



SUSTAINED EFFORTS IN RACIAL TRANSFORMATION: A CALL TO ACTION TO TRAIN STUDENTS IN COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS

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— ABSTRACT —

The reaction to George Floyd's public murder by the police caused uproar around the world and left educational institutions with the unspoken charge to institute change. This article will focus on developing sustained efforts in training students in communication sciences and disorders to be providers of services while being cognizant of racial equity and inclusive teaching. Information will be addressed regarding skills needed in administration and for academic leaders, faculty, and students.

Keywords: Racial Equity, Racial Diversity, Anti-Racist, Teaching Pedagogy, Teaching and Learning, Inclusive Teaching

Introduction

In the wake of George Floyd, a global pandemic forced the world to stand still and witness the murder of an unarmed Black man at the hands of those poised to protect and serve. Protests across the globe highlighted the continued exploitation, marginalization, and discrimination of Black Americans, bringing to light the understanding gained regarding systemic racism. Key questions that remain are: 1) What happens once the protests end? 2) How is a deeper understanding of systemic racism gained? and 3) How do professionals at educational institutions learn ways to interrogate and dismantle racism in their personal lives and the workplace? The responsibility of professionals in the field of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) at higher education settings is to

provide sustained efforts that focus on molding anti-racist clinicians whose service delivery meets the needs of racially diverse patients/students/clients. Sustained efforts for racial transformation are defined as actions that are ongoing, maintained, and prolonged with the — idea of embedding practices within all facets of speech-language pathology and audiology CSD higher education programs. This article will outline ways to develop anti-racist teaching that impacts training students in speech-language pathology and audiology programs.

Discussion

Although achieved in a variety of ways, effective leadership should be the cornerstone to develop

sustained efforts in racial transformation. Effective leadership on racial issues must be institutionally driven in order to be perceived as significant for all involved. The power of leaders within organizations is not to be taken lightly and the only way to be successful with eradicating racism and enhancing inclusive service delivery is a top down approach to the process of training students in CSD. Successful educational institutions must consider creating corporate goals and/or position statements depicting its unwavering commitment to racial equity. However, prior to the corporate goals and/or position statements, university presidents and the board of trustees should require racial equity “submersion” before embarking in these endeavors. Racial equity submersion will allow for tangible, cohesive corporate goals and/or position statements that create a space for a top down approach to permeate throughout an educational institution. This top down approach enables both the university president and board of trustees to institute actions centered on racial equity, which are then passed onto administration and faculty. Faculty then train students to develop their racial lens to better serve clients/students/patients in clinical encounters, thus infusing embedded practices within the program and stakeholders at large.

Issues and Solutions:

Requirements for Anti-Racist Leaders

Issue: The department chairs of Communication Sciences and Disorders programs lack anti-racist leadership.

Solutions: All CSD programs need to require diverse anti-racist leaders in order to drive sustained efforts in racial transformation. These leaders must possess an open mind and cultural responsiveness to create lasting, positive change for equitable speech-language pathology and audiology practices. Leaders who are able to maximize their strengths and leverage inclusive experiences provide students with a broader capacity for learning. Anti-racist leadership is about becoming more racially aware and developing the skills to dismantle racism and the connected oppressions (Superville, 2020). For example, one way to begin disrupting racist undertones within the field is to teach CSD students about the overrepresentation of Black students with individualized education programs (IEP). Sustained efforts mean leaders need to make anti-racist work the centerpiece of their program. CSD programs must proactively seek leaders who are committed to leading anti-racist departments and supporting faculty and students with comprehensive course work as well as coaching and professional development inclusive of

themselves. For example, Miller (2019) notes that “Leaders can be a powerful antidote to race inequality and discrimination in organizations” (p.987). When leaders understand the definition of racism and its impact, then they are able to address race related issues that arise in their educational and professional setting (Miller, 2020). Professional development sessions also become much more meaningful as they engage participants in tangible, systematic exercises designed to develop a racial lens.

Faculty Requirements for Anti-racist Teaching

Issue: There is currently a dearth of diverse faculty who are equipped to address racial issues.

Solutions: CSD programs need faculty from diverse backgrounds inclusive of expertise in teaching about race and inequality. Because the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology are dominated by White practitioners, CSD higher education programs must adjust their recruitment practices to reflect faculty who effectively engage in racial equity teaching (ASHA, 2020). Faculty then, according to Kishimoto (2016, p.540), can “incorporate the topics of race and inequality into course content, teach from an anti-racist pedagogical approach, and anti-racist organize within the campus linking efforts to the surrounding community.” In speech-language pathology and audiology programs, faculty must develop racial awareness and understand their social position within a broader context as well as within their discipline. Their research and departmental work must also reflect such endeavors. This broader scope of practice gives rise to sustained efforts by faculty that reach beyond the tier one anti-racist approach that involves “simply incorporating racial content into courses, curriculum, and discipline” (Kishimoto, 2016, p. 540). In turn, faculty engage all learners and enable budding clinicians to provide service delivery through their racial lens even if a course is not centered on race within the field.

Comprehensive Coursework and Individual Racial Awareness and Recognition

Issue: Current coursework offers a limited scope of anti-racist practices

Solution: “Racial equity is defined as just and fair inclusion into a society in which all people can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential” (Blackwell, Kramer, Vaidyanathan, Iyer, Kirschenbaum, 2017, p. 6). The challenge in academia, however, is how to apply racial equity to teaching in order to promote an atmosphere of learning that is centered on maximizing everyone’s potential. Because of the broad impact that it has on society and the patients/students/clients that are served, sustained efforts

should include a racial equity lens throughout university clinical training programs. However, a majority of “university-based preparation programs have not prioritized anti-racist” courses, often providing one or two equity courses nearing the end of a program signifying they are of less importance (Superville, 2020, p. 22). Current survey results show 82 percent of educators did not receive anti-racist or abolitionist professional development in their preparation programs (Superville, 2020). Results also showed more than half had neither training nor the resources to support the implementation of an anti-racist curriculum and only 14 percent had both the training and resources to do so (Superville, 2020). These findings suggest sustained efforts should entail comprehensive course offerings that must work symbiotically with individual racial awareness and recognition in order to become anti-racist clinicians. Communication sciences and disorders coursework should engage in embedded practices to allow for infusion of a racial equity lens and/or develop courses specifically designed to address this issue. This approach should ideally carry over to clinical training encounters and eventually the workplace.

Summary

University training programs in CSD have a role to play in helping society heal and must do a great deal of work to yield results. In order for the institutional goals and mission driven transformation to be successful, institutions and programs will need to build in sustained efforts at the administrative, teaching, and clinical levels. Sustained efforts within racial transformation require multiple forms of accountability that can be systematically and methodically measured and evaluated.

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