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Exploring the Cultural Humility and Practices of School Psychologists in Virginia

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JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This present study investigated the relationship between cultural competency and years of school psychology experience. In addition, this study determined how well school psychologists understand cultural humility. This study aimed to bridge the gap between school psychology research and that of other fields, as well as the paradigm shift from having a cultural competency lens to a cultural humble lens. Results of the present study indicated there is a statistically significant relationship between knowledge of appropriate assessments and interventions for racially and ethnically minoritized students and years of experience. Additionally, no statistically significant relationship was found between other sub-domains of cultural competency and years of experience. A thematic analysis revealed several themes related to cultural humility including self-reflection, awareness, and learning. The majority of participants did not mention learning and reflection as being a life-long commitment. Results of this present study also highlighted the need for more professional development regarding the impact of cultural humility and incorporating culturally responsive practices.

Exploring the Cultural Humility and Practices of School Psychologists in Virginia.

Statement of the Problem

Racially and ethnically minoritized (REM) students are becoming the fastest-growing subgroup in the United States and currently make up 45.20% of the student population (Grunewald, 2014; Sullivan, 2011). Despite the rapid growth and changing population in the United States, Virginia's population has grown more slowly. Of the nine regions in the state, Hampton Roads, Northern Virginia, and the Richmond region make up 95% of the state's population growth (Lombard, 2020). Virginia encompasses rural, urban, and suburban areas. The 2020 Census revealed that the largest racial population in Virginia is White at 62.02% (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Virginia, 2020). Despite the state being majority White, the Northern Virginia region has a steady rise in minority populations making this region unique to the state. Some regions in Northern Virginia have a higher international population than New York City (Kaneff, 2019), indicating that the region is transforming into a very culturally and linguistically diverse population.

The rapid growth of Northern Virginia most closely reflects the future demographics of the national population as it is estimated that the United States will become "majority-minority" by 2045 in which most population growth will come from immigration (Kaneff, 2019). With the growing REM student population in mind, it is important to examine if schools are able to effectively meet the needs of each student. In the present day, this is still complicated by the fact that majority of educators and school psychologists that serve in these institutions are predominantly White. According to Walcott and Hyson (2018), 87% of practicing school psychologists in the United States identify as White and 86% of practicing school psychologists only speak English. When comparing the demographics of school psychologists to the demographics of students in elementary, middle, and high school, there is a cultural mismatch. The changing demographics in the state of Virginia demonstrate the

critical need for embedding culturally responsive and inclusive practices within the curriculum. The Virginia Academy of School Psychologists (VASP) recently released a statement indicating that school psychologists must dismantle systemic racism and be a model for anti-racism work. They acknowledge that the first step in doing so is through self-assessment of school psychologists' own biases and continued training (VASP, 2020).

Definition of Terms

It is important to note there is not a lot of research related to cultural humility within the field of school psychology. This is also complicated by the fact that the terms cultural humility and cultural competency are often used interchangeably and in various contexts. This could be due to lack of research comparing both terms. For the purpose of this study, the term *Cultural humility* is defined as a lifelong self-awareness and reflection of one's own values, beliefs, and cultural identity while learning about other cultures. *Cultural competence* is defined as knowledge, attitudes, and skills for working with racially and ethnically minoritized students and families. *Culturally responsive practices* are defined as effective teaching and assessment practices that meet the needs of REM students in the school environment.

The Foundation of an Educator's Role

Numerous legislation decisions lay the foundation for the practices and roles of school psychologists today. School psychology is directly impacted by decisions for education and new practices that teachers and other educators should follow. The concept of culturally responsive education and practices derives from the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation efforts in the 1960's and 1970's (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). These changes demanded adapting the curriculum and having teachers shift from a monocultural lens to a multicultural lens for teaching and practice. Other court cases such as *Dianna v. Board of Education* and *Larry P v. Riles* (Richardson, 2002) raised concerns for minority

overrepresentation in special education. This impacted service delivery as school psychologists began to consider the assessment process, tools used, and interventions recommended through a multicultural perspective in order to give each student equal opportunity to receive free and appropriate public education (FAPE) regardless of their ethnic, linguistic, or cultural background.

Educators play a large role in combating privilege and establishing culturally responsive practices (CRP) within schools. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) suggests that social justice should serve as the foundation for all service delivery within the ten domains of school psychology (NASP, 2010; NASP, 2020). In relation to advocacy in schools, educational leaders should assess their own culture, the level in which they value and embrace diversity, manage the dynamics of difference, and institutionalize their cultural knowledge (Lindsey et al., 2009, as cited in NASP, 2016). Culture is embedded in the curriculum, assessment, and instruction. When there is a discrepancy between the demographics of the students and the curriculum used, there may be a mismatch of goals and expectations between the school and family (Klotz & Canter, 2006). There is a clear need for educators and school psychologists to develop a cultural humility framework to explore their biases, values, and knowledge when working with REM students and families.

Concept of Cultural Competency and Cultural Humility

Cultural competency and cultural humility are similar terms and concepts; however, cultural humility expressively includes self-awareness and reflection. The paradigm shift of cultural humility as the foundation for practice can allow opportunities to further explore different domains or roles of any given profession (Davis et al., 2018). Although a practitioner may only have cultural competency, cultural humility, or implement CRP, when all three are combined, their practice becomes much more beneficial and meaningful for working with students of REM backgrounds. In addition to having better service delivery,

school psychologists incorporating all three concepts in their practice are also able to challenge systems and help discuss ways to implement change in schools and school practices with teachers, principals, and other educators.

With the emerging framework of cultural competency into the field of school psychology, most ideologies derive from social work and counseling perspectives (Fisher, 2020). A systemic literature review conducted by Sue et al., (2001) noted that a culturally competent practitioner is one who is aware of their cultural knowledge, awareness, beliefs, and skills. The impact of a practitioner's cultural competence affects the therapeutic relationship between the therapist and the client. Results from a (2013) study by Hook et al. confirmed that participants rated their therapist having cultural humility as more important than similarity, experience, knowledge, and skills. In addition, the comparison between cultural competency and cultural humility should be addressed in school psychology research to help practitioners understand the terminology and follow best practices.

Many researchers note that the goal of cultural humility is more profound than being culturally competent because cultural humility is a lifelong process and commitment at both the individual and systemic level (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015; Fisher, 2020; Foronda et al., 2016). Fisher-Borne et al. (2015) defined *cultural humility* as a process of committing to an ongoing relationship with patients, community and colleagues that requires humility as individuals continually engage in self-reflection and self-critique. Cultural humility provides a deeper understanding both of cultural identity formation and the impact of working within culturally diverse populations and is considered a "way of being" (Foronda et al., 2016, p.214) rather than something one is trained in. The cultural competency framework has been criticized because it often does not focus on self-awareness, uses the term "culture" as a proxy for minority races and ethnicities, focuses on knowing and understanding another culture, and lack a social justice agenda that challenges inequalities (Fisher-Borne et al.,

2015). To better understand the difference between cultural competency and cultural humility, the following example was created by the author. A culturally competent school psychologist may have knowledge about working with students from Mexico. They may know what the schools are like and have an understanding of what daily life and expectations are for kids that age. However, when a school psychologist has cultural humility, they are able to acknowledge that while they may know a lot about students in Mexico, they cannot know everything, and they commit themselves to continue to learn. They can also connect the influence of other social and political systems and question how they can better advocate for students and families from Mexico. Adding reflective questions at both the individual and institutional level creates more room for discussion and awareness of one's own power and privilege.

Researchers across different professions have started examining the outcomes of practitioners having and displaying cultural humility. These consequences include respect, optimal care, mutual empowerment and understanding, and advocacy partnerships (Foronda et al., 2016). This has an impact on a school psychologist's role in schools. School psychologists are trained in multiple roles such as consultation, counseling, and assessment. Students may respond differently to counseling and psychological services depending on how culturally competent or humble the school psychologist is.

Culturally Responsive Practices

Meeting the needs of REM students has been a serious topic of discussion in education policy and literature for many years. Educating students with cultural knowledge in mind can impact both education practices and the student's response. Research suggests that teachers make judgments about their students' achievement and behavior based on student's racial characteristics and teacher's lack of cultural knowledge (Russell et al., 2011). The effect of racial or cultural bias not only impacts how the student views school and creates

relationships with educators, but it could also affect their psychological and physical well-being (Hemmings & Evans, 2016). The movement and implementation of CRP has been both crucial and challenging for schools and educators. In addition to implementing CRP in the curriculum, culturally responsive education focuses on the importance of teachers not expecting students to conform to the dominant culture's norms and practices (Flory & Wylie, 2019). CRP research may fail to connect the school psychologist's role in the school system. For example, if a student is being disruptive in the classroom and does not pay attention during lecture, teachers and other educators may think the student has Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). When both the teachers and the school psychologist implement CRP, they may be better able to understand why the child is off task. Especially for REM students, it is important that both teachers and school psychologists do not overlook the cultural and linguistic factors contributing to a student's academic success. For example, the student may have just moved from another country and does not understand the cultural norms of schools in the United States (Rhodes et al., 2005). This not only emphasizes the importance of CRP, but also the legal and ethical guidelines a school psychologist must follow.

School psychologists are instrumental in supporting teachers in systems-level change. Despite teachers' efforts to implement CRP in schools, research indicates they do not feel supported during the transition and implementation of CRP (Mette 2016; Neri, 2019). Teachers are responsible for managing behavior in the classroom, meeting state requirements and standards, and maintaining a positive and safe environment. Snyder (2018) found that teachers wished there was opportunity to engage in dialogue with administrators and that they were given resources about the initiatives being implemented within the school. Without resources and opportunities to discuss initiatives, teachers may not buy in to execute the proposed initiatives and practices. Buy-in is important for systems change because it

determines how well the new practice or initiative is implemented. This research shows that teachers are often forgotten in the process of system change though they are the ones who will be directly impacted. A school psychologist is better able to help facilitate systems-change in the schools when they have an understanding of human behavior, collaborate and problem solve with other faculty and staff, and are familiar with principles and stages of change (Curtis et al., 2008). Thus, by having these three distinct perspectives (i.e., cultural competency, cultural humility, and culturally responsive practices) and competencies on systems change, they can help effectively meet the needs of school-wide problems or concerns and facilitate discussion with school personnel.

The first step toward implementing CRP is professional development that invites self-reflection in order to examine one's own biases and attitudes about others (Mette et al., 2016). This is also part of the cultural humility framework as it moves toward an interpersonal and intrapersonal outlook on attitudes and beliefs. Because cultural humility involves life-long learning and reflection, continued professional development is important in order to help teachers reach the full potential of CRP. It also gives teachers and other educators the ability to better connect with themselves, coworkers, and students. School psychologists can be instrumental in facilitating professional development opportunities.

Multicultural School Psychology Practices

With the current shift in school psychology practice and increase of immigration, there are key areas in which school psychologists should be competent: acculturation, collaboration with families and the community, international education systems, and redefining the role of a school psychologist (Newell et al., 2010). Understanding the acculturation process, that is, how students adapt to the United States, is important for understanding how REM students responds to interventions and overall classroom environment. In addition, knowledge and awareness of education systems across the world

will help gain a better understanding of where the student is and how educators can best accommodate them during their transition into schools in the United States.

According to the 2020 NASP Professional Standards, one of the six principles that serves as a foundation for the ten practice domains states that “school psychologists ensure that their knowledge, skills, and professional practices reflect understanding and respect for human diversity and promote effective services, advocacy, and social justice for all students, families, and schools” (NASP, 2020, p.28). Although social justice has been listed as a key principle in school psychology practice for over a decade, it had not been defined within the NASP Professional Standards document (Malone et al., 2016) until the recent 2020 publication. By not having a consistent definition of social justice, school psychologists may have a disconnect with other school psychologists and other educators because there is not a shared language in advocacy work. Shriberg et al., (2008) aimed to define social justice through a school psychology lens by using a Delphi technique, an approach that gathers information and establishes a criterion from the opinions of a group. Findings of this study indicated that there is a lack of diversity among school psychologists and there were various definitions for the term *social justice*. This is consistent with current school psychology practices. In addition, terms such as cultural competency and cultural humility are not clearly defined in professional standards (Danso, 2016). The varying definitions of cultural competency and cultural humility can have an impact on school psychology practices across individuals and school districts.

More professional development that focuses on cultural competency and cultural humility should be offered throughout a school psychologists career to better promote advocacy and social justice roles. While educating practitioners on cultural humility is important, it is crucial that other areas of diversity are not dismissed. When diversity is mentioned during a professional development session or in discussion with other

practitioners, people assume it is only referring to race and ethnicity. Other pillars of diversity such as socioeconomic status, language, and religion are often overlooked (Foronda et al., 2016; Parker, 2019; Parker et al., 2020). Parker et al. (2020) emphasized the impact religion and spirituality has on a student's experience in school. This is important because when school psychologists understand different religious backgrounds and spiritual practices, they are better able to meet the needs for students and understand resistance to some interventions. Knowing the different factors of diversity including the different cultural, social, and political systems influencing a student as well as recognizing one's own competency levels can better improve service delivery. The emphasis on social justice as a key principle in practice suggests a curricular focus for university training programs.

School Psychology Training

Many university programs both at the undergraduate and graduate level are shifting toward diversity education. Truell and Myers (2020) found a statistically significant difference between cultural awareness and commitment to lifelong learning beginning with students' graduate program. Consequently, research indicates that behaviors pertaining to knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about working with REM students and families are not translated into practice despite programs having social justice and diversity education initiatives (Moy et al., 2014). This shows that the shift from cultural competence to cultural humility has a significant impact on school psychology practices and it begins at the university training level. Especially in school psychology, changes in practice, policy, and testing norms occur every year. Ethically, school psychologists should be working toward the beneficence of the students and ensuring that everything they do is in the best interest of the child. Without the lifelong learning commitment, their practices could negatively impact the school psychologist works with students and families, especially those of REM backgrounds.

Malone et al. (2016) examined the difference between multicultural coursework within graduate programs and competency in working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. Results indicated that school psychology graduate students who had practicum experiences with CLD students reported higher scores on the knowledge, skills, and cultural appreciation subscales (Malone et al., 2016). The NASP 2020 Professional Standards suggest that social justice be embedded in all graduate training program curriculum through coursework that focuses on topics such as nondiscriminatory assessment and includes field experiences with diverse populations. In addition, for school psychology programs to maintain accreditation through NASP standards, they must show evidence of cultural competence training (Curtis, 2013). Although the previous standards from NASP stated that programs should have a social justice lens, they did not specify how graduate training programs should include diversity education, (Malone et al., 2016). Now that the national organization has suggestions for how graduate programs can implement diversity education, it will be important to monitor the shift in training programs nationwide. Although diversity education is being taught in higher education, there is minimal research on the impact of these frameworks within the field of school psychology.

Current Study

The aim of this study is to explore the perceived cultural competence of school psychologists in Virginia. A secondary purpose was to explore school psychologist's understanding of cultural humility. This two-part study emphasizes the paradigm shift from cultural competence to cultural humility in order to better understand practitioners' experience in Virginia. Specifically, the research questions are as follows:

Research Question #1: What is the perceived cultural competence of school psychologists in Virginia?

Research Question #2: What is the relationship between perceived cultural competence and school psychology experience?

Research Question #3: How do school psychologists in Virginia define Cultural Humility?

Method

Participants

The participants in the study consisted of 39 school psychologists in the state of Virginia. Participants were drawn from school psychologists licensed through the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) using a voluntary response sampling procedure. Some participants were recruited through the Virginia Academy of School Psychologists (VASP) member email list. In total, the online questionnaire was sent to 450 school psychologists in Virginia.

Instrument

An online questionnaire was created in conjunction with the VASP Social Justice Committee. For this study, 11 demographic questions, a 28-item School Psychology Multicultural Competency Scale (SPMCS, Malone et al., 2016), and two qualitative items were used. Participants were asked to report their demographic information regarding race, ethnicity, age, gender, languages spoken, and years practicing as a school psychologist both as a whole and within the state of Virginia. Demographic questions were modeled after the U.S. Census and were used to examine experience and answer research question two. The SPMCS measured participants perceived cultural competence and was used for research questions one and two. Finally, participants were asked to define terms such as cultural humility and describe how they incorporate those ideas into their practice, thus answering research question three.

The School Psychology Multicultural Competency Scale (SPMCS; Malone et al., 2016) was used to measure cultural competency. The SPMCS is a 28-item self-report of multicultural competency for practicing school psychologists and trainees. There are many scales that measure cultural competency and cultural humility; however, the SPMCS was chosen as it measures cultural competence across areas of school psychology such as assessment, intervention, and consultation (Malone et al., 2016). The scale has four subscales that represent different domains of cultural competency: Cultural Skills, Cultural Knowledge, Cultural Appreciation, and Cultural Awareness. Overall, the scale was found to have high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92; alphas for the subscales were moderate to strong (Malone et al., 2016).

The Cultural Skills and Cultural Knowledge subscales measure the knowledge-focused components of the survey in terms of service delivery. Cultural Skills assesses the participants' ability to implement culturally appropriate practices (Malone et al., 2016). The questions 1-10 load on this factor. This subscale had a high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86. The Cultural Knowledge component assesses the participants' knowledge of using culturally appropriate assessments and interventions (Malone et al., 2016). The questions in the SPMCS that load on the Cultural Knowledge factor are questions 11-17. This subscale has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84 indicating good reliability.

Both the Cultural Appreciation and Cultural Awareness subscales relate to multicultural awareness. Both of these subscale's reliabilities were within the acceptable range, each with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.75. The Cultural Appreciation subscale focuses on the participants' values and biases (Malone et al., 2016). Questions 18-23 are loaded onto Cultural Appreciation. The Cultural Awareness subscale measures the awareness and assumptions of behavior (Malone et al., 2016) which correspond to questions 24-28. Demographic questions, the SPMCS, and the qualitative items can be found in Appendix B.

Procedures

All school psychologists in Virginia were recruited to participate in an electronic questionnaire. VASP partnered with the researcher and sent the larger questionnaire to all active members and the researcher obtained an email list of all school psychologists licensed through the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). The survey was then sent using QuestionPro, an online survey tool. A brief statement regarding the purpose of the study, participation, and confidentiality was included in the recruiting email above the link to the survey, which was administered via QuestionPro. Additionally, informed consent was obtained from the participants before they began the survey. Participants were advised their participation was voluntary, they were able to contact the researcher if they had any questions and they could withdraw from the study at any point. The participation email and the consent form with the attached survey can be found in Appendix A and B, respectively. Once consent was obtained, participants were directed to the beginning of the survey. The survey was presented in multiple-choice, dropdown, and open-ended response formats which were then summarized using descriptive statistics and frequency charts in SPSS software. Four weeks after the original posting, a reminder email was sent to licensed school psychologists who had not completed the survey. All responses were obtained electronically and analyzed using SPSS and NVivo software.

Data Analyses

This mixed-methods study consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data analyses. Once data were collected, qualitative were analyzed through descriptive statistics. Responses regarding how long school psychologists had been practicing were re-coded and grouped together in order to consolidate and organize data more efficiently. Then, a Chi-square statistic was conducted to examine if there was a relationship between level of cultural competence and years practicing as a school psychologist. The alpha level was set at 0.05.

Further, a thematic analysis was used to identify and categorize common themes and ideas from the definitions provided by the participants. Specifically, qualitative responses were uploaded to NVivo. Nodes were created in order to color code data based on similar topics and themes emerged from this process. Upon completion of the analyses, results included the demographic information of participants, how long the participants had been practicing as a school psychologist, their experiences in graduate school related to cultural competency, the perceived cultural competence of school psychologists, and how practitioners define cultural humility and incorporate it into their daily practice.

Results

Of the 39 participants, 10.30% were Black or African American, 87.2% were White, and 2.60% preferred not to identify their race. Only 17.90% of participants identified as male indicating the majority of participants were female (82.10%). Participants were unequally distributed throughout the 8 regions in Virginia with 10.00% practicing in Central Virginia, 16.20% from the Tidewater area, 10.80% from Northern Neck, 21.60% from Northern Virginia, 24.30% from the Valley, 5.40% from Western Virginia, 5.40% from the Southwest region, and 5.40% from the Southside of Virginia. The average length of time participants had worked as psychologists in Virginia was 20.16 years, with a range of working less than one year to thirty-one or more years. Participant demographics are summarized in Table 4 within Appendix C.

Participants completed several items related to their experience as a school psychologist. Respondents reported different experiences in graduate school; however, on average, participants took 5.6 ($n=37$, $SD=3.5$) graduate level courses with a culturally competent focus. Three participants (8.10%) reported they did not have training related to cultural competency. Participants were also asked to record how long they had been a school psychologist, and how long they had been a school psychologist in Virginia. On average,

school psychologists spent 20.16 (SD=8.92, n=37) years working as a school psychologist in Virginia; however, overall, the average number of years practicing were 15.63 years (SD=10.22, n=38). The results years of experience are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of How Long Participants Had Been Practicing as a School Psychologist

	<i>n</i>	%
Less Than 1-5 years	7	18.90
6-10 years	9	24.30
11-15 years	4	10.80
16-20 years	4	10.80
21-25 years	4	10.80
26-30 years	6	16.20
31+ years	3	8.10

Cultural Competency

To gain a better understanding of participants' perceptions related to cultural competency and advocacy, the SPMCS was used. Participants were asked to report their perceived level of competence related to working with REM students and families for assessment, intervention, and consultation. Overall, the majority (71.8%, *n*=28) of participants indicated they *agreed* with the 28 statements regarding competency, appreciation, and awareness when working with the REM population. The scale had four subscales that represent different domains of cultural competency: Cultural Skills, Cultural Knowledge, Cultural Appreciation, and Cultural Awareness. These results are summarized in Table 2.

Participants averaged a score of 2.98 (SD=0.24, $n=39$) for Cultural Skills, indicating they *disagreed* with statements pertaining to their ability to implement culturally appropriate practices. However, 53.8% ($n=21$) reported they *agreed*. When asked about using culturally appropriate assessments and interventions, majority (56.4%, $n=22$) of participants reported they did not have knowledge of REM interventions and assessments as evidenced by reporting they *disagreed* to these statements.

All participants *agreed* (71.8%, $n=28$) to *strongly agreed* (28.2%, $n=11$) to having Cultural Appreciation, that is, acknowledging their values and potential biases they may have when working with REM students. Participants also completed several items regarding their Cultural Awareness. Respondents reported an average score of 3.27 (SD=0.40, $n=39$), however five participants (12.8%, $n=5$) indicated they *disagreed* with statements about their cultural awareness.

A Pearson Correlation was used to examine the relationship between scores on each sub-scale of the SPMCS. Results indicate a moderately positive correlation between Overall Cultural Competency scores and Cultural Knowledge $r(37) = .32, p=0.05$. Overall Cultural Competency scores and Cultural Appreciation were also found to be moderately correlated, $r(37) = .39, p= 0.01$. This shows there is a relationship between higher scores on Cultural Knowledge or Cultural Appreciation and Overall Cultural Competence. There were no significant relationships between subscales. Results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations between School Psychology Multicultural Competency Scale and Subscales (n=39)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Overall Cultural Competence	3.19	0.25	---				
2. Cultural Skills	2.98	0.24	0.56	---			

3. Cultural Knowledge	2.87	0.33	0.32*	0.29	---		
4. Cultural Appreciation	3.63	0.37	0.39*	0.24	0.14	---	
5. Cultural Awareness	3.27	0.40	0.44	0.27	0.16	0.27	---

1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree, and 4= strongly agree

*p<.05

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between overall cultural competence and years practicing as a school psychologist. The relation between these variables was not significant, $X^2(6)=9.95$, $p=0.13$. This suggests that regardless of how long a school psychologist had been practicing, overall perceived cultural competence is not impacted.

To investigate the relationship between years practicing as a school psychologist and having skills related to service delivery for REM students, a chi square test of independence was completed. Results indicated school psychologists with more experience are more likely than newer school psychologists to have Cultural Skills, $X^2(6)=12.27$, $p=0.05$. However, there was no significant association between Cultural Knowledge and experience, $X^2(6)=6.99$, $p=0.32$.

A chi-square test of independence showed that there was no significant relationship between Cultural Awareness and years of experience, $X^2(6)=3.27$, $p=0.76$. In addition, the proportion of participants who reported they valued other cultures did not differ by experience, $X^2(12)=16.80$, $p=0.16$. This indicates that years of experience as a school psychologist does not impact cultural awareness or appreciation.

Table 3

Frequencies and Chi-Square Results for Cultural Competency Subscales and Years of Experience (n=37)

Subscale	1-5	6-10	11-15	15-20	21-25	25-30	31+	X ²
	years							
	<i>n</i>							
Cultural Competence								9.95
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Agree	2	5	2	2	0	0	0	
Strongly Agree	5	4	2	2	4	6	3	
Cultural Skills								12.27*
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Disagree	5	6	2	2	3	0	0	
Agree	2	3	2	2	1	6	3	
Strongly Agree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Cultural Knowledge								6.99
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Disagree	5	8	1	2	2	3	1	
Agree	2	1	3	2	2	3	2	
Strongly Agree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Cultural Appreciation								3.27
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Agree	4	6	3	3	2	5	3	
Strongly Agree	3	3	1	1	2	1	0	
Cultural Awareness								16.80
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Disagree	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	
Agree	6	8	2	4	2	4	2	
Strongly Agree	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	

**p* < .05

Cultural Humility

In order to explore how school psychologists understand the term cultural humility, participants were asked to provide their own definition and discuss two ways they implement culturally humble practices. Two themes emerged related to defining cultural humility: self-awareness and familiarity. When defining cultural humility, many participants included components related to the four sub-domains of cultural competency as measured by the SPMCS (cultural skills, knowledge, appreciation, and awareness). Many respondents used the

term “unbiased” when talking about cultural humility and working with racially and ethnically minoritized students and families. Results are summarized in Table 6 in Appendix C.

Self-Awareness. Majority of responses involved awareness and self-reflection (51.12%). Participants who used the term, “awareness” indicated being aware that there are differences within cultures and that culture often influences one’s social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive functioning. This also included the influence of culture on the participant’s own practice. Participants who stated self-reflection is part of cultural humility indicated they must be aware of their own cultural identity and understand their privileges and biases in order to be culturally humble. Some participants shared they were aware cultural humility also involves learning about other cultures as well as learning about themselves as part of their self-reflection. One participant shared cultural humility includes “understanding that I still have things to learn about other cultures and about my own biases and white privilege.” Self-awareness and reflection are one of the components in cultural humility and indicates that many participants understand this as a key difference between cultural humility and cultural competency. However, out of 39 responses, only two responses encompassed both life-long learning and self-reflection components which is the core definition of cultural humility.

Familiarity. Responses indicate that the majority (94.51%) of participants were familiar with the term, cultural humility. Out of 39 responses, only three participants were unfamiliar with the term, cultural humility. One participant stated they had “never heard that phrase before.” However, although many responses included either learning or self-reflection, the results of the thematic analysis indicate that the school psychologists surveyed may not know the true definition of cultural humility.

Implementing Cultural Humility

When asked how school psychologists implement culturally humble practices, one theme emerged: Action. This includes how school psychologists act, discuss, and practice when working with REM students and families. Although many participants mentioned learning about other cultures, one participant shared both “self-reflection and educating oneself about other cultures” are key practices for a culturally humble school psychologist. Results are summarized in Table 7 in Appendix C.

Action. Responses indicated culturally humble practices involves school psychologists taking action in response to injustice. When asked how participants implement culturally humble practices, many indicated it is important to respond to anti-racism practices by having critical conversations with colleagues and advocating for students and families. Advocacy also includes educating oneself and others on best practices. One participant shared this can be done through different “trainings and conversations around social justice, culturally competent, and anti-racist practice.” Action also includes how school psychologists implement appropriate assessment and interventions. This involves using suitable assessments, obtaining comprehensive background information, pronouncing the child’s name correctly, and validating the students’ culture. One participant noted they try to get to know the student prior to beginning assessments in order to determine the most appropriate test battery.

Discussion

This study sought to bridge the gap in research to explore school psychologists perceived cultural competency and understanding of cultural humility. This study also aimed to examine how perceived cultural competence relates to years of experience. According to literature, there is a paradigm shift from cultural competency to cultural humility as the foundation for practice (Davis et al., 2018). Despite the shift in literature, there is little

research regarding current school psychology practices and their knowledge on both concepts.

Cultural Competency and Experience

The first research question aimed to find the perceived cultural competence of school psychologists in Virginia. This research question was generated to determine if Virginia school psychologists self-report cultural competency including having knowledge, skills, appreciation, and awareness for other cultures. This was measured using the SPMCS. Results indicated the majority (92.40%) of participants agreed they were culturally competent practitioners.

In addition, the second research question aimed to investigate the perceived relationship between perceived cultural competence and years of experience. It was hypothesized that there is a relationship between cultural competence and years' experience. Based on the current study, the relationship between these variables were not significant thus not supporting the hypothesis. However, the four sub-domains of cultural competency were analyzed in order to determine if there was a sub-domain of cultural competency that was related to experience. There was a significant relationship between *cultural skills*, or the participants' ability to implement culturally appropriate assessment and interventions, and how long they have been a school psychologist. Meaning, more years of experience as a school psychologist was related to more self-reported knowledge using culturally appropriate assessment and interventions. These results suggest cultural competency, cultural knowledge, cultural appreciation, and cultural awareness may not be influenced by years of experience but rather, by other factors. This is consistent with previous research indicating CRP and cultural competency begins before or at the graduate training level (Malone et al., 2016; Truell & Myers, 2020). Results from the current study indicate practitioners had an average of five graduate-level classes with a culturally competent focus suggesting cultural

competency is being introduced at the graduate level and at the beginning of their career.

Additional education can be obtained through trainings, workshops, conversations, and field-based experiences.

Culturally Humble Practices

The final research question asked how school psychologists define cultural humility. A review of literature indicates having cultural humility is both a life-long commitment and heavily involves reflection at both the individual and systemic level (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015; Fisher, 2020; Foronda et al., 2016). With that, it was hypothesized that the respondents' definitions would include life-long reflection and awareness. Approximately half (51.12%) of school psychologists included reflection or awareness within their responses. However, only two respondents included the life-long component, which is a key difference between cultural humility and cultural competency (Fisher-Borne et al., 2016). This suggests there is a need for more professional development regarding having a cultural humility lens and providing culturally responsive school psychology practices. Participants who included self-reflection as part of their definition included understanding how their biases and privilege may impact their practice. When participants mentioned awareness, they often stated that culture shapes every person's experience and perspectives. Many noted the importance of gathering a comprehensive background of the student in order to provide the most appropriate services.

When respondents were asked how they implement culturally humble practices, many included taking action in response to social injustices. This involves advocating for students and families, incorporating culturally responsive practices, and listening to students while validating their experiences. Many participants noted the importance of educating themselves and others about practicing through a social justice lens and becoming more culturally competent practitioners. This further emphasizes the social justice foundation in

school psychology practice and the role of advocacy. Examples of education opportunities the respondents mentioned include conversations with colleagues and other systems-level stakeholders, trainings and workshops, researching best practices, and book studies.

The responses for how participants implement cultural humility were consistent with the Cultural Skills sub-domain of the SPMCS in which higher scores on this sub-domain were related to more years of school psychology experience. Results showed only one correlation between the sub-domains of cultural competency and years of experience. This could be due to the fact that cultural appreciation and awareness are often not influenced by how long you have been working, but rather, one's own values and beliefs. A school psychologist graduate student may have a higher cultural appreciation and awareness than a school psychologist with many years of experience. However, this is inconsistent with the literature as the more exposure graduate students had to working with CLD students, the more knowledge and appreciation they had (Malone et al., 2016; Truell and Myers, 2020).

The definitions participants provided for cultural humility are consistent with the five characteristics of cultural humility noted by Foronda et al., (2016); openness, self-awareness, egoless, supportive interaction, and self-reflection and critique. This further emphasizes the paradigm shift in the school psychology field from a practitioner not only having knowledge and skills for working with REM students, but also having the ability to reflect and continue learning about their cultural identity along with the identity of their students.

The results of the study are also consistent with NASP standards of having social justice as foundational to all service delivery. Social justice and cultural humility are intersecting constructs that should both be implemented into everyday school psychology practice (Fisher, 2020). While social justice involves advocacy for social and systemic change and providing culturally appropriate services (Shriberg & Clinton, 2016), cultural

humility is described as a “way of being” (Foronda et al., 2016) in that practitioners are fully aware of the impact of culture, systemic oppression, and privilege in all aspects of life.

Implications for School Psychologists

According to Mandracchia and Monteiro (2021), incorporating social justice into practice and within the education system is imperative for dismantling systemic racism. With the recent NASP 2020 professional standards, this often begins at the graduate training level. Graduate training programs should be committed to advocating for multicultural issues and offer high-quality experiences with REM students within their practicum and internships with prominent supervision. Previous research highlights disproportionate representation of the national student population to school psychologists, therefore it is important that graduate programs recognize their responsibility to expand the diversity within the profession. This includes outreach to racial and ethnic minoritized students in high schools and college as well as hiring faculty members of color. In addition, it is crucial that programs provide a system of support for students in their graduate program and cultivate an inclusive environment (Proctor & Owens, 2019). By expanding diversity within the profession, schools will be better able to meet the needs of REM students and families and continue to foster the relationship between schools and communities.

It is imperative that school psychologists continue to learn, reflect, and implement culturally competent and humble practices not only at the individual level but also at the systemic level. In March 2021, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) released a statement that new teacher standards will include culturally responsive teaching and equitable practices. Dan Gecker, President of the Board of Education stated, “cultural competency and equitable practices are essential for teachers to achieve success in the commonwealth’s increasingly diverse schools” (VDOE, 2021). With these standards in place, school psychologists, who are trained in systems-level change, should be at the forefront of

culturally responsive leadership and ensure each school is incorporating culturally responsive practices. Culturally responsive leadership should include providing resources and learning opportunities to school personnel, helping establish procedures that provide an anti-racist school climate, and advocating against power imbalances within the school system.

Results from this study also relate to the role of a school psychologist as school psychologists are trained in systems-change and often hold professional developments for other educators. Systems change involves multiple stakeholders. School psychologists should be part of a school-based team or a professional community to help lead, collaborate, support, and implement culturally responsive practices. Building communities should begin with cohorts at the graduate training level in order to provide support and resources once school psychologists become professionals. This further emphasizes the importance and responsibility graduate programs have to ensure each cohort is a professional learning community that is based out of respect, support, and inclusion. Communities can also include regional, state, and national associations; therefore school psychologists should strive to be active members within these larger communities to gain access to resources and discuss the impact of racism, privilege, and bias within the school system.

Final Thoughts, Study Limitations, and Future Research

There are several limitations to the study. First, despite the common role and function of school psychologists, graduate training programs are fundamentally different. Each graduate program across the nation trains students both on national and state-wide standards. In addition, although previous NASP standards advised training programs to incorporate diversity education, there was limited guidance on how graduate programs should implement it (Malone et al., 2016). This in turn affects the level of cultural competency training students receive. Thus, the experiences, practices, specific sub-domains of cultural competency (Cultural Awareness and Cultural Appreciation), and level of cultural humility of

each school psychologist is going to differ. This may have impacted how school psychologists implement culturally responsive practices and their understanding of cultural competency. It is also important to note response bias may have affected results as participants may answer questions inaccurately. This can often occur when participants are asked to self-report their values and beliefs as they may feel they should respond based on how the researcher views the topic. For example, because this questionnaire focused on culturally competent practitioners, participants may have felt their responses should reflect that of a culturally competent practitioner rather than reflect their true beliefs and practices. Response bias could also indicate those who chose to respond to the survey may have comprised of people who were already interested in the topic and have been implementing culturally humble techniques. Therefore, the survey may not be an accurate representation of how school psychologists practice in Virginia.

Another limitation is how the data was coded regarding years of experience. Coding data into specific categories may impact results. This is because responses from a specific age category groups may load heavily onto the age group and affect the overall outcome. In addition, participants were only from one state therefore results may not generalize to national and international school psychology practices and perspectives. Future research should include a larger sample of school psychologists across different regions to determine the implication of culturally competent, humble, and responsive practices. Further research should also focus on how cultural humility versus cultural competency can impact students in schools by further exploring implementing culturally humble practices.

The goal of this study was to provide additional research within the school psychology field pertaining to cultural humility. Culturally competent practitioners have the knowledge and training to aid in providing resources to other school personnel, challenge individual and systemic injustices. Whereas a culturally humble school psychologist

examines their ability and knowledge to meet the needs of a racially and ethnically diverse student through various aspects of service delivery. Results of this study highlighted the importance of continuous education, discussion, and reflection when implementing culturally responsive school psychology practices. The various definitions of cultural humility demonstrate the need for continuing professional development and encouraging discussion about dismantling social injustices within the school district.

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APPENDIX A

Participation Invitation Email

Dear School Psychologist in Virginia,

My name is Bailey Brooks. I am a school psychologist intern for Newport News Public Schools and am in my third year of the School Psychology Program at James Madison University. I am partnering with the Virginia Academy of School Psychologists Social Justice Committee and kindly request your participation in my Educational Specialist research study: Exploring the Cultural Humility and Practices of School Psychologists in Virginia. The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceived cultural competence and experiences of school psychologists working in Virginia.

This study is a three-part questionnaire that should take no more than 45-minutes to complete. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your participation in this research will help me complete the requirements of my educational specialist degree.

We have contracted with QuestionPro, an independent research firm, to field your confidential survey responses. Please click on this link to complete the survey:

(link to survey)

Thank you for your time and participation,

Bailey Brooks, M.A.
School Psychology Ed.S. Candidate
James Madison University

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Bailey Brooks from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to bridge the gap in the literature by investigating the perceived cultural competence and experiences of school psychologists working in Virginia. This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of her master's thesis to complete the Education Specialist degree.

Research Procedures

This study consists of an online survey that will be administered to individual participants through *Question Pro (an online survey tool)*. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to bridging the gap in the literature by investigating the perceived cultural competence and experiences of school psychologists working in Virginia. Should you decide to participate in this confidential research you may access the anonymous survey by following the web link located under the "Giving of Consent" section.

Time Required

Maximum time of total participation is 45 minutes.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

Benefits

There are no direct potential benefits from participation in this study, however benefits of research include using data to help better the school psychology practice such as the importance of having cultural competence and cultural humility.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented at the James Madison University Graduate Psychology Research Symposium. Individual responses on the survey are anonymously obtained and recorded online through *Question Pro (a secure online survey tool)* data is kept in the strictest confidence. *The researchers will know if a participant has submitted a survey, but will not be able to identify individual responses, therefore maintaining anonymity for the survey.* The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. Aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information will be destroyed. Final aggregate results will be made available to participants upon request.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Bailey Brooks, M.A.
School Psychology Intern
James Madison University
brooksba@dukes.jmu.edu

Tiffany Hornsby, Ph.D.
Graduate Psychology
James Madison University
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Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. Taimi Castle
Chair, Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
(540) 568-5929
castletl@jmu.edu

Bailey A. Brooks, M.A., *Researcher*

Date

*** Giving of Consent**

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form through email. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. By clicking on the link below, and completing and submitting this confidential online survey, I am consenting to participate in this research.

This study has been approved by the IRB, protocol #21-2274.

- a. Yes
- b. No

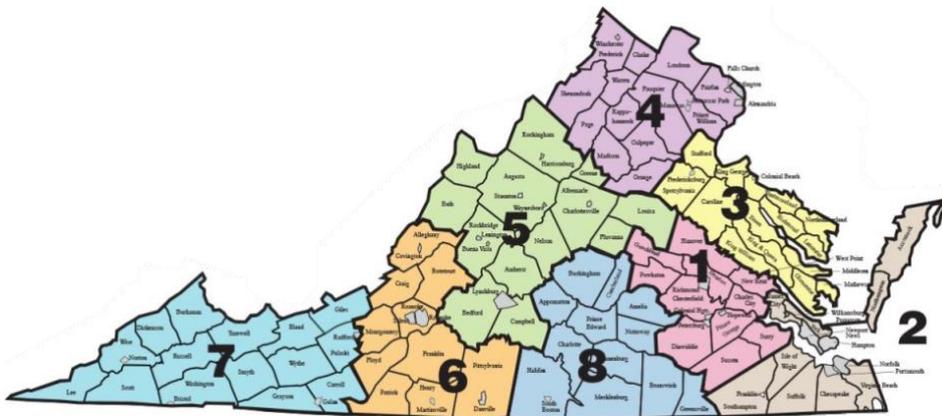
APPENDIX C

Survey Items

I. The following section will ask you to provide information about yourself and the population of students that you serve.

1. Race: [Multiple Choice]
 1. Asian
 2. American Indian or Alaska Native
 3. Black or African American
 4. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 5. White
 6. Two or more races
 7. Prefer not to say
 8. Prefer to self-identify
2. Ethnicity: [Multiple Choice]
 1. Hispanic
 2. Non-Hispanic
 3. Prefer not to say
 4. Prefer to self-identify
3. Do you speak a language other than English? [Yes/No]
4. If so, what other language(s) do you speak? [Open Ended]
5. Please indicate your gender: [Multiple Choice]
 1. Male
 2. Female
 3. Non-Binary
 4. Prefer not to say
 5. Prefer to self-identify
6. Age: [Dropdown]
7. What best describes you? [Multiple Choice]
 1. Practicum Student
 2. Intern
 3. School Psychologist
 4. Retired School Psychologist
 5. Administrator
 6. Other
8. How many years have you been practicing as a School Psychologist? [Dropdown]
 1. Less than 1
 2. 1
 3. 2
 4. 3
 5.

6. 30
7. 31 or more
9. How many of those years have been within the state of Virginia? [Dropdown]
1. Less than 1
2. 1
3. 2
4. 3
5.
6. 30
7. 31 or more
10. Approximately how many graduate level courses (or seminars/workshops at a similar level) have you taken that placed a specific emphasis on cultural issues?
1. Less than one
2. 1
3. 2
4. 3
5. 4
6. 5
7. 6
8. 7
9. 8
10. 9
11. 10
12. 11 or more



11. Using the picture above (Regions, n.d.), which region do you work in? [Dropdown]
1. Central Virginia
2. Tidewater
3. Northern Neck
4. Northern Virginia
5. Valley
6. Western Virginia
7. Southwest
8. Southside

12. Describe the demographics of the students in your school system. [Sliding Scale]

1. African American
2. White
3. Asian
4. Hispanic
5. English Language Learners
6. Newcomers
7. Free and Reduced Lunch

13. Gender [Multiple Choice]

1. Male
2. Female
3. Non-Binary
4. Unknown

II. The following section will ask you to respond to a number of statements using this scale:

1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (agree), and 4 (strongly agree)

Cultural Skills

1. I can explain test information to culturally diverse parents.
2. I can make culturally relevant curriculum and classroom management recommendations.
3. I can effectively assess the mental health needs of a student from a cultural background significantly different from my own.
4. When working with linguistically diverse parents and students, I can interpret information obtained through translators.
5. I can work with culturally and linguistically diverse children, parents, and school staff.
6. I am skilled in nonverbal communication.
7. I am skilled in terms of being able to provide appropriate intervention services to culturally diverse students.
8. I can effectively secure information and resources to better serve culturally diverse students and families.
9. I am skilled in implementing home-school collaboration programs and interventions.
10. I can recognize prejudice and prevalent obstacles that may affect consultation.

Cultural Knowledge

11. I have knowledge of research on assessing culturally and linguistically diverse children.
12. I know how to adapt instruments to assess linguistically diverse students.
13. I am knowledgeable of evidence-based intervention strategies used with culturally and linguistically diverse students.
14. I know how to use alternate assessment methods such as dynamic assessment and ecological assessment.
15. I am knowledgeable of effective assessment strategies used with culturally and linguistically diverse students.
16. I am knowledgeable of the most effective consultation strategies used with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

17. I understand the process of second language acquisition and its impact on the acquisition of academic skills.

Cultural Appreciation

18. I am aware that members of cultural groups may have different attitudes towards disabilities and exceptionalities.
19. I respect and appreciate socioeconomic and cultural background of a child and his/her family.
20. It is important to integrate cultural and language background of a student in a psychoeducational report.
21. I know that cross-cultural variables may affect performance on and interpretation of standardized assessments.
22. I consider sociocultural variables and perspectives when evaluating research.
23. I understand the need to retain one's cultural identity.

Cultural Awareness

24. I understand how my cultural background has influenced the way I think and act.
25. I am aware of how culture impacts learning and behavior.
26. I can discuss how culture influences parenting practices.
27. I have a sense of the values, strengths, and limitations of my own culture.
28. I can accurately compare my own cultural perspective to that of a person from another culture.

III. The following section will ask you additional questions about your perception of cultural humility:

1. What is your definition of cultural humility as it pertains to the practice of school psychology? [Open Ended]
2. What are two ways you embody cultural humility in your practice? [Open Ended]

Thank you for completing the survey.

Appendix D

Additional Tables

Table 4
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Race		
Black or African American	4	10.30
White	34	87.2
Prefer not to Say	1	2.6
Gender		
Male	7	17.90
Female	32	82.10
Monolingual		
Yes	38	100.00
No	0	0.00
Region		
Central Virginia	4	10.80
Tidewater	6	16.20
Northern Neck	4	10.80
Northern Virginia	8	21.60
Valley	9	24.30
Western Virginia	2	5.40
Southwest	2	5.40
Southside	2	5.40
Age		
18-24	1	2.50
25-34	1	2.50
35-44	10	25.00
45-54	12	30.00
55-64	7	20.00
65+	6	15.00

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics for School Psychologist Experience

	N	M	SD
Total Years as a School Psychologist	38	15.63	10.22
Years Practicing as a School Psychologist in Virginia	37	20.16	8.92
Number of Graduate-level Courses with Emphasis on Cultural Issues	37	5.57	3.49

Table 6
Themes from Defining Cultural Humility (n=39)

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>	<i>Frequency, n (%)</i>
Self-Awareness	“I must constantly assess my personal biases and perceived ‘norms’ when interpreting assessment data of each client.”	26 (51.12%)
Familiarity	“The ability to put my own biases and pre-conceived notions aside so that I can effectively serve and support students and families of cultures other than my own.”	36 (94.51%)

Table 7
Themes from Implementing Culturally Humble Practices (n=39)

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Example Quote</i>	<i>Frequency, n (%)</i>
Action	“Participating in trainings and conversations around social justice, culturally competent, and anti-racist practice.”	37 (67.84 %)