

Microaggressions in Administrator Preparation Programs: How Black Female Participants Experienced Discussions of Identity, Discrimination and Leadership

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Objectives

- To bring attention to continued gap in discussions of the intersection of identity, leadership and discrimination in leadership education programs.
- To examine how those with multiple and intersecting minoritized identities, in this case, Black women, uniquely experience these discussions.
- To, as white, female scholars, interested in feminist and antiracist approaches – use race (and gender) based epistemology (Scheurich & Young, 1997) to challenge the institutional structures in which we sit.

Background

- Racial and gender discrimination in educational leadership is pervasive and has real consequences (*e.g.*, Alston, 2005; Jean-Marie, Normore & Mansfield, 2016; Muñoz, et al., 2014; Peters, 2010; Shakeshaft, 1987).
 - Leadership constructions favor maleness and whiteness (Alston, 2012; Christman & McClellan, 2008; Eagly & Karau, 2002)
 - “Double bind” (Weiner & Burton, 2016) and/or “Double Jeopardy” (Beal, 1969; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Rosette & Livingston, 2012; Settles, 2006).
 - Underrepresentation (Cognard-Black, 2004; Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011; Williams & Loeb, 2012)
 - Missing mentoring and “tapping” (Eckman, 2004; Cognard-Black, 2004; Muñoz et al., 2014; Myung et al. , 2011; Peters, 2010)
 - “Glass Cliff” (Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Peters, 2011; Santamaría & Gaëtane, 2014)
 - Extra scrutiny and stress (Boris-Schacter & Langer, 2006; Mendez-Morse, 2003; Peters, 2012)

Background

- Administrator programs often reify discriminatory beliefs and behaviors
 - Remain predominately white spaces (*Young & Brooks, 2008; Jean-Marie, Normore & Mansfield, 2016*)
 - Rely on content from white male perspective (*Jean-Marie, Normore & Mansfield, 2016; Killingsworth et al., 2010*)
 - Often ignore issues of race, racism and other forms of discrimination or relegate to one experience (*Hawley & James, 2010; Johnson & Campbell-Stephens, 2014; O'Malley & Capper, 2015; Rusch & Horsford, 2008*).
 - Professors unwilling, scared and/or unprepared to discuss these issues OR reflect on how their patterns of feedback negatively effect students of color (*e.g., Carpenter & Diem, 2013; Diem & Carpenter, 2012; Rusch, 2004; Sherman, 2005; Young & Brooks, 2008*)

Microaggressions

- Sue et al. (2007):
 - Microassaults: explicit and conscious attacks
 - Microinsults: convey rudeness and put down a person's identity
 - Microinvalidations: serve to nullify or exclude lived experiences of the recipient and their identity (ies)

All can simultaneously exist at the individual, organizational and environmental level.
- Lewis et al. (2013) explore how intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and gendered racism (Essed, 1991) may create unique experiences of “gendered racial microaggressions” for black women in various roles.

Research Questions

1. How, and in what ways, were gender and racial identity discussed in 10 black women leader's administration preparation programs?
2. To what degree did these discussions serve to reinforce or challenge racial and/or gender discrimination in the field?

Methods

Approach

- We took a phenomenological approach (Cresewell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Participants

- Purposeful criterion sampling (Patton, 1990) of self-identifying black female administrators in public schools in the Northeast (n=10).

Data Collection

- 3x interviews using Seidman (2006) as a guide.

Analysis

- We used a dimensional analysis (Charmaz, 2014) with both inductive and deductive codes. Deductive codes were derived from Sue et al.'s (2007) framework.

Credibility

- Frequent researcher meeting and discussion.
- Conducted member checks with participants.

Participants

Table 1

Selected Participant Information

Pseudonym	Position	<u>Yrs</u> Exp.	School Level	Student Pop ¹	Program Type ²	Cohort Based	Residency	Internship	Size Cohort/ Class
Shelby	Assistant Principal	23	9-12	PWI	Alternative	Y	Y	N	4
<u>Kamele</u>	Principal	21	Pk-8	MSI	Traditional	N	N	Y	12
Rosa	Principal	18	6-8	50/50	Traditional	Y	N	Y	20
Marlene	Assistant Principal	18	Pk-8	MSI	Traditional	N	N	Y	20
Terri	Principal	13	6-12	MSI	Traditional	N	N	Y	12-25
Sheila	Principal	13	Pk-2	MSI	Traditional	Y	N	Y	16
Nicole	Principal	25	K-12	MSI	Alternative	Y	Y	N	4
Marisa	Principal	18	Pk-8	MSI	Traditional	Y	N	Y	10
Janelle	Principal	18	6-8	PWI	Traditional	Y	N	Y	20
Michele	Principal	11	Pk-8	MSI	Traditional	N	N	Y	20

Note: ¹PWI: Predominantly White-serving institution; MSI: Predominantly Minority-serving institution; ²Traditional: University-based programs with in-person classes; Alternative: Specialty program run by non-profit to produce leaders to work in low-performing schools.

Findings

- Participants' programs perpetrated various microaggressions:
 - Environmental Microaggressions
 - Lack of demographic diversity
 - **Microinvalidations**
 - Silencing/Tokenizing
 - **Silence/Identity Blindness**
 - **Centering whiteness and “White privilege”**

Silence/Identity Blindness

- Discussions of identity focused on students' identities and leaders' need to engage in “culturally competent” and other “socially just” practices.
- **BUT** discussions of participants' identities and how these identities may impact their experiences were absent.
 - Not anything [in the program] about, you know, identity as a leader...I would not even really say about leadership challenges outside of things other than maybe budgetary...***there wasn't any part of the program that was really about you know, me as a leader...and certainly not as a female leader or a leader of color.*** – Michele
 - [Leader identity was] never discussed... We did talk about from an angle of equity from a student lens, but ***what does that look like if you're the only person of color, and women, or male of color? What are some hindrances, some obstacles that you should be aware of as you're leaving a staff in whatever that role is?*** - Janelle

Silence/Identity Blindness

- Thus suggested that leadership was identity “neutral” or blind
 - I think they [program leaders] were trying to focus on just the person in the role. So maybe...it was ***their conscious effort to not differentiate between a male or a female...*** if they were just trying to say "This is how anyone going into this role should be," right? Rather than saying "These are some of the things you may encounter going into the role." - **Shelby**
 - I think the expectation is that if you're a strong leader that you're supposed to fix that. Like ***it's [gender/race] is not supposed to matter...If you bring that up um, either you're complaining or- or you're showing that you're weak because if you're a leader, it doesn't matter.*** You have to be able to overcome those things that make it work. Like they don't care about the how. They just care about, "Is it working?" - **Kamele**

Centering whiteness/White Privilege

- Programs went to great lengths to include discussions of “white privilege” to support white participants’ reflections and understanding of inequity (McIntosh, 2003)
- **BUT** conversations avoided deep reflection on issues of supremacy and/or focused narrowly on white students’ experiences.
 - One of the gentleman in the *program didn't really think he had a white privilege*...and so it was really kind of breaking it down and making him understand that there is a level of privilege you have just by the fact that you are white and you are a male...This person didn't recognize that it was there. ***And they [program leaders] were adamant...“You have to understand this, if you're going to go into this setting.” - Shelby***

Discussion

- The absence of people of color and black females as colleagues, instructors, and/or guest speakers served to reinforce white supremacy (and patriarchy), and harmed all those enrolled (Endo, 2015).
 - Program leaders' failure to explicitly name or address the program's lack of diversity further normalized whiteness and maleness in the space and in administration more broadly (Armstrong & McMahon, 2013; Blackmore, 2013).
- Instructors' "identity blind" approach, ignoring or refusing to engage in conversations regarding how identity and discrimination plays a role in school administration negated and/or silenced the experiences of minoritized groups (Khalifa, Gooden & Davis, 2016) and upheld conceptions of administration as a white and male endeavor (Alston, 2012; Eckman, 2004).
- Though discussions of white privilege can aid in building aspiring white administrators' self-reflection, build confidence, and thus help them to challenge institutional racism and other forms of discrimination (Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Hawley & James, 2010) such conversations may exclude those who do not identify as white or fail to push white people to move beyond recognition of privilege to action (Leonardo, 2004).

Implications

- Administration programs need to recruit more diverse student and faculty AND communicate these efforts and the underlying values driving them.
- Administration preparation programs must revise current curriculum, courses and practices to be more centered on issues of equity, discrimination and critical thought (e.g., Brown, 2004; Carpenter & Diem, 2013; Gooden & Dantley, 2012).
- Changes to current practices must include ongoing support and training and be coupled with work to shift institutional norms around these issues (e.g., Carpenter & Diem, 2013; Young & Brooks, 2008),
- Programs may wish to shift from focusing on “white privilege” to conversations of supremacy and the daily actions that uphold it (Leonardo, 2004)

Thank you

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