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Reproduction of social inequality through narratives of the superhuman/power hero myth for students and school practitioners

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Introduction

Our search of the literature shows no results of research analyzing the ideas of being superhuman and tapping into one's superpower in schools—promoted to students and practitioners. We focus on the components of being superhuman, the ways neoliberal political, economic, and cultural ideology function in schools to support ideas of grit, and provide an articulation of inequity in society and schools for Black, Latinx, and LGBTQ2+ people.

Superhuman/superhero and myth

Arguments about what it means to be superhuman, often about being a superman, have been debated in the Western canon for millennia (Heron, 2021). In articulating the superman, Heron explains

[according to Jacques Maritain] what enables the human to surpass itself can only be that element, call it spirit or intellect, which connects it to the higher spheres of being. Humanity's deepest moral desire, Maritain suggests, is to remain human while simultaneously surpassing humanity. (p. 439)

Taking this as one component of being a superman—to surpass humanity—provides a way to make sense of the superhumanness narrative in schools and society. From this idea, practitioners and students are being told to be human while simultaneously surpassing their humanness and the human abilities they embody.

Additionally, a superhero is understood “as a mythical figure” (Bahlmann, 2016, p. 3) and is often used in literature as its own genre

superheroes stand as metaphors for freedom—the freedom to act without consequences and the freedom from the restrictions of gravity, the law, families, and romantic relationships... Superheroes are also a metaphor for efficacy—they can accomplish anything they set out to do—and they are often used in this sense in advertising (Coogan, 2006, p. 15)

Though found in literature, this superhero idea—to be free, acting without consequence—can be liberating, a dream one possesses and imposes for good, and one that provides inspiration and hope for a better world. However, this idea does not always align with the realities of people occupying liminal spaces in society, including in schools, where many decisions about what to teach and how to instruct are not made solely by practitioners in schools but by policymakers outside of the classroom and overseen by school administrators. Since schools have become imbued with neoliberal corporate ideology, we can understand the contextualization of how and to whom the superhuman narrative is being marketed. As Coogan (2006) notes, this allows us to see how this idea becomes a myth permeated throughout society and in schools. For this analysis, a myth can be viewed as a false sense of what it means to be human and navigate a society where structural and institutional barriers exist.

In the United States, the ways in which superhuman tropes are used in a racialized Black context have occurred throughout history, particularly through dehumanizing language that describes animals or animalistic-like behavior, juxtaposing Black bodies against humanizing language used to describe White bodies (Goff et al., 2008).

Coles (2023) illustrates a contemporary example of how this occurs, showing how language used to describe dehumanized Black bodies emphasizes superhuman strength,

in 2014, when white male police officer Darren Wilson described his interaction with Michael Brown (an 18-year-old Black boy) before murdering him, he explained: “when I grabbed him, the only way I can describe it is I felt like a five-year-old holding onto Hulk Hogan... it looks like a demon, that’s how angry he looked”. (pp. 446–447)

Additionally, Black women have been viewed as possessing strength, which “soothes many a conscience that could be troubled by the material conditions forced upon such persons and the toll of organized injustice on their humanity... they play critical roles in the societal imagination and in social life” (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009, p. 3).

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism, as a neoliberal cultural-political-economic ideology, plays a crucial role in how schools in the United States function, imbuing economic and capitalistic discourse where schools reproduce social class, capitalism, and dominant culture (Anyon, 1980). Saltman (2014) explains

neoliberalism is a cultural ideology. It imagines society as a collection of private individuals who are foremost self-reliant economic agents—that is, workers and consumers. A central aspect of neoliberal ideology has been to encourage individuals to think of themselves in individual and private ways rather than in social and public way. (p. 65)

We focus on economic corporate ideas and the language of neoliberalism in schools and how they influence ideas of being superhuman and tapping into one's superpower. With the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, signed into law and implemented in 2002, the emphasis shifted to assessments and competing for funds based on how well teachers teach and how well students perform on their exams (No Child Left Behind, 2002). Barack Obama accelerated competition, testing, and funding through Race to the Top (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, 2012). Students and teachers were, and continue to be, pitted against one another based on test scores, where one's superhuman abilities could be employed to overcome obstacles beyond their control to succeed—working hard, doing their best, achieving academic success, and “beating” themselves and others by metaphorically stepping out of their bodies to superhumanly do the work.

The idea of grit finds space here, individualizing success as a function of how hard one works: grit leads to success through persistence, hard work, and never giving up (Duckworth, 2016). In one school example, Duckworth notes

Thousands of high school juniors completed an abbreviated Grit Scale, along with a battery of other questionnaires. More than a year later, 12 percent were grittier, and grit was a more powerful predictor of graduation than how much students cared about school, how conscientious they were about their studies, and even how safe they felt at school. (np)

In a study of eighth graders, Park et al. (2018) assessed students' levels of grit and their academic success to show teachers providing "supportive and nurturing learning environments," valuing "effort and goal perseverance," where students succeeded academically.

The troubling piece here is that societal and external factors, including schools, remain desperately and chronically inequitable in the United States (Spring, 2021). Deficit ideology is pervasive in schools, where teachers in urban schools (read: majority Black, Latinx, and/or low-income) often embody the belief that students in these communities, of these identities, are not on par with other groups of students. This pathologizes the lack of academic success as a failure of the individual community and identity—whether racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, or more (Gorski, 2011).

Grit—to work hard and persevere—when coupled with deficit ideology, in our assessment (not Duckworth's or Park et al.'s assessment), can be interpreted as using one's superpower skills to overcome challenges: you persevered because you had the *mindset* to *not* give up, unlike many who do give up. You transcended the deficits from which you came, possibly through your superhumanness, while teachers never gave up on you!

Who we are

As three scholars working with future practitioners of school counseling, social work, and elementary education (separately, not together), we occupy three different positionalities to analyze and interpret ideas of being superhuman in schools. First, we have all been practitioners—of social work in schools, as a school counselor, and as an elementary educator—providing us with firsthand experience in working with children in schools and understanding the pressures placed on practitioners. Second, our scholarly work examines and interrogates race and sexuality in these professions, equipping us with the theoretical and analytical tools necessary to understand how the trope of being a superhero/superhuman is reinforced in schools, particularly as it relates to the matrix of domination. Third, and most importantly, our lived experiences in minoritized socially constructed identities provide us

with a lens to understand how and why this myth functions. Joanne identifies as a cisgender heterosexual Latina; Ken identifies as a Black gay cisgender male; and Michael identifies as a cisgender White gay male, who has faced pushback as a gay educator, even if he was not “out.”

Michael’s analysis within heteronormative schools provides an example of how we see this trope at play in schools: the superhuman/superpower myth provides a cover for heteronormativity in schools. Was keeping private, staying “in the closet,” his superpower? If he used his superpower, could he bust free from the heteronormative school? And if he failed, would this failure be his fault rather than the fault of structural heteronormativity? Or was Michael playing it safe for the sake of his life and career? The same questions can be asked about his experiences as a young student—if only he had tapped into a superpower, would all have been great? This narrative ignores the heteronormative social pressures he faced in school and the robust funding for his schools.

Our framing of the problem is intended to support students and practitioners because we continue to work with future and current practitioners, as well as children navigating formal school settings. We do not aim to criticize those practitioners who use these terms, as we believe many are caught up in the narrative that has swept schools. This narrative, particularly in how it “just makes sense,” might lead practitioners to think, “Yes, we can do this as a means to support all students!” The three professions are often viewed as inherently activist because practitioners are expected to support youth from all backgrounds by being culturally relevant and purposeful. This requires “bucking” what dominant groups may perceive as a universal solution for all youth, while instead addressing the specific and diverse needs of different communities.

Lastly, all three of us ground our professional work in countering deficit perspectives by calling out ideas and programs that may implicitly or explicitly reinforce deficit ideologies. We also engage in scholarship that brings forth counterstories, highlighting the strengths of the communities in which we socially and physically reside and do our work.

Black, Latina, LGBTQ2+ students and practitioners

The United States is a country where inequity and inequality have been pervasive throughout its history (Zinn, 2003). Though present in all areas of society, inequity is particularly acute in schools (Spring, 2021). From schools being segregated by race and ethnicity for generations (Spring, 2021), to the reproduction of social class (Anyon, 1980), to vastly inadequate and inequitable school funding (Spring, 2021), the idea of superpowers and being superhuman can be tempting to infuse into schools as a way to remediate—or reproduce—these dynamics without policymakers addressing the need for structural changes.

Black, Latinx, LGBTQ2+ students and practitioners

Black, Latinx, and LGBTQ2+ students and practitioners face numerous obstacles in schools, obstacles their racial, ethnic, and sexual majority peers do not encounter (Edwards, Singer, and Winchell Lenhoff, 2023; Kosciw, Clark, and Menard, 2021; Rodriguez and González Ybarra, 2022); each experience differs for all, but all navigate a racist and heteronormative society and schools, informing one's response to their role as practitioner and student.

This must be read in the backdrop of rapid continued political and ideological backlash to: (a) studies of endemic racism in the country (Ray and Gibbons, 2021); (b) former president Trump launching his campaign (and being rewarded by winning) attacking Mexicans and other Latin Americans as rapists invading our nation threatening society (Phillips, 2017) and branding Islamic peoples as terrorists; (c) fights against DACA, allowing “eligible undocumented young adults who came to the U.S. as children to work and study without fear of deportation” (Acevedo, 2023, np); and (d) the rapidness of the introduction and/or passage of 491 anti-LGBTQ2+ bills across the country (American Civil Liberties Union, 2023); in fact at the time of this publication Donald Trump, a convicted felon, who again made his re-election campaign against “mass illegal immigration” (Serrano, 2024) and against LGBTQ2S+ rights (Aufiero and Thoreson, 2024), particularly transgender rights, in schools, won the 2024 election against the sitting vice president, Madame Vice President Kamala Harris.

The reality in schools, the percentage of Black teachers and Black female teachers is small, currently (2020–2021) stands at six percent (Irwin et al., 2023), and the turnover rate is greater for Black females than their White peers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Latina teachers' percentage in the teaching profession is currently (2020–2021) at nine percent (Irwin et al., 2023); these numbers fall vastly short of the demographics of Black and Latina students in schools, 15 percent, and 28 percent, respectively (Irwin et al., 2023).

Rodriguez and González Ybarra (2022) gathered narratives of Latinx youth to understand how they navigated suburban schools, where they were the minority, during the Trump presidency. Results show many youth stayed silent to survive, strived for academic exceptionalism to show their teachers and classmates they were intellectually equals, and some had to “tiptoe” around Whiteness and White students and teachers in class as did some of their teachers. How can one be a superhero if they are trying to stay alive, trying to make it through the school day without being attacked? Why must one be a superhero to survive?

LGBTQ2+ness in schools continues to be a lightning rod, where school boards and educators are facing backlash for queer-themed books and queer-themed curricula (Feuer, 2021; U.S. Department of Justice, 2021). At present, conservative political leaders in many states have passed restrictions on being queer, particularly for transgender youth and their families; conversely, states deemed liberal have expanded protected rights for LGBTQ2+ youth, with much focus on transgender youth and their families (Smith, 2023).

Many LGBTQ2+ practitioners across the country are contemplating their future as practitioners in schools, learning how to navigate this hostile climate (Jones, 2022). This tension of navigation can cause mental health issues and stress in addition to an already demanding workload (Mission Square Research Institute, 2021; Walker, 2021).

These pieces intertwine to show how this narrative of being superhuman can be debilitating, reproducing power dynamics in an already complex space: public schools.

Promoting the idea of being superhuman only exacerbates the issues of racism, sexism, and ethnicism, being viewed as only telling one these attacks, these hostilities, are “natural” and one must use superpowers to rise above and do one's best to survive, be social-emotionally well, and achieve academic success. We can only speculate why superpower/humanness has seeped into

schools in The States, because schools have become spaces of competitiveness and to be better than your fellow student and colleague, you must be extra better, be super. Also, this fits squarely with ideas of The States being promoted as a country of individualism and where we are told we are a superpower, if not The Superpower of the world. Presenting this trope to children at early ages may help continue the ideas of dominance in the world and the individual is responsible for their own fate, not imposed historical and current policies, which create barriers.

Research questions, theoretical framework, and methods

Due to this rise in how we see these terms being employed to students and to and from practitioners, we have three questions guiding our theoretical analysis:

1. How does this narrative, the trope, function within the matrix of domination?
2. How does this trope reinforce social inequality?
3. In what ways could this be detrimental to students and practitioners?

Employing critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), we analyze how and when this trope is used in schools and society (for practitioners and students), how this narrative can be understood as myth (Barthes, 1972) within the matrix of domination (Collins, 2000), and how it reproduces and reifies social inequality and power in schools and society while heeding the words of Fairclough in our analysis

systematically explor[ing] often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and

struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (pp. 132–133)

To better analyze and interpret what is being said, in conjunction with Fairclough, we lean on superpower/superhumanness as a narrative that becomes a myth. Barthes (1972) explains that a myth is “a type of speech” (p. 107) where everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse: “Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message: there are formal limits to myth, there are no ‘substantial’ ones.” (p. 107).

The way we utilize Barthes’ (1972) notion of myths is that when the student and practitioner hears and reads the idea of being, or using, superhumanness/power, this is done, we believe, “innocently” and where “the myth-consumer takes the signification for a system of facts; myth is read as a factual system, whereas it is but a semiological system” (Barthes, 1972, p. 130).

Matrix of domination

From a Black feminist theory perspective, sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2000) argues that, in the context of the United States, power and domination can be understood through the matrix of domination woven throughout society, which is:

the overall organization of hierarchical power relations for any society. Any specific matrix of domination has (1) a particular arrangement of intersecting systems of oppression, e.g., race, social class, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, ethnicity and age; and (2) a particular organization of its domains of power, e.g., structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal. (p. 299)

Collins (2000) underscores that merely knowing the matrix is not enough; rather, understanding the components of the matrix through the lens of Black feminist thought as oppositional knowledge provides a framework to better comprehend society. We read, understand, and analyze superhumanness/superpower from an oppositional lens to resist and blunt the narratives

through the matrix, rather than accepting this narrative as merely “innocent” and “inspiring.” Our critique operates by examining the trope through the lenses of power and domination, understood within the spaces they occupy: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, or interpersonal (Collins, 2000).

These components inform our analysis of how this narrative is used, how it can be viewed, and how it is understood through our use of critical discourse analysis, interpreted through the matrix of domination, and articulated as a myth that promulgates and reproduces inequity and injustice in schools across three different professions: school counselor, school social worker, and schoolteacher.

We adopt a three-pronged approach to interpreting this myth in the three respective professions:

- Elementary education focuses on what is presented on websites promoting “superpower” lesson plans/worksheets, blogs from practitioners, school districts’ missions and/or goals for educators, educator professional organizations, and merchandise sold to practitioners.
- School counseling provides an analysis of how power functions and how superhumanness can exacerbate power dynamics and inequity in school counseling.
- Social work examines how these slogans and narratives impose additional burdens on minoritized youth and practitioners.

Analysis

The myth (Barthes, 1972) of being superhuman and tapping into one’s superpower is seen as a form of invisibilizing power (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008), quietly entrenched in the matrix of domination, and adopting the language of neoliberalism (emphasizing individuality and hard work as inherent traits within a person, disconnected from the social fabric of community and uninfluenced by external forces).

Elementary education (grades K-6)

Reviewing how this narrative looks for teachers and students within the matrix of domination, teachers are tasked with performing–transcending their reality and the racial, gendered, sexual, and/or social class dynamics inherent in their classrooms and society. For instance, through writing activities or games, worksheets often ask students to identify their superpowers. However, none of the examples we found encourage students to situate themselves in the lived realities of being a child or a human, reflecting on how their lived experiences shape their ability to read, write, or understand content. Here, we do not refer to role-playing or pretending to be someone else, which can be problematic by reproducing power dynamics. Instead, these worksheets and games fail to provide opportunities for students to critically engage with the structures of society that make being superhuman necessary in the first place—structural barriers that compel one to tap into their superpower.

In one activity, for example, students are told, “I read. What’s your superpower?” (C.K., 2022). Connecting this to Fairclough (1995), this notion demonstrates a power dynamic in the classroom. Here, the teacher (or in this case, a non-being represented by a poster) frames reading as a superhuman achievement. If a student cannot read, or if reading is not perceived as their “superpower,” they are implicitly framed as lacking strength. This absolves the teacher of responsibility, places the blame on the student, and poses the question: “If not reading, then what superhuman ability do you bring to learning?”

This dynamic can be further compounded by the realities of academic achievement measures, which consistently show Black and Latina students falling behind their White peers (Nation’s Report Card, n.d.). We argue this disparity is the result of an educational debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006), rather than any lack of intellectual ability among Black and Brown students. Similarly, lower academic achievement is also reflected in lower grade point averages among LGBTQ2+ youth (Kosciw et al., 2022).

For teachers, one educator’s words are promoted on the Virginia Educator Association website:

We are superheroes. We have power beyond belief, and the actions we take (or don’t take), no matter how small, affect the future of a child, a family, a community, our country, our world. Accept that. Own it. It’s quite a humbling supposition. Once you do own it, it

can feel daunting. But I have three tips to sustain you, tips that have worked for me. (Nelson, 2021, np)

In this context, the weight of solving society's problems falls on educators. While this may be laudable for some, the concern is that this expectation is unattainable and could lead to stress and burnout, raising questions about one's ability to be an effective teacher. Gonzales (2020) notes

in the complex environments of the twenty-first century, teachers are expected not to control students, but nurture them and protect them from discrimination, social harm and injustice, and help them overcome relationship and learning difficulties... While some thirst for more opportunities to exercise their moral call to action, for others, this demand to be superhuman can become a cause of stress. (p. 88)

By being the one who is using their superhuman strength, the teacher absolves policymakers of the responsibility to rectify the social ills affecting society: the teacher will do this work with their superhuman abilities, and so will the students when they are old enough.

Counseling

Traditionally, school counselors have acted as gatekeepers of the status quo, perpetuating practices that limit educational opportunities for minoritized students within the matrix of domination (Shell, 2021). Within this former paradigm, the use of the superhero trope for students and school counselors seems like a natural adaptation to the matrix of domination. However, demographic changes in U.S. public schools have influenced a role change for school counselors—from gatekeepers of the status quo to social justice change agents and advocates (Shell, 2021).

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) developed the ASCA National Model (2019), a comprehensive school counseling program, to emphasize the role of school counselors as members of the educational team who use advocacy, collaboration, systemic change, and leadership skills to foster more equitable and emancipatory school environments (Shell, 2021).

The ASCA mandate has made it imperative for school counselors to work toward eliminating biases and inequities in their school environments to ensure that their comprehensive school counseling programs are culturally affirming and include antiracist practices (Mayes et al., 2023). The commitment to antiracist school counseling involves dismantling racist practices and policies and honoring the humanity of minoritized students, families, and communities (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022). Antiracist school counseling work involves more than simply recognizing oppressive systems; it requires the active removal of oppressive systems and policies that unfairly target minoritized students (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022; Mayes et al., 2023).

An emphasis on students as superheroes or possessing superpowers works at cross-purposes with the aspirations of the school counseling profession. The superhero trope obscures the systemic forces that impair students' success in school settings and reinforces a deficit-oriented view of learning in which cultural or linguistic diversity is used to justify disparate educational outcomes (Shell, 2021). Moreover, if a student cannot tap into their "superpowers," then we are left with two options to describe their failures: within-child deficits or within-counselor deficits (Shell, 2021).

Social work (latina/black)

The idea of integrating the "what is your superpower" narrative into schools, while intended to bring out the best in students by encouraging them to think about their abilities and use them as strengths, may have unintentional consequences for minoritized students. For Latino and Black students, this concept can take on a completely different narrative and produce unintended adverse effects within the classroom. Social workers are then tasked with intervening to address the mental health impacts of these unintended consequences.

Social workers employ their skills across micro (individual), mezzo (family), and macro (community) systems. One of the leading perspectives in social work is the Strengths Perspective model, which focuses on recognizing and building upon individual strengths. Professional social workers represent the nation's largest group of mental health service providers (National Association of Social Workers, 2023). As part of working with individuals, social workers conduct biopsychosocial-spiritual assessments to evaluate external environments, internal capacities, strengths, faith, and support sys-

tems, helping clients meet their goals or navigate challenges. However, identifying strengths can be particularly challenging for children, especially those from minoritized groups who experience systemic oppression.

If schools adopt the “what is your superpower” perspective, it raises critical questions about the impact on students who cannot identify a “superpower.” For minoritized students who have experienced oppression within systemic racist structures, such exercises may reintroduce feelings of marginalization in the school or classroom setting. Oppression and microaggressions often lead to negative cognitions such as “I am not good enough,” “I am not smart enough,” “I am not pretty enough,” or “I do not belong.” These internalized messages may trigger negative mental health outcomes for students exposed to this narrative.

The concept of power—and who has it—is subjective. Broadly defined, power may involve the ability to bring about a desired effect at the micro (individual), mezzo (family), or macro (societal) levels (Hopps et al., 1995; McCubbin, 2001). *Power* can also be understood as the opportunity to access valued material and psychosocial resources that satisfy basic human needs and instill a sense of stability and predictability in life (Prilleltensky et al., 2001). For some marginalized communities, particularly Latinx and Black students, the internalized sense of powerlessness created by systemic oppression can limit their ability to identify and access their strengths.

Power can also be expressed as an internal capacity to generate change, often perceived or manifested in one’s sense of mastery or competence over oneself, the environment, and others (Hopps et al., 1995). Latinx and Black students may struggle to identify their “superpower,” further perpetuating feelings of powerlessness and diminished self-worth.

The concept of “what is your superpower,” although designed to support individuality, can unintentionally intensify students’ sense of vulnerability and unmet needs. The expectation that students must persevere and rely solely on their inner abilities to rise above struggles invalidates their humanity and suffering. This narrative also fails to account for the daily interactions with racist and oppressive systems that negatively may affect their mental health.

Discussion and conclusion

When the idea of being superhuman, using your superpower to succeed, is promoted to youth and practitioners in schools, we caution that though innocuous, it has deeper (un)intended consequences. For youth, rising above being human, to be lifted out of one's lived liminal existence allows the perpetuation of inequity when they fail to succeed; this again reinforces the neoliberal belief that one is in charge of their destiny without regulations holding one back. With practitioners, to be superhuman is to leave behind the realities of the pressures of the work—often viewed as these professions being the ones fixing society and working with the future leaders to change society; if the teacher is a superhuman and has done their job, the thinking goes, they will have helped fix society for the better. Practitioners alone, with their students, ensure they both used their superhuman powers to succeed and make society a better place.

Analyzing being superhuman through the matrix of domination allows one to view the complex nature of tapping to these myths, seeing how the arrangement of these intersection systems of power are reinforced when one leaves their lived selves behind to succeed—even when success is blocked by barriers within the system of power. This, we believe, shows the human significance of why one must proceed with caution before employing the superhuman trope. By this we mean, to be human is tap into one's lived experiences, to do what one can do to break down anti-oppressive forces through one's work with students, to ensure students are aware their experiences are real, they are human, and can be supported rather than told to tap into something that may fail and reinforce beliefs of self-doubt and failure.

As one social worker explained in a TedTalk about tapping into one's superhuman abilities:

As I've said before, everyone at some point will need a social worker. When that happens to you, don't worry, don't be embarrassed; go find one. I promise you they will be a super-hero. And better yet, they will help you find your superpower so that you can work through whatever life is throwing your way. (Scheyett, 2015)

What if institutional and structural barriers block one's ability to use their superpower to overcome challenges? What if a social worker doesn't succeed in using their superhero/power to enact change in society? Are we setting people up for failure beyond their control?

Practitioners can engage with students in object lessons around this trope, focusing on how to read and analyze the tropes, and how being a (super) hero can be either liberating *or* debilitating. If practitioners are inclined to bring in superpower/humanness—such as when a nine-year-old is asked their superpower—rather than expecting one definitive answer, they could allow the student to study what this concept means and how it differs from identifying one's strengths.

Practitioners can provide students with opportunities to examine how, if their superpower is not “working”, this may be due to larger structural forces rather than a personal failing. Students can also study individuals with similar identity(ies) who have resisted and fought for change—demonstrating that power and heroism can be expressed through the ways humans make changes toward an equitable society.

Reflection questions

1. How do you define superhumanness/power in your profession?
2. How can practitioners utilize superhumanness/power without reproducing inequity?
3. What ways do you see superhumanness/power used in your profession and to what effect?

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