


Chapter 9

Administrators Leveraging School Counseling Supports to Address Disparities in School Discipline

Caroline Lopez-Perry

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2333-556X>
California State University, Long Beach, USA

Edwin Hernandez

California State University, San Bernardino, USA

Enrique Espinoza

University of California, Riverside, USA

ABSTRACT

Across the nation, various movements have persistently called for the removal of punitive practices in school; this includes removing law enforcement officers (LEOs) and school resource officers (SROs) and prioritizing funding toward student support services. This chapter brings attention to the role of school administrators and how they can leverage and support school counselors to address disparities in school discipline that impact racially minoritized youth. The authors draw on the theory of racialized organizations to demonstrate how schools are a racialized space, as individual agency is constrained or enabled by their social position within the organization, and how schools further reproduce inequity through their unequal distribution of resources. This chapter offers some practical approaches to reveal how school administrators can leverage school counselors to dismantle disparities in school discipline and prioritize practices of care.

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INTRODUCTION

Well technically actually we have more campus security. We have more of them than we have counselors because we have campus security, we have a probation officer, and we have a school police. I don't see school police. He's not on campus all the time I don't think, but the probation officer is here all the time and the campus security is here all the time and that outnumbers the number of counselors that we have. - Monica, School Counselor

Monica (*pseudonym*) is one of the thousands of school counselors in the state of California who are tasked with the critical role of supporting the academic, career, and socio-emotional development of students (California Association for School Counselors [CASC], 2019). In her own words, presented in the epigraph of this chapter, she shares a commonly disturbing practice that many administrators and school districts use by over-relying on law enforcement officers (LEOs) and school resource officers (SROs) to address issues of school discipline in schools that serve predominantly racially minoritized youth (Annamma, 2018; Hernandez & Espinoza, 2021; Shedd, 2015; Whitaker et al., 2019). Like Monica, she makes note of how a combination of school police, school resource officers, and probation officers outnumber the number of school counselors at her institution. Not surprisingly, this has direct implications on racially minoritized youth as they are surrounded by a more punitive approach to addressing student needs and fewer services directed toward academic and mental wellness supports that are often provided by school counselors (Serrano, 2020; Whitaker et al., 2019), who in many cases are the first and only mental health providers in schools (CASC, 2019). Given this case, how school counselors respond to the overpolicing of racially minoritized youth and how administrators support by funding these punitive approaches requires further investigation.

The significant presence of law enforcement officers and school resource officers on campuses has persistently shown how their excessive force contributes to the physical and psychological harm for many Black and Latinx youth (Annamma, 2018; Shedd, 2015; Whitaker et al., 2019). Recent events have continued to fuel the movement to abolish all forms of policing that harm Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Such events include the racial reckoning that occurred in 2020 across the country against police brutality over the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and many others. More recently, in September 2021, Manuela (Mona) Rodriguez, an 18-year-old, Latina was shot and murdered by a Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) School Safety Officer (SSO) near the campus of Milikan High School (Black Lives Matter Long Beach [BLMLB], 2021). According to LBUSD policies, SSOs can carry and use

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