A SEAT AT THE IEP TABLE: AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF FUTURE BLACK SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

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ABSTRACT

Black school psychologists are significantly underrepresented in American schools, and this must be addressed to effectively meet the needs of marginalized groups in this field. Through the lenses of critical race theory, intersectionality and the trauma-informed approach, this phenomenological study explored the experiences of eight Black graduate students studying school psychology at both predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Convergent data yielded themes of (1) Awareness of Intersectionality, (2) Black Representation Matters, (3) Black Mentor/Faculty as Support, (4) Black Sociocultural Safe Spaces, (5) Cultural Incompetence at PWI, and (6) Unsupported Traumatic Experiences at PWI. Divergent data revealed that students from HBCUs experienced a sense of belonging, whereas students from PWIs experienced feelings of isolation. Lastly, divergent data revealed that accreditation was the main concern for students who attended HBCUs. Implications, recommendations, limitations, and future research directions are provided.

Keywords: school psychology, Black graduate students, critical race theory

DEDICATION

To my daughter, Ice.

Thank you for inspiring me every day.

I would not have the energy without your light.

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INTRODUCTION

By 2030, the demand for psychologists is projected to grow by 24% within racial/ethnic minority populations, specifically 11% within the non-Hispanic Black population (IHS Markit, 2018). Yet, the most common ethnicity among psychologists is White. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is the largest professional organization that supports and protects the advancement of the field of school psychology. NASP acknowledges the need of diverse practitioners to serve diverse populations of children, adolescents, and young adults. As of April 7, 2021, the NASP demographics show that most NASP members, students, and student affiliates are White women. The *2021 NASP Membership Demographics* survey, which was completed by 18.7% of its members, listed 9.7% of its members as Black or African American (versus the highest demographic of White counterparts being listed at 75.4%), and they listed 13% of its Student and Student Associate members as being Black or African American (versus the highest demographic of White counterparts listed at 66.4%).

Furthermore, there has been a history of Black school psychologists not being members of NASP for unknown reasons. Lewis, Truscott, and Volker (2008) surveyed 124 practicing school psychologists, only seven school psychologists reported to be Black or African American, and three out of those seven Black or African American school psychologists reported to be members of NASP. Therefore, lack of diversity in the field of school psychology has been an issue for well over a decade. Alongside this issue, Black students have a history of being disproportionately represented in special education

programs (Blanchett, 2006). White cultural values are heavily influencing school psychology practices. More Black school psychologists are needed to help mitigate White practitioners over-qualifying Black children in special education. Administrators of school psychology programs should be incorporating culturally sensitive recruitment practices to diversify the field of future school psychologists who will serve diverse populations. Due to the social and political vulnerabilities that particularly affect Black people historically and presently, the need to recruit Black practitioners is paramount to serving Black children, adolescents, and young adults.

Note: Please use Appendix A as a multicultural dictionary filled with relevant definitions from the *Multicultural Guidelines: An Ecological Approach to Context, Identity, and Intersectionality* (APA, 2017).

The Problem

There are social and systemic variables, including assessment, consultation, and intervention that can interfere with the essential role of the school psychologist while serving Black students. In a historical and social context, sociocultural issues connected to systemic racism can interfere with the delivery of these services. Festinger (1957) proposed that people strive for internal and external consistency in their cognitions and behavior, and a person who experiences internal inconsistencies tends to become psychologically uncomfortable and is motivated to reduce the cognitive dissonance via (1) confirmation bias, which is the tendency to search for information that aligns with one's values or beliefs, or via (2) rationalization, which restates or restructures information to make it palatable for one's values or beliefs. The Black school

psychology graduate student or the Black school psychologist may heavily operate on cognitive dissonance when their own social experiences or beliefs conflict with their training and practices in assessment, consultation, and intervention.

The present dissertation study was developed by a Black school psychologist and Ph.D. candidate in school psychology. From this lens, the following analysis of the role of the school psychologist can be perceived to be driven by confirmation bias as she seeks to psychologically explain why Black practitioners avoid circumstances and contradictory information learned in school psychology programs, which further informs the present retention and diversity issues in the field of school psychology. If cognitive dissonance was responded to with rationalization, this present work would not highlight the racist practices in the field. Instead, the following examination of the role of the school psychologist would be met with justification or dismissal of the historical and current practices in the field.

Assessment

Assessment was constructed based on eugenics and exclusionary practices in the Western world. Standardized tests, such as intelligence quotient (IQ) tests, examine a set of abilities related to the social construct of human intelligence. Galton (1869) was the English statistician and originator of psychometrics, who created one of the first standardized tests for rating human intelligence. Later, in the early 1900s, French psychologists Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon designed the Binet-Simon test to identify mental retardation (now known as intellectual disability) in children, and if one's "mental age" was considered lower than their chronological age, it would oftentimes lead to a removal from the regular school setting and a placement into an asylum (Guthrie,

1998). Note, this type of segregation was adopted and continued in the U.S. special education until inclusive education was legalized in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the 1990s (Lloyd & Lloyd, 2015).

Western Eurocentric societies have always borrowed eugenics practices from one another to sustain racism, ableism, and elitism. American historians note that eugenics has always been a tool of oppression used in America to exploit and exclude immigrants (Selden, 1987). In 1883, Sir Francis Galton, British scientist, originally created the term to mean "good stock" and "well-born" as it pertains to human biological makeup, and it evolved into practices, such as standardized testing, to uphold Eurocentric values (Bulmer, 1999). During World War I, the U.S. Army used several mental tests developed by psychologist and eugenicist Robert Yerkes. Later, nonverbal performance tests were adopted for examinees who had limited English skills. Nonverbal performance tests were developed due to the linguistic and cultural loading that disallowed many immigrants' acceptance into the Army, which was deemed controversial then and now (Naglieri, Rojahn, Matto & Aquilino, 2005).

Black American psychologist, Robert Lee Williams II, recognized the impact of cultural and linguistic loading in standardized tests. Williams (1972) presented a paper to the American Psychological Association on the Black Intelligence Test of Cultural Homogeneity (BITCH-100), which incorporated test items based on the general language and knowledge of African American communities. This test included 100 items of multiple choice. Many of the test items included the use of Ebonics. Williams (1973) coined the term and defined Ebonics as:

…the linguistic and paralinguistic features which on a concentric continuum represent the communicative competence of the West African, Caribbean, and United States slave descendants of African origin. It includes the various idioms, patois, argots, idiolects, and social dialects of Black people, especially those who have adapted to colonial circumstances. Ebonics derives its form from ebony (Black) and phonics (sound, the study of sound) and refers to the study of the language of Black people in all its cultural uniqueness (p. 97).

Williams used his BITCH-100 test on a sample of hundreds of Black and White high school and college students. The test was loaded with Ebonics, which heavily aligned with the 1970s Black experience. Results showed that Black students performed significantly better on the BITCH-100 than White students. Williams was one of the first psychologists who directly highlighted how cultural bias heavily influenced the performance on IQ tests for Black people. The BITCH-100 reversed the present Eurocentric practices in assessment and highlighted the unfair biases that are too often overlooked in test result interpretation. Presently, Flanagan, Ortiz, and Alfonso (2013) addressed this issue by creating the most commonly used tool to highlight linguistic and cultural biases in tests. The Culture-Language Interpretive Matrix (C-LIM) evaluates the impact of developmental language proficiency and acculturative learning opportunity on cognitive measures through a quantitative and systematic approach.

Through training, school psychologists should have some understanding that assessment was founded on eugenics and exclusionary practices in European society. Over time, scholars have gained more awareness of the biases that these tests hold, and assessment selection practices and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), such as

Response to Intervention (RtI), have shifted the utility of assessments and emphasized consultation, prevention, and intervention. However, MTSS is heavily supported by the consultative role of school psychologists and their reception from other stakeholders. Particularly, RtI was used to negate the overrepresentation of Black, Latine and Native American students in special education since it observes the ecology (Thorius & Maxcy, 2015). However, does it address the latent White systemic values upheld that Black school psychologists continue to face?

Consultation

The interpersonal aspects of consultation may include mistrust and social inequity for Black practitioners. The MTSS framework includes comprehensive supports with the selection and implementation of evidence-based interventions, typically in a three tiers of service delivery. The first tier of this framework emphasizes school-wide culture and academic skills with screenings to monitor the needs of all students. If students do not respond to the first tier of interventions, they are to receive additional tiers of academic or behavior support intensity. The essence of MTSS is to systematically assess, deliver services, and evaluate programs, which leads to the development of a unique system informed by data. Typically, school psychologists are important stakeholders in this framework due to expertise developed in their training. The school psychologist's role heavily relies on data-based decision making that informs the assessments used and supports provided. Furthermore, the school psychologist's role requires interdisciplinary cooperation and leadership support while they ongoingly evaluate and make provisions of this model. Having healthy relationships, positive social dynamics, and a united ecology is important for Black school psychologists to easily navigate and provide consultation

services. This encourages a collaborative approach that supports all students at varying levels to prevent and intervene challenging behavior and lack of academic skills.

To understand the Black school psychologist's plight in the consultative role, it is important to examine the macrosystem to understand its impact on schools. Presently, there is a disconnect between mainstream institutional agents and the Black community that is leading to mistrust from both parties (Wilkins et al., 2013). Residual effects of slavery linked to historical trauma and mental enslavement stem from the United States of America being founded on the enslavement of Black people over 400 years ago (Wilkins et al., 2013). Pouissant and Alexander (2000) highlight that systemic racism stemming from slavery continues to take a toll on the minds and bodies of Black people, which is straining their capacity to adapt successfully in the United States of America.

Adaptations are necessary when conflicts arise. Past and present conflicts are seen when the government provides services to the Black community. A present example is the observed health inequity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Black Americans were reported to be more at risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19 than any other racial and ethnic group (Stokes et al., 2020). Despite the risk factors, Black Americans continue to opt out of getting the COVID-19 vaccination (Ndugga et al., 2021).

The present health issues and mistrust stems from the past conflict related to ethical issues such as when the Public Health Service partnered with the Tuskegee Institute to study the natural history of syphilis to establish treatment programs for Black people. In the 1940s, penicillin became the recommended drug for treating syphilis, and researchers of the Tuskegee Experiment did not offer it to its participants, which led to untreated syphilis in Black men when treatment was made readily available to the masses

(Jaiswal, 2019). This is one of the most used examples of the recurring exploitation and unethical practices of White institutions inflicting harm on the Black community. School psychologists are often seen as agents for White institutions while their interventions and studies are received based on their expert power base. Oftentimes, referent power between White intuitions and Black communities diminishes if there are unfavorable results or ethical issues.

French and Raven (1959) identified social power dynamics that can be applied to various psychosocial contexts that influences one's ability to comply, agree or be satisfied with a social or service outcome. French and Raven (1959) originally described five bases of power as 1) legitimate, 2) reward, 3) expert, 4) referent, and 5) coercive. Legitimate power comes from the belief that a person is in position to make demands that lead to compliance or obedience. Reward power uses preferred tangible rewards or socially desired incentives to compensate for compliance. Expert power is based on one's skills and knowledge. Referent relies heavily on one's identity, perceived attractiveness, relatability, worthiness, and right to others' respect. Lastly, coercive power influences behavior by punishment of noncompliance. Notoriously, White colonists and White Americans used these power bases to establish law and order. However, one can argue due to Black practitioners' status in this country, they may have less perceived social power.

Martin (1978) studied how expert power and referent power maximized the effectiveness of the consultant–consultee relationship. Later, Erchul, Raven and Ray (2001), reported that position power, impersonal sanctions, personal power, and credibility inform the consultant-consultee relationship. Erchul, Raven and Wilson (2004)

discovered that female psychologists endorsed both soft power bases, which includes information, expert, legitimate dependency, personal reward, and referent, and hard power bases, such as impersonal reward, impersonal coercion, personal coercion, legitimate position, legitimate reciprocity, and legitimate equity, while male psychologists mostly endorsed hard power bases. Furthermore, Getty and Erchul (2009) noted when consulting with female teachers or consultees, male consultants or psychologists were more likely to use expert power than the other power bases, and female consultants or psychologists are less likely to use referent power than the other power bases. Both studies exploring gender influences had less than 2% of respondents that identified as Black. Moreover, none of these studies directly explore the impacts of race in consultation dynamics.

By acknowledging the social status and systemic oppression of Black people, it can be hypothesized that Black school psychologists or consultants can be perceived to have less social power than their White counterparts, in both hard and soft bases. This perception is highly likely to be carried by their consultees, therefore making consultation practices difficult to navigate due to their own experiences in America and their consultees' subconscious and conscious perceptions of the Black school psychologist in America.

Henning-Stout and Meyers (2000) note that primary barriers to the problem identification consultative stage is the assumption of alignment to the norms that arises when research and practice strategies are applied without acknowledging that it all reflects the values of the predominantly White culture of this field. In conjunction with strong objectivity, it is recommended that consultants and consultees collaborate

throughout problem identification and planning to incorporate the values consistent to the population that is being served (Henning-Stout & Meyers, 2000). Furthermore, Henning-Stout and Meyers (2000) urge for cross-cultural responsive consultation that centers on active inclusion and consideration of all perspectives, which calls for research to support these efforts. On the other hand, social justice consultative practices go beyond the concept of inclusion by understanding how cultural identities have been marginalized and advocating for marginalized groups. Calling for a more diverse field of school psychologists is not only socially just, but it is breaking the cycle of White complicity.

Intervention

Black and other ethnic and racial groups have a history of being underrepresented in special education intervention research (Artiles, Trent, & Kuan, 1997; Bos & Fletcher, 1997; Kistner & Robbins, 1986; Pierce et al., 2014; West et al., 2016). Evidence-based interventions are vetted by scholars and practitioners through outcome evaluations to observe effectiveness. Program evaluations often occur in research institutions where undergraduate learning takes place. Universities encourage their students to participate in research while students learn the value of research methods. These particular universities are typically predominantly White institutions (PWIs) ranked high in research activity. Richmond et al. (2015) examined the sample diversity of empirical articles published from 2008 to 2013, and descriptive statistics showed that ethnicity was typically not reported in teaching of psychology journal articles. Furthermore, when ethnicity was reported, Richmond et al. (2015) found that convenience samples were predominantly White female students, which makes results questionable as they cannot be generalized due to ethnic and racial minority groups due to their underrepresentation in the samples.

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Therefore, psychology curricula and interventions cannot be deemed effective for all college students. Black psychology students are not seen in these samples, and these same research methodology practices are being applied in our field for our children and adolescents with diverse abilities.

The underrepresentation of Black youth in special education intervention research undermines the evidence-based practices mandated in education law. Evidence-based practices are meant to demonstrate a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes and/or demonstrate a rationale based on high quality research findings or positive evaluation (ESSA, 2015). West et al. (2016) examined the participant demographics in the 1990 and 2011 special education evidence-based practice literature on children with autism, and the researchers observed predominantly White youth participating in program evaluation studies, while there continues to be underrepresentation of ethnic and racial minority groups. Rowe and Trickett (2018) explored school-based universal social and emotional learning curricula, and they observed a lack of reporting on ethnic and racial characteristics via meta-analysis. The few studies that did report ethnic and racial characteristics tested for moderating effects and found inconsistent effects across ethnic and racial characteristics. These consistent patterns in the research samples show that we cannot confidently say that our Black students are receiving behavioral or academic evidence-based interventions that can be generalized to them when the interventions are mainly researched on their White counterparts.

Instead of research supporting prevention and intervention for our Black youth, there are policies in place that prohibit certain students from gaining full access to their

education environment. Mallett (2016) notes that there are several policies targeting marginalized and stigmatized children and adolescents in the schools that often lend to the juvenile justice system, such as (1) zero-tolerance policies and (2) policing in schools. As a result, Black students are disproportionately suspended and expelled compared to their White and Latine counterparts (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

School disturbance laws are laws that regulate "disturbances" on school grounds. School disturbance describes an array of vaguely defined behaviors that can result in legal penalties for students. Relatedly, zero-tolerance policies in schools are policies that enforce strict regulations and bans against problematic behaviors or possessions. The Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 was the first zero-tolerance policy in the form of federal legislation that required states to give a one-year expulsion to any student who brought a firearm to school, or the school would lose federal funding. To avoid any federal monetary damages and school violence, schools began promoting various types of zero-tolerance policies to prevent drugs and violence in schools. The rationale of zero-tolerance policies is to promote safe environments that support learning, but many schools and school districts increased their use of these procedures, which removes some children from the opportunity to learn (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Through Deweyan analysis, Rice (2009) emphasizes that zero-tolerance policies conflict with nurturing the habit of tolerance among youth in our multicultural and inclusive society. Furthermore, as Skiba and Rausch (2006) outline, there is little to no evidence that zero-tolerance policies are effective strategies, which defies the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandate of practitioners to only use effective or evidence-based practices. In fact, school expulsions

rose right after the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 came to be (Rice, 2009), which denies students the ability to engage in evidence-based practices provided by schools. Therefore, educators and administrators must use evidence-based interventions, rather than an exclusionary approach with limited research findings, such as a zero-tolerance policy.

School resource officers are law enforcement officers who oversee safety and crime prevention in schools, and the U.S. Department of Education and Department of Justice created the Safe School-based Enforcement through Collaboration, Understanding, and Respect (SECURe) rubrics to help provide guidance in defining their roles to school districts (James & McCallion, 2013). Presently, the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments reports that Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, and Kentucky to be the only states to have laws regarding school resource officers. Only a few states consider policing in schools to be a legal issue, but a lack of state and federal regulations can be problematic. Although few have reported benefits from having school resource officers, Johnson (1999) reported that a school district in Alabama had a 17% decrease in school violence and infractions when school resource officers were permanently assigned to schools. However, does the presence of these officers have any psychological effects? Theriot and Orme (2016) surveyed 1,956 middle and high school students, and regression results showed that Black or African American students and victimized students felt less safe with school resource officers on school grounds, while students with more school connectedness (most of these students were White), and students with more positive attitudes about school resource officers felt safer. Zirkel (2019) implemented a review of cases from January 1, 2008 to August 31, 2018 in the Westlaw case database, and he identified 22

court decisions that contained federal civil rights issues related to the actions of school resource officers in response to behaviors of students with disabilities. On a larger scale, Zirkel (2009) categorized 79 court decisions with civil rights claims that show (1) a disproportionately high incidence of such court decisions for public school students in general; (2) a wide variety of students with behavioral disabilities (e.g., autism and emotional disturbance); (3) a significant number of instances of police brutality, where the school resource officer's actions included excessive force in relation to conduct that was often disability-related and not dangerous to oneself or others; and (4) unjustified defendant-skewed legal rulings. Based on these findings, it is clear that minority students and students with disabilities are not benefiting from school policing.

The literature shows that zero tolerance policies and school resource officers are ineffective in providing an inclusive and therapeutic environment, especially for Black youth. During the 2006-2007 academic year, 15% of Black students were suspended compared to 5% of White students (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). However, these practices inform the incarceration rates of 1 in every 15 Black males being incarcerated versus 1 in every 106 White males being incarcerated. The school-to-prison pipeline is failing our Black youth. The interventions and curricula are not being designed with them in mind. Not to mention, these school practices are not very inviting for the recruitment efforts for future Black school psychologists and advocates.

In summary, the roles of the school psychologist in assessment, consultation and intervention may adversely affect Black children. Nevertheless, there is room for being a systems-level change agent and social justice advocate. However, the effort necessary along with the historical oppressive system upheld by White values in the field alone

could appear burdensome. Moreover, the experience and pathway to becoming a school psychologist could be perceived as strenuous. According to NASP, one must earn at least a master's degree in school psychology, participate in a series of practica, perform at least 1,200 hours of supervised internships, and pass the Praxis School Psychologist exam to receive the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential. The present study will explore the concerns and supports for Black school psychology graduate students.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is a framework for studying the relation between race, power, racism, and oppression to highlight injustices and encourage social change (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT highlights that racism is a systemically inescapable issue, rather than a single event. Furthermore, CRT observes race as a divisive tool created by the dominant racial group from the guise of social construction. Lastly, the dominant racial group assigns stereotypical characteristics that stem from superficial group features in order to maintain social status and feelings of superiority (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Counter-storytelling is an important CRT component that is based on exposing racist ideology and White privilege by amplifying the voices of Black people (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The present study attempts to expose the dominant storytelling by providing a (virtual) space for Black school psychology graduate students to share their stories as opposed to using "objective" statistics muddled with misinterpretations in a sea of numbers. Counter-storytelling supports the qualitative methodology and ensures that the participants are heard in order to challenge racism and work toward social justice.

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Intersectionality

Intersectionality acknowledges that individuals have multiple identities, such as race, gender, religion, etc. These multiple identities intersect with and conflict with one another, and any of an individual's identities can experience oppression, including, but not limited to race (Crenshaw, 1991). Consequently, acknowledging intersectionality is necessary in amplifying the voices of the Black school psychology graduate students since they have been silenced by the dominant culture.

The Trauma-Informed Approach

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014) defined psychological trauma as the result of a single or chronic experience that is seen as a threat to a person's physical or emotional safety, thus adversely affecting their well-being. Racial minorities are more likely to experience adverse childhood experiences (Smith & Patton, 2016; Vasquez, Udo, Corsino, & Shaw, 2019). Black graduate students who are navigating, learning, and practicing school psychology could trigger psychological trauma due to the historical and present practices in the field. Trauma-informed practice in school psychology programs may support wellness, retention, and success in Black school psychology graduate students.

As it applies to the graduate student experience, the six tenets of the trauma-informed approach include: (1) safety in physical settings and interpersonal interactions, (2) trustworthiness and transparency in order to build and maintain trust with the faculty and university, (3) peer support and mutual self-help, (4) collaboration and mutuality by leveling the power differences between faculty and students, (5) empowerment by recognizing students' strengths and experiences while supporting their decision-making,

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and (6) acknowledging and addressing cultural, historical, and gender issues (SAMHSA, 2014). It is important to note that the tenets of the trauma-informed approach support CRT. The present study plans to examine the trauma-informed approach in school psychology programs to see if it aligns with the wellness of the Black school psychology graduate students.

Research Questions

The following three research questions were generated as it relates to the themes developed from the literature review in Chapter 2 and theoretical framework presented in Chapter 1. These research questions were addressed in individual interview questions posed to Black school psychology graduate students attending predominantly white institutions (PWIs) and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

1. Do Black graduate students perceive their intersecting identities as influencing their paths in school psychology?

2. Do Black graduate students believe that their wellness and continued enrollment in their school psychology programs is related to the supports they received?

3. What trauma-informed approaches were present in the Black school psychology graduate students' experiences?

Significance of the Research

The present study explored the experiences of Black school psychology graduate students to investigate the factors that may impede diversity in the field of school psychology. The qualitative methodology used amplifies the voices of Black school psychology graduate students through (1) counter-storytelling to highlight the existing school psychology practices that are designed to oppress and subdue Black students in

primary, secondary and higher (mis)education as they actively pursue their goals in this field, and (2) by emphasizing the expression of each participants' intersectionality. This research operates from the premise that being Black is not a monolithic experience. The researcher identified and explored the intersecting identities, including, but not limited to race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, political affiliation, and the juxtaposition of immigration status and family ancestry in the United States of America, which all inform their individual experiences as Black school psychology graduate students. Lastly, the themes found will support recommendations for school psychology programs by identifying the trauma-informed approaches that helped with the retention of the Black school psychology graduate students.

I, as a Black certified school psychologist and scholar, honor my ancestors' legacies, and I plan to use this research to affirm the Black voices of future school psychologists. By exposing oppression in the field, we leave room for social justice as we dismantle the system, self-advocate, and uplift our Black youth with representation and service.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical race theory calls for the voices of the underrepresented and marginalized people to be heard. Furthermore, intersectionality acknowledges the complex, multifaceted and interconnected nature of identity (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) of a person, which can create disadvantages. Lastly, the trauma-informed approach calls for empowering and acknowledging the present and historical contexts of the marginalized. The qualitative methodology lends room to support these frameworks in validating Black graduate students' experiences. There is limited literature on the experiences of Black students studying school psychology. Consequently, it is important to provide context of the theoretical frameworks and how it applies to the field and the Black experience.

Critical Race Theory and School Psychology

The emergence of CRT literature was used by Black scholars to explain the persistence of systemic racism after the Civil Rights Movement (Tate, 1997). There were two common answers that were used to denounce systemic racism: (1) by enacting color-blindness and banning overt racism would lead to a just society, and (2) by observing power and wealth as the overarching culprits that trickle into racism and the oppression of Black people (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Stovall, 2006). However, CRT argues that these two fallacies inadequately address the undeviating hidden nature of systemic racism (Bell, 1992).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) explore how CRT is used in legal scholarship, and they propose five tenets of CRT analysis in education: (1) the notion that racism is ordinary and not aberrational; (2) the idea of an interest convergence; (3) the social construction of race; (4) the idea of storytelling and counter-storytelling; and (5) the notion that White people have been the main recipients of civil rights legislation. Ultimately, the authors note that racism is endemic and permeates the education system, which warrants a reinterpretation of ineffective civil rights law and repeated challenging of claims of neutrality, objectivity, colored-blindness, and meritocracy (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

It is important to include students' cultural references and backgrounds into the learning environment and curricula (Ladson-Billings, 1994). CRT helps disrupt systems of social order based on race and other subordinations, such as gender, sexual orientation, and ability. There is a vast amount of literature supporting CRT. CRT scholars include Idealists who do the work to dismantle racisms, Economic Realists who work to change the inequity of societal resources that allow White people to have more, and Materialists who desire to change the outlook on the relationship between economic power and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). However, Education Week (2021) have reported that 25 states have proposed legislation to ban CRT in schools while eight states have effectively banned CRT. Rejecting CRT puts school psychologists in an ethical dilemma. The NASP Social Justice Strategic Goal endorses CRT to observe the inequities that exist based on race. Furthermore, NASP (2020) notes that school psychologists have an ethical responsibility to advocate and endorse practices that acknowledge disparities and promote equity amongst individuals.

The application of CRT in school psychology incorporates eliminating models that oppress. However, there is a lag in the literature on the application of CRT in the field of school psychology. The IQ–achievement discrepancy model is the traditional method used by school psychologists to determine whether a student has a learning disability and qualifies for special education services. However, IQ assessments demonstrate a vast amount of evidence as being biased against Black youth, which has been a factor of the disproportionality and overrepresentation of Black students in special education. With a review of the literature, Newell and Kratochwill (2007) orient toward using response to interventions (RtI) as a means of support and facilitation of equity in educational services, which is one of the first and only publications that applies CRT to best practices in school psychology.

Intersectionality and School Psychology

Intersectionality came to fruition during the mid-19th century's women's rights activism movement, which highlighted the marginalization of Black women in the movement of women's suffrage (Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). This unique position of Black women led scholars to explore their marginalization at the intersecting identities of race, class, and gender (Hancock, 2016). Crenshaw (1989) emphasized that one's identities cannot be teased apart to examine the impacts of race or gender oppression. The oppressions of a Black woman are interlocked, and Crenshaw (1991) demonstrated this by applying the conceptualization of intersectionality to an analysis of violence against women to show the oppressive nature of interlocking marginalized identities.

There are theoretical frameworks that observe one's self-perceived identity to be complex, but intersectionality acknowledges the socially constructed disparities as

perceived by society. Therefore, the present study examines each participant's experience as a Black school psychology graduate student with intersecting identities because like their identities, their experiences cannot be dissected in that way. Phenomenological qualitative research methods tend to capture the whole experience of an individual. Lewis et al. (2016) studied the experiences of 33 Black adolescent girls, and qualitative data analysis revealed themes that noted participants experience microaggressions based on the intersecting of their race, gender, and social class that made them aware of their marginalized positions in beauty standards, social visibility, and negative tropes. Gadson and Lewis (2021) uncover how racial and gendered microaggressions are ingrained in the criminalization of Black girls in the education system, which was linked to higher rates of minor infractions compared to their White counterparts. The findings of both studies led to recommendations to reform school policies and provide professional development on gendered racial biases.

As presented in Chapter 1, the demographics of school psychologists currently do not align with the marginalized population of students being served, and quite possibly contributes to the disproportionate rates of Black children in special education. There are guidelines set by NASP and APA that address the importance of acknowledging intersectionality and providing multicultural practices to support and advocate effectively. It is important for teachers, researchers, and clinicians to be mindful of the intersectionality framework to disrupt the interlocking systems of oppression.

Trauma-Informed Approaches in Education

The literature on trauma-informed approaches is limited as it relates to adult education. However, it is important to explore best practices to ensure school psychology

trainees receive and apply trauma-informed approaches. There have been positive outcomes when actively using these approaches during times of stress and trauma. The following emerging literature examines trauma-informed approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic in higher education for social work trainees and in elementary education settings in marginalized communities.

Barros-Lane et al. (2021) implemented a convergent, parallel, mixed methods design to evaluate the trauma-informed approach used by undergraduate social work programs at the start of the spring 2020 COVID-19 pandemic school closures. Surveys were given to measure the extent students observed trauma-informed approaches during their studies. Focus groups were held to discover any benefits of trauma-informed approaches. The survey results revealed that the program scored high in evidence of cultural responsiveness and inclusivity, environment of agency and mutual respect, and emphasis on strengths. The themes that derived from the focus group were (a) the program's swift and proactive response fostered a sense of safety, (b) the program encouraged students' empowerment and autonomy, and (c) the program created opportunities for human connection and support.

Giboney (2022) investigated the utility of trauma-informed approaches by examining questionnaire and interview data, which were collected from 14 educators and staff in the fall of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The focal elementary school was in a marginalized community in Southern California. The qualitative data analysis noted physical, academic, and social-emotional challenges related to accessing learning, developmentally inappropriate pedagogy, and lack of socialization. The staff reported to use trauma-informed approaches, which were incorporated by fostering school-wide

relationships, maintaining routines, adapting to the unique needs of the students, and implementing social-emotional learning curriculum. The study highlighted the significance of relationships over results and connection over content, even in virtual formats, and especially during times of collective trauma and loss.

Hitchcock et al. (2021) noted that the trauma-informed approach supports the response to an unexpected crisis while teaching in times of extended crisis to maintain quality education. It is important to explore the trauma-informed approach as a trainee and practitioner in service of marginalized communities. There are positive psychological benefits from being in a learning environment that adopts the premise that assumes that an individual is more likely than not to have a history of trauma. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, more educational settings are incorporating these practices, and there have been positive measurable outcomes.

The HBCU Experience

Attending an HBCU is a unique experience in this country. These institutions were founded in the U.S. of America for Black scholarship due to exclusionary racist practices, and they now welcome diverse groups of people from all over the world. With the use of Black feminist epistemology and autoethnography, Kennedy (2012) noted that Black women outnumber Black men at HBCUs, but they continue to be marginalized, which is seen in the gender imbalance in the present literature. The following literature examines the HBCU experience of non-Black individuals, STEM students who identified as Black women, and Black alumnae.

Greenfield et al. (2015) examined the experiences of non-Black students and staff at HBCUs in a phenomenological approach incorporated with autoethnography. The four

narratives explored were of a White man, an Asian American man, a Filipino American man, and a Muslim man and second-generation immigrant with parents from Ethiopia and Somalia. Each of the narratives touched on their unique prospective informed by their identities, they acknowledged the effort they put forth as allies, and they noted that HBCUs embraced diversity and helped support their own racial identity development.

Morton (2020) investigated retention in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) through the lenses of five Black women studying in a STEM undergraduate program at a HBCU. The researcher applied the Phenomenological Variant Ecological Systems Theory to qualitative methodology. The qualitative thematic data revealed that (1) STEM culture reinforces gender and racial stereotypes, (2) their HBCU supported their "Blackness," (3) their STEM program had a limited amount of Black female faculty, and (4) their STEM program provided individualized supports. Although there are remnants of racial and gender bias from outer social influences on STEM culture, the students felt supported culturally and educationally at their HBCU.

Winkle-Wagner et al. (2020) conducted a critical life story analysis of 20 Black alumnae from Spelman College, a HBCU that centers Black women. This is evident since most of the participants reported a connection to Spelman positively and emotionally. Themes highlight how the institution encouraged women to aspire to live a life of high level of achievement. Implications emphasized how Spelman is an exemplar for crafting a welcoming and affirming space for Black women, compared to other HBCUs and PWIs.

Ultimately, it is apparent that HBCUs apply multicultural practices that lead to positive outcomes for all students, despite the inequities demonstrated in the larger society. The practices used at HBCUs should be considered and applied in PWIs.

Black Graduate Students and Professionals at PWIs

The following literature attempts to explore the experiences of Black graduate students and early career professionals in various disciplines, including the "all but dissertation" status that can be very stigmatizing in academia. There were reoccurring themes that centered on negative experiences, such as isolation at PWIs. Positive themes highlighted Black graduate students and professionals' engagement in social justice advocacy and representation in their respective fields while seeking and maintaining support networks.

Feelings of Isolation

Scott and Johnson (2021) examined the doctoral pursuits and experiences of 3 Black men who were in the "all but dissertation" status. Each participant attended PWIs, and they were reported to be the only Black male in each of their respective programs. This qualitative study used self-efficacy theory and critical race theory to analyze semi-structured interviews. Each participant completed a demographics questionnaire and an interview via telephone. Findings uncovered themes of feeling underrepresented and undervalued, underprepared for doctoral education, and harmed by inequity due to gendered racism. There are few qualitative studies exploring the Black male doctoral experiences. Lastly, the use of telephone limited the observation of participants' body language, which could inform probing techniques by interviewers.

Shavers and Moore (2017) explored the experiences of 15 Black women pursuing doctoral degrees at PWIs in social or clinical science programs. This qualitative study analyzed data using the Black feminist thought theoretical framework. Semi-structured interviews, demographic questionnaires and member-checking exercises revealed that participants endorsed feeling like a "Perpetual Outsider" in their academic programs and in their homes. Additionally, over-visibility in their programs endorsed the subtheme of tokenism.

Henfield, Woo, and Washington (2012) investigated the experiences of 11 Black or African American doctoral students (eight female, three male) in counseling programs. Data were collected via email and instant messenger. Through a critical race theory framework, qualitative data were analyzed, and the following themes emerged related to feelings of isolation, peer disconnection, and faculty misunderstandings and disrespect. The data collection in written text could be cost and time effective, but it is limited since audio and visual would provide additional data for the researchers.

Johnson-Bailey et al. (2009) explored the experiences of Black graduate students at a state university in the Southern United States of America. This mixed method study used a questionnaire and open-ended questions to solicit quantitative (586 participant responses) and qualitative (678 participant responses) data. Data was analyzed through the lenses of critical race theory and exploratory factor analysis. Quantitative data showed the following social experiences organized in factors (1) White professor discrimination, (2) enforced social isolation, (3) underestimation of academic ability, (4) White student discrimination, and (5) forced representation for the race. Similarly, the open-ended qualitative data revealed that participants felt (1) isolated from their

universities and respective programs, (2) regular feelings of isolation and loneliness in graduate school, (3) the graduate school experiences was something that they endured or survived, and (4) they would not send their children to their alma mater. This study did well with capturing the voices of a large number of Black students, the majority of them studying in an education-related field. Future research should expand the sample selection across different areas in the country.

Agents of Social Justice

Roberts et al. (2018) used critical race theory and Vizenor's concept of survivance to explore the experiences and motivation of students of color who choose to pursue their doctorate degree in the education field. The mixed methodology sent a 61-item survey with Likert-based and narrative items to 40 participants of color, 22 of whom identified as African American, at various phases in their doctoral programs and early career postdoctoral professionals within two years of obtaining their degrees. The results showed that the participants of color had an interest in addressing educational inequities for the advancement of communities of color, and their experiences fueled their teaching and research activities to be based on equity and social justice. It is important to note that data collection procedures omitted participant contact information and location, which limited the researchers' ability to follow-up and examine their local and social influences. Future research should allow the collection of this information to understand the ecological applications of the data and allow for follow-up interviews.

Truscott et al. (2014) examined the perceptions of the opportunities and challenges of practicing Black or African American school psychologists in the Southeastern U.S. of America. Data collection included semi-structured interviews

supported by grounded theory, which incorporates constant processing of data collection, coding, conceptualizing, and theorizing based on comparing the data. Chain sampling and criterion sampling supported recruitment of 30 Black or African American school psychologists. The findings noted themes that their positions allow for opportunities to (1) advocate for children of color, (2) provide positive representation of color, (3) connect to students, parents, and colleagues of color. On the contrary, racial bias directed at the Black or African American practitioner and children of color were themes related to challenges experienced by the Black or African American school psychologists, along with recognizing that there is a lack of representation amongst them. Furthermore, chain sampling was used, which limits the representation of participants since they nominate or refer one another to participate in the study. Lastly, the perceptions of the participants might be skewed due to their relative levels of success in graduating from their school psychology graduate programs and being employed in their respective fields. Future research in this area should seek to resolve these limitations.

Faculty and Peer Support

Johnson and Scott (2020) examined the "all but dissertation" status of seven participants who identify as Black women in education and social science disciplines. Each participant completed a demographic questionnaire and an interview via telephone. Data were analyzed through socialization and critical race theory frameworks. Emerging themes from the qualitative data included difficulties with managing intersecting identities and relationships with faculty and family while maintaining employment. Furthermore, the participants actively sought support systems outside of the colleges or universities in which they attended. The telephone interviews limited the ability for the

researchers to observe the body language of participants. However, the themes note the need of supports for Black women attending doctoral programs.

McCallum (2020) examined the faculty-student relationship for Black or African American graduate students' decisions to enroll in doctoral programs. The qualitative data included the 41 participants engaging in face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The theoretical framework of Othermothering supported the analysis of the data. The emerging themes of Othermothering included the faculty characteristics of being caring, keeping it real, having high academic expectations and shared similar identities.

Proctor et al. (2018) investigated the experiences of Black or African American specialist-level or Ed.S. students through qualitative methodology. There were 8 participants studying in NASP-approved school psychology programs located in the Northeast, South, Midwest, and West regions in the U.S. of America. The participants were interviewed on their demographic information, professional path, perceptions of their programs' recruitment and retention efforts, academic and social experiences in their programs, and experiences of graduate school stressors. Moustakas (1994) proposed phenomenological methods that were used to guide data analysis, and Proctor et al. report findings related to retention and persistence. The retention theme centered on program and faculty resources and positive, supportive relationships with faculty. The persistence themes centered on social engagement and support from family and classmates. The notable limitation centered on the recruitment emails sent to 103 program directors who may not know which students identified as Black or African American.

This literature review encompasses the research that has been done, which included analyses through the framework of critical race theory while observing the

experiences of Black or African American graduate students. Furthermore, the feelings of isolation while being marginalized calls for a trauma-informed approach in the present study. The literature supports the qualitative methodology that will be used in this present study. Qualitative research aligns with amplifying the voices of the Black students who are navigating the predominately White field of psychology, which is heavily recommended in the critical race theory literature. The rich interviews in qualitative research inform phenomena that could be further explored quantitatively to be applied to a larger sample and other settings. Furthermore, sampling bias is a potential limitation since individuals may tend to agree to participate due to strong feelings about their experiences. However, those feelings are valid and are needed to inform policy and practice in universities and colleges.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Phenomenology is the study of the subjective first-person point of view that reflect on experiences and conditions. The present study used a phenomenological method that observed the themes that emerged from the shared lived experiences disclosed by Black school psychology graduate students. This qualitative approach is rooted in description as opposed to an explanation of causality, and it attempts to contextualize each participant's personal lived experience (Churchill & Wertz, 2002). Furthermore, it allowed for a conscious understanding of what informs the retention of Black school psychology students. Churchill (2018) noted phenomenology provides rich data needed to comprehensively explore lived experiences, and the present study does this by examining qualitative data provided by Black school psychology students as they navigate reflections of their own studies, which included training on campus and supervised field experiences.

Bloor and Wood (2006) defined the phenomenological method as an aim to describe, understand and interpret the meanings of experiences of people through various modes of data collection, such as in-depth interviews and narratives. In the present study, semi-structured interviews took place with the intention to elicit data supported by critical race theory, intersectionality, and the trauma-informed approach. The aim of the present study was to provide an in-depth exploratory qualitative analysis of supports that informed the retention of Black students in their school psychology programs. Below are the research questions that guide this phenomenological approach.

1. Do Black graduate students perceive their intersecting identities as influencing their paths in school psychology?

2. Do Black graduate students believe that their wellness and continued enrollment in their school psychology programs is related to the supports they received?

3. What trauma-informed approaches were present in the Black school psychology graduate students' experiences?

Justification of Methodology

Phenomenology was the selected method because the purpose of this study was to understand what Black students experienced in their graduate-level school psychology programs, how they perceived it, and what meaning they concluded from their experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Smith et al., 2009). The data analysis was influenced by the seven-step van Kaam process, which includes (1) listing and grouping, (2) reduction and elimination, (3) clustering and thematizing, (4) validation, (5) individual textual description, (6) individual structural description, and (7) textural-structural description (Moustakas, 1994). The choice of the design was selected due to it being an inductive approach that emphasizes concern for the richness, texture, and feeling for the raw data collected (Neuman, 2006). It is important to note that this qualitative method captures the how and why, whereas a quantitative method would have just generated frequency distributions with no in-depth information (Creswell, 2004).

Qualitative research helps to amplify and examine the counter-storytelling and intersectionality of participants. CRT operates on the assumption that the Black school psychology students are navigating a racist system while being underrepresented and

undervalued. Through semi-structured interviews, the participants can be seen, be heard and contribute to the literature in their respective field of school psychology.

All six principles of the trauma-informed approach were used by (1) providing a safe space via Zoom to share their experiences in their school psychology programs, (2) including trustworthiness and transparency through bracketing and member-checking, which allows for participants to view a summary of themes and explanations connected to their interview, (3) providing peer support in the follow-up focus group, (4) encouraging participants to comment on the themes identified by the researcher to support collaboration and mutuality, (5) using qualitative methodology and consent to participate at will to provide empowerment, voice and choice for all participants, and (6) observing critical race theory, particularly intersectionality and counter-storytelling, which highlights cultural, historical and gender issues that affirm their experiences.

Participant Criteria

Prior to the recruitment of participants, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was completed as required by the university. After approval of the request and in accordance with the conditions set forth in the request, the recruitment process of potential participants went into effect. Sampling efforts targeted self-identifying Black or African American graduate students in school psychology programs across the U.S. of America. Their degrees pursued were at the master's-, specialist-, or doctoral-level in school psychology programs at either PWIs or HBCUs. Examining or comparing the differences in the level of support received by participants in HBCUs and PWIs is an element of this present study. These criteria were important for the explorative nature of the present study that highlights the experiences of Black graduate students who are

studying school psychology. Furthermore, the variance in graduate degree levels pursued and university types allowed for a deeper analysis of the supports utilized based on the type of institution and length of program.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through (1) snowball or chain sampling, which allowed for participants to refer others who met the rare participant criteria, (2) emailing school psychology program directors (See Appendix B), and (3) emailing student listservs associated with the American Psychological Association (APA) Division 16, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), and state school psychology professional organizations.

The researcher used snowball nonprobability convenience sampling by posting a SurveyMonkey link in two Facebook groups, School Psych Sistahs and Black School Psychologists, which both center Black students and professionals of school psychology. The online post encouraged the members of the group to participate and/or share the research opportunity.

The researcher contacted the school psychology program directors of 40 different universities. The program directors were asked to send the survey to Black students enrolled in their programs. It is important to note that NASP reported that there are approximately 240 universities with school psychology programs across the U.S. of America. Of the approximate 240 universities, only two of them are HBCUs. Both HBCU school psychology programs were contacted along with 38 other school psychology programs housed in PWIs.

Lastly, the researcher shared the SurveyMonkey link to the demographics questionnaire in student listservs associated with the American Psychological Association (APA) Division 16, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), and state school psychology professional organizations.

The IRB protocol outlined 50 respondents to be the maximum amount accepted and screened from Black graduate students in school psychology programs across the United States of America. However, only eight of those participants were needed to complete the research procedures. Ellis (2016) notes that a sample between 6 and 20 individuals is sufficient in phenomenological research.

After contacting the first 40 school psychology programs, five of the programs responded by noting they did not have Black graduate students enrolled in their programs. All 240 programs were not contacted due to the study timelines and the approaching IRB protocol maximum number of participants. Consequently, sampling efforts ceased when there were 44 viable respondents who met criteria out of a total number of 46 respondents. Eight participants out of the 44 viable options opted to participate in the semi-structured interview.

It is impossible to know which respondents were attracted to the study by which mode or platform, and whether they learned about the study from a peer or program director via social media, email, or professional organizational listserv. Two of the respondents reported to be men, and two of the respondents were from HBCUs. Due to the limited respondents who were men or from HBCUs, they were prioritized and contacted first to participate in the interviews to ensure their voices were heard. One of the male respondents agreed to participate, and both HBCU students agreed to

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participate. The other six participants were intentionally selected to participate in the interview phase since they met sample criteria. Follow-up emails were sent if no response was received within a week, and a new participant was selected if there was no response within two weeks.

This recruitment resulted in selecting two participants who identified other than straight or heterosexual, three participants who identified as being bilingual, and two participants who identified with having Hispanic or Latine ethnic backgrounds, all of which could speak to the complexities of intersectionality that could lead individuals from marginalized groups to more inequality and inequity. Moreover, work status, financial supports, the type of community that they were raised/resided in, and parental level of education provided insight in socioeconomic status and marginalization status in this country. Additionally, immigration status was acknowledged during recruitment to observe the impact of oppression and the residual effects of slavery linked to historical trauma in the U.S. of America. This was supported under the assumption that third-and-higher-generation immigrants may have more exposure to systemic oppression and intergenerational trauma stemming from slavery due to their longstanding presence in this country. Five of the eight participants identified as third-and-higher generation immigrants.

The present study used criterion sampling, which is in alignment with phenomenology that highlights the predefined criteria to explore the Black graduate students' experiences in their school psychology programs. However, the researcher used the demographics questionnaire data to guide the recruitment process by observing the various characteristics that influence their individual experiences and perspectives.

Participants

Participants were prompted to respond to the demographics questionnaire, which showed to be limited based on gender and matriculation at HBCU. Furthermore, there were two respondents to the demographics questionnaire who were immediately exempt from further participation in the study since they did not identify as being Black or African American. Below is Table 3.1, which describes the pool of participants and their responses. These responses were reviewed before selecting participants for semi-structured interviews based on their voluntary response to the demographics questionnaire.

Table 3.1

Responses to Demographics Questionnaire

Category	Responses	Initial Questionnaire	Final Sample	Researcher's Positionality
Age	18-24	14	1	
	25-34	28	6	✓
	35-44	4	1	
Black/African American	Yes	44	8	✓
	No	2	0	
Hispanic, Latine, or Spanish Origin	Yes	7	2	
	No	39	6	✓
Immigration Status	First-Generation	3	0	
	Second-Generation	10	3	✓
	Third-and-Higher-Generation	33	5	
Languages	English only	42	5	✓

	Spanish (and English)	2	1	
	German (and English)	1	1	
	Haitian-Creole (and English)	1	1	
Level of School Psychology Degree Pursued	Master's Degree	7	1	
	Educational Specialist Degree	18	3	
	Doctorate Degree	19	4	✓
	Other: Specialist in Psychological Services	1	0	
	Other: MSEd	1	0	
Post-Graduation Plans	Postdoctoral fellowship/ pursue clinical license	15	3	
	Work in a school setting as a school psychologist, teacher, or administrator	27	4	
	Work in academia/ teaching/ research	3	1	✓
	Self-employment	1	0	
Type of University	PWI	44	6	✓
	HBCU	2	2	
Region	Midwest	12	0	
	Northwest	1	1	
	Northeast	13	4	✓
	Southwest	4	1	
	South Central	5	0	

	Southeast	11	2	
Sex/Gender	Female	44	7	✓
	Male	2	1	
Self-Identified Sexual Orientation	Straight or Heterosexual	41	6	✓
	Queer	2	1	
	Asexual	1	0	
	Pansexual	1	1	
	LGBT	1	0	
Parenting	Yes	3	0	✓
	No	43	8	
Marital Status	Single	38	6	✓
	Married	8	2	
Religion	Agnostic	1	0	
	Baptist	1	0	
	Christian	20	4	✓
	Catholic	4	1	
	Jehovah's Witness	1	0	
	Spiritual	5	2	✓
	N/A	13	1	
	Unsure	1	0	
Political Views	Very Conservative	0	0	
	Conservative	1	0	
	Moderate	8	1	
	Liberal	24	3	
	Very Liberal	13	4	✓
Work Status	Employed	16	0	
	Self-employed or Freelancing	3	1	✓
	Interning	8	3	
	Part-time	7	2	
	Unemployed – Looking for work	1	0	
	Retired	1	0	

	Not able to work	1	0	
	Studying	9	2	
Primary Means of Financial Support	University or College	18	6	✓
	Family	6	1	
	Government	1	0	
	Full-Time Employment	11	1	
	Part-Time Employment	9	0	
	Military/Forces	1	0	
Type of Community Raised In	Suburban	24	4	✓
	Urban	21	4	
	Rural	1	0	
Current Community Type	Suburban	16	2	
	Urban	27	5	✓
	Rural	3	1	
Mother's Highest Level of Education	Some High School	1	0	
	High School Graduate	9	3	
	GED	0	0	
	Some College	14	1	
	Associate's Degree	1	0	✓
	Bachelor's Degree	11	3	
	Graduate Degree	10	1	
	N/A	0	0	
Father's Highest Level of Education	Middle School	1	0	
	High School Graduate	13	4	✓
	GED	2	0	
	Some College	12	1	

Associate's Degree	0	0	
Bachelor's Degree	9	2	
Graduate Degree	7	1	
N/A	2	0	

Data Collection

First, a demographics questionnaire was given, which served as a screener to see if the school psychology graduate student met criteria to participate in the study. The qualitative methods included the utilization of two research tools – a semi-structured interview and a member checking focus group. Then, qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed with Dedoose®. There was a semi-structured interview for each of the eight participants, and one focus group for each participant, where member-checking techniques were used with seven of the participants. Lastly, the university's institutional review board reviewed and approved the data collection procedures. University and psychology professional ethical standards were upheld throughout the study.

Demographics Questionnaire

Potential participants were given a demographics questionnaire via SurveyMonkey, which highlights the student's racial, gender, sexual orientation, religious and cultural identities, location of their school psychology programs, political affiliation, immigrant generation, origin, and socioeconomic status. There were 46 respondents to the demographics questionnaire. Please see Appendix C to view the demographics questionnaire. A recruitment email was sent after reviewing the data from

the demographics questionnaire. Please see Appendix D for the email used to recruit participants for the interview process.

Semi-Structured Interview

The researcher conducted and recorded the study interviews on Zoom. The interview questions can be found in Appendix E. The researcher shared that she is a certified school psychologist and Ph.D. candidate in school psychology. However, she did not disclose any of her other identities unless disclosure was naturally revealed during the interview dialogue. The participants were instructed to find a quiet, private space with minimal distractions for the interview to take place. The researcher interviewed in her home or work office. Interviews were transcribed weekly to control for interviewer drift. Each interview was approximately 45 to 90 minutes in length. Unrecorded use of preferred coping strategies, psychotherapy referrals, and follow-up for wellness were used to mitigate any unintended harm. The semi-structured interview had seven topic questions and open-ended questions, which allowed for collection of subjective viewpoints (Creswell, 2005). Additionally, the semi-structured interview process allowed for a procedural description of lived experiences and perceptions of the participants (Creswell, 2004). The interviews included follow-up questions to clarify and probe interesting responses that emerged (Creswell, 2005).

Member-Checking Focus Group

After all the study interviews were transcribed and member-checked individually, two focus groups were organized with the interviewees. Each participant who participated in individual interviews was invited to participate in a 60-minute focus group centered on a discussion of the themes that emerged from the transcribed and analyzed

interviews. The focus group was not mandatory, but it served to confirm themes from the individual interviews as well as serve as peer support and a mutual self-help group, which was outlined in the trauma-informed approach.

The focus group included member checking, which is a means of enhancing the rigor in qualitative research, proposing that credibility is inherent in the accurate descriptions or interpretations of phenomena (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The present study covered member checking activities individually and in groups by sending each individual interview transcript to every participant for them to review it for accuracy. All eight participants responded by approving, commenting, and providing revisions. Each participant was invited to a member checking focus group to explore the emerging themes of synthesized and analyzed data while fostering community amongst participants.

Focus groups explore the opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of a group of people while enabling them to respond and interact together. For example, Klinger (2005) used a member checking focus group to validate results within a study with people living with traumatic brain injury. However, Klinger (2005) did not outline the details on how participants engaged with member checking within the focus group. The present study had each participant attend a focus group where the emerging themes were presented. The main purpose of this focus group was to explore whether the emerging themes had significance with each participant's own lived experience. The emerging themes were informed by analyzed qualitative data from the whole sample of eight participants. Sharing the synthesized data provided the participants the opportunity to consider

whether any of the experiences or perceptions of others also applied to them (Harvey, 2015).

Seven of the eight participants who were individually interviewed opted to participate in a focus group. The member checking focus groups also led to three members opting to reconnect with one another beyond the present study, and they each provided consent for their information to be shared with each other. One of the eight participants could not attend, and she participated in member checking by reviewing the transcriptions via email.

The member checking focus groups were held and recorded on Zoom with audio and video. The researcher facilitated discussion by asking questions and probing. This focus group served to gather qualitative data on the emergent themes from the first round of interviews. Furthermore, it served as peer support, which aligns with the trauma-informed approach. The initial themes from the study were listed on a PowerPoint presentation, and the participants were prompted to discuss how the themes align with their experiences as Black or African American school psychology graduate students. The recording of the focus group was transcribed. Pseudonyms were chosen by each participant as a continued act of empowerment during their valuable contributions to this study.

Data Analysis

Verbatim data were manually transcribed immediately after each individual interview and focus group. Non-verbal communication was captured in each transcript as well. Each transcription was uploaded into Dedoose® for data analysis. Dedoose® was the qualitative software used to code the transcriptions, organize the data of the

transcriptions, and support the generation of themes. The software allowed for the researcher to document each step of the data analysis process while systematically observing patterns, themes, and constructs. The data analysis was informed by theoretical frameworks of critical race theory, intersectionality, and the trauma-informed approach. Transcripts were continuously read and reread while the emergence of patterns and themes were organized to conceptualize the Black school psychology graduate students' experiences. Finally, the researcher's own personal biases were highlighted to ensure that the participants' voices were heard and not skewed by the researcher's own experiences.

Step one of the processes included the researcher manually coding the commonalities in the data after uploading the interview transcriptions into Dedoose®. For step two, the codes were informed by the theoretical frameworks of CRT, intersectionality, and the trauma-informed approach. Dedoose® immediately organizes the data and allowed for the frequency of codes to be observed within each individual interview. In step four, Dedoose® supported the refinement of codes by generating themes observed in the Code Co-Occurrence Matrix, the Code Application Chart, and the Code Presence Chart. The Code Co-Occurrence Matrix provided information on how a code was used across all participants' excerpts. The Code Application Chart provided a visual representation of the patterns observed by the code system. The Code Presence Chart allowed for the researcher to easily view and track how codes are applied across each of the transcribed interviews. This cyclical process allowed for the emergence and the finalization of themes observed in the convergent and divergent data. Figure 3.1 outlines the systematic discovery of patterns, themes, and constructs.
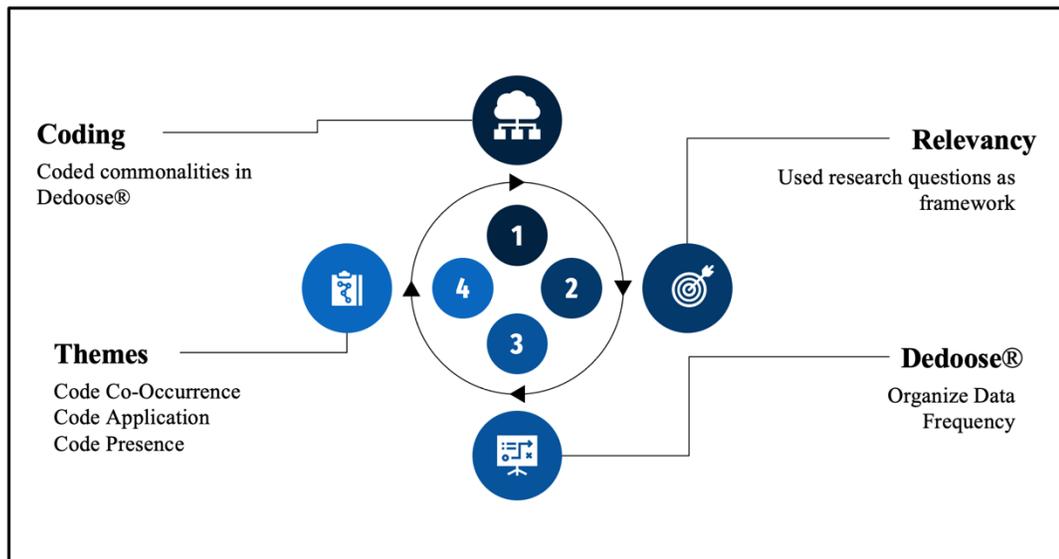
Figure 3.1. *Coding Process and Themes*

Note. This figure displays the data analysis process used with research software.

Table 3.2 depicts the research questions that were used to develop the interview questions, supported by the underlying theoretical frameworks that support the research method.

Table 3.2

Corresponding Research Data Tools

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Theoretical Frameworks
(1) Do Black graduate students perceive their intersecting identities as influencing their paths in school psychology?	(1) How does your identities, including being a Black graduate student, inform your choice and continuance in pursuing a career in school psychology?	Intersectionality Counter-Storytelling (CRT)

	(3) Tell me if or how you experienced discrimination based on any of your identities, including being Black or African American at your college or university.	
(2) Do Black graduate students believe that their wellness and continued enrollment in their school psychology programs is related to the supports they received?	(2) What was your greatest challenge experienced in your school psychology program, and how were you supported? (5) What supports have you accessed during your time in your school psychology program? What supports were available to you at your university?	Trauma-Informed Approach Counter-Storytelling (CRT)
(3) What trauma-informed approaches were present in the Black school psychology graduate students' experiences?	(4) Tell me if or how you experienced trauma or was past trauma triggered during your school psychology graduate studies? Note: SAMHSA (2014) defines trauma as "results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being."	Trauma-Informed Approach Counter-Storytelling (CRT)
N/A	(6) What made your school psychology	Counter-Storytelling (CRT)

graduate experience great
or not so great? What
would have made your
school psychology
graduate experience better?

(7) What else do you want
to tell me about your
experiences as a school
psychology graduate
student?

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an important tenet of the trauma-informed approach. It coincides with bracketing and member-checking methods described above. Qualitative studies are susceptible to being dominated by the researcher's voice rather than the participants' if they impose their personal beliefs and interests on all stages of the process without the proper mitigating strategies (Mason, 2002). Therefore, triangulation of data sources, resources, and participants' quotes from their interviews were used to display the participants' perspectives. Results were triangulated across multiple participants.

Furthermore, member checking was used to validate or assess the trustworthiness of qualitative results (Doyle, 2007). The researcher actively engaged with the participants during the member checking focus group, which involved participants in the interpretation of the results. This involvement enhanced trustworthiness of the subsequent analysis.

Researcher Bias

The researcher identifies as a Black American second-generation immigrant with one foreign-born parent from the Caribbean Island of Dominica. She identifies as a cisgender heterosexual woman with spiritual and Christian influences and very liberal

political views. She was raised in the middle-class suburbs in South New Jersey, and she moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in adulthood. She was an adolescent mother and is currently a single mother of a teenage girl who identifies as having a disability in which she receives special education services. The researcher is a school psychology Ph.D. candidate and a practicing certified school psychologist. Her entire educational history was spent in PWIs. Table 3.1 contains the researcher's demographics information presented with the information reported by the participants of the study.

Bracketing is a phenomenological concept that requires one to refrain from imposing any perspectives other than those of the participants (Wertz, 2005). The researcher bracketed her assumption that other Black or African American students will report challenges like her own experiences in her school psychology program. The researcher documented her own experiences to bring awareness to her personal biases with publishing comments in the transcribed interviews.

It became apparent that the researcher had to distance herself from the participants and their experiences during the data collection and data analysis phases of the study. The stories of the participants weighed heavily on the researcher, and it required her to reflect, process and distance herself to mitigate the psychological load and continue the research project. These effects were not expected in the early stages of the project, and it required bracketing that emphasized the differences in personal experiences and professional identity. Emphasis was put on her differing parental status, the role her training has had on her parenting and advocacy, and the supports and opportunities she has had during training and practice as a school psychologist.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study was designed to capture the experiences of matriculated Black graduate students in school psychology programs across the United States of America. Demographic and program information were provided to observe intersectionality and program differences. A key element reported centered on if the participants attended a predominantly White institution (PWI) or a historically Black college or university (HBCU) for their school psychology training. Below highlights the individuals who dedicated time and space for this study. Pseudonyms of the participants' choice were used:

Descriptions of the Participants

Cassandra identified as a woman of Black or African American and German origin and as a second-generation immigrant who was raised in Germany. She was bilingual and able to speak German and English. Her past community where she was raised, and her community that she lived in during this study was urban. Furthermore, she identified herself as heterosexual, single and with no children. She reported not having any religious affiliations, and she endorsed having very liberal political views. At the start of the study, Cassandra reported to fall in the age range of 25-34. She was enrolled in an Educational Specialist-level school psychology program in a PWI located in the Northeast region of the United States of America. Her primary means of financial support was from her university and internship. She wanted to work in a school setting after graduation.

Chris identified as a woman of Black or African American origin and as a third-and-higher- generation immigrant with the primary language of English. Her past community where she was raised, and her community where she resided in at the time of this study was urban. Furthermore, she identified herself as heterosexual, single and with no children. She had a Christian religious affiliation with liberal political views. At the start of the study, Chris reported to fall in the age range of 18-24. She was enrolled in an Educational Specialist-level school psychology program in a PWI located in the Northwest region of the United States of America. Her primary means of financial support was from her school psychology internship. She wanted to work in a school setting after graduation.

Courtney identified as a woman of Black or African American and Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origins. She was a bilingual second-generation immigrant fluent in Haitian-Creole and English. Her past community where she was raised, and her community that she lived in during this study was urban. Furthermore, she identified herself as heterosexual, single and with no children. Her religious affiliation was Catholic, and she had very liberal political views. At the start of the study, Courtney reported to fall in the age range of 25-34. She was enrolled in a doctorate-level school psychology program in a PWI located in the Northeast region of the United States of America. Her primary means of financial support was from her university. After program completion, she wanted to pursue a postdoctoral fellowship and clinical licensure.

Eryn identified as a woman of Black or African American and as a second-generation immigrant with both of her parents being from Trinidad and Tobago. Her primary language was English. Her past community where she was raised, and her

community during this study was suburban. Furthermore, she identified herself as pansexual, single and with no children. Additionally, she identified herself as spiritual with liberal political views. At the start of the study, Eryn reported to fall in the age range of 25-34. She was enrolled in an Educational Specialist-level school psychology program in a PWI located in the Southwest region of the United States of America. Her primary means of financial support was from her university and internship. She wanted to work in a school setting after graduation.

Jackson identified as a man of Black or African American origin and a third-and-higher-generation immigrant, and his primary language was English. He was raised in a suburban community, and his community during the time of this study was urban. Furthermore, he identified as heterosexual and married with no children. He identified as having a Christian religious affiliation with very liberal political views. At the start of the study, Jackson reported to fall in the age range of 35-44. He was in his first year in a master's degree school psychology program in a PWI located in the Northeast region of the United States of America. His primary means of financial support was from his family. He wanted to work in a school setting when he graduates.

Kayla identified as a woman of Black or African American and Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origins. She reported being a bilingual third-and-higher-generation immigrant who speaks Spanish and English. She was raised in a suburban community, and her community at the time of the interview was rural. Furthermore, she identified herself as queer, single and with no children. She identified as spiritual with very liberal political views. At the start of the study, Kayla reported to fall in the age range of 25-34. She was enrolled in a doctorate-level school psychology program in a PWI located in the

Northeast region of the United States of America. Her primary means of financial support was from her university. After program completion, she wanted to pursue a postdoctoral fellowship and clinical licensure.

Krystal identified as a woman of Black or African American origin. She was a third-and-higher-generation immigrant with the primary language of English. Her past community where she was raised, and her community she lived in at the time of this study was urban. Furthermore, she identified herself as heterosexual, single and with no children. Her religious affiliation was Christian, and she had moderate political views. At the start of the study, Courtney reported to fall in the age range of 25-34. She was enrolled in a doctorate-level school psychology program in a HBCU located in the Southeast region of the United States of America. Prior to her enrollment in her HBCU, Krystal attended a PWI for her undergraduate and graduate studies. During this study, her primary means of financial support was from her HBCU. After program completion, she wanted to pursue a postdoctoral fellowship and clinical licensure.

Lauren identified as a woman of Black or African American origin. She was a third-and-higher-generation immigrant with the primary language of English. Her past community where she was raised, and her community she lived at the time of this study was suburban. Furthermore, she identified herself as heterosexual, married (or in a domestic partnership) and had no children. Her religious affiliation was Christian, and she had liberal political views. At the start of the study, Lauren reported to fall in the age range of 25-34. She was enrolled in a doctorate-level school psychology program in a HBCU located in the Southeast region of the United States of America. Prior to her enrollment in her HBCU, Lauren attended a PWI for her undergraduate studies. At the

time of this study, her primary means of financial support was from her HBCU. After program completion, she wanted to work in academia teaching and/or doing research.

Convergent Data

The collective narratives of Cassandra, Chris, Courtney, Eryn, Jackson, Kayla, Krystal, and Lauren revealed six salient themes, which highlight where the data converges. A theme is an extended phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about and/or what it means (Saldana, 2016). These themes were presented in the member checking focus groups, where the participants confirmed them to be true. Although the theme names may have changed since the focus groups, the content and sentiments remain the same.

The six themes of convergent data are: (1) Awareness of Intersectionality, (2) Black Representation Matters, (3) Black Mentor/Faculty as Support (4) Black Sociocultural Safe Spaces, (5) Cultural Incompetence at PWI, and (6) Unsupported Traumatic Experiences at PWI. These themes connect to the experiences that highlight how Black school psychology students acknowledged the intersectionality of themselves and people they serve, they emphasized the need to be represented in the field, they seek guidance from Black mentors or faculty, and they create, lead, and find groups of individuals with similar culture and interests. These cultural values remain saliant despite observed cultural incompetence during training on campus and field placements, which permeates unprocessed traumatic events experienced collectively at PWIs.

Awareness of Intersectionality

Each of the participants acknowledged their intersectionality and how intersectionality influences their position in the field. Intersectionality recognizes that

identity markers (e.g., "Black" and "woman") do not exist autonomously, and that each informs each other, often creating a complex convergence of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). Essentially, everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression, and the participants were aware of the social constructed identities that can marginalize themselves and other people, such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc.

Eryn began her interview by sharing her intersecting identities that brought her to the field of school psychology. She openly shared:

I identify as a Black, cisgender, pansexual, second-generation American. Throw a couple other things in there and my experiences in school, growing up in elementary and high school really shaped how I got to this position in the first place. Um, the combination of all those identities growing up in a suburban, mostly White area meant that I experienced a lot of challenges. And with the fact that I was a gifted child, who also had ADHD, and was never identified, um, had me questioning, what was it about me that got overlooked? Was there anything about me specifically that had the educators and the adults around me not pay that much attention to my educational processes? And how do I, as an adult, um, who now has the ability and the knowledge, not have that continue on for other students, so essentially, school psychology is completely fueled by my identity.

In 1903, W.E.B. Du Bois (1989) coined the term "double consciousness" to describe the intersecting identities and the experience of being Black and American. He described that as an American, we are measuring ourselves through the eyes of our

oppressor while managing oppression as a Black individual. This psychological challenge was emphasized by Eryn, as she reflected on her intersecting identities by noting:

> Because I feel like Black women specifically, um we have a very very specific place within society, within American culture, and even within academia. Also, the intersection of those identities. It's like, oh gosh, I'm forgetting the term. But it's like double discrete. That is term double discrimination, um where the support from one and the support from the other major group are still not made for us. Myself as a woman cannot rely on the feminist movement because that has nothing to do with me and has shown time and time again it will go out of its way to make sure it has nothing to do with me. And we've seen so much of that in the media news stories. Too many to say, and the same thing within the Black community… or some reason as women. And then I'm also going to pull in being pansexual in there. As a queer woman, I am the bottom of the barrel, with a disability [ADHD], just throw me away. Uhm, so I struggle with being able to talk about my experiences in any spaces by purely saying I'm a woman or purely saying I'm Black because the intersection of the two gives me a completely unique experience uhm, that I see everywhere, in everything, jobs, even in different things that I do for leisure. I cannot separate the two. So, I have to talk about them both.

Courtney acknowledged these challenges of intersectionality by extending her observations to the population of marginalized youth that she serves. She revealed how her intersecting identities help her advocate for Black and Brown youth by stating:

My identity as a Black person, um… probably is a little bit more salient. I know, earlier, in my research, where I was really focused um… like Black women and Black girls err… that intersectional piece, I never, I always use them as one. Um… but seeing how things are unfolding, or just seeing how things are in a lot of urban schools um, recognizing and it also being frustrating. The fact is that a lot of Black and Brown children are overrepresented in special education and remedial courses. Um… I'm like, this is important um... and when I come in, I come in as a Black person and I, in a very nice way, sometimes um... trying to really help teachers, even other school psychs understand that um… *what you're seeing is not that there's something wrong with the child. What you're seeing is not um… that the child cannot do this um…. It's just that they come from a different cultural upbringing*… certain behaviors that are normed and are normal in the communities that they're being brought up on. It's not that it shouldn't be counted against them. I think that's the main thing that I'm saying um… and it's frustrating because a lot of, unfortunately, White teachers and White school administrators um… even sometimes White advisors, kind of focus on the view of Black and Brown children from a deficit lens and and that literally grinds my gears, because it's like, you know, little Timmy can get away with things that um, err… I don't know… Elijah cannot, and yeah, so that's a long winded way of saying, yes, my Black identity is probably a little bit more salient than my other identities er… as I don't know, like, I try not to parse them out. But I know in terms of settings, like people view me first as a Black person than second, unfortunately.

Courtney connoted how her intersectionality helps her advocate. Relatedly, Kayla

acknowledged the saliency of being Black and how it influences her work during her

training. Kayla shared:

> I would say, um, predominantly, my identities, like my racial ethnic identity
>
> seems to be the most salient for me for a few different reasons. Um, I feel like it's
>
> often the one that is talked about within our field in terms of equity. Um, it's often,
>
> of course, the one that's most visible, the one that people will speak to in terms of
>
> under-representation within our fields, and in the context of the communities that
>
> we serve, and the students and youth that we serve. So, I feel like it's at the
>
> forefront of conversations and trainings within a lot of the, um, resources. And I
>
> would say, faculty mentorship opportunities, that, um, discussions and dialogues
>
> and professional development that I'm a part of. So, I would say that's probably
>
> the most salient for a lot of those reasons. Um, but I think also just within like, in
>
> my own sort of interest and thinking about equity, racial ethnic identity certainly
>
> is at the forefront of my mind, and how my identity sort of weaves into that area
>
> of interest in particular.

Lauren had the unique experience of not having her intersectionality in the

forefront of her mind simply because she experienced psychological security being in a

school psychology program housed in a HBCU, where she was surrounded by a

community of individuals with identities like her own. Lauren said:

> So, in my program, um with it being at an HBCU, um it's focused on, you know,
>
> serving the underserved, um minoritized children. Cultural competence, you

know, those are like the cornerstones of our program. So, I've, to be honest, I don't

think about my identity, like as a Black woman 24/7 at my program. And I think

that's because, you know, all of my cohort members, um identify as Black women

as well. Um, you know, and we have Black professors. Um, you know, a lot of the

times when we're put in like, our practicum placements, we're in predominantly

Black schools. Um, but I would say the most recent time that I had to think about

it, or do think about it often, um is at my current placement. Because in that sense,

I'm… I feel like I–it's like a culture shock almost. Um, because it's not a

predominantly Black space. So, I have to kind of, I feel like I'm thinking twice

sometimes, um about, you know, maybe my competencies or things like that.

Although Lauren shared that her identities were in alignment with her peers and faculty at

her HBCU, her intersectionality was most overt in her field placements. Lauren noted:

So-so yeah. So, when I'm there [at practicum], um you know it's just a different

experience. I feel like I'm thinking about, uh, being a Black woman more there,

but I-I think it's just a result of not, you know, seeing anyone, um that looks like

me. My other placement was predominantly White, um like predominantly upper-

class families. Um, so you know a lot of students, they were getting, you know,

outside evaluations and things like that. Now, my supervisor, she identifies she's a

Black woman as well. Um, but you know even still, I-I felt like in that space you

know you're kind of under a microscope, almost, um. And I-I just felt like it was a

little harder to, like assume that student role or like the learner role, um. I don't

know, I-I just didn't feel as comfortable making mistakes, um, and like having the

ability to really learn (*Laughs*.) in that space like I did in some of my other

placements. Um, and that could have been a result of, you know, the supervision style and stuff like that. But, um, you know? I just think it's like the hypervisibility, like, you know. So, it just makes it hard.

The participants noted that they are aware of their intersecting identities, and not only do they reflect on how oppressive intersectionality can be, but they also note intersectionality as the fuel as they advocate, research and practice in the field.

Black Representation Matters

All participants described the need and responsibility for them and other Black professionals to be present in the field and across settings in field placements and academia. They referred to the demographics of the field and noted the statistics related to the underrepresentation of Black practitioners. Below are excerpts associated with this theme.

Chris openly shared how she wanted to represent for the Black community in the field of school psychology by stating:

I would say more specifically me being a Black individual. The field of school psychology is currently women. White women. Um, I'm a woman obviously, so we have that in common, but as a Black woman, the world has often told us that we can't do certain things because we are Black women. So, I don't wanna do the stereotypical thing that, you know, Black women are told to do, or Black individuals are told to do. Just graduate high school, barely. Go to either trade school or go straight to working. Like, I know the potential in me. I can do better. I strive to do better. I can achieve better. And, also, I set that precedence for my community… um, that y'all can do better. You all have the potential to do better,

so do better. So, as a Black individual, I have never strayed away from education. It's been my thing. It's been my jam, so I was like, you know what, Imma do this. I'm gonna take a shot in the dark. I didn't know any other Black school psychologists when I was applying, when I was in the coursework, nothing. I'm gonna do it, and I'm gonna show myself and my community that it can be done for me and for y'all.

Krystal noted that a driving force for her attending an HBCU was representation, and it also informed her desire to be a school psychologist. Krystal reported:

I think it [school psychology] literally just combined all interests together to the point to where it was like, you know, and it has enough flexibility as a woman of color that I was like, *okay, if I want to decide to go private practice, I can do this. If I decide I want to go into academia, I can do this. If I want to go to the schools, I can do this. I can just start.* I think it was really like the versatility that it gives me as being a Black woman and being able to navigate in and out of these spaces. And especially because I did everything so young, people are like, *oh my God, how do you have all this work experience?* And I'm like, *I was done with a master's degree by the time I was 22. And so, I went straight into the, um, into the work field.* And so, I think being younger and also just me being like, *okay, I want to be the first person in my family to actually, um, accomplish this*. And when I think about who I'm doing it for or what reasons I'm doing it for, I think it's really like that little girl in the back of my head that it's like, *you know, this is who you needed when you were younger.* And so, my identities, I would say, um, being a Black woman, of course, representation, representation, representation.

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Cassandra was raised outside of the United States of America, and this need of representation has been prevalent since she was a young girl in Germany. She stressed the importance of being represented in the field of school psychology by sharing:

Yes, I wanna say that's probably the number one reason why I chose this career, as mentioned in my demographics, I grew up in a predominantly White neighborhood. It was culturally diverse. I grew up in Germany, but Europe has very open borders. So, the school that I went to was an inner city school with Spanish students, Italian, Turkish, so there were a lot of different cultures. But skin color wise, I was still very separate and there were not any, or really, like you can count the amount of Black students that were in the school and that is even mixed race if you put them together with African students, for example. And so, growing up, I did not have any teachers of color. No doctors. No real people of color in like higher education positions, and those with higher levels of education, and so I always, I was drawn to every person of color that I saw, and therefore felt like, *okay, I want to be that person represented like for me when I was younger*, you know? Being able to say, *hey, this teacher looks like me. This doctor looks like me,* and so I was super interested about, you know, the theory of mind and just socialization, and so that kind of came together with psychology.

Kayla shared her intersectionality and emphasized that representation in higher education uplifts marginalized groups. She shared:

I would say as a whole, um our representation or lack of representation within higher education certainly played a huge role in my decision to go ahead and pursue higher education. So as noted, I identify as a woman, I identify as a part of

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the LGBTQ community, as a Latina, as a Black American, as well. And so just

coming within my community, I was certainly looking to be able to make an

impact in my community, but also be a role model of coming from um an

underserved community, having had or identifying with all of those backgrounds,

and then taking that into the field of higher education to make sure that our

perspectives, our voices, and our community is heard and represented within the

different fields. With school psychology, in particular, I was not really aware of

the field of school psychology within my own experiences within my own

community. So that came much later on, um through different work experiences.

Ultimately, the participants noted that their intersecting identities were not being

reflected in school psychology, and they felt responsible to enter school psychology for

themselves and others.

Black Mentor/Faculty as Support

Each of the participants identified as Black or African American, and they

deemed it important to be supported by Black mentors and faculty to aid in their

professional development.

Cassandra shared that her school psychology program was deliberate in

connecting her to the only Black faculty member. Additionally, Cassandra intentionally

selected this school psychology program due to the presence of this Black faculty

member. Cassandra revealed:

I doubt that it was coincidental, but I was paired with the only school psych Black

person, the only Black faculty member for any mentorship role, so she was my

direct supervisor for my graduate assistantship, she was my advisor from like,

who they pair you with, and then she's also my chair for my research thesis, which
I chose her for that, but, so I had her and we would meet once a month, but also
like unscheduled check-ins here and there. What drew me to that program was
that she was in that program, me, a student, seeing a faculty member of color. So,
I think by having her there, she's already forcing some of the change.

Jackson revealed that the Black faculty member in his school psychology program
gives him confidence and support. During the interview, he shared that her presence
attracted him to his school psychology program, and he acknowledged her role in the
classroom as impactful. Jackson shared:

Yeah, so I would say that I 100% struggle from imposter syndrome. And, you
know, sometimes it's like, sometimes only to say that because it seems to
sometimes mitigate race, you know, like when it's because it's just thrown around
imposter syndrome. Yeah, we all suffer like, well, there's a particular way that I
arrived, right particular voices that I have that are from, you know, they're
oppressive voices, right? So it's like, showing up in class. Very difficult because,
well, here's the key thing, right? I struggled in undergrad, I went to an Ivy. I was
an athlete. Regardless of my aptitude, there were a lot of things that happened that
made me feel like I didn't belong. And so I had a very, I performed poorly. So I
took a bunch of prereqs, in order to apply to grad school, you know, 15 years
later, but I'm still carrying that from undergrad. Right. So now it's like, even
though I've done well, in my prereqs, it's like, now I'm stepping into graduate
school. Like, it's important. It's, it's, it's going to be different than what I just
experienced. And so I really struggled with the beginning feeling like I could do

it, which is still silly, right? I mean, it's not judging. It's what it is. But I really struggled with believing that I can do it, despite a lot of evidence that showed I could. And luckily, thankfully, it was actually why I chose the school I'm going to, but there's a professor, who is a Black woman who's very, very influential in the field. And she's very helpful in giving feedback, and saying. *I am checking in* and just like, you know, *my doors are open*. Virtual doors are open right now, right? But one of the things that she does is like, she's very straightforward, right, like, so in class. She got upset with us one time because she's like, *everybody's talking around this, why aren't we just calling this racism?* And we're just like, *right? Right*. But it was like, in that moment, I thought it was important because it was like, okay, what are some of the things that I've been conditioned to do? Separate, right? More importantly, it's just like, *man, look at this Black woman.* Like, just commanding class, saying it what it is, you know, like, *man, look at all the work she had to do to get to that point to show up*. But it's like, it's inspiring for me, you know? I mean, it's like, *okay, all right. I can do this, like, in my little small way, you know what I mean, within classes, like, she's doing it in the field.*

Krystal shared that her mentor supported her in and out of the classroom. Additionally, she shared that she helped her get her research fellowship position, which came with a stipend and tuition remission. She noted this as being a rare find at her underfunded HBCU. Krystal shared:

My research, um, advisor has been a great support. Um, not only is she my mentor, but I also have, uh-- I think she teaches-- she's kind of stretched thin, um, and it shows, but she teaches three courses. Um, so I also see her in class, as well

as checking in, you know, um, and making sure that I'm on track with my goals.

So, we at least do-- I don't know, I actually check in with her a whole lot because

of my research fellowship. I have to check in with her once a week and then on

top of the three classes and then my dissertation research and then the other two

classes. So, um, she's been a great help.

This sample of excerpts elaborates on the need for the participants to have

mentorship and guidance from Black faculty. Black faculty served as an exemplar and a

cornerstone of support and professional development. Lastly, Black mentorship and

faculty informed their wellness and continued enrollment in their respective school

psychology programs.

Black Sociocultural Safe Spaces

Each of the students mentioned formal supports that their universities had to offer.

The formal supports were writing centers, counseling centers, and disability resource

centers. These supports were casually mentioned, but commonly not used by the

participants. Many of this led to them creating, leading, and finding safe spaces in-person

and virtually. Their unique minoritized identities along with their graduate-level status

needed more than what was being offered.

Creating, Leading, and Finding Safe Spaces For Us, By Us (FUBU). Kayla

shared that she did use some of the formal supports offered at her university, but it

resulted in continued need, and she found peers who agreed, and with the support of her

PWI's social justice department, she created a space for them. Kayla described this

below:

A new resource that I wish I had come earlier um is a center for racial equity. Essentially, it's a new resource that's on campus. It's housed within our College of Ed, however, or I believe, a little bit broader. It's housed or founded by faculty within our College of Ed. We're very connected to it. But it's faculty within our social justice department. So it's a little bit removed from the school psychology program. Um but they've offered professional development, they've offered sort of safe and inclusive spaces um, where we can process different things that happen like when we come down to all of these recent verdicts and court rulings associated with a lot of the outcomes of Black Lives Matter. So, they've created spaces where students of color or indigenous youth, whomever, can come together with community members beyond the university campus or within, to have these important critical moments of reflection and discussion and processing and safe spaces. So, I'm super appreciative of that. Um and then lastly, it is a self-created space, my peer and I were in our fourth year, we're part of our student organization. Within, within our program, it's called a, we just call it our current graduate programs, school leadership for school psychology.

Lauren identified a problem with her school psychology program at her HBCU, and she garnered support to lead and aid in change as president of her student organization. Lauren noted that:

Um, we basically have, we don't have, um accreditation or, um approval at the moment. And it's something that's kind of been like, very frustrating, um, you know, for a variety of reasons, you know. Um, and I think that has been like the biggest, like, looming thing for us in the past. I mean it's what is this? Like, the

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second year now? So, I currently serve as the president, like, of our student org.

Um, and it's something that like, I-I don't want to say, like, take all the credit for,

but, you know, like as the president, kind of spearheaded it. Um, and I found it

extremely challenging, um because it is a hard conversation to navigate.

Additionally, Lauren expounded on tackling the problem of lack of accreditation with the

support from her peers and collaboration with her faculty. She mentioned:

I do feel like, you know, faculty have been trying their best, you know, to, to do

what they can. You know, to address whatever they can, like you know, that's

reasonable. Um, so in terms of feeling supported with that, um I would say 95%

of the support that I have felt has actually come from my cohort. Um, and other

people in the program. Um, so you know making me feel like, you know I can go

out, and I can present this information to faculty, you know almost as like a-a,

student leader or whatever, you know. Um, you know I think like just having that

confidence boost knowing there's people behind me that support me, they share

the same, you know, concerns as I do things like that. Um, and as far as faculty

support, you know just them being open to listen.

Eryn expressed the need to have supports outside of her school psychology

program, where many issues arose that hampered her trust. Her sorority has been a haven

for her. Eryn said:

I'm a member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated, which is one of the

nine historical Black Greek-letter sororities and fraternities. Mine was founded at

a PWI by seven Black female educators, um, which is kind of the people they

attract. So being able to reach out to my sorority sisters and realize that I'm not

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crazy for the experiences that I've had. I'm so blessed to be surrounded by so many highly educated Black women in education, um where I can reach out to this person, that person, sometimes people that I don't even know and ask them about their experiences and their grad programs and their experiences, being an adjunct professor here, et cetera, and what's it like for them, being a Black woman in these spaces and hearing that I'm living a shared experience has been such a huge help, because if I didn't know that I wasn't the only one going through it, I don't think I would have been able to continue going through it.

Facebook Groups. Facebook was a virtual space used by the participants. Particularly, the participants mentioned two Facebook groups, Black School Psychologists, which is a private group of over 1,000 members, and School Psych Sistahs, which is also a private group with almost 2,000 members. Cassandra discovered these groups while networking. She shared:

Okay. So, I sought out other Black school psychologists, so I met a gentleman during a school psychology conference, great conversation and right away, he said, h*ey, let me put you in contact with these, kind of supports 'cause you might, they might be beneficial to you, don't feel obligated that you have to*, but, he shared two Facebook groups with me… One of them is Black School Psychologists on Facebook and the other one is School Psych Sistahs. I think that's the full name. Mm-hmm, and it's just great because they're brutally honest in those chatrooms and a great form of support just because I feel comfortable reaching out to them. They have a mentorship program and then, yeah, so, and I

stayed in contact with the Black school psychologist that I met at the conference, so if I had any questions or concerns, I posed those to him.

Chris was having a difficult time during her studies, and she yearned for support. She searched for it and discovered it online. She said:

I reached out to Facebook groups. Black School Psychologists is amazing. School Psych Sistahs is amazing. Um, and just being able to share with them my experiences because they've been through it, lived it, done it. And, being able to have my feelings validated. Like, no, I'm not going crazy. That like, *I feel like I'm being graded harder because I'm the only Black girl in the classroom,* or *professors feel like they can communicate with me differently because of how I show up, and how I identify*. So, that was extremely validating just for me, but it was difficult just to have to search for it. I'm glad I found it. Uh, I wish I would've found it sooner, or at least know I would have to find it, so I could've done some of the legwork before. But, being 'the only' in my program, or like, in a room, was something I wasn't really prepared for.

The participants curated and/or accessed virtual and in-person spaces that catered to their needs stemming from their racial identities. These spaces were needed in times of stress, and ultimately, contributed to their retention in their school psychology programs.

Cultural Incompetence at PWI

The participants valued positive action steps when serving marginalized groups and when being students in their respective programs. Moreover, the participants showed the compacity to identify cultural incompetence and culturally responsive practices in their field placements and training programs. Below are excerpts centered on the cultural

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incompetence. It is important to note that both Krystal and Lauren, who were in HBCU school psychology programs, attended PWIs during their undergraduate studies, and their narratives support this theme. Below is a sample of the excerpts associated with this theme.

Kayla pointed out that prior to grad school, there was a time where certain social issues were not addressed, but during her school psychology studies, they are using language to focus on social issues, but the institution is lagging in intervention. Kayla said:

I reflect on just some of my work experiences prior to grad school, where there were instances of very challenging, challenging things happening in my community with no response within the schools that I worked in, no response to the families that I worked with. And then I think about and reflect on the responsiveness that happens now, and just the buzzwords that are out there with being trauma sensitive, culturally responsive, or culturally sustaining or having these pedagogies that center our identity, our identities as a whole. So, I think there's a lot of growth in the responsiveness, I would say and in or in the initial responsiveness and reaction, I think, and in the language and dialogue. Um, and then I think as with all progress, we're just slow to act. I think that it's there, and I'm very grateful that there is just a general language that I feel like even if we don't have necessarily action happening, or I don't see individuals that look like me, or that I can necessarily identify with in some of these spaces, there's a general language that's kind of been brought out there and has progressively come into these spaces, especially within higher education that help to get these

dialogues happening. I just think I've similarly with the APA apology [to Black people], there's a lot of words, there's a lot of language um that we fall back on. And then I think we just kind of stay in this stagnant place of not acting or inaction. So that is sometimes where I feel like okay, well, we've done it, there's been a lot, but it took us a long, a good amount of time just to get to words just to get the language out there where people are like, *yes, this is what we should be doing.* Um, but what does that look like in action? What does that look like in practice?

Jackson aired his grievances on how best practices and the APA make multicultural standards, which are practically ignored in his coursework. Jackson reflected on the self-segregated seating arrangements in one of his classes that was a missed multicultural learning opportunity. Jackson shared:

When I'm in other classes, that are like maybe led by a White male professor. And you're like, *okay, we're talking about, let's say, cognitive tests.* From the first day, until the last day or last class yesterday. However, there was class in-person, however it happened, but all four or five White students sat on one side. And then it's like, people of color. Like, literally, like, non-Black, not one. What is a better way to put it? Yeah, just like people who are people of color, but aren't Black, and then there were Black students. So, we've went from Black, people of color, Black sitting together to White people sitting together. And I'm like, are we discussing all the environmental things that occur in schools, like, when it makes sense to just like, stop class one day, and say *hey, anybody else noticed this?* Because it's

like, when we split up into teams to do an activity, like we're splitting up pretty much based on race, right? Like, we're all feeling it, we're all sitting like, so.

Cassandra reflected on the false advertising of cultural competence when it is not being prioritized and being seen as an afterthought in her school psychology program and classes. Cassandra said:

What I think could have gone better is I was really drawn to the cultural competence part, that is, what it was supposed to be, or was advertised to be incorporated in each class and it's really important to me and I saw that for each class, but it was more so on the backburner. It's like, *yeah, we are doing it like right before Christmas, or right before the semester ends, like, like it's on a checklist.* Like we advertise that we were going to do it, we're going to do it. But you know how, like me, we all know how school is, you run behind you never really fully on schedule and then you have all of these things that you also need to get done. So, the thing you didn't get to yet is going to have less and less, class time to really be discussed and so I think it should, it should have gotten received more time and more discussion and, you know, more, it should have been a priority, and it wasn't, and I think if they changed that around, it will be better also.

Eryn shared her experience taking a multicultural counseling class that she felt was not designed for her, and when she tried to advocate for herself, she got pushback from her professor and his colleagues. She said:

I just completed an advanced multicultural counseling course. This is the second time I've taken this course. First time I took this course, I failed because all I did

was argue with my professor, a White man in a class full of White women, like two Hispanic girls, I think (*Laughs*). The text was not written for me. The text was written from the perspective of a White counselor to other White counselors. When I expressed and then we were also prescribed, we were also asked to read and repeatedly report on White Fragility, which has nothing to do with me. So, I regularly expressed that. And in order to answer different questions and assignments and prompts, I would just use my own resources, which he had a huge problem with. And I think the one instance that had me fail completely was a unit on how to counsel clients of African descent and the chapters (*laughs*) that we were supposed to read open by saying that North Africa is part of the Middle East. And I was like, no (*laughs*). Then it went on to talk about Black Americans as if they were the entire diaspora, which is also very succinct and specific. So, in my assignments I explained, especially being a member of the diaspora that is not purely Black American. I'm Black and I'm in America, but I'm not Black American. So, I had to try and explain that because with the resources I was using, I needed to make that distinction. Uhm and they asked me, *where would I know that from?* Day to day life, 27 years of experience doing it personally, uhm and because I was fighting so hard about that assignment specifically because I failed it, which made no sense because it was beautifully written. I took it to a review board who also sided with the professor on technicalities–using the resources provided to show mastery of the subject and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And I argued, I don't need to demonstrate mastery of the subject because this is

legitimately my personal experience. And what I did was back up my personal

experience with all kinds of resources that match my personal experience.

Krystal disclosed her experience interviewing at a school psychology program

housed in a PWI. She felt unwelcomed in an environment that did not appear inclusive.

Krystal said:

> I remember going, um, to an unsaid PWI and, um, it was about 20 people there
>
> interviewing and across the whole school psych department it was about 60
>
> people there. And, um, you know, as the only Black woman there, I went in there,
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> and I cried. I just-- I went to the bathroom, and I was crying, and I called my
>
> mom, and I was crying, and she was like, *okay, just come home*. You know, that
>
> was, that's what she said. She was like, *just come out*. She was like, *just walk out*.
>
> I was like, *well, you know, they paid for my flight and my hotel and everything, I*
>
> *don't want to just leave*. And she was like, *no, you can leave*. And so, you know,
>
> after I put on my big girl panties and, um, got it together and just looked in the
>
> mirror, I was like, you know, *when you're asking for a seat at the table, this is*
>
> *what it might very much so look like. You may literally be the only one out of 90*.
>
> And, um, you know, so I went back in there and I had already made it up in my
>
> mind though that I wasn't going to the university regardless of if they accepted me
>
> or not. And it kind of changed the way in which I interviewed with them because
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> they were asking me questions and I asked them questions back. I was like, *I just*
>
> *really want to know, did you all not have any Black or Hispanic candidates, or*
>
> *did you all just not choose to interview them?* And, you know, *they were so blown*
>
> *back from my question*. And, you know, I just kept on asking them questions like,

you know, your website says that you value diversity, equity, and inclusion in this

way, but what way does it show up in your program? Because I'm looking at five

cohorts and I only see one person that looks like me.

Cassandra, Chris, Courtney, Eryn, Jackson, and Kayla attended school psychology programs at PWIs. Lauren graduated from an undergraduate program and was enrolled in a school psychology program at an HBCU. Krystal graduated from undergraduate and graduate programs at PWI, she interviewed at doctoral school psychology programs at PWIs, and she shared reflections on culturally incompetence at PWI. Krystal and Lauren both noted that the oppressive nature of the PWIs that they attended influenced their choice to attend HBCUs. The cultural incompetence observed by all participants can trickle into macro- and micro-levels of trauma in PWIs.

Unsupported Traumatic Experiences at PWI

Traumatic experiences are subjective; however, the negative impact of trauma can universally accumulate over time when left unaddressed. Each participant mentioned having been impacted by traumatic events related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter movement, systemic trauma, and personal trauma. Below are excerpts associated with this theme.

Systemic Oppression and Trauma. Jackson's perspectives were informed by being a Black man in the field of education, how the world sees him negatively, and how this affects his psyche. Here, he reflected on how it is to commute to his university. Jackson shared:

I live in an urban city and just getting to school, you know, it's like a calculation

of how to keep myself safe. And just considering that as I'm, yeah, I mean, I

would say just even like, trying to deal with security. It's like I always, you know, got annoyed because this was same way undergrad, right? Where it's like, it's all people of color who are the security, right? But who's overseeing the security? Who's implementing the policies? Who's, who's? Who's setting the tone for how they're going to interact with students, right? So, it always feels very oppressive. Walking down to school campuses. For me, because it's like, I'm like, what are the ways in which I need to, like, convey that I'm a student, you know, like, because I don't want to be, I don't want to have to deal with like, the extra questioning or whatever, you know, it's like, little, little things that aren't little things. But you know, it's just like, you know, how I walk or how I approach the security gate, you know, how I uncover my, my hood, how I say, like, you know, it's just like, all this shit, excuse me, is, you know, this is all this stuff that you feel burdened to do. To get onto the campus. And then you'd like to believe that you're now like, sitting down, and you're just like, ready? But you're not always. And I've found that what has been helpful for me over the last few years is like to counteract. Yeah, maybe it's like, I'm here, because I really enjoy learning. Love it. I just like knowing more, but I'm equipping myself with something greater. Right? Like, that's the way I look at it. But I have to hold that. So, like, suppress the other stuff, right?

COVID-19 Pandemic. Courtney reflected on a time when she had to manage her studies as well as cope when a loved one contracted COVID-19. This event was coupled with insensitivity from her faculty at her school psychology program. Courtney shared:

There's this lack of sensitivity, er… especially when you're going through challenging experiences, especially if you um… are in need of support um… the way that some of the faculty respond is that you're supposed to push through that. It's like, okay, if you want to break, you can take a break, but only within these parameters and some, it baffles me because it's like, well, you are a psychologist, like at the end of the day, you're a psychologist, and you're, you know, working with um… children, well, supposedly working with children who've had like, significant trauma history or, you know, have or are going through stuff. Where's the sensitivity? Where's the understanding? Where's the flexibility? Um… and I know, when I think about the pandemic um… there was a lot of concern. I know, when my brother, like, he had COVID, but he was asymptomatic um… and it's interesting the reaction of like, oh, it's like, there'll be like, oh, it's, it comes down to performing, to performance and being performative and a lot of things. But um… it's like, okay, so okay, *do you need anything?* Um…. But I will still get an email like, *oh, you're, you're missing this work? You know, do you, are you going to turn this in? When are you going to turn this in?* And it's like, *well, right now, my family is going through something and that's my priority.*

Black Lives Matter Movement. The Black Lives Matter movement signifies the social protests related to the racism, discrimination, inequity, and violence against Black individuals in the United States of America. Krystal compared the universities' responsiveness to the deaths of Black people during her time at a PWI versus her current HBCU. She said:

When I was at the PWI, I felt like it was a really, um-- Like racially, it was a lot

going on. So that was like, when it was the Trayvon Martin case, it was like all of

these things. And I mean, I guess it's much like what's going on now, but, um, and

we were also doing a boycott called Being Black at [PWI]. And it was like this

really big protest where, you know, we didn't go to class on some days and it was

a list of eight demands that everybody was going through because it was a

collective that we were feeling these microaggressions or just feeling like we

weren't being necessarily heard at the university. And so, I would say like, you

know, you would go in classes and they're like, oh my God, um, yeah, he

deserved to die and all of these things and really just feeling like, you know, you

have to support the entire Black race and professors wouldn't necessarily, um, try

to facilitate these conversations. So, you know, you would almost be in a heated

argument (*Laughs*.) or something and you're like, *oh my God*. Versus now, when I

walk in a classroom and my professor is like, *"I know you all have seen this or*

you read about it? What do you think about it? How are you all feeling? Should

we go through with class today, you know, can you all take it? How can I support

you?" And, you know, also expressing their feelings and their concerns about it.

So sometimes I think about the lack of resources kind of outweighing-- I mean,

no, the, my, the support that I receive as far as my mental health outweighing, um,

the lack of resources in some cases.

Kayla reflected on how instances of hate crimes increased at her university during

a time when she was coping with the effects of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter

movement. This led to her feeling isolated from her university. She shared:

I think this is more possibly an experience of being at a PWI. But my institution in particular has had quite a few hate crimes, like activities, very much centered in targeting Black students and communities of students on our campus. Um so for me, that's certainly I think, probably in combination with all of the events of um that led up to the Black Lives Matter movement, and the violence towards Black individuals that was prevalent during 2020, and during COVID. For me, those experiences were extremely challenging. And I would certainly say that they brought up traumatic incidents for my community, or whatever ties that I have at home. I have, I come from a suburban community that is predominantly Black and Latino, um, and low income. Um and so I think when instances like that occurred on campus, I certainly had a very visceral reaction, um, that I would associate with a trauma response. And so, and I think it impacted me throughout all of my work, like I had a certain expectation, certainly of my faculty and felt like it was the responsibility of my faculty to take care, or to respond to um, those events and to check in to make sure that students of color, or students that were targeted in any sort of way were supported and felt okay in those moments. They've happened, I think, every year in the fall, a series of different hate crime events targeting either Jewish students or Black students, or LGBTQ students has happened um on campus, primarily within the scope of undergrad. But we're made aware of it, it's circulated, students are talking about it, right, and some of the images, language, um and all of that is also shared. And oftentimes it is, it has been pretty explicit discrimination, it has been very hateful, hurtful, harmful words um that I feel like I brought up some sense of fear, sense of like, lack of

connection, do I belong here, lots of um different feelings and emotions for me. And so those have been pretty, that has been pretty prevalent, I think, and shifted the way that I've interacted um interacted with my school psychology program, and my faculty and sort of the expectations I put forward and some of the actions that I put forward as a student, to make sure that if I didn't get the responses that I felt like should be there, or if students weren't necessarily being reached out to, what can we do? What do we need to do? Because I like, I said, I associated a lot of these things with trauma. But I think we also are living in a context right now where these things feel more visceral, and they certainly felt more visceral for me.

Personal Traumatic Events. Eryn bravely disclosed her personal traumatic events that occurred during her studies. Her program did not respond to her needs effectively, but she still advocated for herself. Eryn said:

Okay. So uhm, my school psychology journey was also kind of long. I was in a three-year program, but right now it's like approaching, like, the very end of four. And then I had a program switch in the middle, but that's a completely different situation. Uhm, oh my goodness, no I think it's four. I started in 2017, August 2017, and I'm just now finally finishing in May 2022. So, it's been a length of time. And um, my biggest challenge is that I had a lot of life happen while I was in grad school. And I think the biggest issue was in June, July 2019, where three very significant things happened. Uhm, number one, I was struggling with, like I would just say, financial insecurity. I have this incessant need to feel like I have to have a job. I have to have a job. I need to do practicum hours. Practicum means

school. And school is you know 8 to 5-ish, and so are most jobs. How do I do this? So, I found a position in a short-term residential therapeutic program, essentially a group home for mothering teens. So, teens and their babies. Twelve girls, nine babies, all in this huge house. And I was really invested in that job. But obviously there's a lot of hazards that happens with the kids just based off their trauma and how they got there. Most of them were um trafficking victims. And on one day in the end of June, I had a young lady that I've been working with very closely before she was pregnant. After she was pregnant, she had a very traumatic birth experience, pre-eclampsia, and all kinds of horrible things. And then her child was taken away from her while she was in the hospital and recovering. So, I was really mending her through a postpartum just general depression and also getting her to try and graduate high school.

So, June, she's about to graduate high school, and then one day she AWOLs with her girlfriend, and she hadn't done that in months. So, this day she AWOLs, and then she got into a car accident and died…. with a fresh newborn, I think he was only three weeks old at the time. And the day before, we have bought her graduation dress. And I think she was one of two other Black girls in the group home. So, I had a very specific connection with her, and it was very hard for me to get through. So, I took some time off, expressed that to my professors. But the day I attempted to express that to my professors, my dad fell and broke his ribs and cracked his windpipe. So now I have two tragedies running around. And then, uhm, years ago, I was sexually assaulted, and I learned that my abuser had moved

back into the area. So, all of this happened within the span of three days. And I called my professors. I was like, look, I don't get it. I don't get it. No, I need some time off, please. And thank you. And what I did not expect…was the best way I can summarize it is gas lighting. Uhm, I feel like with graduate programs, there's so much stress that everyone is under. Uhm and it's not like we're undergrads just starting life. We don't have many things established. Some people have established families, businesses, whatever. And I feel like if this graduate student needs time off for whatever reason, it should be granted essentially no questions asked. What I wasn't expecting was to be put under a graduate review and then be asked so many details about the multiple fresh traumas that clearly is not going to have me participating in school very well.

So, what we did was have me go for a term. They expressed concern about my ability to finish because there was, like, transition in the program in itself. So, the three-year program, the two-year program I was enrolling in the three-year program, and they were trying to make people fit, and it was weird. So, they expressed concern about the fact the timelines were changing. They want me to adapt. And I was like, that's cool, whatever. It's just I can't right now. And because I didn't take enough time off. Again, my terms are eight weeks. So, eight weeks is not enough time for any of that. But I took the time off for the term. Then I came back the next term, and clearly, I'm still working through these traumas. Um and that ended up me having to take off another term down the road, um and then a third term after that. Uhm and each time I had to meet with a board of professors,

and the program director you know asked me, why do I keep taking time off? And I'm just like I told you all. Uhm, so I think, with that as well, it's also pretty triggering just being a Black woman in America. My experiences never seem to hold weight in most of the spaces that I occupy. And it was kind of unexpected to also have that same experience in a field where everyone is a psychologist and counselor. So, I guess I was in grad school with kind of maybe rose-tinted glasses, you could say, um and really having to take them off and be like, no, America is America is America. It doesn't matter what space I'm occupying. I'm going to have the Black Woman experience no matter where I am. And that was the hardest thing for me to get through, and I'm still getting through it, to be honest.

All participants endorsed experiencing trauma during their studies. Additionally, when sharing their woes with their PWIs, the PWIs' responses did not align with trauma-informed approaches. This contributed to *Feelings of Isolation at PWI* and led participants to seek support outside of their universities or departments.

Divergent Data

The six themes emphasized above were prevalent across all participants. However, there were divergences reported by Krystal and Lauren, who both attended a HBCU, in comparison to Cassandra, Chris, Courtney, Eryn, Jackson, and Kayla, who all attended PWIs. The categories of divergent data are: (1) Lack of Accreditation at HBCU, (2) Sense of Belonging at HBCU, and (3) Feelings of Isolation at PWI.

Lack of Accreditation at HBCU

Krystal and Lauren shared that their school psychology programs' lack of accreditation is a concern. However, none of the participants who attended PWIs reported

this as a concern. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is the governing professional organization who reviews, approves, and accredits school psychology programs based on compliance to professional standards. Similarly, the American Psychological Association (APA) also accredits school psychology programs with doctorate-level programs to support clinical licensure for future psychologists across the country. These program stamps of approvals from both NASP and APA influence opportunities and credibility for future school psychologists, especially if you are pursuing certification as school psychologist and clinical licensure as psychologist in most states in the country.

Krystal revealed that her school psychology program at her HBCU was not accredited by NASP or APA, which warranted concerns, but she would prefer psychological security that her HBCU brought over experiencing discrimination again at a PWI. Krystal shared:

Oh, I know what else I do want to add. I want to add, like, because of the lack of professors, um, we've been going through like this really weird NASP accreditation, um, figuring out not being APA accredited, you know, just based on kind of like staffing. Like, we don't have enough faculty on board and all of these different things, and I think that's kind of concerning, you know, especially when you're trying to make a decision to go to a school that's, you know, not NASP accredited or APA accredited, and it's like you're trying to figure out what do you value most, right? Or do I have-- I have to do this extra work. It's not like I can't be a licensed school psychologist, but I definitely have to do all of this extra work. I have to do the portfolio. I have to do all these things to ensure that I'll still get

my credentials, but then you're like, *do I want to go through, you know,*

discrimination at a PWI? Do I want to? And so, it's like some really tough

choices, um, that you have to make.

      Lauren explained why she would like her school psychology program accredited.
She emphasized APA-accreditation could help secure an APA-accredited internship,
which can support the clinical licensure process. She noted:

> But it would just, it's that extra security, you know. Um, and also even outside of
> that, you know because I think about other career paths as well, you know I've
> thought about taking, um the EPPP, stuff like that. You know having, um an
> APA-accredited internship and, you know again coming from an APA-accredited
> program. Um, there's only like I think one in the area that there's been students
> like from my program, and they've went to like, without our program being
> accredited. So, for me, that's been the biggest thing and-and for other students in
> the program, um it's been around internship. You know being able to get, you
> know different internships that are accredited, so. So, yeah, it's just like a, I feel
> like it is an unnecessary stress that I wish I didn't have. Um, but it is something
> that I'm willing to stress about. Um, because I value like, other aspects of my
> program that I don't think I would want to give up.

Furthermore, Lauren provides more context on the importance of accreditation in future
job opportunities in academia. She said:

> So, okay, so my end goal, uh was academia. Um, and I'm still thinking about it. I
> think right now I'm, uh, a teaching assistant. So, I am, like you know getting
> experience of what it's like, you know teaching while also doing coursework,

helping with research projects, you know things like that. Um, and with the accreditation like a lot of times when I do job searches and things like that, just to see like what the market looks like. I see a lot of the times, you know under the requirements of saying, you know we want a candidate that's come from an APA-accredited program. And I'm like, okay like, so it just, it makes me fearful, um about the future and like how attainable that would be for me. Um, and I know it's not everywhere and you know, like things happen.

Only the participants attending a HBCU voiced lack of accreditation as a concern. Their continued enrollment in their programs demonstrated how their valuable experiences at a HBCU take precedent over their programs meeting professional standards of accreditation in school psychology.

Sense of Belonging at HBCU

On the contrary to *Feelings of Isolation at PWI*, Krystal and Lauren shared that they felt a sense of belonging in their respective school psychology programs. Sense of belonging does not simply constitute the presence of tolerance amongst individuals. Sense of belonging encompasses being accepted, heard, and supported by others, which provides psychological security. Furthermore, HBCUs were founded and designed to educate disenfranchised African Americans, and typically foster learning environments led by systems change agents who value culturally responsive pedagogical practices (Darrell et al., 2016). The participants provide evidence that they experienced a sense of belonging at their HBCUs.

Lauren shared an example of a trauma-informed approach that aligns with the culturally responsive practices displayed by faculty in her program. She said:

So, like, um coming back to school, um. After you know like, the murders of

George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor, and, um that was probably the center of, I

would say at least two of my classes, um you know, had conversations. Those

conversations were like, the frame of the class. Um, we would always talk about

it. Um, our program coordinator she is, she's very intentional, um about doing

check-ins with us. Um, you know whatever that looks like, she would ask, you

know, how can she support us. And you know, it's like the little things like that,

um what I was saying earlier, that make me stay in my program, or they

contribute to me staying in my program. Um, like things I value that I feel like I

wouldn't find other places.

Lauren elaborated on how psychologically secure she felt being able to be

authentic due to the models of excellence displayed by her Black peers and Black faculty

at her HBCU. She emphasized:

Okay. Um, so what's made the school psych graduate experience great, um I

would say, is it being an HBCU. Um, just there's like I feel like there is, like a

stress removed, um in the program. Like I said, you know just being able to come

there, you know be your authentic self without thinking twice about it. Um, you

know knowing that there will be other people in your cohort or just within your

program that share some of those same experiences with you. Um, and they're in

the program genuinely for the same reasons. Um, so the support network, like

within students, I would say is very strong. And that I-I wouldn't trade. Um, and

that's probably like the number one, the number one greatest thing about the

program. Um, the second greatest thing I would say is the faculty. Um, it's nice

because one, like, representation matters. It's nice to see, you know Black school

psychologists whether they worked in schools or not, um, just excel and, you

know, see what their different research interests are. And just knowing like, you'll

always have that person, like once you graduate you can always, um, you know,

have that person in your network.

Krystal expressed her relief to be attending a HBCU due to her previous

experiences at a PWI. She said:

I think it's one of those things where it's like, you come out better in the end, but

when you're going through it, it can definitely, um, be difficult structurally on the

other side of like, discrimination at a PWI. So, kind of figuring out where you

best-- where you are best situated, I think is really a, um, really an individual

choice. And I think for me, attending my HBCU just made the absolute most

sense if I was like, *if I got to be truthful in myself, how are you going to get*

through five years and you barely got through four years at the PWI?

Moreover, Krystal expressed that she made long-lasting friendships that extend

beyond the classroom. Krystal shared:

Um, but I think one of my greatest supports have actually been friends that I've

gained from the counseling psychology department. My cohort is only three of us,

um, including myself, but I took statistics with, um, some other women from the

counseling psychology department and those have become like some of my really

close friends.

This sense of belonging depicted in Lauren and Krystal narratives support their continuance in their school psychology programs. The HBCU environments incorporated evidence of cultural competence and trauma-informed approaches.

Feelings of Isolation at PWI

On the contrary to *Sense of Belonging at HBCU*, Cassandra, Chris, Courtney, Eryn, Jackson, and Kayla mentioned circumstances that left them with feelings of isolation in their PWIs. Feelings of isolation describes the loneliness that one's differences may bring. These feelings of isolation emphasize feeling socially isolated or outcaste and alone when you are with others, and it presents itself as exhaustion, sadness, and disconnection.

Cassandra expressed disappointment when her professor and peers did not actively participate in a discussion centered on Dr. Beverly Tatum's book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* Instead, the professor assigned a writing assignment due to the silence the topics of racism brought in the space. Cassandra shared:

> Part of our curriculum during internship is a book study, not a book club, no, a book study and our professor chose a book that addresses, you know, equity, racism and the author is a Black female and speaks very detailed about her experiences and in research and teaching and overall, you know, making connections to the here and now and I didn't think that it was going to affect me really because I'm living it, like it's not news to me.
>
> Oh, I should mention the professor is White and out of the 11 students in my cohort, there are four of color, three females, and then one male of color all self-

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identified with those genders, and no one really participated in the discussion, which I felt if anybody should speak up about the subject, it is the people that are non-ethnic, you know, because this is the opportunity where there is room for discussion. You can ask the questions. We are in a safe space, we have been through trauma together being in COVID, and we had a, I want to say a good relationship with each other and there was just nothing. And I was really disappointed in that they are going to enter this field with the education and, you know, having received cultural competency, training and development, professional development and here we are in a safe space where we can address their fears and issues and there's nothing. At the same time, the professor is not really trying to push more, so the only people who spoke up were the people of color, not surprised, as usually, I mean, everything that I've seen so far, very often that's really the case and so, to kind of fast forward a little bit, in order to get done with the book in a certain amount of time, we were asked to complete or response to a prompt via email about a section that was discussed in the book and I felt that wasn't the best decision. I feel like the subject is so important and emotional for, well, it was emotional for me, that I think an email prompt was not giving it justice, so either the subject is important enough to have a conversation in-person about it, or then don't pretend, I feel like it was another way of pretending to do something in the field of racism and equity and just doing it half, halfway.

Chris shared that she felt misunderstood during her time at her PWI while being the only Black student in her cohort. She provided context with the cultural significance

of "wash day" or the grooming of Black hair on the weekend, which can take hours at a time. She said:

I felt unsupported. Um, from like, professors, program directors. My cohort members, they're cool. They're chilling. No issues with any of them. Um, but, it's not the same. Like, I can talk to y'all about certain stuff, but like, some stuff, y'all just really won't get. Like, they won't get that I can't do a study group on Saturdays because Saturday is wash day. I gotta take out all of my hair. Do the whole process. Like, they don't get that, and it's exhausting for me to explain it all the time. So, like, they can support me, but not really the way that I need to be supported.

Courtney described feeling "invisible" during her time at her PWI. She articulated:

Greatest challenge is um… that's a good question. There was a period where I felt invisible um… I think this is kind of really culminated at the end of my first-year um… where because I was the only um… Black person there also, the only person of any color there. A lot of the things that I was learning, a lot of things that were being taught in class, I didn't necessarily agree with, because they weren't culturally sound, they weren't culturally relevant um… And I wrote that question, or kind of push back and say, *so this doesn't apply to Black students, this doesn't apply to students who are simply not White and do not have these experiences, how are we accounting for those differences um…?* And the answer that I would always get would be something either dismissive, or it's like, *oh, you would, you know, piece together different assessments* and I'm like, *that's not*

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good enough um… and like, for every room I was in during my first year, almost

into my second year, like I didn't have a lot of, I wasn't connected to my cohort at

all, both like they would always hang out and really get to know each other and I

would be, it sounds really bad, but by myself um… and it, it took until, like, I had

a very candid conversation with my mentor, where I was just like, I don't, like I

don't feel safe here. I think that's one of the main things that um… I recognized

like, I didn't feel safe, like, I didn't feel welcomed. I couldn't be my authentic self

and like this is coming from being from um… being um… from a previous

graduate program, where I could be my authentic self, where it's like, yes, of

course, there's always going to be um… more Whiteness than Black students, but

there was also an inviting atmosphere, and when I got here, that was not the case.

After Eryn shared her trials and tribulations experienced at her school psychology

program, she was met with "are you okay, sis?" from the interviewer. Eryn responded:

I don't even know anymore. I truly don't even know. I think I really do feel like I

fought a war. I do. I'm exhausted. Especially these last couple of weeks. I was

running around telling people, hey, I'm not okay. Like that general small talk that

a lot of people ask, hey, how are you doing? I'm fine. I just stopped the

pleasantries completely. *Eryn, how are you doing? Not good!* Consistently,

because I just wasn't. There was a time where I was just completely frazzled.

Didn't know how I was getting through anything. The only thing that I think has

pulled me through is faith and knowing that I'm not the first to walk a hard path.

And since I have all of these very interesting opinions on where I think the field

should go and where I think certain aspects of education should go, and then I'm

also not afraid to fight for these things to change. I kind of just had to pull

inspiration from the others that have walked before me to fight similar issues. And

if I didn't have those resources, I don't think I would have made it at all or so

many times. I wanted to quit, but I turned in my graduation application. So, the

light is at the end of the tunnel, and I'm probably just going to sit down

somewhere for a couple of months before morality makes me go get a PhD.

Jackson described his hesitancy in addressing his feelings of isolation with the

department chair of his program, who was a White woman. Jackson shared:

So, like the department, I brought up something, during one of our like, cohort

meetings, to the Department Chair. I wanted to say something, and I started to say

it, and then she was like, *please reach out to me later*, and I did. It felt like work,

to try to share what I'm going through since like, in some ways. I don't know, this

sounds weird, but in some ways, it's like, *I don't know how you're gonna respond.*

And she's a White woman. *I don't know how you're gonna respond.* And maybe

you'll like, escalate this beyond what it is, you know, she might not just hear me.

(*Laughs.*) Maybe I just want to be heard. But I heard she's a good listener, but I

just will see, right? So, that that was a resource. And what I was going through

was mainly about not feeling connected to my cohort, because of the age

difference and stuff like that.

Kayla shared that she did not have anyone to turn to during her studies in her

school psychology program. She said:

But when I was looking for that same sense of community and um support, when

it came to some of these personal circumstances, I felt a disconnect, in that I didn't

necessarily feel like I had individuals within my program as a whole or within my

faculty um that I was able to go to, that could provide me with the types of

support that I needed. Um whether that be sort of the emotional, personal support,

or really take some of these barriers and respond and provide me with direction

for where I could seek support.

Feelings of isolation impacted the wellness of the participants who attended

school psychology programs at PWIs. However, they were able to overcome this, and

they continued their studies by finding supports that were individualized to their needs.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of Black school

psychology students. This study uncovered how intersectionality informed their

continuance in their programs, whether it be at PWIs or HBCUs. Furthermore, this study

attempted to gauge if the supports and trauma-informed approaches were or were not

present at their respective institutions.

The qualitative research methods included each participant to partake in a

demographics questionnaire, one semi-structured interview for each participant, and one

member checking focus group. The researcher used Dedoose® as the qualitative research

software to code, organize data, and apply the phenomenological approach.

The data collected allowed for counter-storytelling to prevail. Counter-storytelling

is the CRT tenet that emphasizes exposing racist ideology and White privilege by

amplifying the voices of Black people. After each participant had an interview with a

researcher who had a similar sociocultural background, they convened in a focus group.

The member checking focus group served to confirm themes from the individual

interviews through member checking as well as serve as peer support and a mutual self-help group, which was outlined in the trauma-informed approach.

The Black school psychology graduate students' voices were amplified. Their voices illustrated patterns of injustice, resilience, leadership and connectedness to school psychology and social justice advocacy. Their perceptions showed the state of school psychology programs and needs of Black school psychology students. Chapter 5 further analyzes and interprets the data. Additionally, recommendations for practice and further study are provided. Lastly, limitations of this study and closing remarks are shared.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this work was to explore factors that may impede diversity in the field of school psychology. The eight participants were Black school psychology graduate students that shared similar experiences, although they were from various universities that were PWIs and HBCUs. A qualitative research design was used to highlight the lived experiences of the Black school psychology students as they participated in a semi-structured interview. Furthermore, they gathered in member checking focus groups to validate the emerging themes.

The data showed that despite the multicultural standards that NASP and APA uphold, participants in this study, Black school psychology students, observed culturally incompetent practices, and faced discrimination and traumatic events during their studies at PWIs. The students echoed similar sentiments of feelings of isolation and feeling unsupported, which led them to take the initiative to get the support that they need. The students who attended school psychology programs at HBCUs felt a sense of belonging, and they faced little or no discrimination during their studies. However, they could not escape the remnants of systemic oppression when practicing in their field placements.

After coding the interview data, data were further organized in Dedoose® and analyzed by the researcher. Bracketing was used by the researcher to observe her own personal biases. Additionally, member-checking methods were used by sharing the transcriptions for the participants to check them for accuracy, and they observed and discussed the emerging themes in a member checking focus group. Additionally, triangulation of data sources, resources, and students' quotes from their interviews were

used to display the participants' perspectives. Results were triangulated across multiple participants.

Themes of Convergent Data

The research connected the data together and identified themes from the participants' responses to the interview questions. The first research question aligned with the themes of *Awareness of Intersectionality* and *Black Representation Matters*, which describes how the Black school psychology graduate students acknowledge their intersecting identities that warrant their representation in the field to support marginalized groups. The second research question aligned with the themes of *Black Mentor/Faculty as Support* and *Black Sociocultural Safe Spaces*, which informs their need to have culturally relevant guidance and support. Lastly, the third research question aligned with the themes of Cultural Incompetence at PWI and Traumatic Experiences at PWI, which reflects the lack of trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices at PWIs. Table 2 outlines the themes that are categorized in connection to the three research questions that are supported by a sample of the participants' responses.

Table 5.1

Summary of Themes

Research Question	Themes	Evidence from Interviews
Do Black graduate students perceive their intersecting identities as	(1) Awareness of Intersectionality	(1) Eryn: I identify as a Black, cisgender, pansexual, second-generation American. Throw a couple other

influencing their paths in school psychology?		things in there and my experiences in school, growing up in elementary and high school really shaped how I got to this position in the first place.
	(2) Black Representation Matters	(2) Kayla: I was certainly looking to be able to make an impact in my community, but also be a role model of coming from um an underserved community, having had or identifying with all of those backgrounds, and then taking that into the field of higher education to make sure that our perspectives, our voices, and our community is heard and represented within the different fields.
Do Black graduate students believe that their wellness and continued enrollment in their school psychology programs is related to the supports they received?	(3) Black Mentor/Faculty as Support	(3) Jackson: I really struggled with believing that I can do it, despite a lot of evidence that showed I could. And luckily, thankfully, it was actually why I chose the school I'm going to, but there's a professor, who is a Black woman who's very, very influential in the field. And she's very helpful in giving feedback, and saying, *I am checking in* and just like, you know, *my doors are open*.
	(4) Black Sociocultural Safe Spaces	(4) Chris: I reached out to Facebook groups. Black School Psychologists is

		amazing. School Psych Sistahs is amazing. Um, and just being able to share with them my experiences because they've been through it, lived it, done it.
What trauma-informed approaches were present in the Black school psychology graduate students' experiences?	(5) Cultural Incompetence at PWI	(5) Cassandra: What I think could have gone better is I was really drawn to the cultural competence part, that is, what it was supposed to be, or was advertised to be incorporated in each class and it's really important to me and I saw that for each class, but it was more so on the backburner. It's like, *yeah, we are doing it like right before Christmas, or right before the semester ends, like, like it's on a checklist.*
	(6) Unsupported Traumatic Experiences at PWI	(6) Courtney: I know, when my brother, like, he had COVID, but he was asymptomatic um… and it's interesting the reaction of like, oh, it's like, there'll be like, oh, it's, it comes down to performing, to performance and being performative and a lot of things. But um… it's like, okay, so okay, *do you need anything?* Um…. But I will still get an email like, *oh, you're, you're missing this work? You know, do you, are*

you going to turn this in? When are you going to turn this in? And it's like, *well, right now, my family is going through something and that's my priority.*

Research Questions and Answers

1. Do Black graduate students perceive their intersecting identities as influencing their paths in school psychology?

   The participants of this study shared how their intersecting identities drove them to be in the field of school psychology. Furthermore, they collectively valued representation of their identities in the field.

   Awareness of intersectionality provides understanding of the presence of oppression and aids in resistance. As psychologists serving diverse populations, it is important to have this awareness. APA (2017) released the initial version of the *Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists* to aid in highlighting the importance of diversity and multiculturalism in psychology. The most recent version is the *Multicultural Guidelines: An Ecological Approach to Context, Identity, and Intersectionality*, and it includes updates that center on research and theory related to multiculturalism. Guideline 1 suggests that "Psychologists seek to recognize and understand that identity and self-definition are fluid and complex and that the interaction between the two is dynamic. To this end, psychologists appreciate that intersectionality is shaped by multiplicity of the individual's social contexts"

(APA, 2017). Each participant demonstrated competency with Guideline 1, as evidenced in acknowledging their intersecting identities, being intentional in wanting to serve marginalized groups, and valuing Black representation in the field.

Black representation was consistently the main reason the eight Black school psychology graduate students wanted to be in the field. They had a sense of responsibility in continuing their career paths while also celebrating Black role models in academia, professional conferences, and various field placements. The presence of culturally diverse practitioners is needed. Breaux and Ryujin (1999) found that one of the many problems in providing appropriate mental health services to African Americans, Asian Americans, Latine Americans, and Native Americans is that clinicians, typically White Americans, tend to not understand their needs. Furthermore, Whaley (2001) connotes there has been a history of cultural mistrust that interferes with African Americans using mental health services due to prior forms of mistreatment in health settings. Chang and Yoon (2011) presented qualitative findings from racial and ethnic minority clients who reported that White therapists could not understand their social experiences and racial/cultural issues. Most of our school psychologists are White women, and the cultural mistrust of mental health services and our practitioners requires more racial and ethnic diversity in the field to properly serve marginalized groups. Therefore, Black representation does matter.

2. Do Black graduate students believe that their wellness and continued enrollment in their school psychology programs is related to the supports they received?

Pierce (1975) originally coined the term "mundane extreme environment" to describe an environment where racism, discrimination, prejudice, and oppression is negatively permeating Black or African Americans' psyches. Microaggressions are passively weaponized in their daily lives. Examples of the mundane extreme environment could include being asked if they attended their university on an athletic scholarship, being ignored when repeatedly raising your hand in class, and being met with shock and awe when you deviate from the Black archetype displayed in pop culture. Imagine these offenses constantly being present, but not necessarily being seen by your White counterparts' colorblind world. The mundane extreme environment can lead to stress (and *Feelings of Isolation*) that deserves culturally responsive support. If not addressed, this stress can negatively impact the academic motivations, activities, identity formation and welfare of Black students (Garibaldi, 1992; Pierce, 1975). However, it is most common that this stress is self-managed by having the ability to draw support from others who identify similarly (Pierce, 1975).

The participants of this study provide concrete examples of finding faculty, peers, clubs, and organizations of their likeness to aid as a coping strategy as they experienced graduate training and social difficulties. Black faculty, Black mentors, and Black safe places supported the participants' overall wellness and continuance in their school psychology programs.

3. What trauma-informed approaches were present in the Black school psychology graduate students' experiences?

   While navigating, learning, and practicing school psychology, the Black graduate students expressed they experienced trauma in PWIs. Trauma-informed practice in school psychology programs may support wellness, retention, and success in Black school psychology graduate students.

   As it applies to the graduate student experience, the six tenets of the trauma-informed approach include (1) safety in physical settings and interpersonal interactions, (2) trustworthiness and transparency in order to build and maintain trust with the faculty and university, (3) peer support and mutual self-help, (4) collaboration and mutuality by leveling the power differences between faculty and students, (5) empowerment by recognizing students' strengths and experiences while supporting their decision-making, and (6) acknowledging and addressing cultural, historical, and gender issues (SAMHSA, 2014). The trauma-informed approach did not appear present in PWIs since the participants endorsed cultural incompetence and unsupported traumatic experiences. On the contrary, the Black school psychology graduate students who attended HBCUs felt a *Sense of Belonging*, specifically noting that faculty and staff were culturally competent and sensitive to traumatic events by incorporating check-ins in and out of the classrooms.

Themes of Divergent Data

There were divergences in the data that must be addressed. Divergences were apparent when comparing data from the school psychology students studying at PWIs

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versus those who study at HBCUs. Firstly, the students who attended school psychology programs in PWIs endorsed feelings of isolation during their matriculation (Theme: *Feelings of Isolation at PWI*). Contrarily, the two HBCU school psychology graduate students experienced a sense of belonging that they sought for after attending PWIs for undergraduate and graduate studies. This sense of belonging informed their choice in admissions and continuance in their studies at their HBCUs, despite their issues with accreditation. None of the school psychology students at the PWIs reported accreditation as an issue.

NASP has documented demographics that the field is dominated by White women. Additionally, NASP reported that there are 240 universities across the United States of America with school psychology programs, and these programs are in urban, suburban, and rural communities. Most school psychology programs are in PWIs. During this study, there were only two HBCUs with school psychology programs that could be found during the demographics questionnaire dissemination. There was no evidence of them being accredited by the APA.

Recommendations

It is important to note that the experiences of eight Black school psychology students are not exhaustive of the collective. Therefore, the results are not generalizable. However, the qualitative findings provoke preventative measures needed to support this marginalized group of individuals in school psychology. The overall findings supported recommendations to increase the recruitment and retention of Black school psychology students. The main three problems to be addressed are (1) recruitment, (2) retention, and (3) connection.

Recruitment

Recruitment begins with bringing awareness to the field of school psychology. The NASP Exposure Project is one of the awareness initiatives that is being offered. The NASP African American subcommittee of the Multicultural Affairs Committee actively exposes high school students and undergraduates to school psychology as a possible career path to attract culturally, linguistically diverse students into school psychology graduate programs. Additionally, Diversifying Black Excellence in School Psychology (D.B.E.S.P.) is an organization that is run by Black school psychology graduate students, and their aim is to provide support and services to students attending HBCUs as a gateway into the field of school psychology. They collaborate with members of the NASP Exposure Project. Both initiatives are led by Black school psychologists and leaders.

The APA developed the Commission on Ethnic Minority Recruitment, Retention and Training in Psychology Task Force, which offers *Model Strategies for Ethnic Minority Recruitment, Retention, and Training in Higher Education*. The strategies listed were implemented and recommended starting from the year 1995 and ending in 2006. The problem with this is that it does not account for years of trauma experienced by people of color since the last model strategy update was in 2006 (e.g., the effects of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement). It is recommended that this document of recruitment strategies be updated in collaboration with culturally diverse psychologists.

Retention

Proctor and Owens (2019) explored the issues of lack of diversity in school psychology through a structured research review and noted significant gaps in the literature related to retention and attrition. The data were limited and continue to be limited at the time of this study. However, findings relayed a call for APA and NASP to provide research grants for studies on school psychology education and student retention, which could lead to more retention research and ultimately a more diverse field (Proctor & Owens, 2019). Furthermore, Proctor and Owens (2019) recommended for school psychology programs to monitor the socioemotional wellness of students periodically with surveys and face-to-face check-ins and provide multicultural training and experiences to raise cultural competence. Rogers (2006) suggests exposing school psychology students of minoritized groups to diverse professional networks, mentorship opportunities, and culturally competent school psychology programs to support retention. These findings are universal, but most applicable to the school psychology programs at PWIs.

Connection

HBCUs surfaced during a period when PWIs excluded Black Americans from participating in higher education, and during that time, HBCUs' entire student body was Black, but now they make up 80% of the population (Gasman, 2013). The diversity and practices at HBCUs extend a sense of belonging to other races and ethnicities (Palmer et al., 2015).

The participants of the present study included two school psychology doctoral students who attended HBCU. Their narratives revealed that they experienced a sense of

belonging at their school. However, they noted concerns with a lack of accreditation when the participants from PWIs did not. Moreover, the participants who attended PWIs reported feelings of isolation. How can we provide a sense of belonging to our Black school psychology PWI students while giving the security of accreditation to our Black school psychology HBCU students?

It is recommended that we fully invest in multicultural training in all our school psychology programs. Making connections between PWIs and HBCUs would prove to be symbiotic. It is evident that HBCUs center multiculturalism while providing a sense of belonging to diverse populations of students, and currently, none of the HBCU school psychology programs are APA-accredited. There are nearly 100 APA-accredited school psychology programs at various PWIs across the country. The findings of this study suggest professional organizations, such as NASP and APA, (1) should aid in the development, mentorship, and accreditation process of HBCUs, and (2) invest in school psychology exchange programs between HBCUs and PWIs. Therefore, PWI school psychology students of diverse backgrounds would have the opportunity to immerse themselves in culturally rich environments centered on enhancing their multicultural skills. Meanwhile, HBCU school psychology students can take coursework in accredited programs. Ultimately, this initiative must be driven by the APA and participating colleges and universities.

Practice

The member checking focus group was aligned with the trauma-informed approach that centers on peer support. The participants informally provided positive feedback on the focus group and requested that they could reconnect with each other.

Upon thematic analysis of the data, the participants revealed that *Black Sociocultural Spaces* were valued across participants. Therefore, the researcher developed a private group on Facebook. The private Facebook group, Authentically Black Professionals, is a peer support group centering Black students and professionals in the fields of education and mental health.

Limitations

The demographics questionnaire was shared with two Facebook groups, a professional organization's listserv, and 40 school psychology program directors, and only two of the programs were in HBCUs. Some of the PWIs did not have Black students to participate. This resulted in 46 responses to the demographics questionnaire. Two out of the 46 respondents attended a HBCU, and both of those respondents participated in the interview. Although this sampling method yielded responses reflective of the field, details of the institutions were omitted to secure anonymity. This is a limitation because the researcher could not further examine the characteristics of the institutions due to limited school psychology graduate students available without risking a chance of someone identifying those who participated in the interview process.

There is an underrepresentation of Black school psychologists, but Black male school psychologists are even more underrepresented. There was only one Black man's voice represented in this study. This limitation is in this study and in this field since Black male students are disproportionately represented in special education, and they receive the highest number of disciplinary infractions, suspensions, and expulsions from schools (Cook et al., 2018). Having more Black men present in this study could have

offered more insight in their recruitment, retention, and attrition because their presence in the field offers culturally sound perspectives related to Black boys in schools.

Theoretical Implications

Critical analysis of the state of school psychology training programs is essential to understanding the strengths and challenges of the field. The primary strength evident in the field is that NASP and APA have presented guidelines that align with CRT, intersectionality, and the trauma-informed approach, which means there is philosophy and standards that are in place. However, theory lags behind practice in school psychology training. How can school psychology trainers support Black graduate students?

When using the cognitive triangle with individuals, a problem may stimulate thought about the fact of the situation. Then thoughts may lead to internal and external exploration that can trigger feelings. These feelings can conjure behavior change in individuals (Beck, 2020). This same triangular process should be applied in systems. In the case of this present study, the problem is that Black school psychologists are underrepresented, and our present field of school psychologists' demographics do not reflect the diverse populations that are being served. Therefore, the present study applies critical race theory and intersectionality to explore this issue (*Thought/Theory*). The phenomenological methodology captures and utilizes the feelings of the participants and researcher (*Feeling*). These feelings lend fuel to ignite advocacy and changes in school psychology practices (e.g., using the trauma-informed approach) that can support the recruitment and retention of future Black school psychologists. Figure 5.1 displays the

connections suggested to be made to solve the problems of recruitment, retention, and attrition for Black school psychology students.
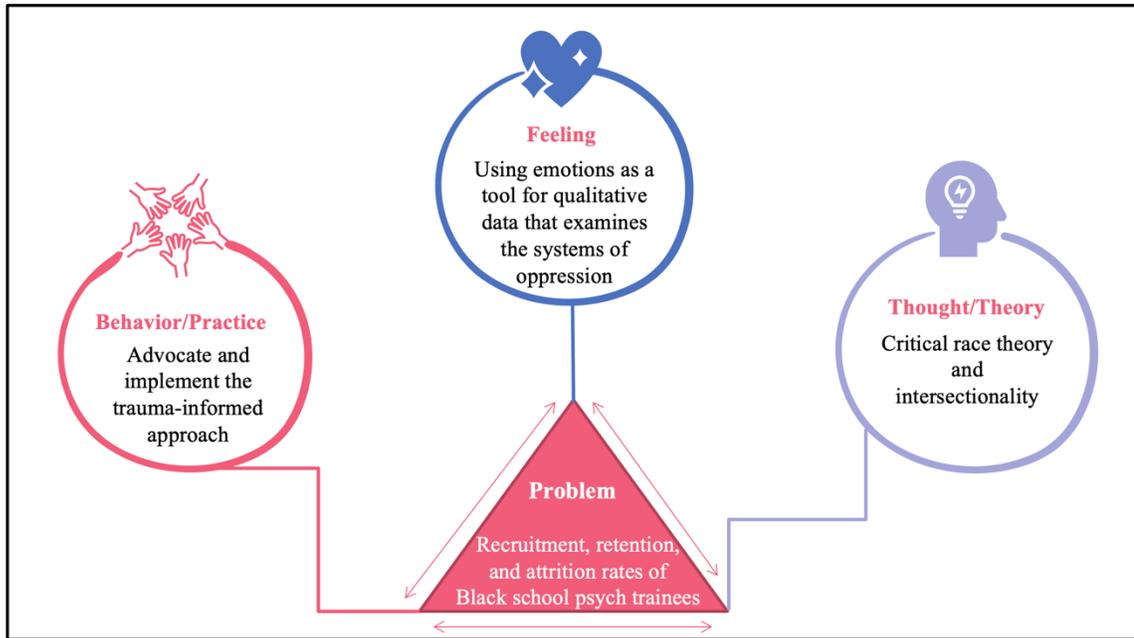
Figure 5.1. *Black School Psychology Trainee Problem-Solving Triad*

Note. This figure displays the connection of schemes that support theory to practice.

Presently, *Thought/Theory* include NASP and APA standards that support multiculturalism while fundamentally acknowledging CRT and intersectionality. However, there is evidence, including this present study, that suggest that there is poor application of these theories. It is proposed that the trauma-informed approach drive *Behavior/Practice* in school psychology training programs. Traditionally, science has accentuated principles of objectivity, but qualitative research permits social scientists to embrace subjectivity with the use of *Feeling*.

Thought/Theory

As noted in Chapter 1, CRT posits that racism is subtle social dynamics that seeps into society and its institutions, and this injustice is seen in the school psychology roles of assessment, consultation, and intervention. Black school psychology trainees are exposed to a field founded on long-standing defective studies that falsely declare a correlation between race and intelligence (Pendergast et al., 2017). Black school psychology trainees may have to navigate higher education settings and encounter implicit bias or unconscious racial or socioeconomic bias in their PWIs (Boysen & Vogel, 2009). Additionally, bias may be more explicit in their roles in school-based field experiences, where faculty and staff may question their competencies in which participants in this study implied.

Kayla (a participant from this study) alluded to the fact that "there's a lot of words, there's a lot of language, um, that we fall back on. And then I think we just kind of stay in this stagnant place of not acting or inaction" when recognizing the lack of multicultural theoretical application in school psychology. APA (2017) offered guidance on applying intersectionality with multicultural practice. These guidelines are supposed to support psychologists understanding of intersecting identities to inform multicultural responsive practice. Proctor et al. (2017) expanded on this by encouraging the application of intersectionality for system change and social justice advocacy. Therefore, school psychology training should integrate curricula and demonstrate practices that builds on trainees' knowledge of self, social status, privilege, and oppression.

Feelings Facilitated via Qualitative Research

Rivera (2018) asserts that emotion is an essential element of the sense-making process while qualitative researchers access and control the knowledge carried within emotion. Furthermore, Rivera (2018) asserts the follow four key methods of emotion in qualitative research: (1) using reflexivity to identify, name, and analyze emotions by connecting them to the rational to promote free exploration of your subject matter, (2) strategically designing a study infused with passion and emotion informed by personal experiences, (3) using emotional reactions as a guide in data analysis, and (4) including emotion in the dissemination of qualitative research, regardless of the audience. The profession of school psychology could benefit from implementing more studies with qualitative methodology. Advocacy and systems-level change can be facilitated with the heavy emphasis on emotion in qualitative methods since emotion is a universal human capability.

Behavior/Practice

Elements of the trauma-informed approach (TIA) was practiced in the present study. As it applies to the graduate student experience, the six tenets of the trauma-informed approach include (1) safety in physical settings and interpersonal interactions, (2) trustworthiness and transparency in order to build and maintain trust with the faculty and university, (3) peer support and mutual self-help, (4) collaboration and mutuality by leveling the power differences between faculty and students, (5) empowerment by recognizing students' strengths and experiences while supporting their decision-making, and (6) acknowledging and addressing cultural, historical, and gender issues (SAMHSA,

2014). It is important that these tenets be applied and monitored in school psychology programs.

The SAMHSA TIAs were applied to the research process as well. Participants of the present study reported feeling safe during the interviews and shared positive remarks related to the present study. It is unclear what those features of safety were, but one can presume that the cultural and professional alignment with the researcher helped with creating a virtual safe space (SAMHSA TIA tenet #1). Maintaining confidentiality and obtaining informed consent was a precursor to each participant's involvement in this study, and this was paramount in trusting the researcher (SAMHSA TIA tenet #2). The member-checking focus group was used as peer support and mutual self-help group, and it led to three participants wanting to reconnect beyond the present study (SAMHSA TIA tenet #3). The dynamics between the researcher and participants included elements of collaboration with the use of semi-structured interviews that allowed participants to process their lived experiences freely, the inclusion of their unique voice captured throughout Chapter 4, and the selection of their own pseudonyms (SAMHSA TIA tenet #4). The researcher implemented empowering interview strategies, such as building a rapport, actively listening, paraphrasing answers for reflection, using verbal affirmations (e.g., "yaaas!"), and expressing gratitude for sharing their experiences (SAMHSA TIA tenet #5). Lastly, the researcher provided context of social issues by probing responses that touched on issues of systemic oppression, the Black Lives Matter movement, COVID-19 pandemic, and personal traumatic events (SAMHSA TIA tenet #6).

The present number of school psychologists from diverse backgrounds do not meet the demands of the students in training programs and in the American education

system, and this is a significant problem. There are seminal scholarly works that support the theoretical frameworks, but there is limited evidence that application of practice is being implemented in school psychology programs and the education settings, particularly in PWIs. Through a CRT and intersectionality lens, systematic oppression inherently makes it difficult for Black school psychology students to be able to navigate certain issues during training, which makes it even more difficult for advocacy and representation to be fluid in field. The present qualitative study provides real life representations of supports and barriers that Black school psychology students have witnessed throughout training. Qualitative work evokes feelings, which should be used in this field to implore changes in school psychology programming, such as the endorsement of trauma-informed approaches. Essentially, the field of school psychology should aim to bridge theory and practice with the aid of feelings rooted in qualitative methodology.

Future Research

More studies on the experiences of Black school psychology students should be done to support the retention rate and decrease attrition rates of this population. Particularly, it is worth examining the factors that contributed to students' discontinuance in their school psychology programs. Eight different Black individuals (1 male, 7 females) illustrated perspectives harmoniously. However, the pool of students could have been widened since there are over 200 school psychology programs in the United States of America. Furthermore, more Black men should be represented in future studies to explore their experiences and support their presence in the field. The participants participated in a member checking focus group. However, there was no assessment of the

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focus group outside of the context of member checking. Soliciting formal feedback on the member checking focus group could provide information beneficial to forming peer support and mutual self-help groups.

Further examination of the sociocultural environmental factors of HBCUs should be closely examined due to the significance of the sense of belonging and cultural competence reported at HBCUs. However, there are issues of accreditation at HBCUs that are worth exploring, especially as it pertains to systemic issues and involvement of the governing bodies of NASP and APA. Lastly, NASP and APA should fund and aid research efforts that target diversifying the field to enhance the mental healthcare of diverse populations and minimize institutional oppression.

More research on applying TIA in higher education settings is needed. It is important for future studies to examine (1) what colleges and universities are doing to be trauma-informed, (2) how TIAs are being implemented in higher education institutions, (3) who could benefit from TIA in higher education settings, and (4) why TIA works by monitoring efficacy in implementation.

Conclusion

Black school psychologists are significantly underrepresented in the American education system. Therefore, school psychology programs need to improve the recruitment and retention of Black students. There are currently only two school psychology programs housed in HBCUs; PWIs are the primary gateways to ratifying policies and practice to combat the lack of representation in the field. The present study included eight Black school psychology graduate students who shared their stories, and the qualitative data were analyzed accordingly. The participants shared how their

intersectional identities informed their presence in the field while urging for Black representation. The analyzed narratives uncovered shared experiences of culturally incompetent practices and a lack of support during their rigorous studies and traumatic events, specifically at PWIs. However, each participant had the capacity to identify their needs to get support from Black faculty or Black professional organizations and social media networks.

There were findings that showed divergences. Black school psychology students who attended a HBCU felt a sense of belonging, and Black school psychology students who attended a PWI experienced feelings of isolation. Additionally, participants from HBCUs shared concerns about a lack of APA accreditation when participants from PWIs did not.

The information from this study can support program evaluation of school psychology programs, retention of school psychology students, and diversity in school psychology in various settings. There are distinctive social experiences that require the individualized training of Black school psychology students. The results of this study note that there is a lack of support received in PWI-based school psychology programs, and oftentimes, the Black school psychology students cultivate their own support systems to stay matriculated. This type of problem-solving can only validate their belonging in this field.

School psychology programs, NASP, and APA need to put forth intentional efforts in the recruitment and retention of Black scholars in training by hiring more Black faculty, creating peer support groups for Black students, supporting the accreditation of school psychology programs at HBCUs, and designing curricula that center culturally

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responsive practices and trauma-informed approaches. It urged that these changes must

be done as an act of professional reparations.

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APPENDIX A

MULTICULTURAL DICTIONARY

The following definitions are from the *Multicultural Guidelines: An Ecological Approach to Context, Identity, and Intersectionality* (APA, 2017).

Advocacy: Refers to the psychologists' role in promoting mental and behavioral health and well-being among those with whom they work. Advocacy in mental health extends beyond individual and group counseling into systems-level change and may involve policy work on local, state, federal, and international levels. Psychologists who serve as advocates become part of a cooperative community, working with clients, colleagues, mental health professionals, and interested supportive others to promote systems of care.

Culture: Belief systems and value orientations that influence customs, norms, practices, and social institutions, including psychological processes (language, care-taking practices, media, educational systems) and organizations (media, educational systems). Culture has been described as the embodiment of a worldview through learned and transmitted beliefs, values, and practices, including religious and spiritual traditions. It also encompasses a way of living informed by the historical, economic, ecological, and political forces on a group.

Disparities: Differences in domains such as health, wealth, income, education, incarceration, employment, and housing, across social identity groups. Health disparities refer to differences in access, utilization, and quality of care. Disparities are linked to structural forms of oppression and may exist with regard to racial or ethnic group, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other identifying considerations, both across and within social groups.

Disproportionalities: Over- or underrepresentation of a given population that may be defined by racial and ethnic background, socioeconomic status, national origin, English proficiency, sexual orientation, and educational needs, among other variables, in a specific category.

Diversity: The definition of diversity is complex, given the array of contexts in which the word is used. It is, within the realm of psychology (and sociopolitical and legal consideration), most often associated with a recognition of a range of identities and personal attributes, across the population of individuals inhabiting a particular setting or environment, such as an educational program, or a country's citizenry, or when discussing the world at large. To be diverse is to be made up of a broad range of individuals representing the multitude of races, creeds, religious or social identifiers, or genders that comprise humanity (or the array of potential identifiers associated with an attribute of nature). It is strongly associated with the concepts of difference, tolerance, and multicultural engagement.

Human rights: The United Nations defines human rights as universal legal rights that protect individuals and groups from those behaviors that interfere with freedom and human dignity (Min, n.d..). Key aspects of human rights are that they are recognized internationally, legally protected, and concerned with human dignity; are universal and interdependent; cannot be taken away; protect individuals and groups; and are obligations of the State and State leaders (Min, n.d.).

Implicit racism: Implicit racism refers to an individual's utilization of unconscious biased attitudes when making judgments about people from different racial and ethnic groups. Implicit racism is an automatic negative reaction when a person is faced with race-related triggers, including phenotypic, cultural, class, and/or speech/accent differences. Since this type of racism lies beyond the awareness of individuals, they may report that they do not hold racist ideologies and yet display implicit racism in their everyday interactions. Implicit attitudes influence "responses that are more difficult to monitor and control... [e.g., eye movements, blinking] or responses that people do not view as an indication of their attitude and thus do not try to control" (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002, p. 62).

Internationalization of psychology: A process by which psychologists demonstrate awareness of the globalization of psychology. Psychologists recognize that their assumptions, values, and biases reference their national history and culture. Internationalization entails recognizing and appreciating global variations in human behaviors, norms, explanatory systems, thought processes, religion, spirituality, and styles of social communication and interaction.

Intersectionality: A paradigm that addresses the multiple dimensions of identity and social systems as they intersect with one another and relate to inequality, such as racism, genderism, heterosexism, ageism, and classism, among other variables. Intersectionality is organized around the location of self within a set of co-constructed social identities (e.g., Black/African American/Black American, gay, older adult, male), and proposes ways to identify, challenge, and resist various forms of oppression. The study of intersectionality has been a significant paradigm within women's studies and is becoming a focus for psychologists who do research and engage in activism regarding historical and contemporary social injustices.

Language: Those symbols, both verbal and nonverbal, that an individual uses to express their ideas and knowledge. Language embodies culture; a society's language reflects its cultural values. For instance, in Spanish the word "I" is "yo," and is written in lowercase rather than uppercase as is found in North America (Clauss-Ehlers, 2006). This reflects the collective aspect of many Latin American countries where the group is more important than the individual.

Macroaggressions: Best defined as potential large-scale or overt acts of aggression and disrespect that are directed toward those of a different race, culture, gender, religion, or other sociocultural identity. Macroaggressions include direct and indirect acts of bias that

are broadly engaged toward diverse individuals or groups and are typically readily identifiable given their presentation. One example of a macroaggression would be recent actions taken to diminish the power in the statement "Black Lives Matter," through efforts to dismiss clear differences in actions taken by political and legal structures against one group specifically (e.g., the promotion of the campaign stating "All Lives Matter," where specific and necessary efforts to emphasize the importance of speaking out in support of African Americans and their challenges within the historical and current culture are challenged by statements made by predominantly White/White Americans that no one group of individuals is due any greater regard than any other, thereby attempting to negate the consideration of aggressions toward a specific group as important and necessary). Macroaggressions can be contrasted with microaggressions, which are perhaps more covert and insidious.

Microaggressions: Lately, the discourse on racism has shifted from overt exo-level manifestations like legal segregation or Jim Crow laws to subtle or indirect discriminatory behaviors and expressions of bias at the interpersonal level, called microaggressions. Microaggressions are: "Brief and commonplace daily, verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Microaggressions are likely to emerge not when behavior would look prejudicial, but when other rationales could be offered. Many microaggressions have become conditioned, with people not realizing that they are engaging in them. In this interpersonal dilemma of unintentional and/or invisible prejudice, there is a question as to whether a racial incident actually happened, resulting in a clash of realities for the actor and the target.

Multicultural: The coexistence of diverse cultures that reflect varying reference group identities. Multicultural can embody the coexistence of cultures within an individual, family, group, or organization.

Prevention: Efforts that aim to avert the development of a challenge, disease, or concern related to mental health, health, or safety, among other areas. Prevention is often divided into three categories: primary prevention seeks to restrict or diminish the onset of an issue or disease through reduction of risk; secondary prevention aims to reduce or end disease progression through the identification and treatment of a condition before it becomes symptomatic; tertiary prevention refers to efforts that decrease the impact of a disease or concern once it has been treated. In education policy, early intervention refers to services provided for children from birth to age 3. These services seek to promote health and well-being, respond to any existing developmental delays, decrease developmental delays, enhance educational skills and competence, and support the parental role.

Privilege: Unearned special rights, immunities, and societal advantages that are granted on the basis of membership in a dominant social identity group. Privilege represents an expression of power. Through cultural norms and values, privilege oftentimes is invisible to those who possess it.

Oppression: Superiority exercised by the dominant group over other groups through laws, policies, cultural norms, and everyday practices that produce and reproduce societal inequities. Structural forms of oppression inhibit the ability to develop one's full potential and may result in negative physical, psychological, and social outcomes.

Resilience: The ability to overcome structural and individual challenges through a combination of character traits, cultural background, cultural values, and environmental supports. As such, resilience is considered an ability to overcome challenges given both individual and contextual strengths.

Self-definition: An individual's description of one's identity and identifications with one or more cultural groups or communities. A person's self-definition can shift across time, context, and life transitions, and has implications for identity labels. Self-definition is linked to a sense of agency and control over one's own life. Due to internalized forms of oppression, self-definition might reflect distorted perceptions of cultural groups produced through stereotypes and prejudice.

Social justice: Full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure (Bell, 1997).

Stereotypes: Fixed, overgeneralized beliefs about a group or community. These beliefs can relate to different aspects of diversity such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, ability status, language, religion, and social class. Stereotypes shape attitudes and behaviors toward various sociocultural groups and contribute to discrimination.

Strength-based approach: Focuses psychological practice toward recognition of the inherent strengths of individuals, families, groups, and organizations. It developed as a response to more traditional deficit-based models of pathology and intervention, and instead guides professionals in assisting clients and consultees to use personal strengths as a means of attaining recovery and empowerment. This approach views health and well-being holistically, by engaging assets to identify and achieve positive outcomes.

Trauma: Experiences of extraordinary, terrifying events such as accidents, natural disasters, interpersonal violence, political violence, and war. Recent conceptualizations of traumatic experiences include hate-based victimization (e.g., violence against racial groups and LGBTQ+ communities). Responses to traumatic events involve an array of psychological and physical concerns such as nightmares, flashbacks, hypervigilance, difficulty regulating affect, headaches, difficulty concentrating on tasks, loss of trust in others, and relational challenges.

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

Note: Each participant's name and email was provided upon submitting the form via SurveyMonkey.

Thank you very much for assisting us with this important project. Please read the following notes before beginning our recruiting process. On completion of this demographics questionnaire, we will be scheduling selected participants for a two-hour follow interview. After the data are analyzed, the participants will be scheduled to a two-hour member checking focus group. It is important to note that interviews and the focus group will be video and audio recorded via Zoom, and the recordings will be used to analyze verbal and nonverbal information for the study.

<u>Study</u>
Through the lenses of critical race theory, intersectionality and the trauma-informed approach, this phenomenological study will explore the experiences of Black graduate students studying school psychology at both Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The purpose of this work is to explore factors that may impede diversity in the field of school psychology. Findings will lead to evidence-based recommendations to support the recruitment and retention of Black school psychology students.

<u>Objectives</u>

- To explore how Black graduate students perceive their intersecting identities as influencing their paths in school psychology.
- To observe the supports provided and the overall wellness and enrollment statuses of Black graduate students in school psychology program.
- To examine trauma-informed approaches provided in school psychology programs in PWIs and HBCUs.

Contact the study team with your concerns. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may reach Tiffany K. Jenkins at tiffanyjenkins@temple.edu. You can reach Catherine A. Fiorello at catherine.fiorello@temple.edu or 215-204-6254.

This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board ("IRB"). An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies. You may talk to them at (215) 707-3390 or irb@temple.edu if:

- You have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the research team.
- You are not getting answers from the research team.

- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone else about the research.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

1. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

2. Are you of Black or African American origin?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

3. What is your immigration generation?
   - ☐ First-generation (you were born outside of the United States of America)
   - ☐ Second-generation (at least one of your parents were born outside of the United States of America)
   - ☐ Third-and-higher-generation (both of your parents were born in the United States of America)

4. What languages can you speak?
   - ☐ English
   - ☐ Spanish
   - ☐ French
   - ☐ German
   - ☐ Other _____

5. Are you currently enrolled in graduate-level school psychology program?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

6. If yes, what school psychology degree will you receive upon graduation?
   - ☐ Master's Degree
   - ☐ Educational Specialist Degree
   - ☐ Doctorate Degree
   - ☐ Other _____

7. What would you like to do immediately after graduation?
   - ☐ Postdoctoral fellowship/pursue clinical licensure
   - ☐ Work in school setting as a school psychologist, teacher or administrator
   - ☐ Work in academia/teaching/research
   - ☐ Self-employment

8. What type of university or college do you attend?
   - ☐ Historically Black Colleges and University (HBCU)

□ Predominantly White Institution (PWI)

9. Where in the United States of America is your school psychology program located?
- □ Alaska
- □ Midwest
- □ Northwest
- □ North Central
- □ Northeast
- □ Pacific Islands
- □ Southwest
- □ South Central
- □ Southeast

10. What is your age?
- □ Under 18
- □ 18-24 years old
- □ 25-34 years old
- □ 35-44 years old
- □ 45-54 years old
- □ Over 55

11. Gender? _____

12. Sexual Orientation? _____

13. Number of children you take care of who are living in your home _____

14. What is your marital status?
- □ Single (never married)
- □ Married, or in a domestic partnership
- □ Widowed
- □ Divorced
- □ Separated

15. Religious/Spiritual Affiliation? _____

16. How would you describe your political views?
- □ Very conservative
- □ Conservative
- □ Moderate
- □ Liberal
- □ Very Liberal

17. What's your work status?
- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Self-employed/Freelance
- ☐ Interning
- ☐ Part-time
- ☐ Unemployed- Looking for work
- ☐ Unemployed – Not looking for work
- ☐ Homemaker
- ☐ Studying
- ☐ Military/Forces
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Not able to work
- ☐ Other _____

18. Select your primary means of financial support.
- ☐ University or college
- ☐ Family
- ☐ Military/Forces
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Full-time employment
- ☐ Part-time employment
- ☐ Self-employment

19. Which type of community were you primarily raised in?
- ☐ Suburban community
- ☐ City or Urban community
- ☐ Rural community
- ☐ Other _____

20. Which type of community do you currently live in?
- ☐ Suburban community
- ☐ City or Urban community
- ☐ Rural community
- ☐ Other _____

21. What is your marital status?
- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Never married

22. What is your mother's highest level of education?
- ☐ High school graduate
- ☐ Some college

- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Graduate degree
- ☐ Other _____

23. What is your father's highest level of education?
- ☐ High school graduate
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Graduate degree
- ☐ Other _____

EMAIL TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAMS

Subject: Research on the experiences of Black school psychology graduate students

Message:

Hi [insert name of school psychology program administrator]!

May you please share the following demographics survey to your school psychology graduate students? Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you!
Tiffany

Are you a Black or African American school psychology graduate student? Research is being done at Temple University to examine the diversity issues in the field of school psychology. This phenomenological research study seeks to describe the experiences of Black graduate students of school psychology.

If you are interested in sharing your own experience, please take this demographics questionnaire, which takes 5 minutes to complete. Please click the link here: [link to SurveyMonkey]

APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT EMAIL FOR INTERVIEWS

Subject: Schedule Interview

Message:

Hi [participant's first name],

I am Tiffany Jenkins, and I am a Black school psychology doctoral candidate at Temple University, and a certified school psychologist. I recently received your demographics questionnaire indicating that you were interested in participating in an interview. I am contacting you because you seem to be a great candidate for this study.

For this study, I would ask you some questions about your experience as a school psychology graduate student. We are an underrepresented demographic in our field, and I hope to use the data collected to inform practices to help increase support for and retention of Black and African American students in school psychology programs and to promote a more diverse field of school psychologists.

Next steps include a semi-structured interview that would take place on Zoom, and it may take up to two hours. Then, you will be invited to partake in a two-hour focus group via Zoom after you and the other research participants have already been interviewed individually. With your participation, all your responses will remain confidential and secure. You will receive a $10 Amazon e-gift card upon completing the focus group. There are no known risks involved in this research.

If you would like to continue your participation, please let me know your general availability for December. Please be mindful that this interview will need for you to reserve two hours of your time, but it may not take up the entire time reserved. Attached is the full consent form approved by Temple University's IRB. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time,
Tiffany

APPENDIX E

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(1) How does your identities, including being a Black graduate student, inform your choice and continuance in pursuing a career in school psychology?

(2) What was your greatest challenge experienced in your school psychology program, and how were you supported?

(3) Tell me if or how you experienced discrimination based on any of your identities, including being Black or African American at your college or university.

(4) Tell me if or how you experienced trauma or was past trauma triggered during your school psychology graduate studies? Note: SAMHSA (2014) defines trauma as "results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being."

(5) What supports have you accessed during your time in your school psychology program? What supports were available to you at your university?

(6) What made your school psychology graduate experience great or not so great? What would have made your school psychology graduate experience better?

(7) What else do you want to tell me about your experiences as a school psychology graduate student?