brought forward by a white cisgender student who had completed previous work with labour unions and felt that the police could be supportive in a public protest. Many group attendees rejected this suggestion, indicating that police presence could be a safety concern for systemically marginalised individuals and groups. This suggestion was illustrative of the differing levels of awareness, values, power, and privilege of individuals in the room. Legewie (2016) outlines how police increase the use of force against Black, Indigenous, and racialised groups to mitigate perceived threats and preserve social order (see, for example, Alexander 2020). This discussion reflected the need to address the safety of all participants in the room and signalled to the class the importance of considering all viewpoints when organising social action. Gamble and Weil (2010) outline how trust develops over time as groups meet and begin to understand what the meaning of personal safety looks like for each other.

As ideas were being generated and plans made, some Black and racialised individuals present at the meeting voiced concerns that the people who were the focus of the hate, hostility, and racism were not sufficiently present in the meeting to contribute to the conversation and the direction of the group's potential activities and agenda. As mentioned earlier, the meeting was scheduled during the day time, which was potentially a limitation because it indirectly excluded many individuals, including those whose work schedule was inflexible.

Enhancing community engagement within this population can be challenging, with data supporting significantly lower social and civic engagement amongst immigrants compared with their Canadian-born peers (Lai and Hynie 2010). Butterfoss (2006, 336) reports that "coalitions often recruit less diverse partners than expected or desired with higher proportions of females, middle-age, and white professionals." However, in order for Black, Indigenous, and racialised community members to feel included in the coalition's agenda, they must be involved at the initial stages and be a part of those providing leadership and decision-making. Barriers to increasing the numbers of Black and racialised attendees included the time of day the meeting was held and the assumption that they were free to attend. In addition, the class was not known to the community, and as a group, they had few community connections, so concerns of trust may have been present.

The attempt to help build a coalition seemed to attract what Gamble and Weil (2010) describe as token representation, whereby there were token representatives from racialised groups present and not an accurate representation of the entire community, and in this case, the communities who experience racism, Islamophobia, and

xenophobia. Wolff (2001) emphasises the need to increase participation and engagement from grassroots organisations by reaching out to those who are most affected by the issues and to decentralise ourselves to create space for racialised people's leadership within the coalition.

Finally, very few members of non-profit organisations attended, as they voiced that they were obligated to receive permission from their boards of directors prior to engaging in meetings. Therefore, meeting attendees decided that no activities, including rallies, protests, or other group action, be planned. Instead, the group decided on an interim name, Anti-Racist Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador (ARC-NL), and created a Facebook page for networking and communication. The coalition continues to influence and contribute to anti-racism and social justice activism in the province and has been co-chaired by Dr Sobia Shaikh and Jen Nolan since its inception.

Ending the Institute: Our Time for Reflection

Reflectivity is a foundation of critical social work practice (Ruch 2002). As graduate-level social work students and practitioners, being reflective is important to evaluate how effective we are in our work with service users, guests, and participants who tend to be some of the most vulnerable people in society. Given this premise, the students ended their institute with a reflective component lasting approximately two hours in which each of them, as participants in this learning environment, shared their feelings, important lessons, and ideas to help influence our practice. They discussed the week's events, how their views of community engagement affected their actions, and future social justice work. It is this reflection which forms the basis of our article.

The Nature of Community-engagement Practice

Community-engagement Scholarship

Community-engaged scholarship (CES) begins and ends with a respectful, reciprocal democratic community-university partnership. CES should be pursued in such a way where power structures are broken down to formulate partnerships with the community while remaining cognisant of the community's needs and challenges (Bishop et al. 2009). Student actions during the institute were often decisions made by the dominant group of graduate students, none of whom had experienced racism and only a few life-altering experiences of discrimination.

One critique of CES is that the university structure remains dominant, and it is rarely community driven (Fitzgerald, Burack, and Seifer 2010). Furthermore, it can be difficult to distinguish between the type of work, such as service learning, and the goals of work, which may include a contribution to the community (O'Meara et al. 2010). Community engagement starts with and involves the community as co-partners in a collaborative process (Sobrero and Jayaratne 2014). During the course institute, the students did not include the community as co-partners in their planning. Sobrero and Jayaratne (2014) suggest that the engagement of service providers in a collaborative relationship with all

populations in the community can allow knowledge to be shared in a reciprocal manner; this can also create a rapport between the two parties and increase goal development and the pursuit of social justice.

There are several factors that guide community engagement activities, including sharing knowledge, deconstructing power relationships, collaborating with the community as partners, and ensuring inclusion and participation of populations within the community (Whiteford and Strom 2013). Partnership with the community entails establishing mutual trust and bringing together various types of knowledge (O'Meara et al. 2010). As Saltmarsh (2010) states, this entails deconstructing the "expert" model and elevating the community from client to partner. Respecting different organisational cultures and providing marginalised and racialised populations with the opportunity to have their voices heard are also important for successful collaboration (Lane and Tribe 2010; Price et al. 2013).

Community-engagement Scholarship

CES is intertwined with service learning and can benefit the community, students, and the university (Fitzgerald et al. 2010). CES can be defined as "a collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Driscoll 2008, 39). The community-engagement process should be inclusive and have a sense of cultural awareness that includes "a family-centered, culturally responsive approach to reach out to minority and disadvantaged communities as well as those affected by disabilities in the identification and solution of problems affecting them" (Vargas et al. 2012, 22).

There are several forms of community engagement, which include service learning, community-based research, and outreach (O'Meara et al. 2010). Service learning is a teaching and learning tool to help students integrate theory with practice while partnering reciprocally with the community to meet the community through civic engagement (Mullings 2014). Community engagement is challenging the traditional learning process of universities, and this transformative process needs to be sustained by becoming a part of the university's identity (Whiteford and Strom 2013). The students challenged the traditional learning process by collectively deciding to change the course institute and engaging with the community in pursuing social justice and anti-racism. They felt empowered, as they benefited from the learning process while advocating with the community. It was a unique experience for most of the students in the institute, as many of them had no former CES experience. Furthermore, many of them had limited knowledge regarding social activism despite having undergraduate social work degrees and employment experience.

Mullings [forthcoming] argues that community engagement is mutually beneficial for the community and for the university because it promotes civic responsibility while enhancing student learning. The community may benefit from capacity building,

community wealth, and the pursuit of social justice, among many other benefits (Fitzgerald et al. 2010). By going beyond a clinical setting, students develop skills for practice, self-awareness regarding where they stand in relation to social justice issues, and a knowledge of the population they are working with (Fitzgerald et al. 2010; Gaitskill 2015). Furthermore, universities benefit from student retention and improved public relations (Fitzgerald et al. 2010). Despite the mutual benefits, it is important to keep in mind that the main goal of community engagement is to provide direct services to the community rather than education for students (Price et al. 2013). Students are often under a restricted time frame, as was the case for this institute, which had been condensed into only six days. Community engagement needs to take place over a significant period of time to create a successful, collaborative partnership, which involves establishing a relationship with the community and having dialogue relating to cultural sensitivity and social justice (Price et al. 2013).

Participation and Engagement of All Sectors of the Community

Striving to include the participation of racialised or historically marginalised populations within the community is important because "participation is the key to integrating a sense of community and ownership of the change process" (Bishop et al. 2009, 115). Vargas et al. (2012, 23) indicate that barriers to participation are historical "discrimination based on race and ethno-culture as well as disability." Many who were affected by racism, violence, and hate were not in attendance during the formation of ARC-NL. The approach to engaging the community may not have reached racialised populations, or they may not have attended because of other structural and social barriers. The students could have implemented a plan to engage community sectors and avoid building on inequities that inherently exist within the St John's region. New members and racialised individuals are less likely to take part in community building because of the racism and discrimination they experience.

Community members must feel a sense of belonging and have knowledge of their community to be aware of opportunities that can increase their participation and engagement (Lai and Hynie 2010). Lane and Tribe (2010) point out that communities are complex and not homogeneous, yet a few individuals are often inappropriately delegated to speak for the whole community. Therefore, meeting attendees did not make any decisions on behalf of the Muslim population about a response to the Quebec Mosque terror attacks until they could provide leadership and direction. Community engagement principles dictate that the students should have spent significant time getting to know the community prior to starting a formal engagement to better determine the most relevant groups to engage, as well as to ensure a community-driven approach (Lane and Tribe 2010). Given the institute's time constraints, the students did not become familiar with the context of both the Muslim communities and the general community of St John's. Getting to know the community and the ethnography can help ensure that the engagement process is inclusive, which is essential to the participation of those who are historically underrepresented (Mayan et al. 2013).

Power Dynamics in Community-engagement Scholarship

Community-engagement scholarship challenges the Eurocentric academic values, norms and ideals in the "ivory tower." While universities do propose what they call community engagement, little value is placed on this scholarship (Mullings [forthcoming]). Furthermore, most of the literature on community and postsecondary education partnerships is written by and for academics, published in peer-reviewed journals and disseminated at academic conferences, all of which are largely inaccessible to community members.

Theoretically, community engagement is driven by the community rather than professionals and academics (Price et al. 2013). Therefore, the students in this class acknowledged that its community engagement was not aligned with community engagement principles and that one meeting could not be called a partnership. In addition, community-university partnership often disadvantages the community in favour of students' learning (Mullings [forthcoming]). The institute focused on a student-centred learning approach, including learning from each other and the community. Therefore, it was a different process to acquire knowledge from the community as an integral learning opportunity. Price et al. (2013, 46) state that "the partnership is conceptualized as moving from a 'top-down' expert model to a co-existing parallel and facilitative model and finally transforming into an integrative, collaborative process model." This involves the willingness of service providers to facilitate community participation in the decisions that affect them and challenge existing power structures (Forde and Lynch 2013). Students acknowledge that models of CE may not be appropriate as "universities are practicing CE in an era of increasing economic, social, political, and technological demands. These evolving spheres have made CE to be approached in different ways over time and space" (Mtawa et al. 2016). Nonetheless, as a student body, the group challenged the university's academic dominance by attempting to engage with the community.

Promoting community involvement through ongoing and open discussion, while being respectful of differences and being cognisant of cultural malleability, will aid universities in becoming more inclusive in their community partnerships (Mayan et al. 2013; O'Meara et al. 2010; Price et al. 2013). "Community engagement challenges the traditional gown/town split by putting both groups on a more equal status, and reducing the perceived difference between those 'guardians of knowledge' and the lived experience of communities" (Whiteford and Strom 2013, 73). Universities need to be aware of power dynamics as they emerge and ensure that open dialogue occurs around these inequities and include multiple viewpoints (O'Meara et al. 2010; Price et al. 2013). Institutional distrust can be confronted by stakeholders participating in discussions regarding issues of privilege as well as racism, heterosexism, and classism (Price et al. 2013). Verjee (2012) notes that it is imperative for academic institutions to acknowledge social injustices within [their] structures and to accept accountability. Maurrasse (2001) adds that colleges and universities must work respectfully with communities and be responsible for the ways in which they collaborate to pursue social justice.

Integrating Critical Race Theory in Community Engagement

Transformational learning comes from both practice and critical reflection. Here, we use Critical Race Theory (CRT) to deconstruct these course activities. During the six days of on-campus learning at the institute, a mostly white settler group of students unwittingly modelled the problematic paradigm of white people speaking for racialised groups, basing their idea of "help" to those groups on their own perspectives. This became clear upon realising that, based on the end result of their work, they had unsuccessfully achieved their initial goals. CRT can provide important learning for future CES projects and activism.

CRT posits several basic tenets. First, it argues that racism is routine; its presence is found everywhere and is felt regularly by racialised people. Second, it states that the dominant group enjoys and benefits from "white-over-colour ascendancy" (REF) and because of this, there is little incentive to remove it. Third, CRT suggests race is merely a social construct; whiteness is simply a construct of thought and ideas with no actual scientific or genetic dispositions to point toward any race having inherent superiority. Another important position of CRT, particularly for a critical reflection of the institute's work, is that white people racialise different groups depending on the interest of the dominant needs at any given time (Delgado and Stefancic 2012). We are currently seeing racialisation, discrimination, hate, racism, and fear-mongering of the Islamic Canadian communities, yet earlier in history, Arabs were seen as exotic and cultured (Said 1978) when it was beneficial for white people to see them as such.

Using a CRT lens to reflect on their activities was an important learning for this class. In education, CRT both exposes and challenges the superficial race neutral policies and practices that are rooted in unequal treatment of racialised people (Stovall 2006). In addition, it strives to champion the voices and stories of Black, Indigenous, and racialised people as "the sources of critique of the dominant social order which purposely devalues them" (Stovall 2006, 244). CRT importantly works at dismembering the fallacy of the education system's homogenous "we are all in it together" underpinnings. Instead, it shines the light on the education system's history of modelling student behaviour and expectations based on white norms and on the myth that people in the Americas are all immigrants (Ladson-Billings 1998). CRT critics argue that the framework reduces race to an individual's entire identity and host of experiences while ignoring other factors such as class (Stovall 2006). While CRT uses race as a defining factor in the experience of racialised people, it does so, intending to highlight systematic ways that racism benefits white supremacy (Delgado and Stefancic 2012); further, CRT has grown as a movement to address racism at the intersections of other social identities (Crenshaw 1989). That said, while self-reflexivity cannot be the extent of working towards ending one's own ignorance about racism, it has to be the absolute basic of what is required for those in antiracist or social justice work (Sholock 2012).

A Critical Analysis of Community Engagement Effectiveness

Having been educated within the university setting, with white behavioural norms, values, and expectations for learning ingrained for centuries, these students easily reached out to other white-led organisations and groups in their attempts at community engagement. Their emails and calls to collaborate, spoke about *their* own unease about the treatment of racialised Canadians who also identify as Muslims, which likely touched on the unease of other whites. They moved towards action within a white-normalised and accepted due process; for example: reaching out to others, scheduling a meeting date that worked for their group at a location that was convenient and familiar with other white elites (the university is not an appropriate venue representation of racialised, immigrants and poor people), agreeing to communicate by email until the meeting. At the time that these activities and attempts were taking place, it did not seem (nor did it come up in group conversation) that any student had been aware of the "whiteness" of activity. Indeed, Sholock (2012) reminds us that whites have a very limited understanding of their own whiteness and white privilege.

As a collective, their attempt to engage with racialised people, immigrant and Muslim communities in the wake of both the immigration ban and the Quebec terror attacks was motivated based on their shared indignation of blatant human rights violations. They reacted quickly, driven by the desire to "help" those they envisioned as "less fortunate" and were able to easily and readily localise several community agencies to agree to meet. The class responded to global and national events and assumed that their requests to discuss contentious political issues with other professionals would be met, illustrating exactly how racism works. Their group did not have to strategise how to challenge stereotypes or modify their outrage in any way. As a power-holding group of mainly white, educated, middle-class professionals, they freely discussed public demonstrations like marches and sit-ins, knowing that even if they were to be arrested, it would turn out (for most of them) to have a happy ending, or at least be an entertaining story to tell their children. Although their actions suggested an eagerness to address systemic racism and violence, they had missed the impact of anti-Black racism in their own class and among their members. It was their group's professor, a Black woman, who suggested they look at an activity other than a sit-in because if the police were called, "they would see me first," and if arrests were made, the Black person would likely be the first. Though "protecting and serving" is the police mandate, policing is racialised and works only to protect and serve whiteness (Alexander 2020; Burton 2015). We see the difference in how white terror is policed and named and how Black gatherings and Black bodies are disseminated (Alexander 2020). CRT principles allow us to understand the white-based assumption that police equate to safety, yet for Black and Indigenous people in particular, and some religious groups (e.g., Muslims), "police" means racist violence, criminalisation, and threats.

Implications for Future Community Engagement Activities

Reviewing the class's activities from the week-long institute course through a CRT lens gave the group pause to consider several elements they had not previously examined during their week together. One of the tools CRT uses is counter-storytelling. Counter-stories are first-voice accounts of those whose experiences, cultural practices, and ways of knowing have been delegitimised, erased or co-opted into dominant discourse like those of meritocracy, capitalism, heteronormativity, whiteness, and empirical research (Chang 2013). As a class with a limited amount of time within which to work, the students naturally assumed action in a way that was meaningful to them. Had they operated within a CRT framework, they might have concentrated their community engagement activities on seeking out and creating relationships with the immigrant and Muslim Canadian communities designed around hearing their own experiences and taking leadership from them about how the class should proceed in our activism. This realisation helped them move into deeper levels of understanding the inner workings of power and privilege.

CRT can help alleviate student resistance to acknowledging their own racism (Abrams and Moio 2009), which is another way that employing both student-centred learning and community engagement is beneficial. For example, when the students were tasked with trying to make connections with the community and to think of an activity in response to the immigration ban, they were much more comfortable in reaching out to other known organisations and requesting help with getting their voices heard. What they did not do was reach out to mosques to ask whether they could listen to the experiences of their members, or even if they would be willing to meet. CRT is helpful in offering the perspective of implicit racism where people act from living in a racist system. Van Soest's (1996) study illustrates white social work students' discomfort with racism. To summarise, this study found that after the class had finished, most of the white students enrolled in a cultural diversity class, believing that the world was just and fair, despite the class's intention to highlight the structural detriments of racism and sexism (Abrams and Moio 2009). When we become aware of how structural racism operates, we are then able to understand how engrained implicit racism is and how white privilege threatens effective community engagement with racialised groups.

Structural racism is not the only problematic, as anti-Black racism and whiteness were evident within this class even before they arrived on campus. Mullings had been racialised and stereotyped by past students who had shared their perceptions of how they experienced her. Without ever meeting her, many of the students arrived at the institute tainted with racist notions of who she was. This was a jarring lesson for the group, as their experience was completely opposite to the gossip that permeated the environment prior to our arrival. With experience, they now have a counter-story of who Dr Mullings is. Understanding life through the CRT lens has been a challenge for those students who are white identifying; they have had to radically question themselves regarding their automatic privileged notions of the world. In doing so, however, they

have been afforded a new paradigm for reflection; indeed, their social work knowledge is able to transcend beyond a desire to "help" disenfranchised groups. They recognise that, as white students, they benefit from these systemic issues and that efforts to engage in real change must be paired with efforts to understand their own racism, prejudice, and fear.

Conclusion

The cultural-competency paradigm used in this community engagement activity proved to service white people and was ineffective in producing real change within the community. The experience has outlined the importance of deconstructing expert roles, increasing community involvement, and acquiring knowledge through the community in a "ground-up" approach while using CRT to involve racialised populations. As graduate students, this experience challenged their traditional way of learning, as they learned through experience that their dominant ways of knowledge do not always prove as beneficial or effective in working with communities.

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