

Chapter 2

Racial Trauma–Informed Pedagogy Strategies for Educational Professionals

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ABSTRACT

In order to address the racial trauma that teens who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) may face at home, and potentially experience in school, educational professionals must equip themselves with the specialized skills to meet students' academic, emotional, and social needs. School leaders must begin this task by examining their own personal racial biases as they lead their staff in the task of re-viewing data, rules, policies, and the school environment to examine practices that support and promote institutional and systemic racism.

INTRODUCTION

Many marginalized groups of color living within the United States have experienced historical racial trauma and still experience racial abuse, trauma, and violence today (Chavez-Duenas et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2018). Namely, the televised shootings of unarmed Black men, women, and children have led to additional trauma. Members of the Latinx community also experience increased trauma related to the unsafe and often deadly missions many have made to the United States while seeking asylum to escape poverty and brutality in their home country. Once detained, these individuals are often met with deplorable holding conditions while being held in immigration detention facilities in the United States (Comas-Dias et al., 2019). Further, unaccompanied minors are often separated from their families enroute to the United States or upon arrival once their parents are taken into police custody (Comas-Dias et al., 2019). More recently, the Asian community has experienced increased violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic, with some Americans blaming the origin of this deadly on China (Batalova & Zong, 2016; Chiu, 2020; Mangan, 2020). Moreover, Indigenous Americans are still fighting for the rights to their reservations and the eradication of racist sports teams' names and school mascots. Racial trauma extends

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to Arab Americans as well. They often face discrimination through the recent implementation of the “Muslim Ban,” which effectively prohibits travel to and from certain Muslim countries (Alsultany, 2012; Audi, 2008; Kira, 2010; Kite & Whitley, 2016).

These examples illustrate racism and the issues plaguing cultures as a whole, including the impact on children within those cultures. The trauma faced by children of minority groups is often felt in their schools and classrooms. However, membership in these racial groups does not automatically mean that children and teens experience these traumatic events themselves. Educational professionals need to be aware of the potential that either the children they work with, or their families may have personally been a witness or victim of this trauma.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide both educators and educational leaders with information about how schools can unwittingly re-traumatize students of color through biased teaching curriculums, unfair disciplinary practices, and personal racial biases. The end of this chapter lists twenty easy-to-implement strategies for educational professionals to put into practice in their buildings to help eradicate institutional and systemic racism towards students of color (SOC).

BACKGROUND

Racial Trauma in Schools

Schools in the United States have a history of institutional and overt racism towards children and teens who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). This history is evidenced by Indigenous/ Native American boarding schools, racial school segregation, biased testing and curriculums, and perpetual racial academic disparities (Kohli et al., 2017). Few would argue that educational conditions have improved for students of color (SOC); yet many still experience racial trauma in their everyday lives. For example, SOC can be exposed to additional racial trauma while in the care of educational professionals throughout the day (Bianco, 2016; Boudreau, 2020; Jackson et al., 2014). Therefore, schools and organizations working with children of color must be aware of how this continued exposure to racism and historical racial trauma may impact this population emotionally, psychologically, and academically (Harrell, 2000). This recognition must include taking a serious stance against the perpetuation of racism and racial injustice, incorporating a thorough examination of all school policies and practices to remove language, environments, and activities that maintain racial inequity (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Joseph et al., 2016). Rarely do schools and educational professionals intentionally engage in overt racist actions, such as the deliberate segregation of SOC or the use of offensive racial slurs, etcetera. However, SOC can still be exposed to racial trauma in schools and educational settings through less overt forms of racism such as racial microaggressions, unintentional educator bias, discriminatory rules and policies, and other forms of systemic and institutional racism (Bianco, 2016; Jackson et al., 2014; Joseph et al., 2016; Urrieta, 2006).

Educators, administrators, and students carry experiences, attitudes, and beliefs that can unconsciously impact their decision-making and interactions with POC. These negative stereotypes and biases can cause an unhealthy school culture (National Educational Association, 2019). However, these unintentional discriminatory practices can be hard to identify. Therefore, educational professionals must receive meaningful training about racial microaggressions, unconscious biases, and culturally relevant pedagogy to prevent re-traumatization of SOC when they come to school (Harrell, 2000; National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.). In addition, educational professionals must acknowledge the existence of historical

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