Media Review: *Moving Towards Action: Anti-Racism in Leadership Learning*

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Leadership education is essential for preparing higher education professionals to take initiative, support students, guide colleagues and supervisees, implement initiatives, and shape direction in their work. While leadership skills are often highlighted by faculty and professionals as vital for success in the field, students in higher education programs may not be taught the importance of anti-racism in leadership practice. Additionally, faculty and staff may lack the knowledge or willingness to engage in these critical discussions. To address this gap, Cameron C. Beatty and Amber Manning-Ouellette's co-edited volume issues a call to action for leadership educators and higher education professionals—particularly those working in student activities and engagement—to embrace and practice anti-racist leadership in fostering inclusive communities where all students feel a sense of belonging.

In their preface and opening chapter, Beatty and Manning-Ouellette (2024) draw from their own positionalities and highlight the pervasive influence of white supremacy in post-secondary education. They call on leadership educators to acknowledge how their understandings of leadership are often rooted in and centered on whiteness. The authors emphasize the role white educators play in advancing anti-racism, urging them to leverage their positionality to create meaningful, positive change (p. 6). Furthermore, they provide an initial framework for what anti-racist praxis looks like in the classroom and the impact it can have on Students of Color. Additionally, they explore the effects of whiteness on both Students of Color and White students, a theme authors in the co-edited text elaborate on. Authors also recognize the unique power that White leadership educators hold in addressing racism, advocating that they utilize this power for anti-racist transformation.

The book is organized into three parts, with thirteen chapters. The first section, covering chapters 2 through 4, underscores the theoretical and conceptual foundations of anti-racist approaches in leadership education. The contributing authors provide essential context for understanding anti-racism in this field. Chapter 2 defines key terminology to ensure a shared understanding among readers as they progress through the book. Chapter 3 presents strategies for navigating race-related

conversations, underscoring how participants avoid these critical discussions, while also offering pathways for engaging in racial dialogues centered on growth and progress. To close this section, Chapter 4 explores leadership education research by introducing an anti-racist research framework. This approach is built around five key components: praxis, ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology, providing a comprehensive lens to examine anti-racism within leadership education.

In Chapter 2, Beatty and Vaughn (2024) provide leadership educators with essential definitions of racism and leadership education, as well as historical context on the development of leadership theories and their connection to whiteness. The authors introduce the racial literacy development model, which "aims to cultivate critical consciousness and understanding of race and racism, particularly within educational settings" (Beatty & Vaughn, 2024, p. 20). By applying racial literacy to leadership education, educators can promote anti-racist practices more effectively. Integrating these practices into leadership education demonstrates an organization's commitment to fostering inclusive environments and preparing future leaders. In today's evolving political landscape, this chapter emphasizes how vital it is for organizations to prioritize such initiatives.

In Chapter 3, Chandrashekar (2024) navigates the complexities of engaging in challenging conversations about anti-racist practices within leadership education. He outlines several barriers to discussing racism, including white fragility, emotional development, and critical consciousness. Chandrashekar also explores the concept of developmental readiness in anti-racist leadership education, offering insights into how educators can enhance their motivation, abilities, and growth in this area. He addresses resistance and lack of prioritization while offering practical questions and a framework for tempered radicalism to help practitioners drive meaningful change.

The final chapter in this section, authored by Roland and Johnson (2024), calls for a reexamination of leadership education research to address racism at multiple levels. They argue that adopting an anti-racist research paradigm allows researchers to center the experiences of historically marginalized racial groups by critically examining the epistemology, ontology, methodology, axiology, and praxis of their work. This approach deconstructs white supremacy in research and has the potential to positively impact multiple marginalized racial and social identities. Roland and Johnson also note that while anti-racist language is increasingly common in leadership education, its integration into research and practice remains limited.

The second section of the book (Chapters 5-8) shifts focus to the praxis of leadership learning through an anti-racist lens. Across these chapters, the authors consistently argue that anti-racism requires intentional self-reflection paired with concrete action. For example, in Chapter 5, GuramatunhuCooper highlights the role of anti-racist pedagogical practice in leadership education, utilizing Fink's framework of significant learning to emphasize how educators can use an anti-racist approach when shaping course design. She challenges educators to reflect on whose voices have been excluded from leadership discourses, emphasizing the importance of engaging students in dialogues that blend subjectivity and objectivity. GuramatunhuCooper also encourages educators to critically self-reflect on their positionality, posing essential questions for leadership educators to consider.

In Chapter 6, Pierre and Nkrumah delve deeper into integrating mindfulness and self-reflection into teaching practice while developing emotional literacy among students. Recognizing the centrality of emotion in dialogues about racism, they provide two frameworks to promote anti-racist pedagogical practices. The first offers specific strategies for improving teaching practice, while the second encourages critical self-reflection with questions on content, climate, and assessment. The authors' discussion of "meeting students where they are" highlights the importance of positionality, and they offer valuable insights into how educators can work through classroom conflict, though personal examples would have enriched this discussion.

Chapter 7, written by Harmon, Gonzalez, and Crockrell, explores the challenges and responsibilities of senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) in engaging in anti-racist practices. The authors discuss how SSAOs, despite internal and external constraints, are perceived as moral compasses and therefore should champion anti-racism. The chapter addresses how SSAOs navigate the impact of race on students and how they can create lasting change, especially by advocating for BIPOC colleagues and students to enter SSAO roles. A critical question they pose, "are our roles inherently set up to betray our own commitment to anti-racism, inclusion, and equity?" (p. 100), invites readers to grapple with the complexities and tensions inherent in their roles.

Wilborg and Ford conclude this section by examining how discourses in educational leadership courses center whiteness, arguing that leadership values and standards are often steeped in whiteness. They critique "white talk" in classrooms, revealing how it fosters competition and division among racial groups while reinforcing the superiority of white individuals. The authors stress the need for educators to improve their racial literacy and challenge the dominance of whiteness in their teaching practices.

The third section of the book outlines practical steps for creating actionable change. Chapter 9, written by Taylor, lays the foundation for anti-racist work, urging leadership educators to create brave spaces where students feel safe sharing their perspectives. Taylor emphasizes the need to challenge existing systems from within and highlights the importance of forming alliances across campus to drive systemic change. His suggestions for fostering anti-racist spaces are both practical and attainable, provided educators are willing to listen and challenge entrenched systems.

In Chapter 10, Williams emphasizes "Centering Community" as a critical means of driving meaningful change. They argue that before focusing on community, individuals must engage in self-reflection to critically examine personal privileges and biases. Williams introduces Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a tool for analyzing systems and structures, encouraging readers to step outside their comfort zones to foster stronger, more impactful outcomes. In Chapter 11, Maldonado Frazen and Youngblood discuss organizational frameworks that can promote change, with a focus on disrupting assumptions. They recommend using tools like the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to assess and enhance intercultural competence, and they emphasize the importance of open communication and personal narratives to drive growth. Their

recommendations - "Be Vulnerable," "Be Bold," and "Be Available" (p. 169) - provide a roadmap for organizations to collectively commit to anti-racist practices.

Chapter 12, written by Manning-Ouellette and Mutambuki, focuses on anti-racist pedagogy in leadership education, exploring key concepts such as Inclusive Pedagogy and Liberatory Pedagogy. They challenge educators to examine their course materials, teaching philosophies, and classroom practices to foster more inclusive learning environments. By centering student experiences and encouraging critical reflection, the authors demonstrate how educators can promote anti-racist learning while humanizing the classroom experience.

In the conclusion, Beatty and Manning-Ouellette outline essential steps for creating meaningful change. They stress the importance of recognizing privilege and influence, urging educators to challenge systems and advocate for their students and colleagues. The authors remind readers that while this work can be challenging, immediate action is essential to drive transformation. By embracing discomfort, continuously learning, and committing to anti-racist practices, leadership educators can contribute to building more equitable and inclusive environments for all.

The authors of this edited text offer meaningful and practical strategies, philosophies, and insights on anti-racist work in higher education. This chapter and the overall work are particularly relevant to those in higher education seeking to create change in leadership education, and as a result institutions broadly. The authors emphasize the importance of leveraging one's influence and power to drive meaningful progress. In the face of ongoing challenges and attacks on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts, this text serves as a crucial resource, providing actionable steps for leaders and equity-minded individuals committed to fostering change. A common theme throughout these strategies for systemic change is the willingness to learn and grow as an individual. This approach is highly effective when individuals are open to self-reflection and eager to learn.

While the book offers valuable insights and practical suggestions, there are some areas where the authors could have delved deeper. One critique is that the text assumes professionals in higher education are inherently open to growth and change, which overlooks the reality that some individuals resist adopting equitable and inclusive practices. A more nuanced discussion around how engagement with individuals who lack a commitment to inclusivity affects both learning and practice would have been beneficial. Higher education professionals do not always enter the field with a mindset geared towards personal and professional development in equity, and the text could have addressed strategies for navigating these challenges more directly.

Moreover, the authors could have explored the fine line between recognizing students' needs and knowledge while unintentionally re-centering whiteness in predominantly white spaces. In contexts where many classrooms are still predominantly white, the book could have provided more critical reflections on how educators can avoid perpetuating this re-centering while striving to meet students where they are.

Given that Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) are still predominantly white, it would have been useful for the authors to include discussions on how white SSAOs can better acknowledge their positionality and take actionable steps toward anti-racist leadership. Although there is minimal scholarship specifically on SSAOs of color, the authors could have drawn on broader research about faculty and staff of color to provide concrete examples of the challenges faced in advancing anti-racist work within higher education. Including case studies or examples of institutions actively engaging in anti-racist initiatives within student affairs would have further strengthened the book's message, offering tangible models for implementing equity-minded and anti-racist practices. Additionally, it would have been compelling for the authors to present alternative approaches to the examples they provide, specifically focusing on how instructors could have interrupted "white talk." Offering potential scenarios for challenging whiteness and its discourses would have provided readers with practical tools for addressing these dynamics in real-time, further aligning with the book's call for transformative, anti-racist practices.

The authors explore the importance of personal reflection, growth, and collaboration in driving systemic change, emphasizing the need for Student Affairs, graduate programs, and professional development organizations to work together in better serving students from diverse backgrounds. As continued resistance to DEI and anti-racist practices mounts, it is imperative for educators and higher education administrators to grapple with these challenges and engage with texts like this, which provide guidance and hope during times of strife and complexity. This book provides a valuable foundation for leadership educators, especially those involved in student activities and programming, to encourage critical reflection and offer practical strategies for driving institutional change and fostering a culture of belonging. By integrating theoretical foundations, practical strategies, and personal narratives, the text equips professionals with the tools to challenge white supremacy and foster anti-racist leadership in higher education, pushing the conversation forward toward greater equity and inclusion.

References

Beatty, C. C., & Manning-Ouellette, A. (Eds., 2024). *Moving towards Action: Anti-racism in leadership learning.* Emerald Group Publishing.