National Leadership Standards and the Structured Silence of White Supremacy

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Contents

Abstract

National standards for educational leaders became a prominent discussion in the mid- to late 1980s as the idea of what administrators needed to know to lead schools evolved. This chapter furthers this discussion and includes an overview of both the national standards and national educational leadership standards. The chapter starts with the dominant historical narrative espoused in the field of education about standards and goes on to briefly review that same narrative about national educational leadership standards. The chapter then interrogates the accuracy of the dominant narratives by juxtaposing the historical realities related to the context of the time and challenges the idea that national educational leadership standards are inclusive and objective.

Keywords

National standards · National educational leadership standards · Critical race theory · White supremacy · Implicit bias · Racism

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The field of memory: The idea that there are universal understandings of how to develop national standards for education and educational leadership; the belief that standards are objective measures which provide baselines for school building and districts administrators and that the standards outlined for programs preparing leaders are objective.

The field of presence: Years of persistent educational reform have yielded mediocre results at best; calls for more accountability on the part of accreditation organizations to better prepare graduates for educational leadership to navigate existing twenty-first century challenges.

The field of concomitance: It includes anthropology**,** sociology, psychology, history, the Civil Rights Movement, and Black Lives Matter Movement.

Discontinuities and ruptures: National educational leadership standards are based on the postmodern view that there are no single, unitary, undisputed views of "reality" (English, 2006); the ahistorical context of education, inclusive of the field of educational leadership, requires critical interrogation of the legacy of white supremacy and institutionalized racism in educational leadership.

Critical assumptions: The inadequacy of national educational standards sustains and maintains opportunity gaps in the field of pre-K-12 education and the white supremacist ontology and epistemology with higher education; the idea that standards are not influenced by an individual's personal ontological and epistemological beliefs is false; the lack of criticality in the field of education and educational leadership contributes to the opportunity gap; if standards are going to be impactful, standards have to move away from the rigid perception that there is equity within the field and must account for the history of white supremacy and the legacy of racism that continues to impact education and educational leadership.

Introduction

National standards for educational leaders became a prominent discussion in the mid- to late 1980s as ideas about how school administrators should be prepared to effectively lead schools and support teachers, shifted. The idea of "principal as manager" expanded to include responsibilities such as serving as the chief instructional leaders inside schools, and discussions about what principals needed to be prepared to do so also began to expand. There has been a good amount of discussions regarding the scope and roles assigned to teachers and school building administrators over the years and yet there has been limited consideration of how systemic racism and white supremacy have aided in maintaining inequity in the field of education. In alignment with the current trend of examining curriculum, lesson plans, and resources to ensure these materials are culturally responsive, national educational standards need to be interrogated to ensure alignment with the goal of dismantling white supremacist ideology and interrupting the pathology of racism that plagues the field of education, broadly, and educational leadership.

Infusing criticality, specifically, utilizing critical race theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995) can allow one to interrogate the historical gaps, omissions, and misnomers about *who* the "standards" in the field of educational leadership were intended to help. The standards were designed to assist school building and district administrators be able to outline "...foundational principles of leadership to guide the practice of educational leaders so they can move the needle on student learning and achieve more equitable outcomes (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2015, p. 1)" (National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA], 2015, p. 2). Utilizing CRT to examine the standards affords us the ability to consider how the gap between the goals and the outcomes of the standards may be connected to sustaining the legacy of white supremacy and racism in education. This is of particular importance in the field of educational leadership as school building administrators-principals and assistant principals contribute significantly to school climate and culture. It is also important because white supremacy, racism, and hegemony continue to permeate the walls of schools across the USA. Research indicates that these factors directly impact the quality of educational experience and indirectly influence student achievement.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the dominant historical narrative on national education standards and goes on to briefly review that same narrative about national educational leadership standards. The chapter then interrogates the accuracy of these narratives by juxtaposing the historical realities related to the context of the time and challenges the idea that national educational leadership standards are inclusive and objective.

Historical Context of National Standards

The history of national standards in the USA dates to 1892 when the National Education Associations Committee of Ten made the case for a standardized high school curriculum or a "national system of education that aims at certain common results and uses certain common means" (Greer, 2018, p. 101). The evolution of the quest for a national set of educational standards is well documented throughout the twentieth century. The goal was to construct a set of standards by which high school accreditations could be granted. This began in 1918 when the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education were drafted, establishing a set of benchmarks students should be able to achieve as high school graduates (Greer, 2018). Establishing standards in education began to take shape in the USA during the twentieth century, partially in response to international developments and domestic educational case law demanding equity for Black children as well as students with disabilities. It was argued that to determine whether inequities existed, there had to be a benchmark by which one could measure what students should be able to do because of the quality of education they received.

Although the Department of Education was founded in 1867 by President Andrew Jackson, the effort to ensure continuity became a national priority in the 1960s as education is not explicitly mentioned in the US constitution

(US Department of Education, 2010). As a result, education, along with many other presumed fundamental rights, was relegated to states. A collective push to develop standards on a national level took shape when the federal government committed to providing resources and establishing an informal but prominent role to influence education sparked by international events such as the Cold War and explicitly the launch of Sputnik. These events ignited a national priority on education and subjects such as science, engineering, and math. The federal government sought to take a more prominent role and in the 1960s and 1970s to influence education in effort to ensure that US citizens could compete on an international level (US Department of Education, 2020).

The evolution of the Department of Education as well as the varying degrees and roles in which the federal government engaged in national governance in education continue today. Reports commissioned by the Department of Education such as the Equality of Educational Opportunity Report in 1966 (also known as the Coleman Report) and A Nation at Risk in 1983 continue to influence and drive federal education reforms, which in turn trickle down to both the state and local educational authorities (LEAs). The following are the federal reforms that have emerged in response to one or both reports: The Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) 1965, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 1969, Goals 2000: Educate America Act, Improving America's School Act 1994, No Child Left Behind 2000, Every Student Succeeds Acts 2015, and Race to the Top 2015. Federal intervention sets the stage for the current standards-based reform movements present in the field today (Greer, 2018). Within the last 40 years, reforms have shifted the focus on exploring the existing levels of inequity in education to seeking to bring national unity on the instructional core in pre-K-12 education. The goal of such national efforts was to develop standards to help "America's students to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access" (US Department of Education, 2010). In response to these standards, national standards in education leadership were born to help identify the skills educational leaders need to support pedagogues in meeting standards and "improving student achievement [which] is the central responsibility of school leadership" (NPBEA, 2011).

Historical Context on National Standards in Educational Leadership

National standards for educational leadership have historically been tethered to national standards on education. The Committee for Advancement of School Administration (CASA) was founded in 1955; this was after the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) was established in 1954 (Hoyle, 2005). CASA was the result of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the Kellogg Foundation brokering a deal to create a committee within NCATE to develop a set of priorities for the preparation of school administrators (Hoyle, 2005, p. 23). The "standards" created by CASA were published in

1958 by AASA and were "…influential in increasing the use of standards of preparation, professional development for school administrators, school board procedures for selected school superintendents and suggestions for needed research in the field (Moore, 1964)" (Hoyle, 2005, p. 24). It should be noted that these standards were used in the accreditation process by NCATE and AASA's CASA.

Scholars pushed back against the standards challenging the validity of them in the accreditation process, and in the 1970s, CASA revised the standards in response to the feedback from scholars in educational administration preparation programs. In 1982, the AASA partnered with CASA to revise the standards. These new standards came to be known as the new *Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators* and went on to serve as the benchmark for licensure in several states and were applied by NCATE as the standard for administrator preparation programs from 1983 to 1995 (Hoyle, 2005).

Coincidentally, those who critiqued the standards and the revised *Guidelines* maintained that they relied too heavily on what they believed were antiquated management models. As a result, additional stakeholder groups, which were made possible as the result of new philanthropic investments in the field of education, emerged (Douglass, Scott, & Anderson, 2019). The 1987 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration gave birth to the National Policy Board of Educational Administration (NPBEA) (NPBEA, 2021). A part of NPBEA's charge was to reform "…preparation programs in educational leadership and developing initiatives to revitalize the profession of educational leadership, including the setting of national school and district leadership standards" (NPBEA, 2021).

In 1994 a new group comprised of current NPBEA members and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) merged to create the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). This body was commissioned and committed to "…regrounding the profession" (Murphy, 2003, p. 8). The 1994 ISLLC standards were the inaugural set of national standards for school administrators. There were six standards comprised of common knowledge, dispositions, and performances that the consortium believed all school administrators, ranging from early career to advanced career, should possess and be able to demonstrate. The ISLLC standards were updated in 2008 to reflect "…how the six updated standards are grounded in the latest research on instructional leadership, which now finds that setting the school's direction and culture influences how teachers perform and are the area where principals can make the greatest impact" (CCSSO, 2008).

With the support of NPBEA, the 2008 ISLLC standards were revised by the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) and presented to NCATE in 2011 because "clearly defining what successful learning or performance looks like has become increasingly evident during the past decade" (p. 5). The NPBEA stated that "without a doubt, the better one understands what excellence looks like, the greater one's chances are for achieving – or surpassing – that standard" (NPBEA, 2011, p. 5). In 2015 the ISLLC/ELCC standards were updated to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL).

The PSEL are the most current standards for educational leaders, and these standards were updated to help leaders navigate challenges in school buildings and districts that may not have exist in 1996 when ISLLC was developed. The following rationale was articulated regarding the need for the 2015 PSEL:

> But the world in which schools operate today is very different from the one of just a few years ago – and all signs point to more change ahead. The global economy is transforming jobs and the 21st-century workplace for which schools prepare students. Technologies are advancing faster than ever. The conditions and characteristics of children, in terms of demographics, family structures, and more, are changing. On the education front, the politics and shifts of control make the headlines daily. Cuts in school funding loom everywhere, even as schools are being subjected to increasingly competitive market pressures and held to higher levels of accountability for student achievement. (NPBEA, 2015)

Currently, the 2015 PSEL and the 2018 National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Program Recognition Standards for Building and District Levels are the most recent iterations of national educational leadership standards.

Discontinuities and Ruptures: Misnomers, Lies, and the Counternarrative: A Case for CRT

> A vast chapter of western thought is thus made to disappear by sleight of hand, and this conjuring trick corresponds, on the psychological or psycho-historical level, to the collective suppression of troubling memories and embarrassing truths...The history of imperialism, colonialism, and genocide, the reality of systemic racial exclusion, are obfuscated in seemingly abstract and general categories that originally were restricted to white citizens. (Mills, 1997, pp. 117–118)

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that "racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional in what is cited as a landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KS* (History.com, n.d., Will, 2019). A year later, 1955, the same year that CASA was established by AASA and the Kellogg Foundation, the Supreme Court ruled on a case referred to as *Brown II* "...which remanded future desegregation cases to lower federal courts and directed district courts and school boards to proceed with desegregation "with all deliberate speed" (History.com, n.d.). This case reversed *Plessy* vs. *Ferguson*, the 59-year-old discriminatory case that legalized racial discrimination based on race in public spaces, essentially ending federal, state, and locally sanctioned segregation based on race in the USA. Understanding the historical context of the time which was that separate but equal was far from equitable, Black communities and communities of color, broadly, were relegated to less desirable facilities and forced to struggle to make do with inadequate resources. The dominant narrative espoused about national standards is framed as coming from an equity-oriented, just, and colorblind perspective; however, the counternarrative is that the individuals responsible for the initial iteration of national standards attended racially segregated schools and likely had deficit perspectives on the abilities and potential of Black children and children from communities of color.

Additionally, the standards published in 1958 were likely not drafted with *Brown II* or any expectation that school integration would be realized.

Given the dominant narrative in the field of education which presumes parity, equality, and access for all along with objectivity, fairness, and meritocracy, it is imperative to highlight the historical context of the time and to chronologically situate or juxtapose how assertions of objectivity, fairness, and meritocracy in education are misguided and false. When Africans were kidnapped, sold into slavery, and brought to the USA in the sixteenth century it was illegal for enslaved Africans to learn to read. In fact, it remained illegal for enslaved Africans to be educated in the USA until the late nineteenth century. Additionally, there was a presumption of superiority and the intent to marginalize and assimilate communities of color that were othered; for example, Indigenous natives were forced to attend boarding schools designed to "civilize" or teach them to assimilate to Euro-American culture.

It is also important to interrogate narratives of history that obscure the role of global white supremacy, to problematize the inconsistencies of the white settler colonial narrative as the foundational narrative of the USA, and to illuminate the role that the hierarchy of whiteness plays in establishing a "White" ethnicity as the dominate culture in US history (Gerber, 1999). West (1993) said it this way "without the presence of black people in America, European-Americans would not be 'white' – they would be Irish, Italians, Poles, Welsh, and other engaged in class, ethnic, and gender struggles over resources and identity" (pp. 107–108). In the field of education, discourse about equity, equality, and opportunity take place in the present day without acknowledgment that the idea of collective or public schooling was conceptualized and designed without Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, or Native Hawaiian communities in mind. Prior to Horace Mann's and Henry Bernard's quest to establish and then reform the common schools in the Northeast, education in this country was restricted to White, male, landowners who were wealthy enough to have tutors come to their homes and educate their children (Isenburg, 2016). The common school was established in the nineteenth century for the children of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) who were not wealthy, and their children were largely uneducated or undereducated. These schools also included children of Jewish, Irish, Italian, and other European ethnic cultures that were not considered "White" until they immigrated in mass to the USA in the twentieth century (Brodkin, 1998; Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 2007).

Yet, discourse about the academic performance of communities of color is disguised in deficit-laden language such as "achievement gap" and terms such as "sub-group." These words are used to describe children of color, poor children, children from the LGBTQIA+ and immigrant communities, and students with disabilities regularly in districts around the country. There is no recognition or acknowledgment that the current state of education is the legacy of intentional, strategic, and racist policies or that these policies contribute significantly to the conditions of schools and communities around the country. Additionally, the "achievement gap" continues to persist despite best efforts to close it. The reason these policies continue to affect the field today is because they were implemented with fidelity. If the legacy of white supremacy and racial discrimination

were acknowledged it might lead to the much-needed reckoning within the field of education.

"Standards rooted in an epistemological and ontological premise of white supremacy will produce ahistorical and uncritical standards guiding ELPP [educational leadership preparation programs]" (Waite, 2021, p. 15). Unless national standards require ELPPs to confront the legacy of white supremacy and institutionalized racism issues such as inequity, discrimination, and anti-Blackness will continue to prevail in pre-K-12 education. If accreditation granting organizations do not require that the field of educational leadership authentically grapple with and provide explicit guidance for ELPPs these issues will not only continue to persist they will worsen. A lack of criticality in the standards themselves is foundational to sustaining both white supremacy and institutionalized racism in the field. This has been evidenced by lack of acknowledgment of race in the standards themselves.

Gooden and Dantley (2012) proffered that a framework for educational leadership was necessary and salient to both speak to the changing demographics in schools and to address issues of race in the broader social context of schooling. The researchers indicated that the use of race and/or racialized language in preparation programs could be instrumental in preparing aspiring and existing educational leaders feel equipped to engage with shifting demographics within communities that directly impact schools. In *Color-Blind Leadership: A Critical Race Theory Analysis of the ISLLC and ELCC Standards*, Davis, Gooden, and Micheaux (2015) analyzed the language of the ISLLC and ELCC standards along with the accompanying reports using a CRT framework which allowed the researchers to examine the domains and components of the standards for use of race or language affiliated with race.

The researchers found that 2008 ISLLC standards did not use the words race, ethnicity, color, diversity, equity, and social justice at all. The word culture was used in the standards twice, twice in the functions or elements of each standard, and once more in the accompanying report. The word diversity was used twice in the functions or elements of the standards. Similarly, the words race, ethnicity, and color were not used in the ELLC standards at all. However, the words culture and diversity were used three times in the standards, twice in the functions or elements of the standards, and 76 and 40 times, respectively, in the accompanying reports. The words equity and social justice were used once each in the standards, once each in the functions or elements of the standards, and 24 and 14 times, respectively, in the accompanying reports. At the time of publication, the authors acknowledged that they were heartened and encouraged by the inclusion of and explicit use of race and racialized language in the proposed 2015 revisions of the ISLLC and ELLC standards, which would go on to become the PSEL standards. While the proposed 2015 revisions reflected movement toward the guidance offered by Davis et al. the studies published by Johnston and Young (2019) and Rogers and Tienken (2020) suggest that educational leadership preparation programs are still not producing educational leaders who feel their programs adequately prepare them to navigate racial and SES issues related to diversity, equity, or social justice.

Johnston and Young (2019) found that 40% of principals and teachers participants felt that their preservice programs did not prepare them to support Black, Latinx, and low-income students. Among that 40% of participants, they also found that "White principals and teachers had lower rates of agreement that their preservice training prepared them to work with black, Latino, and low-income students compared with their nonwhite peers" (p. 2). The American Superintendent (AASA) 2020 Decennial Survey by Rogers and Tienken had 1218 respondents from 45 of 49 states affiliated with the AASA. The findings of the survey indicated that the participating superintendents reported the following perceptions of effectiveness; they felt most effective enhancing perceptions of the district, managing finance and budgets, and improving school climate. These superintendents felt less effective with improving student achievement, navigating issues of diversity, and supporting social emotional learning. In 2020, presumably prior to covid, superintendents articulated that they felt least effective at improving student achievement. Yet, the purpose of the national educational standards is to provide a first step for state and local education agencies to create "comprehensive, locally tailored approaches for developing and retaining high-quality leaders...[and] to raise student achievement" (CCSCO, 2008, p. 5).

National standards are based on the idea that there is a single, unitary view of reality and that these objective standards reflect it. The belief that standards are, in and of themselves, objective, unbiased, benchmarks is problematic. It is equally problematic that these beliefs are established as fact and that the field of education governs itself under this fallacy. There was dissension among scholars about the validity of standards and the process by which they are developed. English (2006) indicated that the development of national educational leadership standards was "...antidemocratic" (p. 463) as "the knowledge base that was fashioned in the political process of creation remains truncated, ahistorical, decontextualized, and most important, immobile" (p. 465). Hoyle indicated that

> The development of professional standards in educational administration/leadership is a continuous quest to find consensus among scholars and practicing administrators about a common body of knowledge and a set of competencies, dispositions, and language to seek quality in the professional preparation and development of school leaders. (2005, p. 23)

Using CRT to examine the standards allows scholars and practitioners, alike, to correctly situate the development of educational leadership standards in the historical context of the time. The "standards" published in 1958 and the subsequent updated iteration dubbed the *Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators* did not explicitly account for preparing administrators to meet the needs of the Black community or communities of color, broadly. In 1892 when the National Educational Association Committee of Ten came together to ponder developing "...a national system of education that aims at certain common results and uses certain common means" (Greer, 2018, p. 101), the country had transitioned from the Black codes during reconstruction to Jim Crow laws in which separate and unequal treatment was legal and experienced throughout the country (National Park Services, n.d.). Yet, national standards for educational leadership have historically boasted that

"The [2015] Standards have been recast with a stronger, clearer emphasis on students and student learning, outlining foundational principles of leadership to help ensure that each child is well educated and prepared for the twenty-first century" (NPBEA, 2015, p. 2). Clearly the 1958 standards and *Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators* were not developed to factor in the education of children of color. If the standards have been in a constant state of revision, how could it be possible that the current iteration of "standards" outline foundational principles of leadership? When the idea of creating a standard was conceptualized in 1892 it was illegal for enslaved Africans to learn to be educated. National education and leadership standards are not and have never been objective and that is largely because there is not one single, unitary perspective of reality. Criticality, and specifically, CRT creates the space for us to ask these types of questions and engage in conversations that can push us toward understanding how our personal epistemologies directly influence our professional praxis.

The Necessity of Criticality Within National Educational Leadership Standards

Organizations developing national educational standards, national educational leadership standards, and national accrediting organizations must acknowledge the role that both white supremacy and racism have played in education. This requires understanding that the history around educating people of color in the USA has been redressed via reforms and interventions rooted in racism and deficit-laden narratives. For African Americans and Black immigrants, the global epistemology in education is anchored in Afro-pessimism or the idea that "Black people exist in the social imagination as (still) Slave, a thing to be possessed as property, and therefore with little right to live for herself, to move and breathe for himself (Gordon, 1997; Hartman, 1997, 2007; Sexton, 2008; Wilderson, 2010)" (Dumas & Ross, 2016, p. 429). It is this ideology that led the Supreme Court Justices to draft the majority opinion in *Plessy* vs. *Ferguson* in 1896. Four years prior, in 1892, the Committee of Ten began conceptualizing the idea of creating a "standard" in education, at a time when Blacks were seen as second class at best. The legacy of that perspective is still alive and active in schools via data on discipline referrals, referrals to special education, and underrepresentation in gifted and talented and/or honors programs. Afro-pessimism is still present today as evidenced through deficit-driven language used to describe Black students, students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and Title I students and their families as "subgroups."

Low expectations and negative thinking about communities of color have negatively impacted generations of students in the USA. This has been demonstrated in the field thorough "best practices" which have been revised because they were detrimental to student performance such as forcing multilingual learners to only speak English in their homes. Fortunately, the research evolved and demonstrated that multilingual learners who had strong foundations in their native language were able to acquire proficiency in a second language like, English, easily (Garicá,

Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2013). Similarly, the growing body of literature on the merits of culturally responsive education demonstrates that strong cultural identity has led to improvements in the academic performance of many aboriginal communities around the world (Duncan-Andrade, 2007). The historical patterns are clear, it is evident that the issue is *not* within communities of color, the issue is the structured silence of white supremacy within national educational and leadership standards. Saad (2020) indicated

> White supremacy is a racist ideology that is based upon the belief that white people are superior in many ways to people of other races and that therefore, white people should be dominant over other races. White supremacy is not just an attitude or a way of thinking. It also extends to how systems and institutions are structured to uphold this white dominance….[In this book] we are only going to be exploring and unpacking what white supremacy looks like at the personal and individual level. However, since systems and institutions are created and held in place by many individual people, it is my hope that as more people do the personal inner work in here, there will be a ripple effect of actionable change of how white supremacy is upheld out there. This work is therefore not just about changing how things look but how things actually are – from the inside out, one person, one family, one business, and one community at a time. (p. 12)

As Saad suggested, the work must begin internally and include reflective praxis, particularly for organizations developing guidance for ELPPs which are responsible for the training, development, and endorsement of state credentials for both school building and district level leaders.

National organizations developing national and educational leadership standards *and* ELPPs owe a debt, moral and ethical, to the students and families who have been impacted by the shortcomings of the graduates ELPPs have recommended for state licensure. The practice of graduating and recommending students for leadership who do not feel they leave these programs equipped to "…move the needle on student learning and achieve more equitable outcomes (CCSSO, 2015, p. 1)" (NPBEA, 2015, p. 2) in spite of graduating from a "rigorous" state-accredited program is deeply troubling. "The bold, radical, transformative experiences required to develop culturally responsive school leaders who are actively anti-racist and social justice-oriented are achieved through powerful, transformative learning experiences informed by critical theory" (Waite, 2021, p. 15).

National standards within educational leadership do not require that educational leaders at either the school building or district levels explore how the historical legacies of slavery, racism, and anti-Blackness are tied to some of the challenges faced in present day within schools. School building and district leaders are often not trained to interrogate how these historical events contribute to the construction and development of the communities they serve nor how the inequities of the past create the current environments which impact the condition and the quality of experience inside their buildings and districts. This limits their ability to support the students and the families they serve. However, recent studies indicate that teachers and leaders are graduating from preparation programs across the country and transitioning into teaching and leadership positions feeling unprepared to serve students

from communities of color as well as Title I students. Leaders must understand how the demographics of the families in their schools/districts directly impact school finances and budgets. They should also understand the historical context regarding the resources their schools receive, for example, special funding weights and allocations or specialized programming. If the social capital of family demographics (particularly families with lower socioeconomic standing) is not considered, how can the impact of additional funding be assessed? How can they improve the quality of education for their students without access to financial resources and other supports? How can ELPPs prepare leaders to redress challenges and inequities that exist beyond the walls of the school that influence what takes place inside of schools? Discrimination in housing, employment, access to food, adequate health care, and a host of other factors contribute to the opportunity gap. Racism, implicit bias, and overt discrimination at the federal, state, and local municipal levels are responsible for the marginalization of communities of color and poor communities. However, none of this is addressed within national standards, nor is there a requirement that ELPPs include this information in course or curriculum.

Given the responsibilities of aspiring and current school building and district-level leaders it is vital to infuse criticality and, specifically, to use racialized language explicitly when developing national educational leadership standards. Davis et al. (2015) stated it best:

> We understand the need for standards and strongly support having them. However, the absence of an explicit consideration of race and its impact on the thinking and practice of educational leaders is concerning, especially given the well-documented impact of race on teaching and learning in schools. (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006a, 2009; Milner, 2003, 2010, 2012) (p. 337)

Conclusions and Reflections

To adequately prepare school building and district educational leaders, the field of educational leadership must examine the historical context linked to national standards. Currently, the external issues directly impacting schools are not viewed as factors within a school's control and the historical gaps about *how* and *why* communities continue to underperform nationally are not examined. In many ELPPs there is little consideration of the context behind the words "historically minoritized communities" in relationship to education and/or how history continues to impact underserved communities in real time. Continuing to ignore the legacy of white supremacy and the reality that there *is* a hierarchy of whiteness maintains impoverished, rural White communities in which poor White children persistently underperform because they, too, are impacted by an opportunity gap as their families lack resources.

The inherent racism, classism, and elitism in education broadly and in the field of leadership, specifically, is exacerbated by the ahistorical context of history in the field. The "bootstrap narrative" or the myth of meritocracy is reinforced by the

ideology of colorblindness in education. To be clear, merit is real. However, the idea that in the USA there is equal access to opportunity if you demonstrate a commitment to hard work is false. This is because national educational leadership standards have been set up to require inequity permanently in society and "...within it, fixed schools. For this reason, the standards have been open to the criticism that they have permanently embedded social injustice for marginalized or oppressed groups within them (English, 2005; Tillman et al., 2003)" (English, 2006, p. 465). Without explicit commitments from national accrediting organizations and professional organizations in the field of educational leadership, this cycle will continue to persist. To redress these foundational problems, the field will have to begin interrogating its foundation. That starts by openly and honestly examining and interrogating the misnomers, unintended consequences, and the incongruities of national educational leadership standards. DiAngelo (2021) said it this way:

> Take action to address our own racism, the racism of other white people, and the racism embedded in our institutions. Insist that racism get on the table, and work to keep it on the table. Center antiracism work by resisting the pull to include every kind of diversity so that nothing is addressed in depth and racism is sidelined. (p. 192)

It is disingenuous at best for the discussion about national educational leadership standards to continue omitting the legacy of white supremacy and institutionalized racism within the academy (Wilder, 2013). However, Mills (1997) highlights that the white settler colonial narrative perpetuated as the history of this country is necessary to employ the narrative that "the United States was founded on noble moral principles meant to include everyone, but unfortunately, there were some deviations" (p. 122). The counternarrative to this fallacy or lie is that the founding of the USA was made possible via implementation of a "...de facto phase of white supremacy" as a global power (p. 122).

Just as CRT rejects "the inherent belief in law to create an equitable society" (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 260), this author rejects the idea that the existing national educational leadership standards will guide ELPPs to produce social justice, equity-oriented, actively anti-racist school building, and district-level leaders. White supremacist ideology undergird the policies, systems, and structures that sustain institutionalized racism in pre-K through postsecondary education. Criticality, specifically, CRT, offers a framework and lens through which we may all examine the world and interrogate both our role within education and the role we play in sustaining *or* interrupting the pathologies of white supremacy and racism in school districts across the country. The national standards maintain the structured silence of white supremacy in educational leadership. The question is now, what will be done to interrupt the pattern?

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