

Chapter 35

A Forensic Psychological Perspective on Racism in Schools of Educational Leadership: Impact on Organizational Culture

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ABSTRACT

Schools theoretically operate under a shared value of fairness in the workplace. The fairness includes a notable sense of egalitarian beliefs, values, and people who hold themselves out to be unprejudiced. When defensible and culturally responsive justice measures are applied in schools of education, leadership in Schools of Education must consistently demonstrate clear and convincing evidence of fairness. The chapter is an analysis of aversive or unconscious racism and in the ways that it might manifest itself through individuals in leadership positions. Evaluating the impact of the institutional racism. In the analysis of forensic psychological perspective, ways of using a forensic psychological approach to assess the stakeholders in the School of Education as it pertains to the experience of racism will be discussed. A forensic psychological portrait of racism in schools of education is examined. Finally, implications for practice, training, and research are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

The roots of what is currently known as colleges or schools of education can be traced back to the “Normal School,” whose creation was fueled by the westward expansion in America. The intent of these schools across the country was to enhance the standards for teaching. The 19th century marked a period where these normal schools were in almost each part of the country. The normal schools also provided an opportunity for women to attend college to become teachers. Historically, schools of education were plagued by an undeniable reality of inadequate standards, low wages, and a reputation for being a less prestigious occupation. The confluence of the aforementioned realities may also explain why so many schools of education remain locked in a seemingly inescapable historical and cultural quagmire related to standards that is now mixed with race-based tensions. That is, some of the same ethnoracial injustices perceived in the broader American society can also be observed in schools of education. Some might assess these inequities as a byproduct of historic positional advantage for some individuals that has resulted in oppression, race-based privilege, acts of racial supremacy and self-serving ignorance of the imbalance in the organizational power structure. Some might even argue that schools of education have become extensions of a larger culture that includes the 21st century version of racially coded lynchings (i.e., academically underperforming schools, criminalization of Black males, and disproportionate unemployment rates. These circumstances coincide with race based reflexive tendency to blame the victim for their plight. Examples of this trend include an accusatory finger pointing to a decline in the Black family (i.e., single-headed households and teen pregnancy rates). In this case, Blacks are seemingly universally blamed as a major part of the community demise reflected in these unwanted circumstances (e.g., people faced with extreme hardships are blamed for the hardships) (Capezza & Arriaga, 2008).

Racism can have forensic psychological (i.e., psycho-legal) implications. For example, racism was alleged in three high profile shooting incidents involving Black males. In two of the cases, timely medical attention was not provided and in a third, the corpse was allowed to remain on the street for hours after the incident. In the case of the 12-year-old 6th grader, he was shot dead by police within two seconds of them arriving on the scene for waving a fake gun. American history is littered by lynchings that took place and often followed by a time when the bodies were displayed, souvenirs were collected, or victims were tortured in a way in order to terrorize (i.e., racial domination) Blacks (Bonilla-Silva, 2009, 2012). This type of terrorism (i.e., group inducing fear) functions as a form of collective punishment for Blacks. In this case, these acts of lynching were highly publicized at the time but now with the access to camera phones it means the size of the crowds that view them exponentially dwarf those hangings that occurred following reconstruction. The handling of the bodies was designed to communicate possible ethnoracial message that resonates today. Like lynchings, the killings of Black males were ruled as legitimate actions, both by the officers themselves and by legal authorities charged with subsequently reviewing them.

In fact, these events were assessed as legitimate criminal punishments. These high profile police shootings of Black males serve as a culturally responsive platform for initiating conversations regarding racism in schools of education and leadership. Racism refers to discriminatory behavior attached with prejudicial beliefs towards an entire race that places that group in a subordinate position in society (Anderson, 1996; Beamon, 2014; Feagin & Feagin, 2012; Singer, 2005). Organizationally, there are at least two types of racism. Structural racism refers to a tapestry of institutional barriers that result in inequalities (e.g., disparities in pay or other financial rewards for academic productivity) between diverse faculty and their colleagues.

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