The Persistence of the Racial Divide in South Africa and the United States: Examining Critical Race Perspectives of School Leaders in the Western Cape and Long Island

The definition of social injustice is undeserved inequalities heaped on children
~ John Rawls

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Abstract

South African and US schools are reflections of local communities and a larger socio-political environment situated in an historical context. While de jure segregation has been dismantled, why does de facto segregation flourish in both countries? The study examines school leaders' perspectives and beliefs regarding the persistence of the racial divide in their respective countries. In-depth interviews were conducted with South African and US school leaders. The conceptual framework was drawn from critical race theory. Grounded theory was employed to analyze data. Concepts were the basic unit of analysis. Data were collected using the constant comparative method. The toxic residue of de jure segregation, the stranglehold of de facto segregation and the insinuation of white privilege emerged as themes from the interviews. The study begs the question: Given the hardening of patterns that continue to leave large swaths of the polity without equal opportunities, will the racial hierarchy remain as the permanent architecture of the societies?

Key Words: Segregation, White Privilege, South Africa, United States

Introduction

It has been over 20 years since apartheid was struck down as the law of the land in South Africa, freeing the country from the burden of a color-driven caste system. It has been over 50 years since the Civil Rights Act outlawed discrimination in the United States based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin.

After these human rights struggles overturned regulations designed to keep a segment of the population powerless and marginalized (Carter, 2012), why does race continue to play a significant role in the everyday lives of citizens? Why is race such a hot button issue? Why are outlawed practices still in place? Why is segregation - in communities, in schools, in workplaces – a fact of life? Investigating de jure segregation, de facto segregation and white privilege may provide insights into these questions.

De jure segregation, segregation enforced by law, has been officially removed from the legal canons in both countries. However, vestiges of de jure segregation, those that may be disguised as laws with no racial valence or may be outside the purview of the law, serve the purposes of those who would continue to separate individuals by race.

De facto segregation, segregation "by fact" and not by law, flourishes in both countries, occupying the vacuum left by the dismantling of de jure segregation (Winslow, 2015; Hannah-Jones, 2014; Carter, 2012). The phenomenon of de facto segregation is borne of a fundamental right in a democracy to make individual choices (Nwaubani, 2014; Spaull, 2015). People are free to choose whom they associate with, where they live, which schools their children attend, how they conduct their business – as long as they do not (overtly) discriminate against any group.

De facto segregation is a slippery proposition. If it appears to be constructed for purposes of replicating a de jure environment, it may be struck down as a violation of law. On the other hand, if applied with cunning, it can survive a legal test.

Many who benefit from de facto segregation claim that a new order has arrived (Eaton, 2012; French & Simmons, 2015; Subreenduth, 2013), one that is colorblind and, therefore, in no need of remediation. In this "post-racial" society, all people have equal opportunities – financially and otherwise. Those who cannot move ahead are handicapped by their own lack of effort, their position in society having nothing to do with the legacy of racial subjugation.

White privilege may be the most subtle, undetectable and insidious contributor to the racial divide. White people occupy a position of privilege in the social/cultural/political realms of their countries, fueled by the inertia of a firmly established racial hierarchy in existence for hundreds of years. By accident of birth, some have the good fortune to be among the privileged, while others are challenged from the start with the burden of a second class rank.

South African and United States schools are crucibles of the racial divide, freighted with baggage that slyly continues the regimes of the past. In such an environment, what does the future hold in store for the children in each country? While the waters of parsing de jure from de facto segregation for adults in a society may be turbulent, it is the effect downstream that is most disturbing.

Purpose Most observers would agree that schools in the US and South Africa are reflections of local communities and the larger socio-political environment (Costello, 2012; Mickelson, 2011; Wells, 2009). It follows that examining school leaders' perspectives and beliefs regarding the nature of the racial divide may shed light on why change has stalled in their respective countries. As educational leaders they may be well-positioned to disrupt the status quo, playing a role in stitching together the divide, their schools serving as visible incubators of social change. The principals' interview responses in this study served to open the space for connecting to the voices of others who have examined these issues.

What are the forces at work which continue to fuel the racial divide? What are the pathologies that have settled into the fabric of both countries, masquerading as normal conditions of an enlightened community, including an assertion that there is equality of opportunity for all children's educational needs? This study addresses these questions.

Background of the Researcher

I have been an educator on Long Island, New York, for 47 years, holding the positions of teacher, principal, curriculum administrator, superintendent and education professor. I have been on the executive board of the curriculum council, a participant in projects and investigations as a member of the superintendents' council, and, in my role as department chair at Long Island University, I have worked with dozens of school districts in recruiting and mentoring graduate students enrolled in the educational leadership program. As a resident of Long Island for over 50 years, I have had the opportunity to observe and interact with a variety of communities throughout the region.

I became interested in schools in South Africa in 2009 when I visited Johannesburg and the Western Cape as a participant in a People-to-People exchange program (People to People International website). I have journeyed to schools in the Western Cape every year for eight years. Through the assistance of a colleague in the department of education at the University of Stellenbosch, I developed professional relationships with faculty from Stellenbosch University, including education department professors and the director of Celemus, an international principals' association. I have talked at length and frequently visited with principals of schools in the Western Cape. I have visited classrooms at the public school and higher education levels, as a guest lecturer and an observer. I have become acquainted with local shopkeepers, residents and citizens who have shared with me their interest and concerns for the state of race relations in their country.

I have coordinated four symposia at Long Island University focused on race relations in schools and communities. In three events, visiting delegations from South African schools were participants. Two to three times a year I hold meetings with US principals to continue the conversation. (Many of these educators have traveled to South Africa with me.) I have organized live webcast sessions between schools in South Africa and the United States where students and faculty have the opportunity to "meet" one another.

My self-location – as a white male, living in a middle-income suburban community composed of a majority of white residents – is the lens through which I conducted this investigation. I am aware that my "whiteness" places me in a privileged position in a study of the racial divide. My intent, nevertheless, was to create a safe environment for the interviewees to express authentic – and perhaps difficult - opinions regarding the subject at hand. Their voices animate the work and provide intimacy in the examination of a delicate subject.

Conceptual Framework

To begin a discussion of critical race theory it is propitious to review the definition of critical theory. According to Bronner (2011) critical theory does not define freedom via existing paradigms. In fact, it challenges the assumptions and purposes of extant conceptions. "Critical theory insists that thought must respond to the new problems and the new possibilities for liberation that arise from changing historical circumstances" (p.1).

Critical race theory (hereafter identified as CRT), like its progenitor, does not rely on conventional wisdom to explain issues, in this case issues regarding race. In fact, it addresses contradictions found in everyday intercourse. Despite condemnation from all quarters, racism is not only "ordinary and normal" but serves to perpetuate hegemonic practices. CRT can be further understood as the study of "collective denial" (Harris, 2012). Decuir and Dixon (2004) emphasize the activist goal of CRT: "Implicit within CRT is this notion of social change. Thus, researchers who seek to utilize CRT are cautioned to consider how their scholarship aids in the project of social justice and social change" (p.29).

The present inquiry is drawn from the critical race theory explanation and commentary found in Angela P. Harris' selected works (Harris, 2012). The statements which principals responded to are taken directly from Harris' explanations of CRT. Her perspectives, framework and articulation of CRT are relevant to the purposes of this study and serve as a backdrop for the investigation.

Limitations

At the outset I am aware that the statements used in the survey are not neutral; they are dispositive of CRT tenets. As such, this investigation does not address whether or not the racial divide exists; enough empirical evidence (Bryson, 2010; Dolby, 2010; Eaton, 2012; French and Simmons, 2015; Moll, 2010; Mukhopadhyay, 2014; Spaull, 2015; Wilson, 2011) confirms that it does. Rather, the study seeks to vivify the current state of the divide through the perspectives and beliefs of school leaders.

In addition, drawing conclusions regarding the relationship between principals' attitudes and beliefs about race and the work they do in their roles as school leaders is problematic. However, the current inquiry suggests that epistemological beliefs expressed by the interviewees may guide their leadership behavior. The epistemological beliefs of leaders have been widely examined for their impact on professional attitudes and outlook (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2012; Freire, 1992; Grant, 2014) and for their effect on transactional and transformational decision-making (Tickle, Brownlee, & Nailon, 2005). Senge (2006) discusses strategic thinking and acting in a learning organization, beliefs and assumptions occupying a place in the "deep learning cycle." The nature of this inquiry, however, is not to develop a leadership/belief quotient but rather to find commonalities and divergences in school thought leaders' perspectives toward systemic race issues. Epistemological beliefs serve as the compass during this process.

There is no warrant in this investigation that the perspectives and beliefs discussed are representative of all principals in South Africa and the US. Long Island (population of 7.6 million) has idiosyncratic features that are very different than communities elsewhere in the US with its 50 states and 300 million citizens. This same limitation holds true for schools in the Western Cape (population of 5.8 million) which is only one province among 12 provinces in South Africa, a country of 50 million. Nevertheless, the principals participating in this study provide a window into the current racial milieu in their countries that may be used as a starting point for further investigations.

Sampling

This qualitative study used purposive (Tongco, 2007) and convenient sampling (Marshall, 1996). The sample was purposive in that participants had at least five years' experience in the position of principal and a long-standing interest in the subject of race as it impacts schools. The principals voluntarily participate in a multi-year project which examines race-related issues via symposia, electronic communications, cross-continent webcasts, and visits to each other's countries.

The study was convenient in that all 14 principals interviewed were accessible to the researcher, working their schedules to find common time for the conversations.

Data Collection

During the course of my investigation for this paper, I interviewed principals in South Africa and the United States. In addition, I took extensive field notes during my trips to South Africa and kept a running log of my experiences on Long Island. I collected documents, reviewed data and had conversations with scores of people (teachers and students at both the public school and higher education levels, and citizens not associated with education) in both countries regarding race and its implications.

I conducted in-depth interviews over a three month period with South African and US school leaders regarding racial issues in their respective countries. I took extensive notes during the sessions – which lasted from 90 minutes to two hours - and I audio-taped the conversations to ensure that I had not missed crucial points made during the discussion. School leaders' were assured their remarks would be treated anonymously. I toured each school with the principal, meeting faculty and students and, where appropriate, discussing topics related to racial issues in their school.

Grounded theory was employed to analyze data (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Concepts were the basic unit of analysis. Data were collected using the constant comparative method; they were examined and re-examined to distill findings into essential themes. Coding was employed to group responses into identifiable categories and sub-categories. As concepts emerged from the perspectives of an individual interviewee they were compared to other interviewee responses (Charmaz, 2000). The categories represent a synthesis of this review. The researcher was aware of the importance of the fidelity between the constructed categories and the individual responses.
Principals were asked to react to ten statements drawn from Harris' (2012) exposition of critical race theory and to explain/elaborate on their responses to these statements:

1. Racism persists despite its nearly universal condemnation by state policy and by the norms of "polite" society.
2. Racism is ordinary and normal in South African/US society.
3. Formal legal equality has produced only modest success in improving the lived experience of most people of color.
4. Domination can exist without coercion.
5. Existing anti-discrimination laws omit the perspective of the racially subordinated.
6. Legal perspectives are aligned with white privilege.
7. De jure segregation and de facto segregation have contributed to racial isolation.
8. Striking down de jure segregation in schools has become an historical artifact – without contemporary significance – given the re-segregation of US schools/the continuing segregation of South African schools.
9. There appears to be an "intersectionality" when exploring bias related to race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, class and sexuality.
10. The traditional focus on racism's victims leaves unexamined the everyday ways in which persons who are not victimizers benefit from racial hierarchies.

Findings

The narrative of race issues in both South Africa and the US today consists of a brew of factors that challenge the investigative process. Identifying these factors and teasing out the relative contribution of each is complex. Often, the dysfunctional tableau in each country is over- simplified, masking the multiple realities which align for an assault on racial harmony. With this challenge in mind, the present study amalgamates principal responses into three categories, each with accompanying sub-categories.

For purposes of distinguishing South African school leaders' responses from United States school leaders' responses, each response is identified as SA principal or US principal.

1.Ghosts of De Jure

Both South Africa and the United States are haunted by the baked-in racism that was normal for centuries (Carter, 2012).

The new normal is fraught with carryovers from these historical antecedents. Remnants of de jure segregation perpetuate the racial divide scheme. Appearing in disguise as civility, they act to codify underground rules to continue the status quo. During the interviews the principals weighed in on the challenges of dismantling the remains of a bygone era when racism was officially sanctioned.

1.1 Impacts on the traditionally marginalized/racially subordinated

Changes in law were intended to make for a more inclusive, integrated society. But what has been the impact of these changes on the lived experience of the traditionally marginalized? Why does a subaltern class remain intact? One SA principal explained that you can bring out all the laws you want, but if you don't change the experiences of people, you won't change their behavior. And added: "The laws are 'window dressing' to help with foreign trade." One principal thought about the future: "The laws have not changed the situation and probably won't for 20 years." Questions raised regarding the conundrum of continued oppression abound. Subreenduth (2013) wonders how much has changed when the quality of life of most black people has not changed. How can there be a claim of social justice achievement in such an environment?

The contradictions between law changes and the perpetuation of the social/cultural status quo exert a toll on relationships. Trust is at a premium, as indicated by two SA principals: "Look at the situation in Cape Town. If you say something [to an integrated audience] you will find that you will tell people of your race something else, i.e., what you feel comfortable discussing with your race," and "When people find themselves in a difficult situation they identify with their own kind."

Several US principals focused on the gap between "non-racist" laws and reality: "We have laws on the books that have become non-racist, but offer only limited equality downstream"; "It depends on how you interpret the law. Racially subordinated people may be protected by the letter of the law, but the interpretation does not necessarily protect them"; "Public policymakers may have different 'political' responses that are 'non racist'; however, expediency drives the perspective." McKaiser (2015) suggests that dejure remnants in the US and South Africa are holding fast. Despite key legislation that rebukes laws that are based on race, race remains alive and well.
One SA principal believed that attempts to integrate the racially subordinated into society were disingenuous: "The lawmakers pretend that they know what the racially subordinated need." Another added: "The racially subordinated are taken out of the equation. This will happen for many years to come." US principals offered their perspectives in the American context: "The change is a façade. The disenfranchised are not involved; and, "Laws that were put in place in the 60s and 70s were anti-discrimination; however, the burden on minorities is to prove that racism exists."

1.2 Obstacles to learning

The resources needed to succeed in school are often unavailable to children of color (Carter, 2012: Johnson, 2015; Mukhopadhyhy, 2014; Wells, 2009). One US principal opined: "Kids can get into any schools, but kids of color, who also suffer from effects of poverty, do not have the resources to achieve, unlike their white counterparts." Another remarked: "Schools can build into themselves sensitivity to minorities. But this is delivered through the 'soft bigotry of low expectations', an attitude evident in some faculty who assume there are those who can learn (white children) and those who cannot (black children)." In South African schools grouping of children, assessment practices, the display of cultural symbols, the distribution of awards and rewards, and the administrative decision regarding who teaches what are influenced by issues of race (Dodge & van Wyk, 2014).
Obstacles to learning are often manifest in the language proficiency of students. Crucial to language development is the language experience from home and neighborhood, the voices that students are surrounded by in their everyday lives outside of the school house. Many children who come from homes where cultural and idiosyncratic language usage is common are handicapped when formal listening, speaking, writing and reading skills are part of the school curriculum (Dyson & Smitherman, 2011).

Especially troubling – and impactful - in South African schools is the historical language differences in the population. One SA principal suggested that the language disparities have been woven into the fabric of the country. Another indicated that schools remain racially segregated because of SES and language differences. Bryson (2010) recounts the story of a 16 year old girl who was reprimanded for speaking in her native language, Xhosa, in her school. Xhosa, spoken by Nelson Mandela, is the language of millions of South Africans.

Despite the trauma from a generation earlier - when South African police opened fire on marching schoolchildren in the township of Soweto who were protesting the mandate that instruction must be delivered in Afrikaans or English (Burke, 2016; Carter 2014) - consequences remain for bringing the language of your home across the threshold of the schoolhouse door.

Today Afrikaans and English remain the languages of power and privilege, even though there are 11 official languages in South Africa derived from different regions of the country, "Such ambiguities and conflicts demonstrate that even the best social justice intentions, when misaligned with national practice, limits/devolves possibilities of social justice/equity" (Subreenduth, 2013, p. 589).

1.3 Hidden in plain sight

Often, the remnants of the de jure era are slyly embedded in the culture, in invisible ways Mukhopadhyay, 2014). Ladson Billings (2012) recounts her experience with research pursuits regarding the outcomes for African American students in classrooms where teachers are successful with them. To her surprise, she found much of the educational research literature on African American students focused on failure, a deficit model borne of an historical ideology which categorized people of color as inferior.

The achievement gap, a trope often used by politicians and educators to describe the failure of schools to educate all youngsters equally and purportedly to address the imbalance, is used as 'social weaponry', announcing the failures of minority children and concealing racial oppression now and in the past (Kirkland, 2010).

Perhaps the most insidious and widespread example of covert racism are micro-aggressions, those "racially charged", everyday messages, that remind communities of color that, while they may be protected by law, they will still be subject to indignities. Whether intentional or unintentional, name-calling, verbal and non-verbal insults, slights that have become so normalized they escape detection, are ubiquitous in the South African and US cultures. Principals in both countries cited various types of micro-aggressions they have observed in their schools. These taunts are outside the reach of the law and often leave their victims surprised, those people believing that laws are designed to protect them from these behaviors (Lukes & Bangs, 2014). One insult has captured the attention of the public in both countries - the use of a widespread derogation hurled at people of color. The words are offensive enough to be signified in letters – the "N" word in the US and the "K" word in SA. Both words have become explosive symbols of racial animus.

Many would argue that offering the franchise to all citizens is the foundation of an egalitarian society. Although the granting of voting rights has all the hallmarks of emancipation, the situation is more complicated. One SA principal explains the challenge in his country: "Those who are poor – quite a large number of people – don't have voice, but they can vote. The way in which they vote gives them a voice. They therefore can push for change. Unfortunately, people vote along historical lines – and people usually vote for the same party even though the party may be corrupt. It will take one or two generations for people to vote their beliefs and not according to tradition." With this thought in mind, further examination may be called for regarding how the once-disenfranchised are – or are not - making headway through a process roiling the culture. McKaiser (2015, p.8) responds: "It just seems completely fanciful to imagine that centuries of state-sponsored and citizen-assisted racism could possibly come to an end merely because blacks are allowed to vote. Political rights do not guarantee less hatred in the hearts, minds, actions and attitudes of people."

1.4 Reaching the Boiling Point?

South African principals voiced their concerns about the growing discontent in their country. Many shared that there has been a suppression of feelings after the promise of freedom has been broken and now things are "exploding." Another referred to the "born frees" (those young people born after the end of apartheid) who oftentimes resort to violence in their frustration. Still another stated that there are protests now linked to lack of services, precipitating tensions in many communities. One principal offered a grim analysis of the situation: "Since Mandela came to power the change has been a drop in the bucket. Today South Africa is going back to hopelessness and despair." A sense of frustration is apparent at the higher ed level as well. College students, who have been written off as post-racial, are pushing back against the residue of colonialism and apartheid. The urgency in their activism demands attention (Mckaiser, 2015).

The US principals' responses included a reference to a "separate state" wherein there is deliberate suppression of people's rights. They added that educators must define for themselves how schools move forward.

Another principal discussed the nature of face-to-face experiences when the topic moves to race. "This is the hottest button to touch. Race is the 'third rail' ". This reaction seems to be worsening in the United States.

There are those who believe the police regard black people with suspicion (Stevenson, 2014). This assumption breeds unrest and anger in minority communities (Hannah-Jones, 2014). The animus between police departments and people of color has occupied a substantial portion of the national conversation in the United States. Actions by the police, who arrest or confront black people (young black men in particular), that are deemed unwarranted by the black community, have given rise to confrontations and, in some cases, violence. These tensions have led to the "black lives matter" movement (Lowey & Kaplan, 2016) a political force to be reckoned with in the US. Other realities of black life in the US add fuel to the movement. These include the inordinate number of black people who are incarcerated in the US and the existence of " . . . convincing empirical evidence that the race of the victim is the greatest predictor of who gets the death penalty in the United States" (Stevenson, 2014, p.142). By many accounts (Filler, 2016; Flournoy, 2012; Kristof, 2016.) the tensions between blacks and whites in the US have reached unprecedented proportions.

2. The Pervasiveness of De Facto Segregation

The manifestations of the de facto racial divide were articulated by the principals. Two emphases emerged from their responses: The relationship between race and poverty and housing and schooling segregation

2.1 The race/poverty nexus

The race/poverty nexus is apparent – in fact, obvious – in both countries. Subordinated people are not going to "enjoy the fruits" of the society, as one US principal suggested.

In the US a myriad of consequences befall those who are the victims of concentrated poverty: instability in housing, unaddressed physical and mental health issues, drug trafficking, violence, incarceration, unemployment/underemployment, overcrowded living conditions/lack of personal space, school achievement challenges; delinquency, infant and maternal mortality rates, teenage births, etc. (Berliner, 2013; Payne (2013); Wilson, 2011).

South African and US principals believe the racial divide is fueled, in part, by the disparate wealth distributions in their respective countries. Issues that arose during the conversations included the impact of generational wealth and the toll that poverty exacts on families, including social, cultural, physical and mental well-being. One South African principal made this comment: "The legal system is complicated – the more money I have, the better representation I have, including hiring a lawyer."

The black/white wealth gap has been growing since the recent US recession. As of 2014, the Pew Research Center reported that the median white household was worth $141,900, 12.9 times more than the typical black household, which was worth just $11,000. In 2007, the ratio was 10 to one (Weissmann, 2014).

Subreenduth (2013) suggests that freedoms can exist if there are connections, economic and otherwise, to the broader society. The new South African apartheid is a toxic mixture of class and race. "The post-apartheid race-class formation thus moves the issue of race from biology/cultural differences to market mediated value of commodification" (Subreenduth, 2013, p. 588).

Others have joined the movement for change by aggressively condemning the status quo and challenging others to do the same. Wilson (2011) finds a " . . . persistent racial discrimination in hiring practices, especially for younger and less experienced minority workers. This racial factor affects black males especially seriously" (p.18). Rothstein (2008) faults, in part, an absence of forthrightness: "[There is] a lack of "moral, political, and intellectual integrity in the suppression of awareness of how social and economic disadvantage lowers achievement . Our first obligation should be to analyze social problems accurately; only then can we design effective solutions" (p. 31).

2.2 Generational poverty

Wealth is a complex topic. Those who simplify the concept may be (willfully?) ignorant of its multi-dimensionality. Wealth is not simply the income derived from having a job. It heavily relies on personal history. Wealth is created over generations and inheritances and life transfers are related to race (Moore, 2016). In fact, it is estimated that 80% of assets in the US come from transfers of wealth from one generation to the next.

Situational poverty, on the other hand, comes from the lack of forbears who could be counted on to provide wealth, this misfortune mostly visited upon people of color as the policies and laws historically favored the whites. The vagaries of the job market, their preparedness for work, the circumstances of their lives – death, disease, disability, etc. - determine their ability to stay afloat in their society (Payne, 2013).

South African principals shared their views on generational poverty:

Bad things still exist for black people in the Western and Eastern Cape. Things may not get better in the future. If your family is not doing well generation after generation you will stay down. In the colored community if one family moves up the next family is jealous. If one family succeeds the next family thinks they made it in a devious way. . . .

The mass of colored people remain poor, and the inequality may be worse today than in the past. Because of lack of skills and a lack of a good education the poor remain stuck. While the wealth was supposed to be distributed it remains in the hands of a small percentage of the population.

. . . inequality will be part of this country for generations to come. Inequality is part of Africa. To a large extent, you may have to transform cultures – which takes time. People are tired of being homeless and jobless. They are impatient and we must respect that. After 25 years the lives of many have not changed. We need to redress the inequities.

Schooling success in South Africa is tied to a child's social and economic inheritance, regardless of his or her motivation or ability (Spaull, 2105).

2.3 Housing and school segregation

Perhaps no more obvious examples of the existence of de facto segregation are found in segregation patterns in schooling and housing in both the US and South Africa. Those who would insist that these practices have been outlawed and, therefore, should not be considered in discussions about the racial divide are either fooling themselves or conveniently ignorant. The housing and schooling problems are inextricably bound together as housing patterns are often coupled with schooling reputations.

Housing segregation

The issue of where people choose to live – or in many cases, forced to live - engendered a variety of perspectives from the principals. One SA principal commented on the roots of the problem, stating that South African segregation is embedded in Eurocentric attitudes. Another referred to the "group areas act" which mandated that people of color be separated from whites – in fact, even if the groups wanted to live together they were forbidden by law to do so.

Other episodes in the tawdry history of the racial divide include the remarks of Hendrick Verwoerd, Minister of the Republic of South Africa and regarded as the mastermind behind apartheid. Verwoerd, attempting to rationalize apartheid, called the policy one of "good neighborliness." (Apartheid: A Policy of Good Neighborliness). The comment reminds us of the "separate but equal" doctrine in the US, where services provided to African- Americans were purportedly equal, but, nevertheless, demanded segregation in housing, schooling, and public spaces. etc. This disreputable milestone, codified by Plessy v. Ferguson, gave rise to the Jim Crow laws, a social framework much like apartheid (Riegel, 1984).

Another SA principal lamented: Today the affluent people stay on one side and the poor on the other. Another added: The de facto has been passed down from generation to generation. People are ingrained in their community and will not mix.

Several US principals complained that although there have been changes in the law, people are still "locked" into segregated areas. Another suggested that Long Island provides a "classic" example of housing segregation; there is a caste system that exists.

A US principal referred to a common practice of real estate brokers planning communities by "steering" families of color away from white communities. This practice, often referred to as "redlining", has created a balkanized region on Long Island where an all-minority community is frequently contiguous to an all-white community. In one case, residents of a poor minority community, situated next door to a wealthy community (where 1.2 percent of the residents were black) were effectively blocked from living in the more affluent neighborhood.

A federal appeals court ruled that the wealthier community had violated an anti-discrimination law by rezoning an area set aside for multifamily housing (Foderard, 2016).

Wilson (2011) suggests that boundaries between communities of color and white communities become hardened because of the perception that minority communities are dangerous. This attitude, as well as the impacts of a long history of racism, propels the housing divide. Charles (2003) expands the argument: "Sociologists and policymakers have long viewed racial residential segregation as a key aspect of racial inequality, implicated in both intergroup relations and in larger processes of individual and group social mobility" (P. 67). One easily surmises that people who live in segregated communities, with little chance of social interaction, are left with stereotypes to define one another.

Is there a precedent beyond the regional practice of redlining? Most definitely. The United States has a shameful legacy of redlining, as pointed out by Wilson (2011) in his reference to the Federal Housing Administration established after the great depression to provide mortgages so citizens could become homeowners:

"The FHA selectively administered the mortgage program by formalizing a process that excluded certain urban neighborhoods using empirical data that suggested a probable loss of investment in these areas. "Redlining" as it came to be known, was assessed largely on racial composition. . . virtually all black neighborhoods were excluded.. . [this practice] "severely restricted opportunities for building or even maintaining quality housing in the inner city, which in many ways set the stage for the urban blight that many Americans now associate with black neighborhoods" (Wilson, 2011, p.12).

"Historically, when white people planned the perfect community, it often involved the exclusions of many different people . . . No group was more commonly excluded than African Americans" (Winslow, 2015. P. A20).

Schooling Segregation

The destructive forces of school segregation have a profound effect on the long term goals of a healthy and vibrant society - one which welcomes diversity and perceives it as a strength (Carter, 2012 & Mukhopadhyay, 2014). Children are the unwitting players in this arrangement. US and South African schools continue to be divided along racial lines and principals in the study were forthcoming about the issue.

A US principal referred to a neighborhood rife with social ills. Students reside in an impoverished community and are subject to homelessness, often residing in shelters. The only place many of these children feel safe is in school. Another alluded to the inordinate number of young African-American males in prison, precluding them from completing their education in a public school. A principal in a wealthy community shared that his school has virtually no children of color although the law is clear that any parent can register a child for the school district. Most families of color simply do not have the resources to purchase homes in the area.

The consequences of the "wealth divide" have been examined. The New York State Education Department records indicate that many contiguous Long Island school districts report disparate achievement results when one district offers a sizeable portion of their students free and reduced lunch – indicating a high poverty rate. These patterns exist throughout the region (New York State Department of Education website).

An extensive study of schools on Long Island concluded that family income and wealth, differing property values of land and homes, level of education of parents, political "clout" and other factors, are determinative of the daily experiences of children. The study challenges the claim that separate can be equal when considering the connection between schools and the broader context. The racial divide, such as it is on Long Island, is reinforced by geographical boundaries that separate rich school districts from poor school districts (Wells, 2009).

Another example of the impact of boundaries on schools - from a different part of the United States - is worth noting. In Normandy High School in Ferguson Missouri (a town with an infamous incident involving the shooting of a young black man, which grabbed the attention of the country), 98% of the students are black (Hing, J, 2014). Half the black male students never graduate and only one in four graduates goes on to a four year college. Normandy was placed in the "unaccredited" category by Missouri law. Five miles away is a predominantly white community that has virtually no poverty. Clayton HS boasts a ranking of top 10 percent in the state, over 96 percent of the students graduate and eighty four percent go on to four year colleges. District boundaries throughout the St.Louis area make it one of the most segregated urban locations in the country (Hannah-Jones, 2014 & Hing, J.,2014).

A Missouri law mandates that students in a school which is unaccredited can transfer to school that is accredited. When parents in Clayton found out about the plan, a raucous assembly of 2,500 Clayton parents packed a gymnasium and angrily went through the litany of their concerns : metal detectors, their children subject to violence, what about test scores plummeting. One parent made sure to add that the issues were not about race – but "trash" (Hannah-Jones, 2014, p. 7).

One South African principal referred to "governing bodies",those organs which provide oversight to the schools. These groups are quite often driven by politics which tend to perpetuate the racial divide. Sports activities, which would seem the obvious venue for breaking down barriers, are also subject to the divide. In many cases, a SA principal states, white private schools will not even compete with township schools. Another refers to a time when white schools did compete with black and colored schools. The black and colored athletes appeared to be afraid of making contact with the white athletes.

A South African study (Mbunyuza,2010) found troubling results when examining the "new" South African school systems. While the government underwrites the schools in the poorest communities, this remedy does not solve the problems of the distance to travel to such schools for some children, and the exposure to potential dangers along the way like "rape, snake bites and drowning" (p.6). Those teachers who are proficiently trained in their teaching skills leave poverty stricken areas to find better working conditions. An integral part of a child's education – parental involvement – is absent. There are many homes, in fact, without parents. Wealthy families are able to send their children to private schools and then on to the university. Children of poor families – ones that do not have the resources to pay for higher education – are left to fill low paying jobs or to be relegated to extended unemployment – even those who may have the necessary skills to succeed in more professional pursuits. After 22 years of democratic rule, most black children still receive an education that condemns them to the underclass of South African society, where poverty and unemployment are the norm. This substandard education does not develop their capabilities or expand their economic opportunities: instead it denies them dignified employment and undermines their sense of self-worth (Spaull, 2015).

In South African township schools black and colored students do not have the same chances as white kids unless they are fortunate enough to attend one of the small number of black/colored schools that do work. This situation yields a staggering disparity in achievement results between students of color and white students (Dodge and vanWyk, 2014).

3. The Constancy of White Privilege

No more enduring feature of the racial divide is white privilege. Prior to the abolishment of the de jure period, laws were built around white privilege. Today, while laws putatively prohibit this privilege, its existence, nevertheless, lurks in every sector of the culture, often invisible to those who benefit from it (Mukhopadhyay, Henze & Moses, 2014).

3.1 Built and sustained by a white system

Several principals weighed in on the legal foundations of white privilege. One SA principal commented: "In most continents legal systems were built on white systems." A US principal agreed: "Only people meant to have anything were white protestant males. All others were marginalized; the entire legal system was developed by white protestants." Another US principal suggested: "On paper we have magnificent laws and a constitution. However, perspectives are aligned with white privilege and interpretation of laws are white-privileged based." Another US principal viewed the situation from the powerlessness that many African Americans experience: "A 'mental enslavement' exists. For example: African Americans believe that they are not capable of rising. Ghetto kids do not have the same defense when something happens." And, this from a SA principal: "When a white person comes into a situation most colored/black people need to respect white people more." Another SA principal shares this story which he says is not uncommon: Two 16 year old girls, one from a privileged white community and the other from a black township, were raped and murdered. The township girl's assailants took three weeks to capture, the white girl's assailants were captured in 24 hours.

Cornel West (2005) describes the white privilege phenomenon this way: "The existential challenge to the new cultural politics of difference can be stated simply: How does one acquire the resource to survive and the cultural capital to thrive as an artist and a critic? . . . I mean not only the high-quality skills required to engage in cultural practices but more importantly, the self-confidence, discipline, and perseverance necessary for success without an undue reliance on the mainstream for approval and acceptance. . .

The widespread modern European denial of the intelligence, ability, beauty, and character of people of color puts a tremendous burden on critics and artists of color to "prove" themselves in light of norms and models set by white elites who own heritage devalued and dehumanized them" (West, 2005, p.38).

Nwaubani (2014) supplies an example for West's comments. A Nigerian and a writer of repute, she says that her books must still stand the scrutiny of "white people" if they are to be successful. The Western world remains the arbiter of quality even on the African continent.

3.2 Intersectionality

The effects of "intersectionality" (the convergence of various biases in both obvious and subtle ways) contribute to the racial divide by further complicating the message and, in some cases, intensify the damage. Here, again, white males tend to occupy the privileged, rarefied space above all others.

A SA principal avers: "When there are multiple characteristics this confuses people. For example – if you are a poor white in South Africa the question asked is 'What happened?' If you are a Muslim you must be Al Qaeda. Additionally, country of origin is always a bias in South Africa."

A US principal adds that stereotypes exist for "the other": "Some examples include: black males are lazy and criminals; Latino women are dominant; Asians are good at math, etc. Bias comes from the same place, i.e., the expectation is that everyone should behave the same way – when you don't you are labeled. Fear or ignorance of the unknown is the driving force."

Racism is connected with sexism, classism, and religious intolerance; it cuts across institutions such as the legal system, health care, and education (Mukhopadhyay, Henze & Moses, 2014). Intersectionality can also impact economic well-being, e.g., when white males consider themselves superior/dominant to females and people of color, they push out others when feeding at the economic trough. Other characteristics of people – disabilities, sexual orientation, age – can also contribute to amplifying the racial noise (Payne, 2013).

3.3 The "Colorblind"

It seems likely that many white people would be more than willing to announce their non-racist view of the world (Eaton, 2012,French and Simmons, Albrecht, 2012) . But, beneath the surface of this egalitarian declaration lies a layer of privilege which may be unconscious, and therefore inaccessible, to those who claim to be "colorblind".

Mindell (1995) suggests that unintentional racism is "insidious", destructive, even when subtle. At a town meeting in the US organized by Mindell, an audience member declares that he wants to apologize for the country's past racism; he does not want to feel guilty anymore. Mindell replies that white people who apologize for racism do not realize that they, by virtue of their whiteness, continue to benefit from the attitudes shaped by the Western World.

He adds "History is not just in the past. It creates the present . . . You have the privilege of not dealing with prejudice because of your color. You can ignore bigotry whenever you feel like it, but a Black person must face it every day " (p. 148).

Several principals agreed that there are social currents beneath deceptively calm waters. One SA principals stated the issue this way: "The benefit of the racial hierarchy has to do with understanding that you are not a racist but the mere fact that you are there means you benefit – i.e., the mere fact of your (white) bloodlines, your inheritance, etc." A US principal supported the notion: "You don't have to have a racist bone in your body – you still have privileges that people of color don't. This is part of racial institutionalization in this country." Another added: "We [white people] benefit in a sub-conscious manner and there are practical, everyday ways we benefit in our jobs, etc." One suggested that white people benefit by their denial of the problem. That is part of the privilege. [White people say] there's nothing I have done to these people. I worked hard. Why should I even hold a conversation about these issues?"

In a small town in Minnesota a plan to integrate schools to "reduce glaring and growing disparities in the racial and socioeconomic makeup," (Eaton, 2012, p.2) met strong and vocal resistance from a portion of the community. "Parents who opposed the plan fired predictable shots in blogs, in letters to the newspaper editor, on Facebook and at the microphone during public hearings. Typically, opponents began by stating that "race" had nothing to do with their outrage" (Eaton, 2012. p.2).

The colorblind approach can damage the self-efficacy of students of color. When teachers – with the best of intentions - are reluctant to even broach the subject of race, they negate the reality of many black and Latino children who experience racism and prejudice on a daily basis. These students' perspectives and experiences essentially become "invisible" in the classroom. On the other hand, by using a curriculum that includes the impact of racism in the society, young people of color feel empowered and included (French & Simmons, 2015).

Discussion

The current investigation examined the social mechanisms at work that perpetuate the racial divide in South Africa and the United States. Conversations with principals in both countries elicited troubling perspectives on race. Despite promises of change trumpeted by the abolition of a laws based on a two-tiered system, both countries find themselves stuck in a quagmire of racial tensions.

Principals shared their disappointment with the lack of progress. They agreed that changing laws does not necessarily mean changing behavior. Their countries are divided into the haves and the have-nots, the cleavage obvious to school leaders as they observe the effects of poverty and marginalization on children.

Remaining prominent in South Africa and the United States is a lack of trust between the privileged and the poor, and a great suspicion of one another. As long as segregation in communities and schools continues, people of different backgrounds will have little opportunity to get to know one another, reinforcing stereotypes and leaving little room to debunk the mythologies associated with the "other". Principals argued that these divisive patterns will continue unabated as long as current practices of segregation remain legitimized by cultures unwilling to confront their past and willfully ignorant of their present.

Has the situation reached critical mass? Will the victims of the current iteration of the racial divide, heavy with the weight of generational racism, decide on a more aggressive – perhaps violent - confrontational approach to air their grievances?

Elements of the toxic residue of de jure segregation, the stranglehold of de facto segregation and the insinuation of white privilege emerged from conversations with school leaders as they shared their beliefs about their respective countries. The study begs the question: Given the hardening of patterns that continue to leave large swaths of the polity without equal opportunities, will the racial hierarchy remain as permanent architecture of the societies?

While the principal interviews, and views of others who have studied the issues, paint a depressing portrait of the social/political/economic status in their countries – and thus a concomitant pessimism regarding the chances for success of minority youngsters - there may be hope emerging from the bleakness.

Change comes with the courage to expose a truth - one typically hidden in the shadows - to the light of day. School leaders in this project are willing to be frank about the racial divide in their countries, boldly and courageously stating their dissatisfaction with the status quo and demanding change on behalf of their students. Others have joined the challenge. Some representative samples appear below.

Many have been researching the mechanics of the healing process. For example, Mickelson (2011) found that integrated schools in the United States actually increase academic outcomes for *all* students. Pollock, Deckman, et al (2009) imagine a professional development regime they call "three necessary tensions" which address the most common questions that teachers ask about race and encourage an ongoing inquiry into these tensions, providing skills for creating a classroom environment which aims to dismantle social injustice.

Organizations and institutions have provided space and time for improving conditions through programs which provide training and resources. The Shuttleworth Foundation has been working since 2007 to provide "open educational resources" (sources that are free and customizable for a multitude of learning styles) in all subjects to all South African primary and secondary schools. This initiative is providing more of a "level" playing field for all students, regardless of background (Ash, 2012).

The Tomorrow Trust, a South African non-profit organization, supports orphaned and vulnerable children so that they can achieve their educational goals, from their earliest years until they are program alumni. They are provided with both academic and psychosocial support on their way to higher education. The ultimate goal of TheTomorrow Trust is to provide students with the foundations to become prepared for a career in their field of study. All *Tomorrow Trust* students are required to give back to younger students and to their community, learning how their efforts contribute to a stronger South Africa (The Tomorrow Trust website).

One US partner school in the project has developed a course known as "seedlings" for 12 and 13 year olds. Racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and other systems of oppression are explored. The course is designed to build a public conscience in young people and has an activist component wherein students volunteer for assisting with local community problems including food and book drives (Seedlings website).

The University of Stellenbosch (in a message from the Dean) sets out an aim for the education faculty which is not only to produce "technical professionals but to cultivate professionals with an emancipating agenda – people who care about others and actually do something to change the impoverished situations" (Eduvoice, 2011, p. 2). Long Island University offers its students an undergraduate program which prepares them for a **". . .** career of global engagement through a structured and focused curriculum, with opportunities for students to develop expertise in navigating increasingly complex global challenges" (LIU website).

Foundations, non-profits, schools (public and private, K-12 and higher ed), have carved out a mission to make a difference, to change the course of events. For the people who are behind these initiatives, children's distress from forces beyond their control must be eliminated.

A final word

The tortuous path of the racial divide leaves the citizens of both South Africa and the United States quizzical. What to do next? Guinier & Torres (2002) invite us to respond. They liken issues of race to a canary in a mine. Communities which are marginalized because of race, signal warnings about the destructive nature of embedded privilege and power. These communities provide early warning signs of the poisons in the social atmosphere, signs "alerting us to both danger and promise" (p.12). It is way past time for us to pay attention to these harbingers. Leaders – both in schools and in the society at large – willing to challenge the status quo and fearlessly tackle race-related inequities, can be the champions of a new order in which diversity is recognized as a strength and people of all backgrounds feel welcomed.

My hope is that this investigation stimulates others to dig more deeply into the racial divide in South Africa and the United States as they search for solutions. Youngsters in both countries deserve no less of an effort.

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