

A perusal of Minnesota's racial discipline disparity is offered as a way to gain an understanding of the issue of how race and culture intersect with ethical practices and leadership in diverse contexts. The purpose of this examination is to make inter- and intra-cultural connections to the larger context of global education.

According to Minnesota Department of Education (2017), in most Minnesota school districts the most disproportionately disciplined students are black and brown children: African American, African, LatinX, and Native American. This data trend is evident throughout the United States and in countries where there is an historically oppressed racial group. There is much data about who is being disciplined, however, the factors preceding that discipline are less clear. Often the actionable student behavior is characterized as defiance, disrespect, or insubordination (DDI), where the student engages in refusal to follow directions, talks back, and/or delivers socially rude interactions. There is a paucity of literature that addresses the initial antecedents to teachers and administrators taking disciplinary action. There is also data to support that black and brown students receive harsher consequences than their white counterparts who exhibit the same behavior.

While blatant student disrespect toward a teacher is unacceptable in all cultures, what constitutes teacher disrespect toward students of color? What part does cultural difference between teacher and student play in the behavior referral process? Our presentation examines the underlying "negrophobia" - fear of black people - that may initiate the antecedents to unacceptable and actionable student behavior. It probes many of our common behavior norms to analyze if they are written and enforced through the lens of white culture.

Much has been documented about discipline disproportionality. Several causes have been suggested, from dysfunctional families to poverty. Several solutions have also been proffered, from Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies to restorative justice circles. We recognize these efforts but still question the effective sustainability of these remedies as they seem to be conceived and implemented through the lens of white culture when in fact, white culture might be the very cause of the disproportionality to begin with.

During our interactive workshop, we will review some aspects of historic propaganda against black people - particularly black males, and the effect of the tenets of white culture on discipline disparities in classrooms and districts.

If behavior policies are written using white culture as the gold standard, then it benefits and protects white children and children of color who can easily assimilate into white culture. While the student population of Minnesota is becoming increasingly diverse, teachers and administrators, however, remain overwhelmingly white. Administrators and teachers must be cognizant of the cultures of their students and families when creating policies and addressing discipline issues. The "White" way may not always be the right way. Participants, through an examination and exposure of the root causes of persistent discipline gaps, will be able to apply their learnings within their school settings and formulate possible alternatives to long-held and biased policies and practices.