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Recruitment and retention of African-Americans in school psychology in a social justice context: practitioners' perspectives

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Recruitment and Retention of African-Americans in School Psychology in a Social
Justice Context: Practitioners' Perspectives

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Abstract

School psychology is moving toward more culturally competent practice; one way of attaining that is through increasing the number of culturally diverse practitioners.

African-Americans in particular are needed. Various factors including a negative perception of psychology and lacking knowledge of school psychology contribute to the low numbers of members of this ethnic group in school psychology. Social justice issues, such as prejudice and disproportionality in special education seemingly affect minority groups' interest in the field; however, little research has been conducted to examine this interaction. Effective recruitment and retention strategies to increase the number of African-American school psychologists in the context of social justice were explored via survey and focus group in the current study. There were 33 survey participants, including graduate students and practitioners. Of those, 2 people participated in a follow-up focus group. Results suggest that culturally diverse faculty, mentorship, financial support, and establishing graduate school psychology programs at historically Black colleges and universities would encourage recruitment. Social justice issues do appear to affect recruitment efforts, specifically experiencing identity threat from being in a majority Caucasian learning environment and knowledge of the large number of African-American students in special education. Furthermore, focus group data suggests that an open environment to discuss cultural differences in a predominately Caucasian graduate program is vital to retaining African-American school psychology graduate students. Implications for practice and future research include creating culturally accepting programs where identity threat may be decreased and drawing more African-American psychologists into academia as faculty members.

Recruitment and Retention of African-Americans in School Psychology in a Social Justice Context: Practitioners' Perspectives

Personal Statement

Until my sophomore year in college, my dream was to become a pediatrician. The respect of being a physician and opportunity to work with children was always a passion. However, after shadowing a developmental pediatrician, I found that there was a need for connecting the needs of a child to his or her education. This combined with working with a school psychologist at an alternative school program sparked my love for school psychology. I did not have much knowledge of the field, but it seemed to be able to match my interests. Fast forward to applying for graduate school and I fell in love with James Madison University's warm faculty and ability to fully fund my education. As the only African-American student in my program, I was already accustomed to being one of a few minorities in a setting and had little trouble acclimating myself to the campus. Aside from skin color and some minor cultural differences, I did not see myself as being too different from my classmates. Then we began going to conferences. This is where I learned that the field of school psychology was just diverse as my program. It felt like a game of "Where's Waldo" when trying to spot other African-American school psychologists at the state conference. The scene was a bit more hopeful however on the national level. This reality pushed me to want to explore means of increasing the number of African-American practitioners. Others to carry the burden of representing an entire race when discussing culture in class, others to identify the unique culture of African-American children in school, thought to have a disability, others to understand the thoughts and aspirations of African-American students that cannot always be shared

because of self-imposed pressure to dispel perceptions of inferiority and admittance based on filling a quota, rather than true intelligence.

Background

As the need for more school psychologists of color arises in response to the call to more culturally competent practice, methods of recruiting and retaining African-Americans need to be identified and implemented in training programs. Few articles have been published to address this issue; however, an increasing number of presentations at national conventions focus on bringing awareness to this topic. There are disproportionately fewer minorities participating in the National Association of School Psychologists and ultimately serving students. Of the 69 % of members who responded to a 2004 survey, 92.55% were Caucasian, 2.99% Hispanic, 1.94% African-American, .94% Asian-American, and .82% Native American (Curtis, Lopez, Batsche, & Smith 2006). These percentages, however, do not reflect the growing diverse student population they are serving. The 2000 Census showed that 12.5% of the population was Hispanic American, 12.3 % African-American, 3.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, and .9% Native American. By 2050, it is estimated that ethnic minorities will become the majority accounting for nearly 54 % of the population (U.S. Census, 2008). These statistics present a clear issue in school psychologists not being as diverse as the population with an overwhelming majority being Caucasian. In particular, the African-American population is of interest for attracting more professionals from that group. The proportion of African-American professionals in school psychology has not increased much since 1980-1981. This coupled with the increasing need for school psychologists to maintain appropriate (1:1,000) school psychologist to student ratios further supports the necessity

of recruiting African-Americans to school psychology (Graves & Wright, 2009). The achievement gap between African-American students and their Caucasian counterparts persists as a national concern (Lee, 2002). Along with this problem, African-American students are disproportionately identified for special education and face violence in their schools and communities more than other populations. Disproportionality in education has been linked with a misunderstanding of culturally diverse students and the use of interventions that do not match the students' cultural needs (Sullivan, A'Vant, & Baker, 2009). Perhaps these issues could be ameliorated by the increased presence of African-Americans in the field, to relate to the children and families, and influence the cultural competence of non-African-American colleagues.

History and Theory

Attendance of African-Americans to institutions of higher learning has ebbed and flowed in the past, with a marked increase in the 1960s following the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision and again in the 1980s (Allen, 1992). Between 1980 and 2001, conferral of master's degrees increased by 180 percent for students of color (ACE, 2003). This increase did not have a marked effect on the field of school psychology, however.

Despite growing numbers in higher education, African-Americans made no numerical gains in school psychology. This trend can be attributed to a variety of reasons. Historically, African-Americans have been skeptical of mental health services. Reasons for this negative perception vary from distrust in medical professionals, poor service, and a perceived stigma against those with a mental illness (Utsey, Hook, & Stanard, 2007). Thompson, Akbar, and Bazile (2002) further found that African-Americans see

themselves as too strong to need counseling services, turning inward and to family to solve problems; they believed in seeking therapy in severe cases of mental illness, including schizophrenia and depression. This perception of strength may lead to an internalized stigma surrounding pursuing counseling services and an externalized resistance to mental health treatment (Brown, et.al., 2010). Minority students represent a small portion of the pool of qualified applicants to graduate programs because of lagging preparation for graduate study and lower standardized test scores. This deficit in preparation may also influence the retention rate of these students in school psychology programs (Zhou et.al, 2004).

Furthermore, lack of knowledge of the field and attraction to other career fields contributes to the low number of African-Americans in school psychology. Nationwide, African- Americans have been found to be more likely to attain a degree in business than other professional areas of study, including psychology (ACE, 2003). In a 2009 study, ninety percent of students sampled planned to go to graduate school for psychology with a significant amount unaware of school psychology as a field. The lack of knowledge of the field was attributed to few recruitment tactics on behalf of APA and NASP and no prior interaction with school psychologists on the part of the students (Graves &White, 2009). African-Americans seek financial stability and gain, autonomy, the opportunity to serve others, and status when choosing a career (Daire, LaMothe, & Fuller, 2007). For those who are aware of and choose school psychology, more challenges present themselves in selecting a program. Few historically black colleges or universities have a school psychology training program. Of the 105 historically black colleges and universities, 60% (63 schools) offer psychology majors for undergraduates, only 13 of the

schools grant graduate degrees in psychology; 5 having school psychology or psychometrics as an area of study (Deghani, 2001). Of those 5 programs, only one meets the criteria for approval by the national organization (NASP, 2011). Therefore, African-American students seeking training in the field more than likely must attend predominately white institutions. Required attendance to a school where African-Americans will be a minority creates an additional hurdle as historically African-American students perform better academically and have more emotional stability on black campuses. Predominately white campuses are conducive to fostering stereotype threat in minority groups, such as African-Americans who have been stigmatized with low academic achievement. This threat may lead to lower performance (Worrell, 2006). Specifically, African-American students experienced more anxiety and lower academic achievement at white institutions when compared to their counterparts attending historically black institutions (Allen, 1992 & Jackson, 2010). This discrepancy in achievement may be related to how African-Americans identify themselves personally and in relation to their surroundings. Helms and Parham (1985) attempted to explain this phenomenon using Cross's (1971) model of racial identity in relation to self-actualization. The five stages conceptualized to attain racial identity are pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. Transcending through these stages takes the African-American student from pro-white ideals, to unbalanced ethnocentricity, to finally the state of internalizing one's race and standing secure in it. Students in the pre-encounter (pro-white/anti-black) and immersion (pro-black/anti-white) stages experienced more stress when attending predominately white institutions (Helms & Parham, 1985). Higher levels of immersion/emersion

coincide with less effective coping mechanisms and decreased social emotional stability. However, elevated levels of positive regard for Black ideals and identity increases hope aspirations and the attainment of set goals in African-American college students (Jackson & Neville, 1998). Though supported by research, the theory is limited by questions of the developmental nature of racial identity (Behrens, 1997).

The faculty members at these predominately white institutions housing school psychology programs have an effect on the successful completion of students of color as well. Due to increased perceived comfort, minority students fare better when faculty of color are present (Hess & Leal, 1994). Zins and Halsell (1986) found that along with 22 % of school psychology programs surveyed having no minority students, 57.4 % also had no minorities represented in their faculty. Furthermore, the composition of the faculty has an impact on the experiences students of color have, especially in the area of mentorship. Mentorship in professional training programs is instrumental and is beneficial for the student. Particularly, African-Americans on predominately white campuses benefit from mentoring as it provides social-emotional support needed to adjust to an environment that can otherwise be perceived as culturally insensitive or discriminatory (Walker, Wright, & Hanley, 2001). Minority students in training and new professionals have more positive experiences on a global scale when mentored by minority faculty members. However, non-minority mentors created positive relationships with the students as well (Atkinson, Neville, & Casas, 1991).

Graduate students in general bring various challenges to both historically Black colleges and predominately White institutions, being at risk for psychological and physical problems. African-American students in particular are at risk for depression

when they have a lower academic self-concept. This effect is exacerbated by perceptions of obstacles, lack of support, and academic challenges (Uqdah, Tyler, & DeLoach, 2009).

Recruitment and Retention

Recognizing that the student population is growing in both linguistic and cultural diversity, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) issued a position statement encouraging recruitment tactics to improve the multicultural composition of school psychologists (2009). Even prior to this statement, NASP created the Minority Recruitment task force in 2004. The purpose of this group is to not only investigate why minorities do not seek membership in NASP, but how they can be attracted to the field. To reach minority school psychologists, the task force led four training workshop programs held outside of the national convention addressing issues such as LD identification using the discrepancy model and facilitated conversations on recruitment. Several issues arose from these conversations including declining membership in NASP because of cost, feeling of one's culture not being represented, and NASP's perceived disinterest in minorities. For recruitment ideas, participants suggested targeting urban areas, implementing support services for ethnic minorities in the field, and having minority school psychologists speak at local schools (Franco & Green, 2004). Qualitative interviews with African-American school psychologists revealed that location of both the training program and job site, presence of coworkers of color, and established supports, both financial and social, attracted them to the field (Truscott, 2009). Suggestions have been made to address the financial concerns of potential students. Daire, LaMothe, and Fuller (2007) suggest applying Sharp's human capital theory when recruiting African-American students. Using this, faculty members would focus on the

investment the students are making toward their future income by enrolling in the training program. African-American students attending historically black colleges and universities have voiced common concerns. Noting that along with support from scholarships and grants, they need to feel a connection between their field and improving the Black community, have an accepting environment created by faculty and classmates, and early exposure to the existence and benefits of school psychology (Chandler, 2007). Additionally, prestige of the training program, proximity to home, and cultural diversity in both staff and classmates are important factors in attracting African-Americans to the field (Curtis & Hunley, 1994).

Proctor (2009) theorized a three-tiered model for recruiting and retaining African-Americans in school psychology. Tier 1 focused on universal recruitment efforts on the part of national organizations such as NASP and the American Psychological Association, focusing on building awareness of the field in the African-American population. Recruitment of individual programs from local schools and historically black colleges and universities marked the second level. The tertiary level addressed actual retention of students who have been recruited. Methods here include funding and mentorship, from Black practitioners if possible.

Social Justice

School psychology is moving toward incorporating the principles of social justice into training and practice. Social justice has been defined as the protection of the rights of all, each person having the equal opportunity to succeed, and the extinguishing of institutionalized oppression and domineering power. Within this paradigm, increasing the diversity of practitioners has been identified as a pertinent issue and lacking diversity, a

potential impetus to the advancement of social justice (Shriberg, et.al, 2008; Shin, 2008). As defined by a group of psychologists, social justice is a construct centering on the protection of the rights of others and cultural diversity. Social justice is more often than not preceded by an acceptance of cultural diversity, the direction in which NASP is moving (Shriberg, Bonner, Sarr, Walker, Hyland, & Chester, 2008). NASP has created individual interest groups and committees to address the needs of individual minority groups. Additionally, NASP is moving toward more culturally competent practice. Awareness of inequality and cultural oppression is one means of accomplishing this goal (Shin, 2008).

Purpose

The purpose of the current research project was to further investigate how the number of African-Americans in school psychology may be increased. By surveying current African-American practitioners, this study gave voice to what attracted them to the field, believing these same factors may be applied to recruiting new professionals to school psychology. Additionally, this study explored how issues of social justice may affect the trends of recruitment and retention for this ethnic group in school psychology. These varying social issues included cultural competence, power, and access to education.

Hypotheses

Given the findings from previous research, certain responses were expected of the participants. Support, both financial and emotional, will be viewed as vital to sustaining the participation of African-Americans in school psychology training programs. The school psychologists surveyed will express that a culturally accepting program with diverse faculty and student populations may attract more African-Americans to school

psychology. Practitioners will believe that establishing school psychology training programs at historically black colleges and universities will aid in the recruitment of African-Americans to the school psychology profession. Additionally, participants will endorse items addressing certain social injustices that deter African-Americans from pursuing school psychology.

Method

Participants

African American school psychologists in the District of Columbia metropolitan area comprised the survey sample and subsequent focus group. These persons included professionals practicing in schools (N=15), private practitioners/contractors (N=6), faculty in academia (N=3) and graduate students (N=12). There were 31 females, 1 male, and 1 unspecified gender. The highest level of education varied, 6.3% Bachelor's degree, 34.4% Master's degree, 31.3% Specialist degree, and 28.1% Doctoral degree. Of the 33 participants, 94% identified themselves as African-American/Black/Negro/Afro-Caribbean and 6% as Caucasian/White. The majority of survey respondents ranged from the age of 21 to 40. Years of experience in the field of school psychology were as follows: 6 people had 0-2 years of experience, 8 had 3-5 years, 4 had 6-8 years, 3 had 9-11 years, 7 had 12-14 years, and 5 had 15 or more years of experience. For school psychology graduate training programs, 30% attended Georgia State University, 12% went to Howard University, and 6% matriculated at James Madison University.

Procedure

A combination of focus groups and surveys were used to collect data on potential methods of recruiting and retaining African-Americans in school psychology and how social justice affects both. The survey was sent to persons who volunteered to participate in the study prior to the group data collection. The purpose of the study and risk to the participants was clearly explained. In the spring of 2011, an online survey created through Survey Monkey.com was sent to 30 school psychologist from the District of Columbia metropolitan area, New York, and Georgia. One of those recipients

additionally forwarded the survey to an undisclosed amount of graduate students attending Georgia State University, leading to 33 persons completing the survey. Chi-square analysis was used to determine significant factors contributing to recruitment and retention of African-Americans.

After responses from the survey were tabulated, respondents were asked to participate in a follow-up focus group. Two participants agreed to engage in a focus group dialogue on Saturday, April 30, 2011. The purpose of the study and focus group were explained, along with the participants' right to decline consent. Each agreed to participation, along with being recorded and signed the informed consent forms. Participants were assigned an identification code to maintain confidentiality. The session lasted for approximately 1.5 hours. Within that time, participants were asked a series of 6 questions following up on the results of the data collected in the surveys. Lunch and gift cards were provided as compensation for the participants' time and contribution of opinion. At the conclusion, they were thanked and provided the researcher's contact information for any follow-up. The researcher transcribed the focus group sessions. Following transcription, the focus group data was be coded for common themes by the researcher and a clinician, Dr. Jennifer Kasey, to establish inter-rater reliability. Using two raters aids in increasing the trustworthiness of the results (Morrow, 2005).

Instruments

The instrument used in data collection was an unstandardized tool created by the researcher. Questions included were based on indicators from past research. The first nine questions of the survey addresses demographic information and the remaining 21 pertaining to what attracted him or her to the field, what may improve recruitment and

retention for prospective African-American students of the field and how social justice issues affect the number of African-Americans in school psychology. The responses were on a Likert scale ranging from 1-5 with 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 5 as “Strongly Agree.” In the focus groups, a list of questions created by the researcher in response to the survey data was verbally posed to the participants. The questions were asked in an open-ended fashion and can be found in Appendix B.

Results

The quantitative data from the preliminary survey was analyzed to determine the perceived significance of certain factors when attempting to recruit and retain African-Americans in school psychology. Using SPSS, a chi-square analysis was run to determine the significance of these factors on recruitment and retention. Descriptive statistics, including the percentage of response that were Agree or Strongly agree, are included in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Survey Data

Factor	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage A or SA (%)
Awareness	2.15	1.00	72.8*
Negative Perception	3.39	.83	54.5
Negative Leads to Few	3.24	1.09	54.6
Need	4.61	.86	94.0
HBCU Increase	4.42	.75	90.9
Financial Stability	4.42	.66	90.9
Mentors	4.55	1.00	93.9
Diverse Faculty	4.48	.87	90.9
Diverse Students	4.39	.66	90.0
Diverse Community	4.21	.78	78.8
Connection to Community	3.88	.60	79.8
Scholarships	4.67	.48	100.0
Loans	4.15	.87	81.8
Cultural Competence	4.18	.95	75.8
Social Factors	4.03	.59	84.9
Prejudice	3.33	1.11	54.6
Majority Caucasian	2.64	.93	15.1
Fair Treatment	2.39	.84	64.5*
Disproportionality	2.45	1.03	24.2
Power	3.06	1.17	42.4

Note. A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree. Values marked with a (*) indicate the percentage of Strongly Disagree and Disagree responses for that item. Mean out of number value equated to each possible response, 1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Actual survey items may be found in Appendix A.

Several items showed that statistically, factors outside of chance affect the recruitment and retention of African-American graduate students in school psychology training programs. Chi-square analysis was used to evaluate the significance of each survey factor. Support, both financial and emotional as indicated by items pertaining to the availability of scholarships, loans, and mentoring had mixed levels of significance. An alpha level of .001 was used for all statistical tests. The opportunity to have funding via scholarships as related to recruitment may be related to chance, $\chi^2(1, N = 33) = 3.67$, $p = .056$. The difference from the expected value for loans and financial aid may be related to low levels of chance, $\chi^2(1, N = 33) = 13.67$, $p = .003$. Mentorship proved to be significant and the difference from the expected value, not due to chance, $\chi^2(2, N = 33) = 24.18$, $p = .000$.

The presence of diverse faculty members proved to be a significant factor. The difference between the expected response and what actually occurred is not likely related to chance, $\chi^2(3, N = 33) = 30.88$, $p = .000$. Establishing school psychology programs at historically Black colleges and universities was believed to be a means of aiding in recruitment and retention. The difference between the expected response and actual response is not likely due to chance, $\chi^2(3, N = 33) = 24.33$, $p = .000$. Additional social justice factors were thought to affect recruitment efforts as well. The difference in responses most likely is not due to chance, $\chi^2(2, N = 33) = 16.55$, $p = .000$. Chi-square analysis data for each of the individual social factors explored, power, prejudice, studying in a majority Caucasian environment, affects on disproportionality in education, and fair treatment in education is included in Table 2.

Table 2

Chi-Square of Survey Recruitment and Retention Factors

Factor	<i>df</i>	χ^2	Significance Level
Awareness	3	9.06	.028
Negative Perception of Psychology	3	16.33	.001
Negative Perception Leads to Fewer	4	16.55	.002
Need	3	46.34	.000
HBCU to Increase	3	24.33	.000
Financial Stability	2	9.46	.009
Mentors	2	24.18	.000
Diverse Faculty	3	30.88	.000
Diverse Students	2	8.91	.012
Diverse Community	2	2.36	.307
Community Connection	2	14.36	.001
Scholarships	1	3.67	.056
Loans	3	13.67	.003
Cultural Competence	3	12.70	.005
Social Factors	2	16.55	.000
Prejudice	4	10.79	.029
Majority Caucasian	4	18.36	.001
Fair Educational Treatment	3	15.84	.001
Disproportionality	4	26.55	.000
Power	4	7.76	.101

Note: No expected values were below 5. The lowest expected value used was 6.6.

Two raters independently coded the transcript of the focus group for common themes. Several themes arose from the two participants in the focus group dialogue. When considering methods of recruitment, financial support from the institutions and location were two of the most prominent themes. Specifically, assistantships and fellowships were discussed as attractive components for a program. The dialogue further suggests that lacking knowledge and awareness of the field is a major impetus for recruitment in school psychology, for African-Americans and other ethnic groups. Both respondents had been exposed to school psychology, if only briefly prior to choosing it as a profession. One person knew a school psychologist personally and the other attended a presentation on school psychology on her undergraduate, historically Black campus. The issue of comfort was noted throughout each participant's conversation. It appears that one's comfort with being the only student of color can make a great difference in the perception of social injustice in a predominately White university setting. Each respondent had either attended an undergraduate university with Caucasians being the overwhelming majority or was raised in a predominately Caucasian community. They each expressed the opinion that adapting to being the only African-American in a program would perhaps be much more difficult for someone not yet exposed to that type of environment. Furthermore, comfort was also a common theme when addressing the perceptions of Caucasian professors working with African-American students as well. Professors of the majority race often appear to not be completely comfortable with discussing issues of minority culture and status. Conversely, professors who the participants had encountered who had been at ease with facilitating conversations on culture created an open atmosphere. The use of humor was also a theme presented as a

means of easing tension when discussing challenging issues involving culture.

Additionally, each expressed a need for school psychology programs to have classes on the importance of culture, as their experiences reflected limited or an absence of culture included in the curriculum. When the two participants were given the opportunity to provide additional comments, not directly prompted through the questions, they both expressed concerns about the differences in curriculum and preparedness of students between predominately Caucasian programs and school psychology programs at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU). In particular, there was a theme that though the number of African-Americans in the field may be increased by establishing programs at HBCUS, those programs must be able to meet the standards of other programs, as signified by being NASP-approved.

Discussion

It appears that there are several areas professional psychology organizations and school psychology graduate programs may want to consider when recruiting African-Americans for school psychology. Many people may not be aware of school psychology as a possible career field and negative perceptions of psychology may further limit African-Americans interest in the field. Partnerships between historically Black colleges and universities and established school psychology programs can aid in increasing minority exposure to the field. For programs that have students and faculty of color, those persons should be involved in outreach and recruitment efforts (Shin, 2008). Support, both in the form of mentorship and funding, is crucial to recruitment and retention. Though responses to neither were found statistically unrelated to chance, qualitative data implied that scholarships and grants are preferred over loans. Practitioners and graduate students believe that there is a definite need for more African-Americans in school psychology. The idea of cultural competence in school psychology may, in part, be accomplished by improving recruitment tactics for this population of people. Focus group participants indicated that they were attracted to the field of school psychology by personal connections between the career and their backgrounds. Specifically, one respondent has a brother with Down's syndrome and the other's parents are both educators. They both additionally expressed a desire to connect to students of all backgrounds. As the importance of increasing the number of African-Americans in the field has been identified, so have social factors that may deter African-Americans from pursuing the career.

Social Identity Threat

Survey and focus group data suggest that though there are not high levels of perceived prejudice or discrepancies in power in school psychology, participants do believe that the pressure of having minority status in majority Caucasian field may deter the retention of African-Americans in school psychology graduate programs and in the profession. Specifically within the focus groups, identity threat arose as an area of concern. The respondents indicated that being the only minority and or African-American in a program of study can be difficult, especially if that is a novel environment for the person in question. One participant stated:

People who are more comfy being minorities, nothing's going to keep us from doing whatever it is we decide to do, but there are other people that I think need to know that 2 other people at least on either side of them that have their backs when they go into places.

They noted that professors often, unknowingly, look to the single minority individual to speak for his or her entire ethnic group in conversations on multicultural issues.

Specifically one focus group respondent worded it as such:

You always have to answer the questions. You know, 'What do you think Black people would do?' I am just one person and have lived one life... But I certainly would not have had the courage to say that to a professor. 'How does it feel to be the only black person?' [responding with] 'How does it feel to be the only menopausal person in the room?'

The affect of being singled out in this way can lead to identity threat. Environments, including a graduate level classroom, set the tone for a person's expectations based on his or her identity. These identities depend on perceptions, judgments, stereotypes, and discrepant treatment of individuals. As the number of minorities present in a setting increases, the level of comfort and trust increases (Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Dittmann, & Crosby, 2008). Focus group data further suggests that social identity threat

may be exacerbated by social events such as trials, books, and campus events that are racially charged. Participants in the current study noted that having increased minority representation, especially in the faculty composition may aid in recruitment and retention efforts. Additionally, programs need to have a strong commitment and actual execution of consistently incorporating culture and social justice into the curriculum (Shin, 2008). Focus group themes indicated that though some program include multicultural issues in course study, at times it is minimal, and therefore, not meaningful.

Lessening the probability of identity threat lies in the hands of each program. Consistent evaluation of program curriculum, pedagogy, and faculty perceptions and convictions acts as a starting ground for creating a more socially just environment. One suggested instrument to use for this purpose is the Multicultural Environment Inventory (Shin, 2008).

Openness

The results suggest that one way to attain the goal of trust and comfort with one's environment may be to foster an open environment when discussing cultural differences. Openness was a consistent theme in characteristics focus group participants sought to have in a program and faculty members and ultimately vital to providing comfort in potentially retaining African-Americans in school psychology graduate programs. This openness may be accomplished in various ways, and oftentimes leads to the fulfillment of social justice. Nash (2010) suggests using moral conversations to create an open and socially just climate. Persons facilitating moral conversations need to focus on four main principles; humbly approaching even the most challenging conversations, ensuring each person is heard; trusting the process, understanding that each person has a worthwhile

contribution to the conversation and success is obtained when the speaker focuses on making others “look good”; encourage members to examine their own convictions and biases they bring to the group; and looking for the good in others, while not ignoring faulty reasoning and additionally seeking commonalities within your differences (Nash, 2010).

Intergroup dialogue has been found effective in engaging diverse groups in difficult conversations about and race. This approach moves students toward social justice by using dialogue to analyze differences and issue of power in society, engage one another across cultural lines, and sustain an intermingled community meant to purposefully engage in conflict to challenge current societal structure (Nagda & Gurin, 2007).

Limitations

Though this research produced results that are quite informative to practice, there are some areas that may have limited the outcome. Only 30 psychologists were contacted for potential survey completion. These psychologists’ email addresses were from a personal contact list which acted as a constraint to the number who could have been contacted. NASP offers the mailing addresses of members at a cost and to a very limited number of research proposals meeting strict criteria to meet the association’s goals. This means of contact would have taken more time, but may have increased the number and diversity of training experiences of the respondents. Additionally, the focus group participants were perhaps limited by the group being held on a Saturday and also being in Maryland, a location not easily accessible to survey participants from New York, Texas, and Georgia.

Future Research

In the future, others may want to explore a few different areas stemming from the present research. Survey and focus group data indicated the need for more African-Americans in academia in school psychology. Tactics to attain this goal would be useful research to further enhance the cultural competence of school psychologists. Participants endorsed items stating that the number of African-Americans needs to be increased and may be done so in part by creating school psychology graduate programs at HBCUs. Given that knowledge of the field is thought to be low in this community and there is a negative stigma surrounding psychological services in the African-American community, strategies for conquering these hurdles to establish programs on predominately Black campuses need to be researched (Utsey, Hook, & Stanard, 2007). Furthermore, research on the perceptions of stakeholders from those institutions on social justice issues such as perhaps contributing to disproportionality in special education and preparing students to face identity threat in the workplace could aid in moving the field of school psychology beyond predominately Caucasian campuses.

Appendix A

African-Americans in School Psychology Survey

Thank you for agreeing to complete this survey. The information gathered here will be used for research purposes only.

Demographics

Please circle the response that best describes you. For those without choices, please fill in the information

1. **Gender:** Male Female
2. **Age:** 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61 and over
3. **Ethnicity:**
4. **Years in the Field of School Psychology**
0-2yrs 3-5yrs 6-8yrs 9-11 yrs 12-14yrs 15 or more yrs
5. **What is your current position?**
School Practitioner Private Practice/Contractor Academia Graduate Student
6. **Highest Level of Education:**
Bachelors Master's Specialist Doctoral
7. **Name of Graduate Training Program:**
8. **Undergraduate Major:**
9. **Name of Undergraduate Institution:**

Questions

Please circle the response that best reflects your opinion. Responses are on a Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

1. ***African-American students are aware of school psychology as an area of study.***
1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3- Neutral 4- Agree 5-Strongly Agree
2. ***African-Americans have a negative perception of psychology.***
1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
3. ***A negative perception of psychology may be associated with fewer African-Americans in the field of school psychology***
1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
4. ***There is a need for more African-Americans in the field of school psychology.***
1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
5. ***Establishing school psychology training programs at historically black colleges and universities would help increase recruitment of African-Americans to the field.***

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3- Neutral 4- Agree 5-Strongly Agree

- 6. *Financial stability is important to African-Americans in selecting a career.***

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

- 7. *Mentors are important in the professional training of African-American school psychologists.***

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

- 8. *Diversity reflected in the faculty composition for training programs would help in recruiting African-Americans to school psychology.***

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

- 9. *Diversity reflected in the student population for training programs would help in recruiting African-Americans to school psychology.***

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

- 10. *Diversity found in the community surrounding the training program would aid in recruiting African-Americans to school psychology.***

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

- 11. *Being shown a clear connection to giving back to their community would increase the number of African-Americans.***

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

- 12. *Availability of scholarships and grants would increase a program's ability to recruit African-Americans to school psychology.***

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

- 13. *The option of financial aid and loans would increase a program's ability to recruit African-Americans to school psychology.***

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

- 14. *Cultural Competence may be accomplished by increasing the number of African-Americans in school psychology.***

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

15. *Other social factors may attribute to the recruitment and retention of African-Americans in the field of school psychology.*

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

16. *There is a perception of prejudice within the field of school psychology.*

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

17. *African-Americans may be deterred from the field of school psychology because the majority of the population of professionals is Caucasian.*

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

18. *African-Americans are treated fairly in education.*

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

19. *The disproportionate number of African-American students in special education deters African-Americans from pursuing a career in school psychology.*

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

20. *Dynamics of power, with minorities seemingly having less, may affect the number of African-American practicing in school psychology.*

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

Comments:

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

- I. Greet and thank participants for attending focus group. Light refreshments will be provided.
- II. Review the purpose of the study being investigation of methods of recruitment and retention of African-Americans to school psychology.
- III. Consent
- IV. Questions- 30-45 minutes
 - a. What is the need for more African-Americans to the field of school psychology?
 - b. How might the number of African-Americans in school psychology be increased?
 - c. What attracted you to the field? What has kept you in school psychology?
 - d. What may be keeping African-Americans away from the field?
 - e. How do the issues of power and social justice affect the number of African-Americans in the field?
 - f. What would you like to have been asked that was not mentioned?

Appendix C

“Web”/ “Email” Cover Letter (used in anonymous research)

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Marlana Ashe from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to determine methods of recruiting and retaining African-Americans in the field of School Psychology and to further determine how impacting issues affect this population’s interest in the field. This study will contribute to the student’s completion of her Ed.S. research project.

Research Procedures

This study consists of an online survey that will be administered to individual participants through *email using Survey Monkey*. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to African-Americans in the field of School Psychology. Additionally, some participants will be invited to participate in a follow-up focus group.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require approximately 15 minutes of your time for the completion of the survey. If you are asked to take part in the focus group, up to an additional 60 minutes of your time will be required.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include participants providing his or her input on an issue that is critical to development of the field of school psychology. Though this may not be a direct benefit to the participant, the information gathered will contribute to the body of research of expanding the multicultural community in school psychology.

Confidentiality

The results of this research may be presented at a national or state meeting of school psychologists. While individual responses are anonymously obtained and recorded online through Survey Monkey, data is kept in the strictest confidence. No identifiable information will be collected from the participant and no identifiable responses will be presented in the final form of this study. 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. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, 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 that matches up individual respondents with their answers 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. However, once your responses have been submitted and anonymously recorded you will not be able to withdraw from the study.

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:

Marlana L. Ashe
Graduate Psychology
James Madison University
asheml@jmu.edu

Patricia Warner, Ph.D.
Graduate Psychology
James Madison University
Telephone: (540)-568-3358
warnerpj@jmu.edu

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Cockley
Chair, Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
(540) 568-2834
cocklede@jmu.edu

Giving of Consent

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about this study. I have read this consent and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. By clicking on the link below, and completing and submitting this anonymous survey, I am consenting to participate in this research.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SZ2LWNJ>

Name of Participant (Printed)

Date

Name of Researcher (Printed)

Date

Appendix D

Consent to Participate in Research

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Marlana Ashe from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to determine methods of recruiting and retaining African-Americans in the field of School Psychology and to further determine how impacting issues affect this population's interest in the field. This study will contribute to the student's completion of her Ed.S. research project.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of a focus group that will be administered to African-American school psychologists in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area at the Bowie, MD Public Library. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to the recruitment and retention of African-Americans in School Psychology.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require up to 60 minutes of your time.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include providing his or her input on an issue that is critical to development of the field of school psychology. Though this may not be a direct benefit to the participant, the information gathered will contribute to the body of research of expanding the multicultural community in school psychology.

Confidentiality

The results of this research may be presented at a national or state meeting of school psychologists. 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. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, 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 that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed. The digital audio recordings will be permanently deleted.

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:

Marlana L. Ashe
Graduate Psychology
James Madison University
asheml@jmu.edu

Patricia Warner, Ph.D.
Graduate Psychology
James Madison University
Telephone: (540)-568-3358
warnerpj@jmu.edu

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Cockley
Chair, Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
(540) 568-2834
cocklede@jmu.edu

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. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

I give consent to be audio taped during my interview. _____ (initials)

Name of Participant (Printed)

Name of Participant (Signed)

Date

Name of Researcher (Signed)

Date

Appendix E

Focus Group April 30, 2011 Transcription

Need for AA in SP?

- RD Because so often the kids we serve are minorities specifically AAs, I think its really important that there is representation of school psychologists working with children.
- RS- I think that the only thing I would add is that, when we are doing assessments for children quite often with children of color being referred, I think that it's helpful for them to see a familiar face, or a person who looks like them, someone with whom they might be more comfortable in truly getting a really good estimate of their potential because I think your comfort level also can greatly affect your performance. I also think its' important because there are cultural aspects to things that we may be more aware than some of our counterparts who are not persons of color. So I think that's really important. But just like you were saying with the overrepresentation of minority folk receiving specialized instruction, I think it's important for people who've been there help in that identification process not only in that but in addressing their needs because if I kid is hungry, I don't think he needs an IEP, he needs a PIP, parent intervention plan

Thinking about in the field, need for more persons of color, what affect do you think it will have on children of the majority?

- RS I think its good for everybody to persons of color in positions of authority in the school system. Certainly we've got the market cornered in the sports arena and entertainment industries but a lot of times in schools, I don't think we get to see persons of color in administrative roles, the heads of things, you know department heads. I also think its good for young people to know the field is out there, maybe not now with the economic situation, but it's a way you can earn a living w/o being a lawyer or doctor and still give back to your community I think it's a very promising field, a growing field.

What could programs and NASP do to increase the number?

- RD I think some targeting of HBCUs and some of the other black student organizations, especially within the psychology and education fields. I know when I was in undergrad, I did not hear about school psychology until my last year just when I decided to apply for a school psych program
- RS I think it would also be really nice to have some professors of color. I didn't have any in my program until I was in, I took clinical classes. We had one. I was like "What other classes you teaching?" You know, so I think that would also be validating. So once we go out and get these jobs, If I can see someone else who looks like me too I think that would make me want to stay in the field. An also, like scholarships! That would help. Like what you go

So what drew you all into the field of school psychology?

- RS Well I can tell you there were 2 things, my brother has down syndrome. I was always interested in his education period. How you find out whether this person is functioning on this level or not. And also, I studied to become a teacher at first

and in my first year of teaching, I had one student I just could not figure out how to get him to learn, Lil Chris I'm not gonna say his last name and somebody identify me. He, you know I tried a lot of different things. Called his parents and they weren't he's not responding, do you need to get his hearing checked, is there another name you call him at home? Because this kid was just very very interesting. And to watch the other kids positively grow by leaps and bounds, including our little Spanish-speaking boy, just grow by leaps and bounds in terms of what they could understand concepts and their questions, I mean it was just amazing and this poor little kid was lagging behind. We had a school psychologist, at least I think that's what he was. I asked him to come in, He did an observation and waited until the end of the year to do so. I asked him for some help and he said that kid's just one kooky nut and then he never said another thing and I decided, you know what, if he can do this, I am certain that I can do this and actually maybe be able to answer some of the teacher's questions to help kids who are struggling.

- RD- Both my parents are in the education field. So I knew I wanted to do something within education, but I didn't want to go in the classroom. 'd also had great interest in psychology and I wanted to help teachers in general kinda on a school-wide level versus just the systems level

Researcher: So I know you said you found out about school psychology your senior year, but how did you even find out about it as a field? Did you do research? Or did you meet...

- RD- I'm trying to think, I think I met someone came from one school and did a presentation on the field of school psychology in my senior year, in the beginning of my senior year and that's how I became...
- RS- So they should do more of that. And other than the guy that told me my student was a kooky nut, I actually knew a girl, young woman from undergrad whose father was a school psychologist and was actually a professor in the program I ended up attending, but that was where I first heard of it and then I got to see it not working too well. But nobody every really talked about it. I was a psych major and elementary ed secondary, and even in the field of psychology, even majoring in it, they never talked about it. They talked about educational psych, where you could do tests and psychometric properties and the school of education didn't talk about it either. How did you find out? Are you allowed to tell us?
- Researcher: pre-med major, shadowed developmental pediatrician, alternative school,

But I wanted to go back to your comment on having profs of color because that was a question that arose in the symposium. Many of my profs were curious as to what we could do. So what do you think we can do to increase the number of AAs in academia?

- RS Well that is a good question and I don't know how to answer it, but I would like to add to the reason why I think it would be helpful to have professors of color during my graduate school experience, I don't know if you guys heard about this, but the president of my college made a comment and it was taken out of context you know recorde staff meeting and he didn't know he was being recorded and it was taken out of context and

maybe he was joking but he said something derogatory like “ You know they’re not going to be able to get the scores on SATs so that kinda struck a wildfire throughout the campus and you know here we are trying to be professional psychologists and it was like we need to take a role and do something here to help people talk and be productive and it was just the tensest time on campus and luckily it was around the time of the OJ trial and, I’m surprised I didn’t have a nervous breakdown. So we’ve got the OJ trial , the remarks of the university president questioning the ability and aptitude of students of color and the Earnstein and Murray book, the Bell Curve had just come out and it was time for our final exam and one of the questions they made us answer, they posed to all of the students, I don’t know if it was for the clinical psych students as well, but for the school psychs to address the misuse of science in this book and it troubled me on a number of levels.

- Researcher- I’m not familiar with the book

RS- yeah it was this horrible piece of trash that masqueraded as science and said because black people can’t learn and they can’t do this because they are down here at this end of the bell curve, we shouldn’t be spending money on social programs because they won’t get any better. And so they had what they said about blacks, then they turned it from race to a sort of cultural religious view and said the Jews do really well on these tests, you know we should be spending money here. It was horrible. But what was really troubling to me was having to buy this book, then go through it in a supposedly in a scholarly way, discounting all of these things while looking at myself in the mirror thinking why do I have to do this when I’m trying to learn how to make us feel better about ourselves and do better educationally and to think I have my performance and whether I get that big piece of paper be based on whether or not I can do this dispassionately and I said it we had a professor of color, there would at least be a debate on whether or not I would have to answer this question because no one had to answer a question on their sexual orientation or defending their religion in order to pass, and yet I had to talk about something that it was very hard for me to distance myself from when basically you were telling me that I shouldn’t be here because I don’t test well or I can’t get the grades or I’m intellectually inferior it was so heinous. It was all over, not just in colleges. It was on talk shows, on the cover of magazines. It was all over and it was just for me a very unsettling time. And I’m no OJ fan but I’m going to tell you , after the president said that... It just seemed so blatantly unfair. First of all, I’m a good test taker, so I knew they weren’t talking about me specifically, they don’t know me, they don’t know my scores. But it did seem very personal having to read through this and the stuff was so ugly. And again there weren’t any books asking women were inferior to men and feminists had to read through. But it could have been done in a more sensitive manner. For example, if you chose to write about this for part of your comp exam, that would be fine, but for me to make that a requirement, it was incredibly insensitive. And you know we had read about everything, you know if you remind someone of their race, in most cases or remind someone of their gender when they are doing something they are not supposed to be good at it’s called...but you know what I’m talking about. They will sometimes underperform because you reminded them of it. If you don’t have a place to check gender, race, or ethnicity, your performance is likely to be enhanced if you are of the minority gender or culture. And it just seemed like you’re teaching about this but you’re making me defend

why I'm here and why I'm not intellectually inferior to my yellow-haired, blue-eyed counterparts. And we asked as students, but students don't have the power that professors do. WE were told, well you're going to have to be able to defend your position anyway, so I don't understand why you can't do it now. So I really feel like it would have been so wonderful to have a professor of color there for that.

Now what was your question again? You asked how we could get them in there?

Researcher- Yeah

RS- It's just like moving into the neighborhood. If there are a couple out there that people know, and you don't feel like you're gonna be the only, I think you will be more likely to try it.

RD- I think its also about getting more maybe some practitioners to do some adjunct positions at some of the local colleges at the very least if they are not full time. To have some real world experience.

RS- When you talk about cultural differences. When folks come in for things like internship, we used to ask this question, but have since stopped, "What would you like to do in the future?" Many of our applicants of color would say, well I want to do this for a while but I'd like to get my PhD. Which is wonderful, fine lofty goals ,great. Folks didn't want to hear that. What they want to hear is that you will do this job until the day you rot and you love this and because there are not a lot of doctoral level school psychologists, they don't want to hear you say that you're going to get a degree that is higher than what they have. I heard as, "Look at my brown ppl! They want to better themselves and get the highest degree they can get and I took that as a positive but it didn't come off that way to the other folks that weren't necessarily ppl of color. It came off as, oh they're not committed to the field. Cuz I felt like that was a cultural difference. So all of that is a positive thing, but to even know that you should down play it, I don't think is something we know. To tell ppl.

RD- I never thought about it like that.

RS- exactly, but the other thing is when there are more ppl like us, the comfort level changes and I think you can be more of who you are when you are more comfortable. It's not like, I'm gonna grade you better because you are brown so you doing this, but if I'm looking around the room and I don't see anybody that looks like me like when I came to apply for an internship, it's just different depending on who you are. Now you, both of you come from schools where there are not lots and lots of brown people so if you enter that situation, you are more comfortable when compared to a student coming from Virginia state or Howard, saying what in the, omg? Where are all the black... and your comfort level will dictate how personable you appear to be how comfortable your are in continuing to answer questions, or you just give them the bare minimum so you can get out of there. So there again, the more people I see that look like me the more I am going to feel like I am welcomed, I belong, I can stay, I should stay.

What has kept you in sp?

RD- I really like the field. I like that fact that it's really diverse, that there's many different things I can do with school psych and it's not just restricted to me testing. Currently, I would say the most school psychology thing I'm doing is consultation and I really like consultation. Consulting with teachers and providing them feedback about their students. One thing I would like to do more of is direct services with children and I would say that that would keep me in the field of sp is the fact that I have the ability to work on the systems level, the school level, and on the level of direct services with students.

Researcher: And when you said you like the diversity, is it the diversity in tasks?

RD: Yes. They don't do interviews at W&M, but they do like an information session and I came in and asked, and I again I was the only person of color. And I asked the professor, "Oh how diverse is W&M?" so he gave me this look and he kinda paused and so I changed it to "diversity in what I can do." Laughter

RS: I would agree with what you are saying in terms of the flexibility. There are all types of ways you can practice in the field. I like the role that I have supervising young ppl in the field and that is certainly one of the highlights for me, I certainly enjoy watching ppl come into the profession and seeing what it can be and seeing what they themselves bring to the field. And the students. Every now and then I get to work with a student for whatever reason or another, you connect with. You know sometimes you'll be in meetings and explain to a team of ppl that may have had one idea about a student, that actually this student is gifted. Whether they're brown or pink or yellow, but its really that is a very exciting part of the job. And when you get a really good team. That collaboration is just awesome. Trying to solve the puzzle or uncover the mystery of what is going on with this kid and with everyone bringing in their expertise or their lens to the issue to of the child. That is also very rewarding. Yeah but there's really a need. Having worked in areas with very very poor neighborhoods, where the kids don't have books to read and sometimes food to eat and areas with less economic need, the truth is, the children need you no matter where you go and its doesn't matter if their folks are driving a beat up Pinto or an Escalade. kids needs are the same no matter what and being able to help kids is very rewarding.

What do you think may be keeping AAs away from the field?

RS- they don't about it.

RD- mmhmm I would agree

RS- and it's not just AAs, I don't think ppl know about it. You tell ppl I'm a sp and they say oh you're a counselor? No not a guidance counselor. But I think that's one thing, that the field is not widely known. But I think another thing, what I heard from ppl when I started saying I'm going to study to become a... there's this notion that we are a part of the problem. IQ tests, they're racist, that's not right, you're gonna keep a brother down and there are too many black ppl in sped. So this idea you somehow become a part of the problem, a part of the system, the man trying to keep all black ppl in sped. So I think that may be another fuey.

RD- Yeah I would say at this point, maybe the job market currently.

RS- It's a great place to meet women so brown guys should be all over this job

When you talked about ppl feeling like we contribute to the problem, like disproportionality. That was a question on the survey and many ppl did not feel like it contributed to the low number of AAs. So what do you all think?

RD- I do get that sometimes. Ppl saying, oh you're just going to diagnose them with ADHD or something. So I would say I hear that often. You know I was already in school for sp and it wasn't a deterrent for. I mean I can see how that would be an issue for some ppl, you know they might have had a bad experience or they know someone who had a bad experience with a school psychologist in the past.

RS- Well and the question is about what would deter folks from coming into the field?

I think if you had a negative school experience period, you wouldn't want to choose a career in education period. And certainly not this. To go through the education program, there were no brown males in any of my classes and just a few brown females. And I kinda expected to meet ppl who said you know "I wanna be a teacher" it's because they've either had a really positive experience with a teacher or a really horrible experience and they want to right that experience for other students. You know I had a teacher and he was so terrible and I'm gonna be a better teacher than they were. But I think similarly if you have not had a good experience in school, or you have a family member who did not have a good experience in school or they feel the school has somehow failed them, you're not gonna want to be in education period, but you're certainly not going to want to be in that part of education (sped), oh they put me in special education, they didn't want me in their school. so I do feel like you go where you are comfortable and if you weren't comfortable in school then you're not gonna want to go back there as a career. Does that kinda make sense? Does it address your question

Researcher: Career development theory

Just looking at social justice issues, equality, equal access to field, education, power?

How do you think that has affected the field

RS: You could not have asked worst subjects because...I'm gonna speak for you just because of what I think I know.

People who are more comfy being minorities, nothings going to keep us from doing whatever it is we decide to do, but there are other ppl that I think need to know that 2 other ppl at least on either side of them that have their backs when they go into places. You know, but if you've gone to a pwi lets' say, if you've chosen that for your undergrad/graduate experience, then you're gonna be fine wherever you go. Its' really not gonna matter. You're gonna find a good hairdresser and you're gonna be aight.

But for folks that are less comfortable being out of their own element, and by that I mean, not seeing more... there are ppl on our staff that you know that if they'd been your position they would have left. "I'm leaving, I'm not staying here." So you need to talk to some of them folks.

Researcher: In your position? At your school?

RS: Meaning at the interview and she was the only one there.

RD: They would have been like, "No, this is not for me."

RS: But you go ahead

How do the issues of power and social justice affect the number of AAs in sp?

Gave clarification of the definition social justice. Power, as minorities having less

RD: I think my partner has made a really great statement. If you have that mentality that I'm going to do it regardless then it's really not gonna matter whether the field is underrepresented or with minorities or persons of color. I can just say just from my experience I think there was some social injustice. I just think that I had the mindset that I started something and I'm going to finish it in spite of some things having been done unfairly or unjustly. But I do see how that could be a deterrent for some ppl and my background, I lived in an area that was pretty predominately Caucasian, so I kinda have that experience in my background.

RS: And it didn't surprise you or deter you. But you know what? It would I think, I was just thinking that there were a couple of fellowships for my program. One was a minority scholarship and the other was purely scholastic. And I'm not gonna say any names, but I got a minority one, but I think I should have gotten a scholastic one, but I think the feeling one was we'll just give her this one and give the scholastic one to someone who is not a person of color. And then when there were times for jobs around the campus, you know of course everyone needs money, graduate students are always broke, the professors, who were not persons of color talked to the students who they were most comfortable with and let them know about those jobs. Even when it came down to practica. There were some practica that were paid and others that weren't and it seemed like somehow all of the little pink Jewish ppl seemed to keep getting these practica and nobody else was getting them and we looked at our professors and they were talking to ppl they were most comfortable with and they were talking to them also. So at one point, one person of color got a paid practica and she told me. And that had to happen bc I wouldn't have known and I didn't know how to seek things out but the folks who had been there did know and I think sometimes you seek out those seeking you out if you're the professor, so I don't think they were doing anything mindfully racist, but I do think if you're not used to being the only in a place, then you may not go up to the professor. You may not say that something they said intrigued you. You may not say, oh that was really interesting. Do you have any other studies I could become involved in? Could I volunteer to help you do blah blah blaha

And then you find out about all these other opportunities and so this kinda, the idea of networking I think and the ability to do that or lack there of may affect ppl's ability to stay in the field because if my money runs out after two years and I'm not a Rockefeller, then how am I going to pay for the next year?

RS: You always have to answer the questions. You know, "What do you think Black ppl would do?" I am just one person and have lived one life. They expect us (1 minority in a program/class) to answer all the questions and you're right if you have to have a certain level of experience with that or awareness of it. But if someone were to ask me something like that now I would tell them "Now you know I gave up my membership." But I certainly would not have had the courage to say that to a professor. "How does it feel to be the only black person? How does it feel to be the only menopausal person in the room?"

RD: our professors would give us these looks, like not say it directly. "Children with challenging needs from diverse backgrounds..." I'd be like, really?!

RS: Yeah I'm not from a diverse background, both of my parents are educated. Nothing diverse about that

Researcher: and that also makes me think do you think they have some discomfort as well? Like dealing with us?

RS: Absolutely. Remember when I said that I will often refer to students as pink or brown? Because that is, that puts race on the same spectrum as a crayola crayon and it makes it easier for ppl to talk about it. If I say it first, then the questions will just start flooding. Then it's like o ok, I thought it was we just couldn't see color. I'm like I hope you can because you're driving behind me and the lights red and you can't see color. So, but things like that. If you start to talk about it... If you can say, hmm that's interesting, that little brown boy. Especially with younger ppl it is race. It is a prevalent issue. We have a brown president you know so ppl are talking about it and they do look to us as the psychologist to talk about the things that are difficult whether it is an educational classification that is hard to hear or an emotional disability or talking about the child's background.

You're right. The answer to question is yes. You're absolutely right. I think that pink ppl might be uncomfortable talking about race and issues, but not all. I will say I've had some wonderful professors who were pink, who did a masterful job and did not make me like the only chip in the cookie and solicited feedback from everybody and did not say, now what do you think little brown girl? You know it was just very open and easy, or easier dialogue. I don't think it's ever easy to talk about race especially when you are in a mixed group of folks of different races. But you know there are ways to make it easier. One is your openness and willingness to talk about it. And I think a sense of humor goes a long long way. But yes I do think it is incumbent upon the minority folk to bring up the issue first and in a way that is non-threatening. You know, that doesn't mean that I go and say "Hello how are you? I'm your psychologist and I've noticed that all of your teachers are WHITE and your students are BLACK" That's not what I mean. But I mean

in a way that is not charged. Just like, hmm do you have any pink students here? You know that allows other ppl to make comments that are honest and it opens the door.

Researcher: So to piggyback on that question. Do you think for programs trying to advertise to AAs, do you think it would be helpful to note that those conversations can be had. That the faculty are open. Or even for it not be advertised, but understood. So you feel that that openness is something that would make AAs feel more comfy in a school psych program?

RS: I'd hope so.

RD: I'd say that whatever programs are doing now. I'd say that some of them are going the right way. You know they'll hear you know we're getting everything except that instruction on diversity and you know they might spend 2 slides of the powerpoint on it. Like diversity within testing or multiculturalism in counseling for an hour of a three hour class for the entire semester. So something like that. But if it were more in the forefront. We didn't even have a class dedicated to it.

RS: Mmmhmm, we did. Thanks to our loving clinical psych professor.

RD: Yeah and I'm wondering, going back to the previous question if it was because they really found it challenging. We had one teacher we had to read something about poverty, poverty something... It was something the poverty and we read a book by the this other guy and he was talking about the schools in NY, but the point is we would read these books and have discussions trying to flesh out and they would kinda look to us, or me. You know, how did you feel? I was kinda trying to educate the class on code switching and different topics like that. We did have one teacher, I think she was just really open to having discussions but some of the other professors, you could just tell they really just did not feel comfortable discussing it in any fashion. They didn't want to deal with it all because they were scared. I shouldn't say scared, that was mean but because they were uncomfortable. They felt uncomfortable with the subject.

Researcher: Explaining multicultural class, discussing race, religion, sexuality to make the class feel more diverse and not just a class with one black person.

Are there any other questions that you would like to have been asked?

That would be pertinent to recruitment and retention?

RS: I think you should ask JMU if they want me to be a professor there? Lol

Why did you guys choose the programs you chose?

RD; It was the only one I applied to.

RS: I know that, but why was that the only one you chose? You knew about other programs but you chose that one because...

RD: I wanted to be... I like Wburg. We used to go there on vacation so I really like it and I guess I didn't think through on that...[inaudible through laughter]. But I yeah I liked to the area, but to come from an HBCU, I did want a different experience. Because I knew the world... an HBCU is like a microcosm and the world is not like that and I wanted to make sure I had a well-rounded experience so that I was ready for any school system or wherever I chose to go afterward you know.

Researcher: How was that transition from the HBCU?

RD: It was a difficult transition. I remember the first day I walked into the library, I was like, "Oh my goodness! Is this what a library should look like?" W&M's library is amazing! When you first walk in, it's so big and bright. And you know blackboard, accessing powerpoints. You know going from, let me copy down these notes to to you can get a copy of the powerpoint on BB, "You mean I don't have to write anything? It was a cultural shift in a positive way.

RS: So what I wanted to know was... All these things that we talked about didn't matter that there was a brown person there or not there. It was comfort in where you wanted to be. It was an area you liked or were familiar with or was close to home and money, hmm

Researcher: Explaining connection to Sherrie Proctor's research, location of GA state as related to large number of AAs there

RS: Well I'd gone to Rutgers for undergrad, so going back there for grad school was very easy. It was very comfortable. You know lots of folks did socialize, but it was very close to NY and back when I was driving everywhere, 3.5 hours wasn't bad. And the money helped cuz I didn't find until later that that other assistantship was a whole year longer

Researcher: This is just an extra question I have just sitting here thinking now about HBCUs, and this is just speculation but why do you think there are so few that have sp programs? From research there are only 5 programs from HBCUs.

RD: IDK that's an interesting question.

Me: out of the 105, only 60 have psych as a major

RS: How many have education?

Me: Not sure, but from memory, quite a few had early childhood ed, sped, and counseling and even the program at Alabama A&M was psychometrics.

RD: I think that's what it is. A lot of ppl don't know about it.

Me: and there was one comment on the survey was that yes it would be nice to have more programs at hbcus, but they need to be quality and actually able to gain that NASP/APA approval

RS: I might have been that person who made that comment. I just want you to be well trained and I've worked with some of the persons, some of those students who have come out of some of those programs who have not been well trained and it's not fair to them

because you're paying all this money and you do not have all the skills that the persons coming out of those PWIs have and you know, that's not fair. Its not fair. And supervising interns from programs that are not strong, well-structured, good training programs is really difficult because what you end up doing is being an extension of their graduate program. And that's not fair. It's not fair to them because their experience is to be almost from the outset, working independently as young professionals and if you have to train them on things they should have learned on the first year in, you're just behind the eight ball and you're never going to be, not never, but during that year, you are not going to be able to work at the level of independence that the other interns will be able to achieve. So when you go out into your first year, you're gonna be more like an intern and that is going to set you up, not for failure, but for a very difficult first year. I've worked with folks in the past that have never heard of Sattler and I'm just... how do you not know... that's like your Bible.

How can you have gotten through an entire program and not never have? You don't own a copy of hi book? 'I've never seen the book.' " You've never seen the book?!" What have they been teaching you? And you've been paying all this money like all those other ppl and you're gonna...where you gonna get a job?"

Didn't know how to administer a test. And again, that doesn't have to be your bread and butter, but you need to know how to do it. You need to know how to interpret it so that when you get the 17pg report from blah blah blah, you can interpret it to the team and if you've never administered a test correctly, it's just gonna be really really hard. I just would rather see a person from an excellent program than a student from a crappy program because no matter how good you are, if you don't have the training, you just don't have the training and that's just unfortunate.

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