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Cognitivism in School Psychologists' Talk about Cultural Responsiveness:

A Critical Discourse Analysis

by

Sujay Sabnis

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in School Psychology
Department of Educational and Psychological Studies
College of Education
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ABSTRACT

Although there is an increase in publications on the topic of cultural responsiveness in school psychology, the research literature does not interrogate the discourse around cultural responsiveness and the modes of practices it enables. Using a preexisting dataset featuring interviews with 15 school psychologists, I analyzed the discursive formations characterizing the talk about cultural responsiveness. Data analysis using the critical discursive psychology framework illuminated the presence of cognitivism in participant talk. Critical discourse analysis drawing on Foucauldian theory of power effects revealed the ways in which cognitivism both enabled and constrained the discursive production of 'culture' and 'cultural responsiveness'. Culture became a primarily cognitive concept (beliefs, values, and tendencies of various groups), and cultural responsiveness came to be a rational non-discriminatory form of decision making process oriented toward individualistic and micro-level forms of practices that had institutional sanction. Implications and recommendations for further research are discussed.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

School psychology is an applied branch of psychology that emerged in the U.S. in the second decade of the 20th century. Right from the field's inception, school psychologists used scientific methods to treat "children suffering from all defects interfering with school progress" (D'Amato, Zafiris, McConnell, & Dean, 2011, p. 13). Since then, the field has undergone several changes, and the current role of school psychologists in K-12 settings is most impacted by the special education legislation Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142) (Shriberg et al., 2008). The current job of school psychologists entails psychoeducational evaluation, although indirect services such as consultation and home-school partnerships are also becoming increasingly common (D'Amato, Zafiris, McConnell, & Dean, 2011).

A newer development in the field of school psychology is the emphasis on social justice (Lopez & Bursztyn, 2013) which Goodman and colleagues (2004) described as "scholarship and professional action designed to change societal values, structures, policies, and practices, such that disadvantaged or marginalized groups gain increased access to these tools of self-determination" (p. 795). In 2016, National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) president Melissa Reeves created the Social Justice Task Force (SJTF) to advance the cause of the social justice in the field of school psychology (Barrett & A'Vant, 2017). Since then, the SJTF, in collaboration with other NASP committees has created practitioner resources, such as *Supporting Marginalized Students in Stressful Times: Tips for Educators* (NASP, 2016a) and *Supporting Refugee Children and Youth: Tips for Educators* (NASP, 2016b). The SJTF members

have presented at the NASP Annual Convention, and organized webinars and podcasts around the issue of social justice and diversity. Some NASP members (many of whom served on the SJTF) created a social media campaign called #SP4SJ (school psychologists for social justice) which, "included 422 posts, 144 participants, and reached an audience of more than 144,000 on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram" (Barrett & A'Vant, 2017, p. 5). This incipient turn in the applied field of school psychology corresponds to growing conversations about race, immigration, white supremacy, and institutional discrimination on the heels of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The NASP website also boasts of an array of resources to help practicing school psychologists become culturally responsive by understanding concepts such as privilege and intersectionality. Vera and Speight (2003) argued that cultural responsiveness carries a narrower scope than social justice. The former refers to the nature of school psychological services provided within schools whereas the latter refers to an agenda for societal change that extends beyond schools. Since the eighties, the issue of cultural responsiveness has assumed increasing importance not just in school psychology but in the broader field of applied psychology (of which school psychology is a part) and psychiatry (Kirmayer, 2012). Whitley (2007) explained this phenomenon as a reaction against the evidence-based movement, which sought to professionalize the medical field by introducing a one-size-fits-all approach to treatment. The evidence-based movement's insistence on standardizing treatments overlooked the fact that cultural differences sometimes necessitated the modification of interventions to make them more acceptable to and effective for culturally diverse clients. Professional guidelines by organizations such as the American Psychological Association (APA, 2003) and National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2010) explicitly call on graduate training programs to prepare

future professionals well-versed in working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Although there are differences in the guidelines of the two organizations given their different scope (NASP is specific to school psychology whereas APA addresses all the branches of applied psychology), there are some similarities. Both the organizations call for student trainees to "to demonstrate awareness of how individual differences (e.g., abilities and disabilities) and factors related to culture can affect service delivery and the success of interventions" (Grapin, 2017, p. 175).

Given these developments, there is, now, a growing recognition about the importance of preparing school psychologists who can respond effectively to the needs of culturally diverse clients, especially when those needs diverge from the values or expectations of the dominant culture. Regardless of these developments, the topic of cultural responsiveness is undertheorized in school psychology. The number of articles in school psychology journals that deal with cultural responsiveness are few. Existing studies of culturally responsive practice in school psychology are often descriptive, and limit their analysis to coding participants' perspectives on cultural responsiveness to find similarities in themes, an approach that has been critiqued as "too often finding what is already known" (Sthapit, Harrop, Ercin, & Lindhorst, 2018).

This is part of a larger issue in school psychology noted by various researchers regarding the paucity of research articles that focuses on issues of diversity. Table 1 summarizes the findings of three studies that counted the proportion of articles with a significant diversity focus appearing in school psychology journals.

Table 1

Number of school psychology publications with significant diversity focus

Research studies	Time period	No. of articles with significant diversity focus
Miranda and Gutter (2002)	1990-1999	10.6%
Brown, Shriberg, and Wang (2007)	2000-2003	16.9%
Grunewald et al. (2014)	2004-2010	15.5%
Graybill, Baker, Cloth, Fisher, & Nastasi (2018)	2010-2013	13%

Noltemeyer, Proctor, & Dempsey (2013) noted that the number of published articles on diversity-related issues has grown over the years but lags behind other allied disciplines such as special education and counseling. An unsystematic survey of these articles suggested that most articles were effectiveness studies of interventions to increase academic and behavioral outcomes of students of color. Missing from this literature was the problematization of the frameworks of evaluating the outcomes as well as the uncritical acceptance of what constituted culture and cultural responsiveness.

The undertheorization of cultural responsiveness in school psychology may cause it to be used in multiple overlapping ways in the research literature. This is not a new problem, and has been examined in other fields of education such as teacher education, curriculum theory, and critical pedagogy, albeit in regards to a different term – multiculturalism. As early as the

seventies, Dolce (1973) and Tesconi (1984) pointed out the varied interpretations of 'multiculturalism' among educators. Sleeter and Grant (1987) surveyed existing literature and found at least five varieties of multiculturalism whose aims ranged from benevolent assimilation to the social reconstruction. Other researchers such as Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol (2001) also examined the different conceptualizations and practices of multiculturalism circulating in education, and found the most commonly practiced multiculturalism to be of a conservative or liberal variety, even though the original conception of multicultural had social transformation as its goal.

Statement of the Problem

The writings of Sleeter and Grant (1987) and Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol (2001) pertain to the disciplines of teacher education and curriculum, and speak less directly to the field of school psychology. The writings also pertain to the topic of multiculturalism and hence may not be entirely applicable to cultural responsiveness. However, what they suggest is that constructs, particularly those that engage with culture may come to be used in different ways and to different ends. I did not find similar inquiries undertaken in the field of school psychology about just what school psychologists meant when they said they were being culturally responsiveness, what the underlying discourses were, and the implications of these assumptions for the equity-oriented practice of school psychology. This suggested that despite the growing discussion about culturally responsive school psychology, the core issue of what constitutes cultural responsiveness for school psychology is underexplored. Attention to this issue may potentially throw light on the various ideological forces at play in determining how culturally responsive school psychology is practiced. Therefore, I was interested in investigating the discourses and underlying assumptions shaping school psychologists' talk about cultural responsiveness.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to bring a critical approach to understand the oft-used catchphrase of cultural responsiveness in school psychology. Given the increased emphasis on cultural responsiveness in the field of school psychology, I wanted to look at how school psychologists talk about their experiences of responding to and serving cultural groups different from them. Although cultural group membership can be defined in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and so forth, my inquiry especially privileged the racial part of the cultural identity matrix given that the field of school psychology is 90% white (Castillo, Curtis, & Gelley, 2013). Because of my focus on the way participants *talked* about cultural responsiveness, the use of discourse analysis seemed appropriate.

According to Goodman (2017), a robust discourse study involves selecting appropriate research questions that can be answered by/through/in this methodology. Discourse analysis eschews research questions that focus on participants' *authentic* perspectives or attitudes about a topic, because such questions treat language as a transparent medium to represent reality. Discourse analysts view language as constituting reality rather than simply representing it. As a result, the research questions of a discourse analytic study should focus on how speakers justify, argue, explain, or accomplish something with their talk (Goodman, 2017).

Given this focus, the research question that guided this inquiry was: How do school psychologists talk about cultural responsiveness? The sub-questions were - What underlying assumptions are evident in the construction of culture and cultural responsiveness? How does discourse structure the participants' talk? How are participants positioned by/in the talk about cultural responsiveness? Further discussion about the methodological assumptions guiding these research questions is in the Methods section.

Rationale for the Study

Researchers in school psychology increasingly call for the importance of preparing school psychologists equipped with cultural responsiveness (Reyna, Keller-Margulis, and Burridge, 2016). An underlying assumption in these guidelines and research articles is cultural responsiveness as an uncontested 'good' for students from minoritized backgrounds, when in fact such a concept can be practiced to achieve assimilationist ends or instrumentalist ends that may have little to do with social justice and more to do with ensuring the smooth functioning of institutions. Therefore a study that interrogates the conceptualization of cultural responsiveness in school psychology is warranted.

Background of the Researcher

My worldview is informed by critical theory which challenges commonsensical notions of reality, and destabilizes dominant onto-epistemological frameworks. I am interested in the way existing social structures react to the threats posed by critical concepts or theories. These reactions can go from ignoring them to coopting them once their momentum becomes harder to ignore. Over the years, I have seen increased mention of social justice and multiculturalism in school psychology conferences, job postings, and published journals. I view this development with cautious hopefulness. I am happy that the field is opening up to the critical frameworks signaled by these terms, but also notice that the dominant discourse around multiculturalism is anchored in logic of neoliberalism rather than social reconstructionism. For instance, many of the school psychology arguments in favor of cultural responsiveness point to changing demography in the US (e.g., the increase in Hispanic population, diminishing proportion of White students in schools). These arguments position cultural responsiveness as a way to arm school psychologists with the skills necessary to adapt to a changing clientele, rather than as a path to transformation.

These thoughts and musings influenced my inquiry about the discourses shaping cultural responsiveness in school psychology.

Overview of the Study

This study is based on pre-existing transcripts of interviews from a larger research project of which I was one of the team members. In the original project, we interviewed school psychologists from all over the U.S. to understand their perspectives on cultural responsiveness and how they incorporated it in their school-based practice of consultation. The interviews began with general questions about their journey into school psychology. The second part of the interview delved into participants' general understanding of cultural responsiveness, what it meant for their practice and life in general, and how they arrived at that particular understanding. The third section was specific to consultation which is one of the many roles that school psychologists play in schools. We asked them about how they incorporated cultural responsiveness into consultation practice and asked them to describe a case in which they worked with someone from a different racial or ethnic group than them. The original study operated from an interpretivist paradigm and findings took a descriptive format to represent the various strategies participants used in consultation.

For this dissertation, I decided to analyze the existing transcript to examine participants' talk about cultural responsiveness *in general* rather than how it applied specifically to their role as a consultant. I made this decision because I believed that cultural responsiveness is relevant to every area of a school psychologist's work, and focusing on consultation would cause me to miss out on the larger picture. Another reason for focusing on a general understanding of cultural responsiveness was due to my interest in the profession of school psychology as a whole rather than in some of its parts. Finally, including portions of the interviews that dealt solely with consultation would have resulted in consultation overshadowing all the other areas of school

psychologists' job, and limited the relevance of study findings to research communities who are primarily interested in consultation.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this dissertation was critical discursive psychology (CDA), which lies at the intersection of critical psychology and discursive psychology. Parker (2015) identified critical psychology as a response to the various problems posed by mainstream psychology – "a discipline that routinely reduces explanation to the level of the individual" (p. 1). Even socially or ecologically-oriented research topics take individuals as the starting point of inquiry into social issues. In opposition to this stance, critical psychology takes social as the starting point, and views the individual as a socially constructed phenomenon. Parker (2015) identifies several core principles of critical psychology while also acknowledging the multiplicity of voices that populate the field. The first principle involves a rejection of the artificial divide between the objective psychologist-scientist and subject-participant, where the former is the neutral observer and interpreter of psychological processes taking place within the latter. The second principle involves skepticism about treating the individual as the basic unit of analysis. The third principle is the "methodological as well as conceptual critique" of post-positivistic psychology that involves not merely identifying the limits of structural cognitive-behavioral models, but also critiquing "how psychologists go about building those models" of human behavior (p. 4). The fourth principle involves emphasizing the centrality of interpretive processes in 'descriptive' and 'objective' accounts of psychological events. The critical psychologist is also interested in understanding the ideologies at play in the interpretive processes behind these models. The fifth principle involves recognizing the importance of

researchers' positionality, their material conditions, and institutional arrangements in shaping the kind of research questions that get asked and answered.

Discursive psychology emerged in reaction to social psychology's treatment of language as a transparent medium to access people's cognitions (attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and values) (Edwards & Potter, 1992). While discursive psychology did not deny the existence of cognition, it critiqued social psychology's reliance on surveys and interviews to access what people 'truly' think as ignoring the centrality of discourse and social contingencies in shaping what can be said and how. Discursive psychology examined the way people deployed psychological language (e.g., think, remember, believe, feel) in social practice and to what ends (Potter, 1996).

The intersection of critical psychology and discursive psychology is referred to as critical discursive psychology (McMullen, 2018), which forms the theoretical framework of this dissertation. Critical discursive psychology interrogates how micropolitics of psychological language in conversations or interviews relate to wider sociopolitical issues. Researchers working with this framework draw on critical structural theories of discourse analysis (e.g., van Djik, 1995) as well as poststructural theories (e.g., Clark & Hepburn, 2015) to work against mainstream psychology's truth-claims about mind, self, to reveal how "the language of the text has been rhetorically produced" with a specific focus on the use of psychological language (p. 299).

Summary

This study used the data gathered as part of a larger study on culturally responsive consultation. I analyzed the transcribed interviews of 15 participants to answer the research questions. I performed critical discourse analysis to understand the discursive production of culture and cultural responsiveness, and what type of practices it enabled. In the next section, I review literature related to the research topic.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

My method for selecting articles to review was flexible. Although I initially limited my search to articles in school psychology journals that mentioned cultural responsiveness, I found relevant literature that used other terms, such as cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, multiculturalism, and social justice. School psychologists used these different terms in the same way, and without a clear rationale for choosing one term over the other. This observation corresponded to Whaley's (2008) systemic review of applied psychology literature which found ten terms commonly used in psychological literature interchangeably (see Table 2).

Table 2

Usage frequency of terms related to cultural responsiveness

Terms	Keyword (KW)	Title (TI)	Default field
Cultural sensitivity	298	96	2520
Cross-cultural competence	9	21	46
Cross-cultural expertise	1	0	3
Cross-cultural effectiveness	4	5	15
Cultural responsiveness	14	11	25
Cultural awareness	115	69	299

Table 2 (Continued)

Terms	Keyword (KW)	Title (TI)	Default field
Culturally skilled	0	0	8
Cultural competence	220	173	473
Culturally relevant	101	0	527
Multicultural competence	69	61	128

Whaley (2008) found that these terms were often used interchangeably in applied psychology literature, and without a clear rationale for choosing one over the other.

I therefore differentiate the research landscape of school psychology from that of education which does in fact see these terms as different, each with its own history and academic communities. Part of the reason for this difference between education and school psychology may be that education has had a relatively longer history of engaging with this subject matter than school psychology (and applied psychology in general), thus allowing for multiple camps and competing frameworks to emerge over time (see Aronson & Laughter [2016] for discussion of the various competing frameworks that have emerged since 1970s). School psychology's commitment to postpositivistic quantitative research may also have prevented the field from deeper engagement with complex and messy dynamics of culture and issues of power that may not always be amenable to quantification (Noltemeyer, Proctor, & Dempsey, 2013). Given that the present study is situated within the field of school psychology, I provide a very limited discussion of the accumulated work on cultural responsiveness and multiculturalism in the field

of education. I only draw on those writings in education that are useful for an interdisciplinary application to school psychology.

I begin this chapter by reviewing some key writings by critical scholars in the field of multicultural education that analyze the various multiculturalism*s* that circulate in K-12 education, and the ideological and discursive practices they engender. In an interdisciplinary move, I then use these critiques to work against the conceptualization of cultural responsiveness in school psychology. I treat the terms such as cultural responsiveness and multiculturalism interchangeably while searching for articles and book chapters to include in my critical review of school psychology literature. I also restricted the results to school psychology journals (i.e., journals that focus on the use of psychology in schools).

The Various Multiculturalism*s*

In the past three decades, the field of education has attempted to address the growing diversity in classrooms by increasing emphasis on concepts such as cultural awareness, acceptance, sensitivity, and inclusivity (Childs, 2017). Organizations such as the National Association for Multicultural Education, among others, played an important role in the development of multicultural education (Childs, 2017). To this day, multiculturalism remains a contentious term among educational researchers with many different meanings and usages in play (Childs, 2017). The growth in research on multicultural education has not been without critics. Various critical theorists have illuminated the appropriation and the conservativization of multiculturalism in order to make it more palatable to dominant (white) policymakers and gatekeepers over the past three decades. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) critiqued this trend for "attempt[ing] to be everything to everyone and consequently becom[ing] nothing for anyone, allowing the status quo to prevail" (p. 62). One of the earliest critiques of multiculturalism was

Sleeter and Grant (1987) who identified three problematic strands of multicultural education – teaching the other, human relations, and single-group studies.

The first approach involved framing multicultural education as something educators 'do' to the students of color. The aim of this approach was to "assimilate students of color into the cultural mainstream and existing social structure by offering transitional bridges within the existing school program" (Sleeter & Grant, 1987, p. 422). An example of this approach is education programs for English Language Learners that offer instruction in students' native language in the first few years with the ultimate goal of helping the students acquire the linguistic and pragmatic skills to participate in the dominant Anglophone culture of the U.S. Sleeter and Grant acknowledged the strengths of this approach in terms of applicability of teaching strategies and intentions, but also critiqued the limited scope of action inherent to this approach. There is superficial engagement with the wider political, cultural, and economic factors that create disenfranchisement. The approach placed responsibility of overcoming barriers to equity on students of color and their teachers, while placing few such demands on white students, administrators, and policymakers. Research publications and pedagogical resources operating from this approach foreground the cultural differences while backgrounding the unequal social relations and power dynamic between various groups. The focus of this approach was thus on assimilation rather than questioning or challenging dominant structures that produced alienation and disenfranchisement for students of color.

The human relations approach aimed to improve the quality of interactions between people from different groups within an organization. The literature base on this approach emerged within the aftermath of the desegregation movement, and many of its strategies revolved around the reduction of interpersonal conflicts within the newly desegregated

environments (Sleeter & Grant, 1987). The strategies often dealt with encouraging respectful communication and polite expression of disagreements. Sleeter and Grant (1987) acknowledged the immediate and practical benefits of this approach to readers who worked in schools, but also critiqued the approach for being undertheorized, and implying that improved interpersonal communication and niceness would lead to systemic changes such as reduced rates of incarceration or poverty among historically disenfranchised groups. They further criticized the approach for seeming to suggest that "people should get along, communicate, and appreciate each other within the existing stratified social system" (p. 427).

A third approach in multicultural education which Sleeter and Grant (1987) found problematic was the single group studies approach. This strand of literature offered lessons or units on educating people about the essential or core beliefs and practices of various culture groups. Like the human relations approach, this approach offered applications and prescriptions but did not clarify the theoretical underpinnings of these prescriptions, nor did it clarify the long-term goals for this approach (Sleeter and Grant, 1987). Barring a few exceptions, this approach did not explicitly tether its practice to the goal of bringing about social change. For instance, the approach focused on teaching readers about the contributions and cultural practices of Native Americas, but in a manner that was depoliticized and emptied of politically loaded topics such as colonization, genocide, and forced assimilation.

These three approaches can be characterized as channeling a conservativized form of multiculturalism, where the core mission is assimilation. Conservative multiculturalists view themselves as being committed to equality, and their path to equality involves helping to, "assimilate students into the mainstream culture and its attending values, mores, and norms" (Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol, 2001, p. 90). An example of assimilationist views of multiculturalism is

the school psychology textbook *Meeting the Psychoeducational Needs of Minority Students*, which emphasizes the importance of schools "unapologetically requiring students to live up to a highly specific and detailed code of conduct based on middle-class values and a Protestant work ethic nurtured within an explicit culture of achievement" (Frisby, 2013, p. 328). In conservative multiculturalism, affirming cultural differences are seen as undesirable in the long run, and conservative multiculturalists often desire to gradually replace diverse cultural identities with a common national identity. Providing effective services to diverse students is seen as important to prepare them to work in free market economy. Educators working from this approach assume that conditions and structures necessary for justice already exist. Therefore, they view actions that threaten or challenge these structures as undesirable or dangerous.

In addition to three approaches discussed so far, Sleeter and Grant (1987) identified a fourth approach that was prevalent in multicultural education. The multicultural approach was a reaction to the former three approaches' focus on assimilation. The multicultural approach took a clear stance against assimilation of students of color, and had relatively clearer connections between theory and action it engendered. The topics of the writings invoked institutional racism a lot more than the previous three approaches. The shortcoming of this approach was that it paid inadequate attention to the use of education to bring about social transformation and equal distribution of resources in the society. Although Sleeter and Grant (1987) found anti-assimilationism to be a worthy stance, they also argue that "The desire not to have to assimilate culturally has been only part of the concern; the desire to have power and economic resources equal to Whites has also been a concern" (p. 433). Finally, they also argued that the approach lacked strategies/solutions to bring changes at a broader level given its focus on changing the instruction and curriculum at the classroom and teacher level (Sleeter & Grant, 1987).

This approach falls under Jenks, Lee, and Kanpol's (2001) description of liberal multiculturalism, given its anti-assimilationist discourse of celebrating differences. Liberal multiculturalists view themselves as committed to equality, and the path to equality involves promoting tolerance and understanding. Although this approach is progressive in intent, it, "masks the conflicts and contradictions inherent in our society, ignoring what at times seem like irreconcilable and divisive identity issues revolving around race, class, and ethnicity. Moreover, insufficient consideration is given to power constructs, control issues, and 'official' knowledge, which stand in the way of achieving equity and excellence by denying political power" (Jenks, et al, 2001, p. 92).

Critical multiculturalists such as Gorski (2006, 2009) described liberal multiculturalism as a 'feel good' approach because the "let's get to know each other better" exercises are not accompanied by sufficient engagement with politically vexed topics that can lead to arguments or heated discussions. Gorski argues that by avoiding confrontations, this approach fails to destabilize the status quo. In addition, the celebrating differences approach also sidesteps analysis of why inequalities exist in the first place (Grant & Sleeter, 2007). Thus, there is inadequate attention to systemic inequalities and the role of institutions in (re)producing inequalities. The approach also engenders a mechanistic view of cultural competence, which is framed as a set of skills that can be instrumentalized in work settings to optimize work outcomes and provide effective services to 'clients'.

Sleeter and Grant (1987) as well as Jenks, Lee, and Kanpol (2001) advocate for a more critical approach to education, aimed at transformation of society to end oppression and secure justice for disenfranchised populations. Critical multiculturalists view themselves as committed to equality, and the path to equality involves confronting, challenging, and eventually

dismantling structures and policies that perpetuate inequality regardless of intentions. This approach attends to institutional, identarian as well as material aspects of social inequality, and views policy change as a crucial site of social action. The strategies emerging out of this approach emphasize social action, for instance, by helping develop critical consciousness among readers to mobilize them to hold institutions accountable and take direct action against social injustices (Sleeter and Grant, 1987). In the next section, I discuss the literature in school psychology in the light of these critiques of assimilationist and individualistic approaches to multiculturalism.

Critical Review of School Psychology Literature

Using the insights from these critiques, I provide a critical review of research literature in school psychology that relates to themes of cultural responsiveness, multiculturalism and social justice. School psychology journals have typically lagged behind other allied disciplines in publishing articles that engage meaningfully with questions of diversity, cultural responsiveness, and social justice (Noltemeyer, Proctor, & Dempsey, 2013). Shriberg and colleagues (2008) argued that although the three constructs mean different things, they are connected to each other. Social justice is a relatively recent turn in school psychology (Ratts, 2011; Shriberg & Moy, 2014). It was preceded by the recognition of and attention to cultural responsiveness as indicated by the various models of cultural responsiveness put forth in the 2000s (e.g., Lopez & Rogers, 2001; Wright Carrol, 2009) as well as the incorporation of cross-cultural competency in the foundational skills listed in NASP's training model for school psychologists (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). Although terms such as social justice, multiculturalism and cultural responsiveness are used interchangeably in school psychology, Shriberg and colleagues (2008) argue that social

justice forms the aspirational principle that undergirds the conversation around cultural responsiveness and multiculturalism.

In order to bring more clarity to the question of what social justice meant to/in school psychology, Shriberg and colleagues (2008) surveyed 20 school psychologists who had demonstrated expertise in the area of diversity. The expertise was determined through the presence of publications or presentations where culture or diversity was a central focus, rather than an afterthought. Through inductive content analysis of participant responses to written questions (Phase 1) followed by participant ranking of various definitions (Phase 2), Shriberg arrived at five most common conceptualizations of social justice. The majority of the participants (71%) equated social justice as it related to school psychology with ensuring equal rights and services for 'all'. The connotation was that all individuals, regardless of their cultural background of demographic affiliation, should receive appropriate educational services. The most common conceptualization of social justice among school psychologists is thus framed in the universalist and colorblind framework of 'all' (Shelton, Barnes, & Flint, 2019), and can thus be argued to be a form of liberal multiculturalism. Other conceptualizations of social justice involved such things as fostering an inclusive environment where each individual feels valued, "working beyond the immediate context" (Shriberg et al., 2008, p. 461) of schools to fight injustice at the societal level, advocating for marginalized individuals or groups in schools, and framing social justice as something that should be a core principle of every school psychologist's professional identity. With the exception of the third conceptualization, all the other conceptualizations displayed varying levels of focus on individuals.

In addition, the interviewees were also asked to name the topics they believed to be the most salient to a discussion on social justice in contemporary school psychology. The two most

important topics were those of institutional power (e.g., who has power, how it gets distributed) and advocacy (e.g., how to advocate for LGBTQ students in schools). Other salient topics that came up included unequal access to services, how to provide culturally competent services, the issue of prejudice and discrimination, types of diversity that exist and what to know about each. There was another topic called the role of school psychologists in promoting social justice. None of the participants selected this as a salient topic for conversation about social justice in school psychology. Finally, participants were also asked to identify and rank the issues that facilitated or hindered school psychologists' work as social justice agents. The biggest barriers were the lack of diversity in the field of school psychologists followed by disproportionate placement of minority students in special education and the shortage of resources (shortage of school psychologists, lack of funding).

In the next section, I critically review the existing literature in school psychology to understand the underlying assumptions about the nature of racism and the implications for the practice of school psychology. Although few publications in school psychology engage with issues of culture and diversity, there is a growing interest in these areas as indicated by the increasing number of diversity-focused articles published in school psychology journals in recent years compared to the past (Graybill, Baker, Cloth, Fisher & Nastasi, 2018; Grunewald et al., 2014). Although this trend is preferred to the colorblind approach of the past, the models and frameworks of cultural responsiveness operate from a predominantly human relations perspective and exhibit liberal impulses of individual and incremental change. I identify four types of school psychology publications that engage with issues of culture and diversity – disparities in educational outcomes and experiences, school-based interventions, school-based consultation, and graduate preparation of future school psychologists.

Educational outcomes and experiences. A significant area of research and discussion in school psychology is targeted at verifying the presence of racial-ethnic disparities in different domains of education, and discovering various patterns within the data. These studies are often quantitative, and investigate the presence of racial disparities in such domains as reading achievement, rates of special education referral and placement, and rates of suspensions or other forms of discipline. Research into these respective areas has often investigated how Black students are more likely to be referred to, tested for, and found eligible for special education compared to their white counterparts, and how the school staff disciplines Black students much more than white students.

An oft-cited study is Skiba and colleagues (2011) which found that Black students received many more office disciplinary referrals (ODR) and harsher consequences than white counterparts for similar infractions. This study collected data from more than 400 schools across the U.S. who used the Schoolwide Information System to document disciplinary events in terms of the nature of the infraction, time and setting of its occurrence, disciplinary action, and race and ethnicity of the student. Statistical analysis of the data indicated that Black students were 2.19 times and 3.78 times as likely as white students to receive ODRs in elementary and middle schools, respectively. Skiba and colleagues also found that Black students received harsher consequences than white students for infractions of similar intensity. Between Black and white students who had committed minor infractions, Black students were four times more likely to receive out of school suspensions and expulsions. Moreover, Losen and Skiba (2010) also found that the disciplinary gap has widened over the last forty years. More recent studies (e.g., U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014) have corroborated the findings about discrepancy between the disciplining of Black and white students.

Scott, Gage, Hirn, and Han (2019) investigated whether teacher race played a role in the higher disciplining of Black students compared to white students. They observed a randomly selected student in each classroom during a 15-minute interval when Reading or Language Arts instruction was in session. Observers trained in coding process observed the interaction between the selected student and the classroom teacher. Observers recorded the number of times who provided positive and negative feedback to a selected student per minute, the percentage of time that the student was off-task, and the number of times per minute that the selected student was disruptive (defined as behavior such as negative or threatening comments, noises, or other actions that disrupted or threatened to disrupt another student). Data analysis of the quantified data indicated that Black students were more disruptive than white students, and that both Black and white teachers provided more negative feedback to the Black students than to white students even after controlling for student behaviors. On the other hand, the rates of positive feedback were similar for both groups of students. Lastly, Scott and colleagues found that Black students were less disruptive and more on-task when they were with Black teachers than with white teachers. It is important to note that the study does not mention observers' positionalities (race, gender, etc.) which could potentially shape the students they perceived as disruptive or teachers they perceived as providing negative feedback.

School psychology publications also discuss racialized disparities in literacy and access to educational services. Although primary research in this area is sparse, school psychology journals regularly feature commentaries on the findings of various national organizations or think-tanks based on national datasets. For instance, Albritton, Anhalt, and Terry (2016) reviewed the national policy reports from various institutes which found that Black students had lower reading proficiency, lower access to high quality early childhood centers, and were less

likely to attend early childhood centers compared to white peers (Ewen & Herzfeldt-Kamprath, 2016; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015; Nores & Barnett, 2014).

School interventions. This strand of school psychology research involves testing the effectiveness of various interventions to reduce the aforementioned disparities. School-based interventions found in school psychology research run the gamut of individualized interventions to school-wide interventions such as positive behavioral support or multi-tiered systems of support. Although a majority of articles do not specifically address questions of diversity or cultural responsiveness, those that do, involve testing the effectiveness of an intervention with a specific population or testing the impact on reducing racially disparate outcomes. For instance, Castro-Olivo (2014) tested the effectiveness of a culturally adapted Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program with a group of Latinx students who were not yet proficient in English. Wang, Wang, Zheng, and Atwal (2016) presented findings on the bullying of Asian-American students, and proposed ways for school psychologists to ameliorate the problem, such as increasing coworkers' awareness of implicit bias and model-minority stereotypes that prevent them from identifying Asian-American students in distress. McIntosh, Moniz, Craft, Golby, and Steinwand-Deschambeault (2014) studied the application of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) with Indigenous students. Blake, Gregory, James, and Hasan (2016) proposed a step-by-step guide for school psychologists to analyze schoolwide disciplinary data to reduce the disproportionate suspensions of Black and Hispanic students compared to white students. Marston, Muyskens, Lau, & Canter (2003) studied the impact of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) on reducing racial disparities in achievement and special education testing and placement.

These articles indicate a positive trend in school psychology toward race-conscious instead of colorblind approach to interventions. Nevertheless, the school psychology research on culturally relevant interventions tends to encode several assumptions about the nature of racism which are not questioned or acknowledged. There is a tendency to draw on psychological explanations to explain racial differences in disciplinary and instructional practices. For instance, McIntosh, Girvan, Horner, and Smolkowski (2014) attribute the disproportionality in disciplinary practices (e.g., higher rates of office disciplinary referrals for Black students compared to white students) to implicit and explicit biases which they frame as "the critical threat to equitable education" (p. 3). Criticizing the "unidimensional" model of the past that attributed disproportionality to bias, they propose a multidimensional model that explains how these biases are mediated by situational variables (stress, exhaustion) to bring about racially discriminatory decisions. The example they provide is that of a teacher who makes racially equitable decisions at the beginning of the day but racially discriminatory decisions at the end of the day. The core argument is that "the interaction between individuals' biases *and* the situation leads to biased decision making" (p. 5). Their roadmap for bridging the disproportionality in discipline involves changing "malleable factors" such as school policies to prohibit explicit racist attitudes and using data-based decision making in the classroom to overcome the impact of implicit factors. Although there is a brief acknowledgement about the impact of "structural variables" on the disciplinary outcomes, the operationalization of structural variable is in terms of socioeconomic status of student, parental education, and school demographics. Critical theorists would argue these are merely the symptoms of the structural cause and not the structural cause itself. In sum, the McIntosh and colleagues' model (2014) foregrounds the role of individual decision-making in the production of racially unequal schools, and foregrounds the

role of cognitive concepts such as biases to explain the (re)production of these decisions. The solution forward is the enactment of rational decision-making with the use of data systems and policies aimed at helping individuals make rational decisions.

The dominant discourse around racism in the field of school psychology is thus shaped by individualistic and cognitivist account of social conditions, and can lead to a praxis at the individual and micro-level rather than the institutional level. For instance, Gregory, Hafen, Ruzek, Mikami, Allen, and Pianta (2016) propose the "closing" of racialized disciplinary referral gap through the enactment of an ongoing, intensive and individualized teacher coaching program to "guide teachers in creating emotionally positive, motivating, and cognitively challenging classrooms characterized by sensitivity to students' socioemotional and academic needs" (p. 173). The randomized controlled trials found sustained and positive impact of this program in reducing the disproportionality to non-significant levels. Gregory and colleagues note that the resource-heavy "equity-oriented" coaching program did not explicitly broach issues of race or inequality, but rather attempted to improve teacher interaction with "any student." The study results were commendable as they showed a positive impact of the individualized coaching on reducing referrals for Black students. However, the overall discursive effect of the article was to construe colorblind interventions at the micro-level as a sufficient solution to overcome problems of inequity that are themselves operationalized in constrained ways. The lack of attention to institutional racism was noticeable given that the study used a researcher-directed intervention funded by an IES grant in large schools located in low to middle income community areas of predominantly non-white families. Given the raced and classed discrepancies in school funding, it may be important to consider the extent to which different districts possess the resources

(funds, skilled personnel, adequate staff, etc.) to implement the programs without the support of a university team and research grants.

School consultation. This strand of school psychology research involves the effect of culturally responsive consultation on various school outcomes. School psychologists often serve as consultants to school personnel as part of their work responsibilities. Consultation is an indirect form of service delivery in which the consultant, "attempts to effect change in a third party (i.e., client) by working directly with a second party (i.e., consultee)" (Erchul & Ward, 2016, p. 73). School psychologists can use consultation to help school personnel in improving the instructional (Rosenfield, 2014), behavioral (Hughes, Colbert, & Crothers, 2014), mental health (Sandoval, 2014), and organizational (Burns, Kanive, & Karich, 2014) aspects of schools. Cultural responsiveness in consultation involves adjusting the consultative process "to address the needs and cultural values of the consultee, the client, or both" (Tarver-Behring & Ingraham, 1998, p. 58). Researchers such as Ingraham (2000) have put forth models of cultural responsive consultation. However, the models often define the cultural difference in apolitical terms. For instance, Ingraham's model of culturally responsive consultation emphasizes the importance of being sensitive to degrees of cultural differences or similarities between the consultant and the consultee. However, the differences are not situated in context of history or power relations, but in terms of cognitions such as "worldviews, experiences, and perceptions of individuals" (Ingraham, 2000, p. 325).

Empirical research on culturally responsive consultation follows a similar trend. Ramirez and Smith (2007) interviewed 49 school psychologists about their experiences of consulting with teachers in relation to a specific Hispanic student in their respective schools. Ramirez and Smith analyzed the anecdotes provided by each participant, and found that school consultants typically

used three strategies when they consulted with teachers about a Hispanic student. The strategies included (1) the evocation of cultural norms such as collectivism to justify the cause of a student behavior or the reason for selecting an intervention, (2) educating teachers about cultural differences in values and expectations between the dominant (white middle-class) culture and student's culture, and (3) use of a non-English language to communicate with parents when possible. O'Bryon and Rogers (2016) studied how 11 bilingual school psychologists helped teachers who had sought consultations in regards to an English Language Learner (ELL) in their respective classrooms. Teachers commonly sought consultation with the bilingual school psychologists to determine whether a student's poor academic performance was due to lack of English fluency or because of cognitive or learning disabilities. The school psychologists typically did the following things during the consultation: (1) they educated the teachers about the process of language acquisition and what could be expected from students in process of acquiring a new language, and (2) they suggested exercises and strategies (e.g., vocabulary word balls) that teachers could use with ELLs.

Other researchers also studied the use of consultation involved to effect organizational changes at the classroom or school level. For instance, Knotek (2012) conducted a micro-ethnography of two Native American administrators using culturally responsive consultation to institute problem-solving team meetings in a rural school over a period of three years. The administrators drew on their own identity as Native Americans to access knowledge, which they incorporated into their consultation with the school staff which was predominantly Native American. Administrators designed the organizational changes in keeping with the local values such as communitarianism, collectivism, and familial way of relating with colleagues and students. Rephrasing many of the aspects of the reform in terms of local discourse enabled them

to get buy-in from the school staff. The study demonstrated the pragmatic utility of cultural incorporation to ensure successful transition to new systems of functioning. Overall, the studies surveying the consultative strategies of school psychologists demonstrated the instrumental use of cultural responsiveness to achieve institutional goals. Incorporation of cultural responsiveness into consultative practice involved reasonable changes in the school psychologists' usual protocol to address the culturally situated needs of an individual student or of the school staff.

Graduate training. Various professional organizations have called for graduate programs in applied psychology to emphasize social justice training and cross-cultural competencies (American Psychological Association, 2003; Grapin, 2017). NASP's Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists (2010) require that graduate programs prepare their students to be culturally responsive professionals. Given these developments, research publications focus on identifying the competencies needed to become culturally responsive.

One of the earliest attempt on this front was Pederson's (1994) tripartite model which has influenced many applied psychology training programs. Under this model, the path to developing cultural responsiveness involves three components, namely awareness, knowledge, and skill. Each of these subcomponents builds on the previous one. In the Awareness subcomponent, the practitioner develops awareness of their identity, and ways in which their values and beliefs were shaped by their culture. They also become aware of the biases and prejudices that they have imbibed due to life experiences and upbringing. They reach a deeper level of understanding about ways in which their values influence various aspects of their work.

In the second subcomponent (i.e., knowledge), the practitioner gains knowledge about the common beliefs, norms, and values of various minority groups. In addition, they are aware of words and behaviors that are deemed offensive or that can result in miscommunication when

interacting with an individual from one of these minority groups. Practitioners can acquire this knowledge by reading literature produced by members of a group, having interpersonal interactions with group members, attending cultural activities or meetings by cultural leaders, and consulting with 'cultural guides'. Finally, practitioners also realize that individual differences exist within a given group. Therefore, not every member within a given group may adhere to or agree with the customs or expectation of that group.

Skills is the highest in Pedersen's (1994) tripartite model. It is the ability of a practitioner to draw successfully on awareness and knowledge in a given situation to meet the needs of a minority client. For example, a culturally responsive school psychologist draws on these factors to conduct culturally valid assessment or develop interventions that are culturally sensitive and responsive to a minority student's needs.

This generalist model of cultural responsiveness has a large scope of application, and is used by various fields of psychology. In the field of school psychology, one of the earliest attempt at defining the scope of cultural competency purposes was Lopez and Rogers (2001) who identified and polled 11 crosscultural experts in the field of school psychology. Expertise was defined in terms of publications, presentations, and faculty recommendations, and led to a sample of four faculty and seven practicing school psychologists. Through a three-step polling procedure, Lopez and Rogers (2001) identified 89 separate competencies in 14 practice domains that experts had deemed as most important for school psychologists working with "clients from diverse cultural and language backgrounds" (p. 227). Of the 89 competencies, the competency rated as most critical pertained to psychoeducational assessment and entailed "having knowledge of cross-cultural variables" (p. 285) that influence students' performance on various tests as well

as the practitioners' interpretation of the scores. Table 3 describes the competencies Lopez and Rogers identified in 14 domains.

Table 3

List of essential cross-cultural competencies for school psychologists

Domains	Brief descriptions of associated competencies (in terms of knowledge and skills)
Psychoeducational Assessment	How culture impacts student performance, practitioners interpretation of student performance, limitation and biases of various tests, how to evaluate students for whom English is not a first language
Consultation	How to work with others, show flexibility and respect toward people from different cultures, how to use cultural knowledge to accurately identify the problem and solutions
Counseling	Knowledge of norms and values of cultural groups, how culture impacts the way clients perceive the counseling process, understanding culturally specific nonverbal cues and communication patterns, working through language barriers if English is not client's first language
Culture	Knowledge about cultural differences, values and beliefs of various groups, role of culture in shaping learning and behavior, life demands and challenges of students from 'different' cultures, appreciation for diversity and how it enriches U.S. society

Table 3 (Continued)

Domains	Brief descriptions of associated competencies (in terms of knowledge and skills)
Language	Knowledge of language acquisition processes for first and second language, what ‘normal’ language development looks like in different cultures, challenges faced by bilingual students, research on and best practices in bilingual education
Laws and Regulations	Knowledge of federal laws regarding the assessment of students whose first language is not English, the importance of interpreters in meetings with non-English speaking parents, case laws that found placement of limited English proficiency (LEP) students in special education discriminatory
Professionalism	Behavior that models tolerance, shows appreciation for “intellectual or cultural or artistic manifestations of different cultures” (p. 300), shows sensitivity to cultural differences, awareness of values and beliefs of ones’ own group, knowledge of when to refer a case to another staff member with better understanding of the culture in question.
Report-writing	Skills to interpret test results in cases where language proficiency is an issue, knowledge of a student’s culture when writing about that student, skill to write reports that parents from various cultures can understand
Research	Knowledge of issues in generalization of results

Table 3 (Continued)

Domains	Brief descriptions of associated competencies (in terms of knowledge and skills)
Theoretical Paradigms	Awareness of one's theoretical paradigms and how it is/was shaped by one's culture "an awareness that poverty plays more of a role in a child's functioning than does membership in a particular minority group" (p. 302)
Working with Interpreters	Skill to discern interpreter's level and areas of expertise, knowledge of the problems in using client's family members as interpreters, knowledge about the strengths and limitations inherent to translation
Working with Organizations	Being aware of and sensitive to cultural beliefs and values of coworkers
Working with Parents	Awareness of cultural values of parents, how these values shape their beliefs about education, knowledge of parenting practices in various cultures.

The model is valuable in providing school psychology trainers with a roadmap to build their curriculum to prepare a culturally responsive workforce. However, the model also suffers from conceptual issues. For instance, the domain of Culture contains several competencies that are not well differentiated. The competency of "understanding of cultural differences of groups within U.S." and "respect for other cultures and peoples" could be subsumed under "understanding and appreciation of cultural differences" but are listed as separate competencies.

The language of 'understanding/respecting/appreciating other cultures' appears in various other domains leading to the issue of redundancy. The domain of Theoretical Paradigm carries vague explanation of what the author meant by theoretical paradigm. Additionally, the two competencies listed under the paradigm appear to be contradictory; whereas the first one frames theoretical paradigm as a socially situated and culturally influenced way of understanding the world, the second competency is a specific reading of the world presented as a fact. Finally, the model also prefaces each competency with cognitive actions such as 'knowing about', 'understanding how', 'recognizing that' and 'being aware of' within clarifying the decision to choose one term over another for a given competency or clarifying whether they are being used interchangeably.

Similar conceptual issues are at play in Wright Carroll's (2009) model of multicultural competencies for school psychologists which defines cultural responsiveness as "a process, an ideology and set of interventions in which school psychologists and other culturally (responsive) professionals engage" (p. 2). According to Wright Carroll, ten elements combine to form cultural responsiveness:

1. Valuing cultural pluralism
2. Striving for social justice, cultural democracy, and equity
3. Promoting the skills and knowledge to function in a pluralistic society
4. Valuing and respecting intra-group and intergroup differences
5. Understanding that there is no one right way to think or behave, and that different cultural groups may have different standards or ways of living
6. Cultivating analytical thinking
7. Celebrating contributions and achievements of different groups in the U.S.

8. Promoting change in institutions and society

9. Confronting uncomfortable realities about one's self or one's own group

10. Striving for positive outcomes for individuals, groups, and the society at large

According to Wright Carroll (2009), a school psychologist's mastery of each element ranges from awareness to action. The *awareness* stage is the most basic stage in which the school psychologist is merely aware of the need for a given element. The next stage is *acknowledgement*, which involves a more intentional appreciation of a given element. In this stage, the school psychologist is not merely aware of an element's existence but clearly understands its importance. In the third stage *advocacy*, the school psychologist transforms her abstract multicultural values into a plan for ensuring justice to an individual who is being treated unfairly because of their cultural background. Finally, the *action* stage is one in which the school psychologist comes to embody the ten components of cultural responsiveness through activism in everyday life. They grab opportunities to promote policies or actions that benefit students from historically marginalized groups. According to Wright Carroll (2009), *action* is more intensive, focused, and intentional than *advocacy*, although it may involve many of the same behaviors (e.g., advocating for equitable policies, resisting unjust policies, etc.). Whereas *advocacy* may benefit a specific student or a family, *action* has more far-reaching consequences that impact the larger community.

From a critical standpoint, the article has many strengths – it situates the need for multicultural competency in the context of structural injustices such as unequally funded schools, diversion of ever-shrinking tax revenue to prisons instead of education, and so forth. It also speaks to the importance of ideology in the construction of multiculturalism. However, it is also set against a theoretical ambivalent background, and conceptualizes multiculturalism as a

process, an ideology, an individual value, or specific behaviors at different points without a clear explanation of how the signified concept moves in and out of each of these signifiers. Like Lopez and Rogers (2001), its ten components of multiculturalism often overlap with each other, and draw on the liberal multicultural rhetoric of 'respecting differences'. But unlike Lopez and Rogers, Wright Carroll's model also mentions the importance of discomfort, tension and conflict over realities to the construct of multiculturalism. In this way, Wight Carroll's model is more critical than Lopez and Rogers's model. The model also spreads multicultural competencies into four areas – awareness, acknowledgment and knowledge, advocacy, and action, and clarifies the differences and overlaps between these areas which makes the overall conceptual model robust.

Other scholarship in this area typically involves empirical studies such as nationwide surveys of school psychology programs to identify prevalent strategies graduate programs use to develop cultural responsiveness among students and increase the retention of students of color. Newell et al. (2010) recommended four key components for developing a graduate program aimed at developing culturally responsive school psychologists. The components included embedding multiculturalism throughout the graduate coursework, increasing student awareness about values and beliefs of various cultural groups, integrating research experiences focused on multicultural topics, developing strategies to retain students and faculty of color, creating opportunities for students to interact with diverse cultural groups as part of their practicum or internships, and regular evaluation of program's effectiveness at fostering cultural competencies. Lopez and Bursztyn (2013) built on these recommendations and also encouraged programs to think about the different ways they could go about the issue of multiculturalism. For instance, some programs may use the additive approach where they add a module on culture to an otherwise colorblind course (e.g., dedicating one class of a psychoeducational assessment course

to the topic of non-biased testing). Other courses may take a more expansive approach where multiculturalism is infused into every facet of the program, starting from recruitment of faculties of color. Lopez and Bursztyn also recommend expanding the definition of diversity beyond race and ethnicity. Radliff, Miranda, Stoll, and Wheeler (2009) discussed their efforts to embed social justice in their graduate program through a revised mission statement that centered social justice, diversification of the student body, revising curriculum and program requirements, and increased program involvement in community initiatives.

Lopez and Bursztyn (2013) identified the common rationales provided in these papers for the incorporation of multiculturalism and social justice in school psychology training. The rationales include professional standards and ethical guidelines developed by various professional organizations such as NASP and APA, case laws and civil rights legislation, and the positive connection between cultural responsiveness and improved intervention outcomes for minoritized groups. Lopez and Bursztyn argued that the most important rationale for embedding multiculturalism in training is the immigration-related demographic changes in student population in the U.S. All of these rationales operate from an instrumental perspective; the value of cultural responsiveness derives from its utility in preparing a competent workforce that delivers efficient and results-driven services. The present-focused orientation of these rationales (as seen in the demographic change argument for instance) is also ahistorical because it deflects from the past/histories of various oppressed groups (e.g., Native Americans, descendants of enslaved African-Americans) that were in the U.S. even before the rapid demographic changes, and deserve culturally responsive services.

Summary

In the literature review, I reviewed critical writings that questioned the extent to which the discourse around cultural responsiveness does justice to the transformative vision of its early proponents. Theorists who operate from a critical lens criticize popular talk on cultural responsiveness for propagating a depoliticized version of diversity, and stopping short of questioning power and privilege. Using the critical frameworks devised by multicultural theorists, I review the use of cultural responsiveness in the field of school psychology. I look at the four areas of research in school psychology journals where the topic of cultural responsiveness emerges – statistical evidence of systemic disparities in education, school-based interventions, school-based consultation, and graduate training. I also briefly touch upon literature on social justice, a relatively new turn in school psychology, and connect it to cultural responsiveness. I discuss various research studies with an eye toward their underlying assumptions, their discursive framing, and the transformative actions they engender (or do not engender). In the next section, I discuss the design of this research study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

I analyze a pre-existing dataset collected as part of a larger research project that included interviews with 15 school psychologists across the U.S. about their experiences of culturally responsive consultation. In this section, I introduce the reader to the original study, and discuss my analysis of the data, in terms of my research paradigm, and methodology.

Overview of the Original Study

The original project was a collaboration between multiple researchers at two universities, and included interviews with 15 school psychologists across the U.S. about their experiences of culturally responsive consultation. Researchers used what Maxwell (1992) called an interpretive approach to understand the various strategies that school psychologists utilized to provide culturally responsive consultation. Acknowledging that the label ‘interpretive’ is used in many different ways, Maxwell (1992) described an interview study as ‘interpretive’ if the researchers represented findings in ideational terms (e.g., participants’ ‘perspectives’) but did not apply or develop explicit theory in the process of data analysis. Data analysis of the original project involved consensual coding to increase the trustworthiness of the findings. Presentation of the findings was predominantly descriptive, and theory-based interpretation was kept to a minimum given school psychology’s disciplinary emphasis on empirical objectivity.

Using semi-structured interviews, researchers in the original study collected participants’ perceptions about and experiences with culturally responsive consultation. Semi-structured interviews provide a pre-determined list of interview questions that guided the interview (see

Appendix A for the list of questions used for the larger study). We interviewed each participant twice for approximately an hour each. The interviewing approach was influenced by Roulston's (2010) discussion of social constructionist interviews. This approach to interviewing is helpful when a researcher desires to, "[access] particular versions of affairs produced by interlocutor on specific occasions" (Roulston, 2010, p. 219). Social constructionist interviews help us to access participants' sense-making processes such as, "explaining, attributing, justifying, describing, and otherwise finding possible sense or orderliness in the various events, people, places, and courses of action they talk about" (Roulston, 2010, p. 219).

In keeping with the social constructionist approach, researchers of the larger study asked questions that elicited participants' sense-making processes. We began the first interview by eliciting general information about the participant's journey as a school psychologist and their current work environment. Apart from offering background and contextual information on the participant, these questions also served the purpose of rapport building. The next section dealt with consultation - what it looks like in theory and practice from the viewpoint of the participant. We then asked the participants about their perspectives on cultural responsiveness, and finally their experiences with providing culturally responsive consultation. During the second interview, we asked participants to discuss a consultation case in which they had used principles of cultural responsiveness. These questions sought to elicit a comprehensive case vignette, including the context, the specific details, and the outcomes.

Participants. The original study interviewed 15 participants about their experiences with and perspectives on culturally responsive consultation. Any individual who met the following three criteria was eligible for participation in the study. All of these criteria were based on self-

report. In other words, we did not conduct any external verification of a participant's claim about meeting participation criteria.

- Practices in a K-12 school setting
- Utilizes student-focused consultation fairly regularly (at least 10% of their time) in their practice
- Uses a problem-solving framework to guide their consultation

Data collection was completed in Summer 2018, and consisted of a total of 15 participants. Ten participants were from the southeastern U.S., two were from northeastern U.S., and three participants were from the western U.S. Participants' work experience in schools ranged from one year to 20 years, with six participants having less than five years of experience, six participants between five to 15 years of experience, and three participants more than 15 years of experience. See Table 4 for description of participants' demographic information.

Table 4

Demographic details about the participants

Self-reported identity	Number of participants
Black non-Hispanic women	4
White Hispanic women	2
White non-Hispanic women	4
South Asian American woman	1
East Asian American woman	1

Table 4 (Continued)

Self-reported identity	Number of participants
Arab American woman	1
White Hispanic male	1
White non-Hispanic male	1
Total	15

Data handling. Each participant gave two interviews, with each interview lasting 45 minutes to an hour. We contracted a professional transcription service called Go Transcript (GoTranscript.com) to transcribe the audio recordings of the interviews. After each interview, a research team member uploaded the audio to the group account on GoTranscript.com. Traditional discourse analytic methods such as conversation analysis require detailed transcriptions that contain annotations about the precise length of pauses (to the hundredth decimal), fillers, self-corrections, emphasis, and volume of speech. Given that conversation analysis was not the goal, the transcripts were restricted to participant words. We received the completed transcript in Word document within five business days. Researchers stored transcripts and audio recordings in a secure online storage facility Box.com provided by their research institution.

Institutional review board. The original study was a multisite project composed of five scholars affiliated with USF (including me) and three scholars affiliated with College of William and Mary. Institutional Review Boards (IRB) from both the institutions approved the study. The approval letter and the letter of informed consent for the study are attached in Appendix B and C,

respectively. In order to safeguard the privacy of the interview participants, the interview recordings and transcripts were uploaded on Box.com. Box.com is a secure cloud service that is approved by USF's IRB to enable safe online collaboration and data-sharing between research team members. Only the eight members had access to the folder that contained the recordings and transcripts.

In the next section, I introduce the reader to the research paradigm of my dissertation, and then discuss my analysis of the data.

Research Paradigm

In this dissertation, I operate from a critical paradigm and use data from the original project to analyze the discursive underpinnings of participant responses. Lather (2004) discussed some of the characteristics of this paradigm. As opposed to the post-positivist insistence on neutrality and 'objectivity', the critical paradigm takes a more advocacy-based approach to research. Research arising out of this paradigm is "openly ideological" (Lather, 1986a) and takes clear political stances. Indeed, critical theorists reject the post-positivistic claims to impartiality and non-partisanship, and claim that, "nothing is outside ideology, most certainly the production of social knowledge" (Lather, 2004, p. 204).

Onto-epistemic assumptions underlining the critical paradigm can best be described as social constructionist (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). A critical paradigm concurs with post-positivist paradigms about the existence of a 'reality' outside of human mind (Sipe & Constable, 1996). However, critical theorists also believe that there is no impartial or neutral way of knowing this reality. The questions of what can be known is imbricated in dominant power relations, and there is no escaping the historical baggage or social situatedness for an observer/researcher (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). In other words, "there is no transhistorical,

culture-free, disinterested way of knowing" (Lather, 2004, p. 207). Thus, commonly accepted and taken-for-granted accounts of history or contemporary social life are those that served the interests of the dominant groups, while the lived truths of the oppressed population were marginalized (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002; Paul, 2005).

Critically oriented theorists ask questions about power, powerlessness, oppression, and social processes that perpetuate injustice. The overall aim of critically-oriented research is to, "bring scholarship and advocacy together in order to generate ways of knowing that interrupt power imbalances" (Lather, 2004, p. 208). Typical research questions focus on how race, class, gender, and ability mediate the lives of social actors and on how social actors navigate, perpetuate, or resist these forces of oppression (Lather, 2004).

Research Methodology

Wolgemuth, Hicks, & Agosto (2017) described methodology as the delineation of "what the inquiry entails and provides justifications for how it will be conducted within the philosophies of inquiry it is embedded" (p. 133). The current study was methodologically a critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) analyzes, "the connections between the use of language and the social and political contexts in which it is used" (Paltridge, 2012, p. 186). In other words, CDA delves beyond the formal qualities of a text to understand what that text does in a given situation. For instance, Van Dijk (1993) reviewed reports in the British media about events characterized by racial tensions, police brutality, or anti-racist protests, and found tactical use of passive voice when reporting hate crimes or police brutality against minoritized groups (e.g., headlines such as 'Black youth harassed') without declaring the agent of the harassment. On the other hand, newspapers used active voice when reporting on negative actions of minoritized groups in headlines such as: "They were among a mob of 50 Asians who

smashed up an East London pub after a series of hammer attacks on other Asians." These instances demonstrate the strategic ways in which discourse operates via texts to perpetuate and reproduce racial dominance (Van Dijk, 1993). CDA is especially interested in the relationship between language and power. As a result, topics such as gender, racism, media discourses, political issues, and identity issues are prominent among CDA researchers (Weiss & Wodak, 2003).

Although there is no one theory or method that is foundational to CDA (Weiss & Wodak, 2003), there are some onto-epistemological stances found across the diverse CDA landscape (Paltridge, 2012; Weiss & Wodak, 2003):

(1) Language does not merely represent reality but constitutes it,

(2) Identities (e.g., race, gender) are not innate. Rather, they are social creations that are created, negotiated, and contested through language; and

(3) Ideologies are operated and circulated through texts. Thus, text is not just a linguistic formulation but a socially, politically and historically situated performance. Different ways of conceptualizing ideology exist but discourse analysts typically conceptualize it as "a fragmented and often contradictory constellation of beliefs that usually parade as 'common sense', which guide the beliefs and activities of groups/cultures, thus shaping an unending powerplay within and across groups/cultures" (Goddard & Carey, 2017, p. 52).

Although the word discourse occurs prominently, discourse is defined variably, and its meaning is often evident from the context in which it is used. For Paltridge (2012), discourse is the "language produced as an act of communication" in a given social context (p. 244). Each social context has a set of unspoken rules that structure production of language in the situation.

Discourse analysts operating from this definition of discourse may observe communication between servers and customers in restaurants to learn about the social conventions that structure the discourse of placing orders.

For van Dijk (1993), discourse entails not only the language produced in situations but also the rules that structure the language use. van Dijk (1993) used the metaphor of a floating iceberg to explain the meaning of discourse. The surface of the discourse iceberg is the empirical aspects of communication that can be seen or heard (e.g., sounds, writing). Underneath the surface is the syntactic structure that encodes the speaker's motivations, intentions, assumptions, or mental representations about the given topic, and communicates specific versions of social reality. The lowest part of the iceberg represents *schemata* that exists outside of individual preferences, is socially shared, and structures the overall communication in a given situation. For instance, the situation of running into someone familiar at the supermarket often involves beginning the conversation with greeting and ending with farewell. The iceberg floats in the *social context* of existing unequal power relations of race, gender, class, and so forth.

Both Paltridge (2012) and van Dijk (1993) employ structuralist approach to discourse, but there are some important differences. Whereas as Paltridge may employ the traditional non-critical linguistic focus on analyzing text at the empirical level (i.e., talk), van Dijk goes beyond the empirical text to uncover the presuppositions as well as implications of the talk for broader societal issues. van Dijk (1993) also promotes the concept of individual cognition as an important step to understand talk. This priority is therefore visible in his approach to discourse analysis that entails the study of speakers' mental representations of given topics. Foucault (1972), on the other hand, framed discourse as a system of circulating signs and practices not contained within individuals, and which "systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of

which they speak." (Lessa, 2006, p. 285). One of the difference between the van Dijk and Foucault's approaches to discourse is that the former viewed individuals as the producers of discourse whereas the latter framed discourse as the producer of subjects.

I synthesized the two approaches to adopt a structural non-individualistic definition of discourse as an epistemic entity that governs the production of subjects and their language about a specific topic. I also drew on Foucault's (1981) theory of discourse as constituted by as well as constitutive of power. In more structural terms, the dominant social systems (e.g., professional organizations, media houses, schools) reproduce discourse and in turn are reproduced and perpetuated by discourse. Through careful selection, exclusion, organization, and redistribution (Foucault, 1981), certain versions of reality are produced. The rules that govern knowledge production in a given system make it difficult to think outside of the discourse. – "to be outside of them is, by definition, to be mad, to be beyond comprehension and therefore reason" (Hook, 2001, p. 522). The Foucauldian conceptualization of power possesses both productive as well as restrictive capabilities. It produces certain forms or writings and speaking as well as restricts others. The action of production and exclusion/restriction are complementary and equally necessary for the reproduction of dominance. Exclusionary systems embedded in discourse include taboos against the discussion of certain topics, and less explicit systems such as the binary between reason and madness, and the valorization of truth (defined as that which the current discourse allows to be natural, obvious, reasonable, and/or scientific). The productive power of discourse is seen in the formations of constructs, rationales, and subjects-positions in texts. A critical reading of text in line with Foucauldian understanding of discourse thus involves examining the productive and restrictive effects of discourse evident in a text (Foucault, 1981; Hook, 2001; Wolgemuth, 2014).

In this dissertation, I conduct a critical discourse analysis informed by Foucauldian (1981) theorization of power to analyze the psychological discourses that produce and transform subjects, knowledge, objects of knowledge, and the interrelationships between those subjects in the context of power (Clark & Hepburn, 2015). Drawing on van Dijk's process of discourse analysis, I looked at participants' transcripts to analyze text at a macro-level – how the participant talk connected to discourse. I did not restrict myself to the sentence-, word-, or grammar-level analysis, and also analyzed the words' meanings in relation to social context of power.

Method. There is no canonical way to conduct a critical discourse analysis (Goodman, 2017; Paltridge, 2012). Many critical discourse analysts have noted the difficulty of explaining the 'steps' and 'procedures' involved in critical discourse analysis. One of its early proponents, Potter and Wetherell (1987) pointed out that analyzing discourse was like "riding a bicycle", that "it is not a case of stating, first you do this and then you do that" (p. 168). A similar case can be made for difficulty of explaining the steps that went into data analysis for this dissertation. Nevertheless, I use Goodman's (2017) list of steps to communicate my data analysis procedure to the reader while acknowledging that the process did not proceed in the structured fashion indicated by these steps. I also brought in Foucault's ideas of discourse and power to add to the insights emerging from this discourse analysis without straying too far away from the critical roots of the dissertation. Below I describe Goodman's steps and discuss the extent to which I subscribed to or deviated from each step:

The first step in Goodman's guide to discourse analysis was generating appropriate research questions that aligned with the focus of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis treats text (e.g., interviews responses, participant accounts) as a social performance rather than a

representation of a stable reality. Thus, research question that seek to use text to 'uncover' participants' attitudes or authentic perspectives are not aligned with discourse analytic methodology. The proper research questions focus on how certain versions of reality are produced in the course of the interview via explanations, justifications, silence, and argumentation. The research questions in the current study were based on Goodman's recommendation of appropriate research questions. These questions served as the guide for the inquiry.

The second step involved picking appropriate source of data to answer the research questions. In other words, Goodman's guide recommends that research questions drive the generation of data. This recommendation makes a specific assumption about the research process (as linear and structured), and does not consider research scenarios where an interesting dataset sparks research questions, as was the case with the current study where I used existing set of interviews from another project. It is important to note the debate in discourse analysis about the use of interview as a source of data. Some traditional discourse analysists like Potter (1997) prefer naturally occurring data such conversations, and criticize interview-based data as "contrived" (p. 150) as it occurs in an artificial situation (the research interview). Speer (2002) argued against Potter's (1997) distinction between natural data and contrived data by saying that all data obtained from participant interactions was natural because the interview was also a form of social interaction, and therefore evoked the usual processes of discourse. For the purpose of answering the research questions, my data consisted of an existing set of interviews with 15 participants who worked as school psychologists in K-12 settings.

Step three was generating a corpus, namely identifying the parts of the data that are relevant to the research questions. Interviews yield data that can be discourse analyzed in a

number of different ways. As a result, the exclusion of data irrelevant to research questions is warranted. The original interview transcripts contained questions that prompted participants to talk about cultural responsiveness as it applied to their practice of school psychology *in general*, and then prompted them specifically to talk about it in relation to consultation (one of the many roles they fulfill as school psychologists). For the corpus, I selected passages where participants talked about the former and copied them onto a new document for further analysis. The decision to exclude interview questions related to consultation specifically was made to broaden the scope of the study, and to prevent the topic of consultation from overshadowing all other responsibilities that constitute the job of school psychologists. Note that the final corpus contains many instances of participants talking about consultation in addition to other domains of their work, such as testing and counseling, thereby capturing a well-rounded picture of their daily activities at work.

Step four in Goodman's list is transcription of the recorded interviews. Given that I used preexisting dataset, this step was omitted. I however re-read the transcripts while listening to the audio recording in order to familiarize myself with the data, and rectify some transcription errors.

Step five involved the preliminary reading of the data. In this stage, the researcher reads and re-reads the transcripts in order to identify the 'action orientation' of an utterance – the inferred role of an utterance in a conversation. Speakers may employ several strategies in the course of a conversation to achieve certain ends. For example, an instructor begins negative feedback about a student's paper with few initial lines of encouragement ("e.g., this is a good first draft, and I can see you put a lot of effort into this."). In this context, the action orientation of the encouraging message could be to prepare the groundwork for criticism. For the fifth step, Goodman (2017) recommends identifying excerpts that indicate any kind of action orientation,

and pasting them into a new document for further analysis while deleting the rest. I annotated the various action orientations in the corpus, but did not delete the rest of the text in the corpus.

Step six involves going deeper into the new document to search for discursive and rhetoric strategies that speakers use. The speaker can draw on strategies identified in existing literature, or may discover new strategies not covered by another researcher. Taking a leaf from Goddard and Carey (2017), I scanned the excerpts to identify the presence of discursive features that included (but were not limited to) interpretive repertoire, ideological dilemmas, and subject positions. Wetherell and Potter (1987) described interpretive repertoire as “relatively internally consistent, bounded language units” (p. 172). Seymour-Smith et al. (2002) described them as, “a recognizable routine of arguments, descriptions and evaluations found in people’s talk often distinguished by familiar clichés, anecdotes and tropes … ‘what everyone knows’’ (p. 255). I scanned the document of excerpts to see messages, phrases, or tropes that occurred repeatedly. Ideological dilemma as a discursive feature entails the presence of tension elicited in an attempt to navigate multiple competing ideologies without losing textual coherence. Discourse analysists may also look at the subject positions, which involve how a speaker constructs themselves and others, and to what end. I also looked at other discursive features such as presuppositions (Paltridge, 2012) - the ontological and epistemological assumptions that undergird a text.

I re-read the document twice, and coded various excerpts that manifested repertoires, dilemmas, subject positions, and presuppositions. I use ‘coding’ loosely to signify the tagging of excerpts (e.g., sentences or paragraphs) with labels that described the discursive features – often accompanied by memos describing the action orientation. Following the completion of coding, I organized the codes by grouping and subsuming some codes under other codes. I also coded segments that showed specific understanding of culture and cultural responsiveness, as well as

any other textual information that seemed potentially useful in the future. Throughout the analysis, I made memos about the productive and restrictive effects of discourse on the data.

Step seven involves building a case to support findings. This step occurred in parallel to step six. While coding was under way, I began to read various theoretical and conceptual publications in order to make sense of the patterns that had begun to emerge. I wrote memos to document the various directions in which data interpretation would go. After numerous attempts, I settled on the theoretical framework of critical discursive psychology to explain the data and organize the findings.

The final step is the writing of the report, which included making choices about what information to include in the report, and how to organize the said information. For the purpose of this dissertation, I decided to use the traditional format of school psychology research, namely dividing an article into introduction, rationale, methods, findings, and discussion. Although Goodman's (2017) list frames the research process as a set of linear and discrete steps, my research process was non-linear and involved co-occurrence, reversals, and overlaps between steps.

Participants and reporting. The operating definition of discourse guiding this study drew partly on Foucault (1981) and positioned the participant-subject as well as their talk as discursive productions. In other words, I did not view talk as a realization of each individual participants' 'inner' intents but rather as moments of discursive instantiation. Building on this logic, I decided to deviate from the standard practice in qualitative research of attributing quotes to individual participants represented by pseudonyms. I provide a brief inventory of participants' racial, ethnic and gender categories in Table 4. I specifically refrain from adding more

information about each participant in order to work against liberal humanist discourse (St. Pierre, 2014).

Validity

There is no universal consensus on the criteria for determining validity of a qualitative research study. Various researchers such as Bochner (2000), Creswell (2007), Lather (1986), and Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed criteria to determine validity of an inquiry. These criteria are historically situated, and become meaningful within the context of specific research designs and sociopolitical milieu. For this study, I utilized Maxwell's (1993) criteria of theoretical validity, Lather's (1986) criteria of catalytic validity, and Tracy's (2010) criteria of rich rigor and significant contribution as markers of validity.

Theoretical validity. Phillips (1987) critiqued the positivist notions of validity wherein quality is judged by the extent to which research procedures ensure the production of "sound data or true conclusions" (p. 21). Maxwell (1993) argued for seeing validity in terms of the quality of understanding it produced rather than in terms of the truth it entails. For Maxwell, qualitative research studies can aim to produce three types of understandings for the reader – descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical, and their validity should be judged by the extent to which the research study accomplishes its goal. Descriptive studies aim to report participant acts that have been corroborated to be factually accurate (e.g., two independent observers in a classroom observed a student's eraser hitting the floor). Interpretive studies aim to communicate the meaning of participant acts in terms of their concrete description as well personal meaning for the actor (e.g., student angrily threw his eraser to the floor). This account explains the act in terms of the perspectives and intentions of the participant as interpreted by the researcher. Theoretical qualitative studies go beyond describing the act from participant's perspective, and

explain the observed act in terms of a theory. For instance, a researcher may explain the student's action of throwing the eraser to the floor as a form of micro-resistance to disciplinary and normalizing functions of formal schooling within a late capitalist social structure (Maxwell, 1993). In this analysis, participant act is explained in terms of the connections between the three constructs - micro-resistance, school as a disciplinary apparatus, late capitalism. Theoretical validity hinges on the use of theoretically valid constructs that are woven together through coherent argumentation to justify the interconnections. In the current study, I drew connections between cognitivism, cultural responsiveness, and Foucauldian notion of power. Specifically, I explained participant talk as reflecting cognitivism in relation to the practice of cultural responsiveness, and further related it to Foucauldian constructs of power. I discussed each construct in detail, citing previous authors who have written on them. Discussion on the constructs occurs throughout the dissertation study, and draws on a wide variety of sources to provide a glimpse into the prevailing positions on those constructs. I provide direct quotes to corroborate my argument about the cognitivism in the talk, and bring in historical sources (e.g., Immanuel Kant) to show the interconnection and socially situated nature of these constructs. I use coherent arguments, examples, and citations to potentially convince the audience about the legitimacy of the study findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The current manuscript was also reviewed at least two times by four faculty members from different disciplines in Education. Their comments and concerns about the constructs and interrelationships between constructs were incorporated into data analysis and manuscript revisions, leading to higher level of theoretical validity.

Rich rigor. Tracy (2010) described rigor as characterized by richness of descriptions, arguments, and conceptual tools to support the researcher's interpretation of the data. This

criterion is especially relevant to cases where the focus of investigation is a complex social phenomenon. In such a situation, the researcher draws on a requisite variety of theoretical tools to explain the data. Requisite variety is a term borrowed from cybernetics. It refers to the need for a tool to be at least as "complex, flexible, and multifaceted as the phenomena being studied" (Tracy, 2010, p. 841). Using this principle, a researcher interested in rich rigor draws on a variety of concepts and theories to make sense of complex social phenomena. The researcher eschews simplistic descriptive-level analysis, and seeks to do justice to the complex truths and contradictions uncovered in the course of an inquiry.

In addition to the use of appropriate conceptual tools, the researcher also presents appropriate data segments and explanations in support of their argument or claim. This step is about convincing the audience about the validity of the researcher's interpretation. Tracy cautioned that, "a head full of theories and a case full of data does not automatically result in high quality work" (p. 841). Building a case in support of a conclusion is an art. Therefore, there is no formula to ensure that a study conclusion is rich in rigor.

My study used conceptual tools from critical psychology to analyze participants' talk on cultural responsiveness. The conceptual frameworks seem relevant and timely given that terms such as multiculturalism and cultural responsiveness have become commonplace in education. I used participant quotes (i.e., data segments) to support significant claims, and walked the reader through my interpretation of those quotes. I believe these strategies make this inquiry rich in rigor.

Catalytic validity and significant contribution. I situated the third criterion of quality in midst of catalytic validity (Lather, 1986) and significant contribution (Tracy, 2010). For Lather, catalytic validity entailed the power of a study to transform people's understanding of the

society. As people become more aware of the taken-from-granted oppressive assumptions that undergird their actions, the possibility of collective change becomes possible. Lather described catalytic validity in context of long-term critical ethnographies and Freirian action research where the participants come to develop critical consciousness because of their involvement in research activities over a period of time. The current study did not use an ethnographic approach or share the study conclusions with participants. As a result, the catalytic validity of this study cannot be judged in terms of Lather's original framing. Nevertheless, the study can be said to open up a new lines of inquiry, and provide a new agenda of research for other school psychology researchers and readers interested in approaching the topic of cultural responsiveness from a critical perspective.

A related form of validity was that of significant contribution which Tracy (2010) described as making a valuable addition to the "current climate of knowledge, practice, and politics" (p. 845). A study that makes significant contribution might produce knowledge or improve practice towards the goal of reducing oppression or empowering marginalized groups. I believe that the current study can accomplish at least some of these goals. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the cultural turn in school psychology is characterized by a liberal humanist conceptualization of culturally responsiveness and social justice. The studies that exist so far do not delve into the discursive construction of cultural responsiveness and fail to bring attention to the ideologies at work. Understanding these aspects and their implications for practice may open space for a new generation of school psychologists to cultivate more critical ways of thinking about cultural responsiveness as well as about school psychology. Finally, the research study might introduce critical psychology to a wider community of school psychologists via conference presentations or publications. This could potentially open up new lines of inquiries

and generate critical conversations about what school psychologists mean when they claim to be culturally responsive.

Ethical Considerations

I did not seek IRB approval for this dissertation, given that its goal was similar to that of the original IRB-approved study – to understand the nature of cultural responsiveness among school psychologists, although my dissertation used a different lens (critical discursive psychology) to analyze the data.

Given that this dissertation was guided by a critical orientation, the analysis was critically interpretive in nature. As a result, the interpretation of a participant's words might portray them as 'racist' even though they might vehemently disagree with such a characterization. I sought to ameliorate this dilemma by (1) guarding against racial essentialism, and (2) avoiding the characterization of racist utterances as a personal failing of a participant. Racial essentialism involves a tendency to ascribe fixed and unalterable properties or traits to individuals based on their racial identity (Tadmore, Chao, Hong, & Polzer, 2013). Critical race theorists might fall into the trap of assuming every utterance of a white participant is guided by a desire to maintain complicity with the existing system of white supremacy. This approach may result in lost opportunities to interrogate how participants navigate through, align with, or distance themselves from a variety of social discourses in order to project a certain identity during the course of an interview. In order to avoid this, I delved beyond the specific words of the participants to contemplate the social and political factors inscribed in those words. I drew on multiple theorists who were influenced by structural (and some poststructural) understanding of identity and racism. This orientation does not locate racial ideologies within individuals, but rather treats it as

a circulating power that is reproduced and maintained through oppressive discourses (Wolgemuth, 2014).

Summary

Navigating cultural differences is an integral part of school psychologist's daily lives in schools. Therefore, I investigated school psychologists' talk about cultural responsiveness, and used critical discourse analysis to make sense of data that was collected in a larger study. In the next section, I explore the discursive construction of culture and cultural responsiveness in participants' talk, and connect it to cognitivism.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Analysis of participants' talk around cultural responsiveness within the interview setting revealed many important insights, including the discursive production of culture and cultural responsiveness in the course of the interviews, and modes of school psychological practices enabled by the discourse of cognitivism.

The Discursive Production of Culture

Although the meaning of culture was not explicitly specified, the common way to talk about culture included describing it as a "package" of race, poverty, religion, gender identity, and sexual identity and expression, as Participant 8 did. Participant 5 instantiated what she understood by culture by listing the various groups with whom she practiced cultural responsiveness – "We have quite a few refugee and immigrant families, so that's something to keep in mind. I have quite a few lesbian parents, so that's another facet." Participant 1 instantiated culture by listing the various categories that students often came from such as "economically deprived, or multicultural, or multilingual, or LGBTQ students."

Learning about different cultures entailed learning about their social cognitions (cultural values and beliefs). One participant summed the process of learning about cultures as coming to know "the values, general values and beliefs" associated with a culture. There was also emphasis on gaining more information about their cultural traditions or histories.

Interviewer: What areas related to cultural responsiveness do you feel less prepared in?

> Participant 1: I would say in the last few years, I've had a high percentage of students from Asian backgrounds and I'm less prepared on that. Because I've typically worked with kids from Hispanic backgrounds. […]In my new district, they have a high percentage of kids that are Jewish. That's not something I'm accustomed to and so I think that I only <u>require more information on in terms of cultural heritage and values and holidays and stuff like that</u>.

The underlined text highlights the participant's desire to learn about the non-cognitive aspects of Jewish culture such as their holidays. Like Participant 1, Participant 3 expressed her desire to know more about the background of Venezuelan students: "I think there are specific things about each of those countries and their education system that they come from that's <u>always good to know</u>." Here, participant 3 expresses the desire to learn about the educational infrastructure for formal schooling in the students' previous country. Participant 2 wanted to learn about the appropriate terminologies to use while working with transgender students.

To the participants, the various identities were ontologically real and stable, with an essentialist connection to a culture. When speaking about students in her school who came from low income, predominantly Spanish speaking families, Participant 1 stated "they have their own <u>inherent</u> culture that's often misunderstood and discriminated against in a public school system." The use of 'inherent culture' asserted the presence of a stable essence that encapsulated the student, distinguished the student's community and marked them for differential and discriminatory treatment in the public school system.

Participant responses suggested that culture was constructed as a cognitive mass of values, beliefs, and tendencies. Although non-cognitive factors such as educational infrastructure were mentioned, they appeared to form the backdrop for the culture. Learning about the cultures

entailed knowing the cognitive-behavioral characteristics "inherent" to that culture, which could help the school staff predict a client's behavior or plan for the meetings. Participant 12 spoke about a Hispanic colleague who would help the school staff prepare for meetings with parents from different Hispanic nationalities:

> "She was really wonderful to have not just for the language interpretation but also for cultural interpretations. She would give us that information like, '"Okay, well this one is from Honduras, this is how they may respond to something. Or they may feel differently than that family from El Salvador or something."

In this quote, the knowledge about the cognitive-behavioral characteristics of parents provided a particular framework for the participants and her coworkers to adjust their behavior during the meetings in order to be culturally responsive. The onto-epistemological assumptions about the nature of culture paved the way for an additive model of acquiring cultural responsiveness. The process of becoming culturally responsive was a cognitive trajectory of becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the cultural values and tendencies of different groups. The cognitive framing of the discursive construct of Culture carried into the participants' discursive construction of cultural responsiveness.

The Discursive Production of Cultural Responsiveness

Participants' described cultural responsiveness as a twofold process (1) becoming aware of culture of various groups, and (2) using this information to make rational decisions about students. Here are responses from three participants to the question about the meaning of cultural responsiveness.

> Excerpt 1: Cultural responsiveness means to me, just <u>being aware</u> of different people's culture, their views and just <u>being cognizant</u> that everybody is not the same, everybody

wasn't raised the same but everybody has their own little points of opinions about different situations.

Excerpt 2: It means understanding students and cultures and families, and the culture of the school, even in terms of what they need, what's appropriate for them, what interventions to recommend based on their cultural norms and beliefs and values, making sure that we're not asking students to do something that's against their cultural-- the importance of their culture or their cultural needs.

Excerpt 3: I think to me cultural responsiveness is an understanding of what the students of various cultures bring to the table. What their expectations are of school, of assistance from those in school.

The underlined phrases 'being aware' and 'understanding' denote cognitive action of recognizing something as a thing to be attended to, and capturing information about its nature. The phrase 'being cognizant that' entails the cognitive acknowledgement and acceptance of a fact that exists 'out there'. The descriptions of cultural responsiveness in the three excerpts foreground the cognitive actions of awareness, acknowledgement, and understanding – all of which can be said to constitute different forms of knowledge. Non-cognitive actions entailed in the realization of culturally responsive practice are backgrounded.

The excerpts also illustrate the objects of the participants' desired knowledge. The object of acknowledgement in Excerpt 1 was the existence of differences – differences in life histories and differences in opinions. For Participant 4, the object of acknowledgement was the influence of "how [minoritized student's] experiences outside of school affects how they learn, and how they interact with teachers within school." In Excerpt 1, the object of understanding (i.e., the thing to be understood) was people's culture and their personal views. In Excerpt 2, the object of

understanding was students in terms of "what they need, what's appropriate for them, what interventions to recommend based on their cultural norms and beliefs and values…" In Excerpt 3, the object of participant's knowledge was information about "what students of various cultures bring to the table."

The object of understanding in the production of cultural responsiveness thus entailed a range of information – from knowing specific contextualized information about what a culturally different student needed in a school to more general information about the student's background. Participant 1 wanted to learn about the "cultural heritage and values and holidays" of Jewish students in district. Participant 3, whose school had a significant number of students from South American countries wanted to know "specific things about each of those countries and their education system." The sought-after background information thus went beyond individual students or their culturally situated social cognitions. Participants also desired to know other information such as holidays, heritage, and structural context (e.g., formal schooling) of where the student was coming from. This pattern was present in all the participants' responses to the question of what cultural responsiveness meant to them.

The foregrounding of cognitive acts of knowing, understanding, acknowledging, and so forth, in the definition of cultural responsiveness signified the presence of a socially shared epistemic system that structured participants' subjectivity as culturally responsive school psychologists during the interview. I refer to this system as the discourse of cognitivism, and argue that it framed the discursive production of 'cultural responsiveness' among the school psychologists interviewed in this study.

Critical psychologists such as Arfken (2015) have theorized about the centrality of cognitivism in guiding much contemporary work in applied psychology. Stemming in part from

the revolution in information technology, the cognitivist perspective dislodged the behaviorist paradigm as the main psychological framework to understand the social world. Cognitivism, as understood from the excerpts so far, highlights the centrality of thoughts, values, schemas, and beliefs in shaping social reality, and assumes that these cognitive entities can be apprehended (or known) by objective observers, in this case the school psychologists.

Given its roots in modernism, the cognitivist discourse is also imprinted with assumptions of rationality and individualism. In other words, the default Subject created by the cognitivist discourse is a stable and unified entity, oriented toward rational thought, and using available information to make the most optimal decision in a given environment. Participants took a cue from this discourse to frame the practice of cultural responsiveness in terms of using information about students' cultural norms to make optimal decisions for students. For instance, several participants raised the issue of school psychologists or other student support staff (e.g., speech language pathologist, nurse) being asked to evaluate a minoritized student who was not doing well in academic areas. Their knowledge of the student's cultural norm or background enabled them to decide against the evaluation.

> Excerpt 4: My ELL teacher came up to me one day and said, "Oh, I think our Syrian refugees need hearing screeners. They can't hear me". I said, "All of them?". She's like, "Yeah, because they're in war-torn countries". "How do you know they came from a war-torn country?". She's like, "Well, they're from Syria". I was like, "Maybe they came from Jordan. Maybe they came from Turkey. Maybe they went somewhere and then came here. We don't know what their past is". She's like, "They can't hear me. We've been working on the same letters over and over again; they can't hear me". I'm like, "Like what

> letters?". "I don't know right now. It was like P?". I was like, "Exactly. It's because we don't have the letter P in our language."

In this excerpt, the participant speaks about a teacher who wanted her Arabic-speaking students tested for hearing impairment. The school psychologist's knowledge of Arabic allowed her to know the absence of /p/ sound in Arabic, and thereby helped her to advocate against the students being tested for hearing impairment. Other participants such as Participant 1 and Participant 4 also provided similar responses to illustrate the application of cultural responsiveness as a way to make rational decisions, in the face of demands by other staff members to conduct psychoeducational evaluations for special education eligibility purposes.

The application of cultural responsiveness was not restricted to the issue of special education testing, but also extended to other aspects of their work in schools. Participant 8 gave the example of a teacher who revealed to him her frustration about a student who did not know the basic facts about farm animals on a class test. Given the student's urban background, Participant 8 asked the teacher to consider the possibility that the student had had limited exposure to farm animals, and therefore it was a test concept "that was not readily accessible" to the student. Similarly, Participant 3 stated her observation about "loudness" of students from certain groups (without clarifying which groups) and spoke of the time she intervened to prevent a student from getting in trouble with a teacher simply because the student was talking in a tone or volume which school staff considered "rude" or "disrespectful." In sum, culturally responsive practice entailed using information about a student's culture to make rational decisions that did not penalize a student from minority background for engaging in culturally valid behaviors.

Given Foucault's (1981) argument about the productive as well as restrictive effects of discourse, I inquired into the ways in which the dominant discourse of cognitivism enabled participants to 'do' certain things while constraining them from doing other things.

Productive Effects of Cognitivist Discourse

The rationalist and individualistic assumptions embedded in cognitivism allowed the participants to trouble the relationship between culture and individual. All participants interviewed for this study emphasized the importance of understanding student's culture while at the same time not assuming that the student necessarily adhered to all values and beliefs associated with their respective culture. Participant 14 said, "You have a generalized thought but at same time, you have to keep in the back of your head that there probably are those that don't fall in that as well." Participant 2 emphasized the importance of "recognizing that, 'Yes, I have a general understanding of - this is what the values and beliefs of this culture are'. But then being able to be responsive to - if when you're working with someone that - what you know, what you've learned about that culture and then you work with that person - maybe they're different." Participant 15 similarly warned against the use of "broad brush" of cultural characteristics to understand the students. In doing so, participants resisted the cultural determinism that may have accompanied the initial construction of culture and cultural identity as stable ontological realities. In sum, the cognitivist discourse, underpinned by modernist notions of individualism, resisted cultural determinism and emphasized the importance of "not putting kids in a box."

Restrictive Effects of the Cognitivist Discourse

During the course of the interviews, participants narrated accounts of inequitable treatment of students of color that they had witnessed in schools. The accounts framed racism in specific ways that emphasized the cognitive aspects and individual (in)actions over the structural

aspects. For instance, Participant 6 recounted the time she noticed a teacher consistently giving the citizenship award to white students only even though her classroom was highly heterogenous in terms of racial composition. She concluded the story with saying, “This is what I always say to the teachers that I'm working with, ‘I don't think that you are purposely excluding students of color, but your implicit bias and your frame of reference of what makes a good citizen in your classroom may not be aligning with the culture and the experiences of students who may not look like you in your classroom, and so we got to bridge that divide.’”

Participant 6 recounted the time she went to observe a teacher’s classroom, and noticed that all the white students were sitting on one side of the classroom and all the non-white students were on the other side of the classroom. This is how Participant 6 explained the situation – “She spent the entire period teaching this way. She was completely unaware she was doing it, but she was teaching to the students who were responding the way, from her experience, she felt students should respond to her teaching. That was a situation where we had to be much more direct and just go in and say, "Hey, when we were in here observing, this is what we saw." Of course, she was like, ‘Oh my gosh!’” Both the accounts provided by the participants revolved around the inequitable treatment of students of color by individual white teachers in classrooms. Participants’ explanations centered on the lack of awareness in the teacher about their implicit biases and frames of reference, and foregrounded the importance of bringing these biases into the individuals’ awareness as well as increasing participants’ understanding of various cultures.

I argue that the cognitivist discourse oriented the participants toward particular understanding of racism and what to do about it. Their examples and accounts of racism often involved individual teachers acting in ignorance or unawareness, and solutions for these

problems involved informing the individuals about their blind spots, and bringing into their awareness the information needed to alter their behavior toward more rational decisions.

Outside of classrooms, the participants' practice of culturally responsiveness involved active efforts to get to know their students (especially those referred for special education evaluation) as individuals, learning about their story, their family history and their culture. Participant 2 stated, "As a person, I genuinely want to get to know people. I want to get to know who you are and not so much going based off of what my preconceived notions are about this cultural group like that. […] And I want to get to know, based off of what we're talking about - these things, what do you feel about this? What are your thoughts, feelings about this? About everything that's been happening. The school saying they've been calling you. What are your thoughts about that?" Participant 9 had similar thoughts about the importance of getting to know students, parents and coworkers, "I think cultural responsiveness is ultimately that. It's being like, okay. I understand that you are also a human being that's worthy of time and respect. Your opinion matters."

The individualistic focus of the cognitivist discourse explained the relative absence of discussions about structural racism in participant talk. None of the participants troubled the structures and policies that framed their work in schools. The examples participants provided to illustrate cultural responsiveness commonly involved scenarios of eligibility meetings, where parents or guardians of referred students met with school personnel to discuss the possibility and process of evaluating the student for disability. For Participant 9, cultural responsiveness in these meetings took the form of "Having interpreters available. Just watching cultural, possibly cultural related behaviors like eye contact, nonverbal body language pieces there, how they view disability." She also mentioned modifying the way she typically explained the evaluation process

to the parents: “I give them time. I probably give them more time than those who may not have cultural factors affecting them. Give them more time to make decisions, like having them feel no pressure. Like you don't have to decide.” Thus, Participant 9’s cultural responsiveness entailed the enactment of institutional procedures (gaining parental consent for evaluating a student to determine special education eligibility) in modified format while fundamentally retaining the essence of those procedures.

Several studies have highlighted the pernicious effects of special education referrals and placements, how they disproportionately affect students of color, and reproduce racial segregation (Blanchett, 2006; Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, and Tobin, 2011). Given this, I expected to hear participants talk about the problematic nature of special education, its underlying assumptions, and meaning of disability categories, given that special education eligibility placement occupies a significant portion of a school psychologist’ job (Castillo, Curtis, & Gelley, 2012). However I did not find instances of participants problematizing the institution of special education. Their cultural responsiveness in the course of talking about special education entailed developing a good rapport with the parents, communicating in culturally sensitive ways, and gathering relevant information and using appropriate instruments to identify the student’s disability.

I argue that the lack of structural focus was an outcome of the structuring effects of the cognitivist discourse. By producing subjects as rational individuals, and framing social injustice as a lack of awareness and/or misconceptions about other cultures, the discourse of cognitivism oriented the participants’ toward a practice of cultural responsiveness that was aimed at changing individual minds, and did not fundamentally question the structures and institutions that the individuals inhabited. This is not to say that participants absolutely overlooked the connection

between the individual acts of cultural insensitivity in schools and the ongoing events in larger society. Some of the participant interviews referenced the Charlottesville rally, the Black Lives Matter movement, the 2016 Presidential Election, as well as the national debate about immigration in their accounts of cultural responsiveness. However these topics were framed in the cognitive language of biases and beliefs. When asked to identify areas of cultural responsiveness where she would like to improve, Participant 11 responded wanting to improve on "understanding some of the mindsets behind wanting to maintain the statues, wanting to maintain some of the supremacist views and values" behind the Unite the Right Rally that took place in Charlottesville against the proposed removal of Confederate monuments. Participant 11, as a Black woman, reported that she did not agree with those views but that if there were an area that she could improve on, it would be in her ability to be welcoming and respectful of those views. Participant 14, Participant 15, and Participant 10 also reiterated the importance of welcoming all views "even if you don't agree with whatever it is, doesn't mean it's right or wrong." In these utterances, the issue of differing viewpoints between individuals is foregrounded in framing historically and socio-politically situated injustices. The way forward for Participant 15 that emerged from this framing is to be "nice" to others, and accept rather than merely tolerate "the fact that there are differences."

Participants' Discursive Self-positioning

In addition to examining the role of dominant discourses in structuring participants' responses about cultural responsiveness, I also examined how participants positioned themselves in the course of the interviews. I looked at the way participants positioned themselves with speech acts, and in doing so performed multiple shifting identities. Their discursive self-positioning "encompass[ed] macro-level demographic categories" such as stating ones race, as

well as “temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles,” in the context of the linguistic interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 585). Prior to the interviews, all participants completed screening questionnaires where they stated their race. Of the fifteen participants, eight identified as white and seven identified as non-white. Two of the eight white participants also identified as Hispanic; none of the participants of color identified as Hispanic. It is worth mentioning that one of the participants who identified as Middle-Eastern and Muslim in the interviews had listed her race as white in the screening questionnaire, but expressed disagreement about the U.S. Census’ classification of people from Middle East as white – “We don't have that white privilege. When you're white, you have that white privilege. You don't have the discrimination against you. You don't have people constantly asking you where are you from?" As a result, I counted her as a participant of color for the purpose of this study.

Participants of color. All the participants of color indexed themselves racially - “I am African-American,” “I am Asian. I lived in New York City,” “a Black female growing up in rural Alabama”, and so forth. These self-descriptors emerged spontaneously in the course of our interviews without any specific questions or prompts to elicit these descriptions, and were often accompanied by regional descriptions to further contextualize their experiences growing up.

Personal experiences. Participants followed up these descriptions with personal accounts of experiencing discrimination during childhood. Participant 2 spoke about experiencing discrimination “on almost every corner, and even moving forward through undergrad and then even in my adult life having to experience that.” Participant 4 recounted the experience of attending a predominantly white school in an affluent neighborhood on scholarship.

> A lot of times my racial identity was questioned because when I first started going to the school, I was made fun of for having an accent or not speaking properly enough. Then

> when I learned to speak the way they spoke, then I got made fun of for being too white from my friends outside of school or even my friends in school. They like to use this term called Oreo, which means you are Black on the outside and white on the inside. That was something that got thrown around a lot which I did not like. Or some white students would still say, you were the ghetto one even though you're not really ghetto. There was that. There was also sometimes teachers confusing the Black students a lot like messing up our names, calling me someone else's name. Noticing that they didn't do that to the white students as often as they did to us.

Participant 14 spoke about being placed in special education and given speech therapy in order to stop her from rolling her R's – "They were trying to get me not to roll my R. I mean, you've got to remember. This is in the early 80's or maybe early mid-80's. Why does she roll her R's? She needs speech [therapy] so she doesn't roll her R's. I remember that but I don't ever remember being tested to be put in special ed which was what it was called back then."

Dilemma of equality. The tone and register of participants' responses while narrating these accounts carried an affective orientation that differed from the rationalist and cognitive framing they had employed so far. Their personal experiences with racism oriented them toward advocating for students who shared their background in their schools. At the same time, it brought about questions of being partisan and favoring students from underserved background at the expense of the white students. Participant 4 said, "I also don't want to look like that I'm only trying to help Black students if that makes sense. [laughs] I'm also constantly in my mind making sure that I'm helping everyone equally as much as I can." Speaking about Black school personnel, she further said, "A lot of them enter in Education because we want to help our people because we have the worst statistics when it comes to Education but at the same time it's like

we're not purposely not trying to help white students, that's not it at all. That's just something I always, I guess, keep in mind too if that makes sense.” Another participant spoke about the significance of Islam in her personal life, and the impact of her hijab on how school staff, students, and students’ parents viewed her. One of the parents of a Muslim student requested her to talk to the student about the acceptable dress codes for Muslims, but she politely refused to do so – “I'm like I can't do that, I could just tell you this is what the criteria is for [our] county or for this school, the shorts have to be longer than fingertips.” Both these accounts indicate a tension between the dual subject positions of a racialized person with specific cultural histories, and a colorblind school staff tasked with serving all the students and staff equally regardless of their historical and cultural background.

White participants. Analysis of the white participants’ talk elicited the following patterns.

Level of hesitation. White participants differed in terms of the level of hesitation that was noticeable in their talk. While some like Participant 7 and Participant 6 came across as very confident and fluent, others such as Participant 15 and Participant 10 showed caution while navigating questions about culture, diversity, and differences. The hesitation typically surfaced in the form of pauses, slowed pace of speaking, and false starts (i.e., stopping a sentence midway, and then restarting it). The most explicit example of this hesitation was in the following exchange between the interviewer and a white interviewee. When the interviewer asked Participant 15 what cultural responsiveness meant to him, Participant 15 started by highlighting the need to be aware of the different learning styles and expectations that students and their parents from various cultural groups “bring to the table.” He followed this utterance by hedging the deterministic relationship between cultural background and learning style by providing a

disclaimer against using "a really broad stroke", and then followed it by reiterating the need to understand how "certain group of students" learn.

> "And again I don't want to use a really broad stroke of a brush but I think certain groups of students… I don't really know how to say this. [long pause] You have to go about understanding how different students in different cultures and different environments learn. I guess I'll leave it at that. Sometimes they're very different from one group or culture to the next or to another. Identifying those learning styles and those expectations I think is really key to providing a competent educational support to these students."

The hesitation was visible in the mid-sentence break and the long pause. The transition from the personal pronoun "I" (which he had used so far) to the impersonal "you" served to temporarily distance the speaker from the claim he was about to reiterate about culturally specific learning styles. He concluded the utterance by saying "I guess I will leave it at that" indicating that he had said just enough to be coherent to the interviewer without getting entangled in claims and disclaimers he felt compelled to provide.

Talking about whiteness. White participants also differed in terms of the extent to which they spoke about their whiteness. Some like Participant 13 did not mention it all but referenced it obliquely when she spoke about her desire to be sensitive to "non-white non-Utah culture." Others such as Participant 1 were more forthcoming and self-identified as "a white cisgender person. So I have privilege that I recognize." Like Participant 1, three other white participants also briefly mentioned the existence of white privilege, and acknowledged their connection to it.

In sum, there were some qualitative differences in the responses of white and non-white participants. The issue of cautiousness in talking about culture and diversity was not visible in the non-white participants to the same extent that it was in white participants' talk. There were

also some differences in the topics and issues raised by white and non-white participants. For instance, white participants spoke to some extent about white privilege, whereas non-white participants spoke about their experiences with racism and how it informed their passion toward cultural responsiveness. Despite these differences, both groups of participant responses indicated similar conceptions of culture and cultural responsiveness undergirded by cognitivist discourse.

Another interracial commonality was the action of critique in participant talk about cultural responsiveness. For most part this critique was directed toward teachers. Participant accounts of cultural insensitivity typically revolved around teachers doing or saying something insensitive, followed by participant's righteous disagreement with the teacher:

> Participant 8: Like I've heard someone in the teachers' lounge say like, "Oh well, so and so's parent wouldn't just show up to the meetings." <u>I am like okay well maybe they don't have a car, maybe they're working three jobs because they're trying to afford dinner for the student?</u>
>
> Participant 3: [Students] would talk a little louder or just like it can sound aggressive to someone who doesn't know the child. So a lot of times like -- I'm okay and it doesn't bother me -- and then we'll be going to a class and they'll say or they'll speak in that tone or demeanor or whatever it is and then the staff will just yell at them. "You've been disrespectful!" *and I am like,* <u>"Oh my god, please leave the kid alone, let me just take him back to class, he's not being disrespectful. That's just how he talks."</u>

All participant included some variation of these accounts, and occurred spontaneously (i.e., without a question or prompt specifically provided to elicit the response.) The ubiquity of these examples suggests the presence of a dominant narrative that foregrounds the responsibility of staff (especially teachers) in maintaining or perpetuating racism in schools. This move masks the

responsibility of other adults working in schools as well as the role of policymaking and macropolitics in the (re)production of inequality. In the context of the interviews, these moves served to position the participant as a righteous figure in opposition to co-workers who were driven by biases or ignorance.

There were rare exceptions of participant accounts that included confessions of personal actions in schools they considered problematic in hindsight. Participant 11 gave a brief example of the time she misgendered a transgender student, and Participant 1 spoke about the time she was not sympathetic enough to a Black co-worker who complained she was being "targeted by administration for her race" although Participant 1 believed it was because of her professional performance. These examples of self-critique were rare, as opposed to teacher critiques that were abundant in participant talk. I argue that this strategy of positive self-representation enables the participants to construct themselves as cognizant about the presence inequities in schools but externalize the blame for school-based inequities to other individuals within the school, especially teachers. In the next discussion, I situate the findings in existing literature as well as explore the implications of the findings for the field of school psychology and critical psychology broadly.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Critical discourse analysis of participant talk revealed the prominence of cognitivism in the discursive production of culture as a set of ontologically real categories with a stable set of cognitive characteristics (values, beliefs, tendencies). This finding may be a consequence of the way culture is conceptualized in the broader field of applied psychology - as a set of actions and traits that are fixed, static, knowable, and teachable (Carpenter-Song, Nordquest Schwallie, & Longhofer, 2007). Such a definition of culture often masks the role of power and dominance in the creation of the Other, and frames discrimination as "a matter of individual bias and ignorance." (Kumas-Tan, Beagan, Loppie, MacLeod, & Frank, 2007, p. 554).

A professional field socializes its practitioners into certain ways of being in and talking about the world, and it is possible that the culture talk in participant accounts reflected the individualistic orientation of their field. Indeed, the high prevalence of the term 'cultural sensitivity' in Whaley's (2008) systematic review of applied psychology literature suggests this to be the case. Cultural sensitivity is often discussed in applied psychology literature as the act of being respectful of a client's cultural values and beliefs, and avoiding actions that may offend, upset, or alienate the client. The heavy usage of this term (Whaley, 2008) thus suggests a traditional disciplinary preference for a relatively individualistic and apolitical engagement with culture.

Cultural responsiveness was portrayed in participant talk as a depoliticized act of becoming aware of cultural cognitions and using the information to make rational decisions

about students from marginalized groups. The cognitivist discourse enabled the troubling of the deterministic relationship between a culture and an individual. On the other hand, the rational conceptualization of oppression as resulting from lack of awareness or presence of misconception about another group seemed to limit the scope of culturally responsiveness practice to the collection and dissemination of information about cultural groups, and making better decisions about eligibility identification and testing.

Critical psychologists such as Arfken (2015) use the term cognitivism to denote the modernist project of modeling mental processes along the lines of an information processing system such as a digital computer. The main aim of the cognitivist "project" was/is to provide a "psychological account of human activity" (p. 27). In the classical model of cognition, human activity is structured in the following frame: data enters an individual through senses, is transformed into symbolic representation, and mental rules organize these symbols to yield a "relatively coherent representation of reality" (p. 24), which then leads to behavior. An important assumption in this model is that all human thinking and behavior is rule-governed. The rules are discrete, acquired socially, and implicit (i.e., the individual is often unaware of these rules). The role of psychology is to make these implicit rules explicit so that they can be controlled, refined, or altered.

For the proponents of cognitivism, this model of human nature is universal (i.e., applies to everyone in all situations and contexts; Arfken, 2015). Some cognitive psychologists attempt to broaden the overly individualistic notions of cognitive science by considering the role of shared values, norms, and beliefs in the information processing system of the human mind. Context is considered an important mediator and moderator in the selection of data, formation of mental rules, and the socially sanctioned behavioral response to culturally located interpretations.

The role of contextualized cognitive science then is to uncover the rules that govern information processing in each context. Additionally, cognitivist science is also tasked with identifying the rules by which the individual selects the correct rules to apply in every context. The result is an endless spiral (Dreyfus, 2007) in search of rules for identifying rules, and becomes a major limitation of the cognitive model.

Critical philosophers (e.g., Taylor, 1995) also criticized the governing ontoepistemological assumptions of the cognitive model – namely, that the rules of information processing can be accessed by objective observers through scientific methods, and that scientists can formalize these implicit rules into discrete linguistic propositions. Critical psychologists reject the cognitive concepts such as memory, thoughts, and emotions as interior mental process, and instead see them as discursive social practices formed in/through intersubjective encounters (Edwards, 1997; Potter, 1996). This assertion goes counter to the popular psychological understanding of social injustice and inequality as resulting from internal mental phenomena such as implicit bias and misconceptions about other groups.

In his book, *Race on the the Brain: What implicit bias gets wrong about the struggle for racial justice*, legal scholar Jonathan Cohn (2017) talked about the popularity of the psychological concept of implicit bias among lawmakers as the master tool to understand race relations in the U.S. He argued that the popularity of this concept among psychologists and lawmakers arose out of its colorblind nature and the technocratic and depoliticized solutions it engendered. Indeed, the textbook *Understanding the Psychology of Diversity* is marketed to instructors of Diversity courses for precisely this reason. In the Preface, the author states, "When we study diversity, we confront the fact that social injustices exist. Too much emphasis on social injustices (e.g., where they originate, how they can be addressed) adds a political element to the

book that may be intrusive" (Blaine, 2011, p. xiii). The textbook advocates for a *psychological approach* to teaching diversity in order to avoid "polemic regarding social injustice" (p. xiii). It does so by framing social injustices in terms of cognitive biases and stereotyping habits of individuals. The universal signifier of the individual, shorn of time and space, obscures the unequal power relations which may allow dominant group to institutionalize their biases. Further, it also dilutes the collective fight against institutional racism by framing anti-racism as an individual fight against one's own implicit biases.

Cohn's thesis builds on critical race theorist Charles Lawrence III's' (2008) self-critique of his past embrace of *unconscious racism* to argue against the legal requirement of *purposeful intent* in order to show the presence of discrimination. Lawrence's (1987) original argument was that the implicit and unconscious nature of racial bias made it difficult for plaintiffs to establish the conscious discriminatory intent of the defendants, and thus served as an obstacle to securing justice against racial discrimination. Looking back at the way the concept of "unconscious bias" was appropriated over the years, Lawrence (2008) expressed his fear that "cognitive psychology's focus on the workings of the individual mind may cause us to think of racism as a private concern, as if our private implicit biases do not implicate collective responsibility for racial subordination and the continued vitality of the ideology and material structures of white supremacy" (p. 942).

Although these studies critique implicit bias, they treat implicit bias as a discourse in itself, rather than situate it within the larger context of psychologization of the individual and the society in the Western society. According to Martin (2014), Western philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes stressed on individualistic conceptions of persons. Other philosophers such as John Locke and Immanuel Kant described the person as a stable continuous entity, and invoked

rationalistic constructs of memory, thought, and reason to address skepticism about the unified, coherent, and empirical nature of the Self accessible to scientific inquiry (Martin, 2014).

> The fact that man is aware of [self] raises him infinitely above all other creatures living on earth. Because of this, he is a person; and by virtue of this oneness of consciousness, he remains one and the same person despite all the vicissitudes which may befall him. He is a being who, by reason of his preeminence and dignity, is wholly different from things, such as the irrational animals whom he can master and rule at will. (Kant, 1785/1997, p. 9)

Kant saw individuals as fully capable of governing themselves because of their inherent capacity for reason, introspection, and awareness of the self (Eze, 1997). This doctrine of individual liberty, science/progress, and rationality that emerged among West European philosophers challenged the epistemological dogma of the Church and monarchy in late 17th and 18th century (commonly referred to as the Age of Enlightenment), leading to the emergence of the Individual subject whose beliefs and actions could (and should) be guided by reason rather than divine or monarchic authority. Nevertheless, the emerging discourse of individual worth and freedom contradicted the institution of slavery sustaining the economic prosperity in a modernizing Western Europe (Hsia, 2001). Bouie (2018) writes,

> At its heart, the [Enlightenment] contained a paradox: Ideas of human freedom and individual rights took root in nations that held other human beings in bondage and were then in the process of exterminating native populations. Colonial domination and expropriation marched hand in hand with the spread of "liberty," and liberalism arose alongside our modern notions of race and racism.

West European philosophers sought to resolve this contradiction by proposing a typology of individuals couched in proto-biological language of eugenics (Eze, 1997). Kant, for instance, acknowledged the monogenist nature of human descent (i.e., all humans have common lineage) (Abundez-Guerra, 2018) but argued that different climate conditions, over a period of centuries, had created races of people with different mental capacities that were fixed and unchangeable, and therefore deserving of different levels of personhood and autonomy: “In the hot countries the human being matures earlier in all ways but does not reach the perfection of the temperate zones. Humanity exists in its greatest perfection in the white race …” (Kant, 1802/1997 p. 63). The perfection to which Kant referred entailed psychological attributes such as emotional maturity, rationality, creativity, intelligence, appreciation for arts and sciences, and the ability to govern (Eze, 1997).

The central role accorded to mental processes in the creation of this unified continuous Individual paved the way for the ascendancy of psychology in the Western thought in nineteenth century (Martin, 2014). As psychology developed as a discipline, it further expunged the more romantic and ecological understandings of personhood in order to establish itself as a scientific discipline engaged in ‘objective’ study of behavior and cognition. In sum, Martin (2014) argue that the “the history of disciplinary psychology is a history of successive attempts to reduce person” (p. 1357) first to their consciousness, second to their behavior, and finally to “internal cognitive, computational, and neurophysiological structures, processes, and patterns of activation.” The currently dominant psychological discourse of cognitivism treats the individual as the starting point of social and historical analyses, and attempts to locate “social and cultural behavior [in] the mental activity of individual social actors” (Arfken , 2015, p. 28). Its

disciplinary power is visible in the way it made it impossible for participants to talk about cultural responsiveness outside of the cognitive framework.

The popularity of implicit bias as an explanatory mechanism for racism (Cohn, 2017) should thus be seen as a byproduct of this discourse of cognitivism rather than a discourse in itself. The current study situates the topic of biases as one of the many discursive constructs produced by the psychological discourse of cognitivism, and shows how it impacts the way participants spoke about self, society, racism, and inequality. In addition to showing the cognitivist conception of individual, it also shows how the discourse of cognitivism produced culture as a fixed set of values and beliefs, and institutional racism as an irrational decision made by rational actors due to biases, misconceptions, or lack of information. In addition to demonstrating the productive effect of cognitivist discourse, the participant responses also illustrate the role of the academic discipline of psychology in recirculating exclusionary formations of reality (Foucault, 1981; Hook, 2001).

The solutions engendered by cognitivist framing of culture and oppression are individualistic, and the cognitivist discourse constrains the troubling of the structures school psychologists inhabit or embody. At their core, structures such as special education, school psychology, general education, and practices such as curriculum design, creation of learning standards, and testing are assumed to be fundamentally moral and necessary, albeit in need of refinement. The inequitable conditions witnessed in schools are linked to individual actors acting out of ignorance or bias. In the current study, this rhetoric of blame was directed at teachers, as seen in various anecdotes that participants supplied spontaneously (i.e., without being asked for). Utterances related to the contribution of school psychology in the reproduction of dominance and oppression were rare. This may be a larger problem in the field of psychology. Parker (2015)

argues that the discipline of psychology, given its objectivist and postpositivistic leaning, has its gaze “directed at those outside the discipline” (p. 3) in seeking explanations for social injustices. For instance, research articles in school psychology journals often foregrounded the role of teacher biases and unpreparedness (e.g., Cook et al., 2018; Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, 2016; Sprague, 2018) to explain inequitable outcomes in K-12 schools. Cook and colleagues (2018) also argue that focus on historical racism and institutionalized disparities is “not useful” given that they are “not readily malleable nor do they fully capture the microsystemic factors within the school setting” and recommends interventions targeted at teacher biases and teacher-student relations as much better solutions to the problem of racial and ethnic disproportionality. I argue that this discourse serves to explain away the problem of systemic inequality in individualistic and cognitive terms, and positions psychologists as neutral observers of injustice who possess the tools necessary to combat the inequities they see in their coworkers. Placing the onus of blame on teachers, a relatively deprofessionalized profession (Angus, 2017) in the era of standardized curriculum, performance pay, and high-stakes testing (Endacott et al., 2015; Hall & McGinity, 2015), also enables psychologists and policymakers to find solutions in diversity workshops while displacing the need for sustained and organized effort for social transformation.

Both white and non-white participants’ talk showed similar engagement with culture and cultural responsiveness. There were some differences in the topics they spoke about and the affective orientation of their talk. Participants of color spoke about their personal experiences with racism and their affect-laden talk in this portion of the interview suggested an embodied experience of marginalization that served as a motivational and pedagogical resource to them. Utterances of white participants showed varying levels of hesitation and cautiousness while talking about diversity, and the hesitation may be influenced by a desire to avoid saying

something that could be interpreted as problematic. White participants also differed in terms of the extent they felt comfortable identifying themselves as white and as having white privilege. Regardless of these differences in topics and affects, the participants' conceptions of culture and cultural responsiveness were similar, and their practice of cultural responsiveness cohered around efficient decision-making via data collection, selection of appropriate tests, and correct identification of disability labels for the referred students. Both the findings can be explained by drawing on poststructuralist notions of selves as "nonunitary, continually shifting, and, overall performative" (Wolgemuth, 2014, p. 588) While the subject position as a Black or white participant influenced how they spoke about culture and society, they potentially drew on the subject position of a school employee when discussing the specific strategies they used at work. Consequently their discussion of practice of cultural responsiveness took the form of practices sanctioned by their institutions within the constraints of their job title.

This explanation may be relevant to other studies that found a discrepancy between participants' self-positioning as an agent of social justice and the reality of their practice. For example, McCabe and Rubinson (2008) conducted focus groups in which they explored behavioral intentions of various practitioners to advocate for and serve LGBTQ students in their respective schools. Although participants supported social justice initiatives and reported interest in creating safe and empowering environment in the school for LGBTQ students, they had difficulty explicating the ways in which they supported LGBTQ students in their schools. McCabe and Rubinson explained this discrepancy between intentions and practice in terms of participant-reported organizational barriers such as heavy workload, lack of administrator support, and lack of resources. While I agree with these conclusions, it is also possible to explain the discrepancy as a result of different subject positions that participants draw upon when talking

about social justice: as an individual interested in advocating for social justice (which can entail working against the system) and as an organizational employee socialized to work for the system. The conflicting subject positions that practitioners occupy can create the discrepancy between intentions and praxis that McCabe and Rubinson reported. In the current study, a similar dilemma was found between the conflicting subject positions as individuals interested in social justice and school psychologists expected to test and place referred students in special education. The conflict may be resolved by the forging of a depoliticized cultural responsiveness that works for incremental changes without threatening the actor's position within the institution.

Participant examples of praxis included strategies such as forming a good rapport with a parent, getting the parent to feel comfortable and informed during an eligibility meeting, and gathering information about student's background in order to make decisions about special education. These examples raise the question about the extent to which individual justice (i.e., justice for an individual) is conflated with social justice in the school psychology community. This conflation of individual justice with social justice would overlap with Jenks, Lee, and Kanpol's (2001) description of liberal multiculturalism which also straddles the thin line between working for social change without significantly disrupting the structures which reproduce those injustices. Whereas Jenks, Lee, and Kanpol's critique was made in the context of teacher preparation, the current critique operates in the realm of school psychology practice.

Limitations

Whereas van Dijk (1993) promoted the mental models created by and involved in discourse (re)production by individuals, Foucault (1972, 1981) decentered the individual and theorized discourse as a circulating agency that creates individual subjects. Given that the dissertation works against the discourse of cognitivism, I tried to reduce the use of ideational

language in the manuscript. Nevertheless, the cognitivist discourse manifested glaringly in the Findings section where I use ideational language situated in individualist conception of agency. For instance, I begin many quotes with the phrases such as “participant said” which foregrounds the individual. I use ideational phrases such as “Participant 3 expressed her desire to know more about…” which present desire and other mental constructs as internal phenomena.

I attempted to minimize the ideational language wherever possible but found it impossible to get rid of it completely. One of the solutions considered to reduce the use of such language in the Findings section was to present the quotes without alluding to an active agent/speaker. I decided against this move because it made for awkward writing. I acknowledge this to be a major limitation of this study. The limitation also illustrates the extent to which my socialization into the writing conventions of empirical social science research draws on cognitivist discourse. I attempt to offset this limitation of Findings section by using non-individual and non-ideational language in the rest of the sections as much as possible.

Another limitation of this study is that it does not account for the wide variety of terms used in the psychology community in place of cultural responsiveness, such as cultural sensitivity, cultural competence, cultural awareness, and so forth. It is possible that interview questions that utilized these phrases may have yielded entirely different findings. Given the findings by Whaley (2008) and corroborated by my personal experiences in the field of school psychology, I assume that these terms are used interchangeably in the community of school psychologists. Therefore, I have no reason to believe that the findings of this study would be different if the researchers behind the larger research project had utilized another term instead of cultural responsiveness.

While the study points out the problematic impact of the psychological discourse, its overall purpose appears to be to reform the field of psychology by nudging it gently in a more progressive direction (Parker, 2015, p. 2) in a way that feels less individualistic and more social constructionist. Parker spoke about how the emerging community of critical psychologists contains diverse voices, ranging from those that call for reformation of psychology to those who call for its rejection altogether. Although I see the merits in both sides, the latter camp may possibly critique the present study as falling in the liberal/reformation camp, and therefore not truly a representation of critical psychology. Parker (2007) may even classify the current study as a part of the problem rather than a solution to the oppressive discourses legitimized by the institution of psychology.

Another potential limitation relates to methodological assumptions and expectations. Whereas interpretivist approaches have regarded the interview as a technique for gathering participants' authentic knowledge and perspectives, discourse analysts reject the possibility of interview (or any data collection technique in social sciences) as a tool to access the participant's personal truth (Alvesson, 2002). This rejection partly derives from the poststructuralist view of the self as situationally and linguistically produced rather than something that exists a priori (Butler, 1990; Wolgemuth, 2014). Because discourse analysts view the interview as just another social act that produces versions of reality in relation to the situational contingencies, participant accounts during the study interviews cannot be assumed to constitute authentic beliefs. As a result, the study findings about cognitivism's impact on participants' construction of culture and cultural responsiveness may not be generalized to any other aspect of their lives. This lack of generalizability may be construed as a limitation by readers approaching the study from the post-positivistic paradigm, and who expect research to produce results that represent non-research

situations. The current study, however, does not subscribe to that paradigm, nor was generalizability a goal of the study.

Researcher Reflexivity

This dissertation was situated in the critical paradigm, which emphasizes reflexivity – "[a] critical reflection both on the kind of knowledge produced from research and how that knowledge is generated" (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 274). The original project that recruited the 15 participants pertained to the practice of culturally responsive problem-solving consultation. Problem-solving consultation by school psychologists typically entails the use of a four-step cognitive model of problem-solving model to work with teachers in regard to the difficulties or struggles experienced by specific students (e.g., Ramirez & Smith, 2007; O'Bryon and Rogers, 2016). Although some researchers have explored the use of consultation at the extra-individual level (e.g., Knotek, 2012; Lott & Rogers, 2005) to bring about changes at the institutional level, the structural application of consultation remains relatively rare. It is possible that the process of study recruitment positioned the participants in a discourse of individualistic service delivery. The original framing of the study thus potentially played a role in the emergence of cognitivist and individualistic descriptions of cultural responsiveness in the course of the interviews. The phrase 'cultural responsiveness' also may have played a role in situating the participants in an individualistic framework since responsiveness can translate to mean the response of one person to another person with different worldview. The cognitively-oriented responses of participants may thus have little to do with the history of modern psychology and everything to do with the study itself. I doubt this to be the case, however, given my own experiences in the field of applied psychology.

I came into this study in context of increasing frustration and dissatisfaction with the "cognitivism, individualism, and universalism" of mainstream Western psychology (Dashtipour, 2015, p. 82), accompanied by a desire to provide an alternate account of human activity in a progressive direction. The research questions in this dissertation were directly tied to my interest in issues of social justice and multiculturalism, particularly as these issues play out in the field of school psychology. My research methods violated the disciplinary expectation of order and a clear sequential progression of research from literature review, to research questions, to data analysis, to findings. My process was characterized by frustration, dead-ends, and periods of disengagement. I made notes, left memos, highlighted quotes, extracted them into documents, deleted those documents, and started new documents with an entirely different set of quotes. I initially sought to look at the data from the framework articulated by Jenks, Lee, and Kanpol (2001) about three kinds of multiculturalisms, but many data segments could not be easily slotted in these three categories. I abandoned the framework and began to read other literature while re-reading the data. I began to see "data hot spots" (MacLure, 2013, p. 172) that demanded a framework to connect them and explain them.

I considered various frameworks, and settled on critical discursive psychology which seemed to make sense of the data better than any other framework I had considered so far. Another reason for selecting this framework was my desire to work with critical psychology in the future. A dissertation that drew on this strand of literature thus seemed beneficial and apt given my research interests and future goals. However, there were aspects of data that could have been explained better with another type of analysis, one that could make its own dissertation.

The data analysis and the selection of theoretical framework proceeded concurrently, and each informed the other. The final days of data analysis entailed simultaneous data analysis,

writing, and framework-related reading. Throughout the analysis and writing, I struggled against my socialization into what St. Pierre (2011) called conventional humanist qualitative research that privileges the individual as the basic unit of social phenomena, and qualitative research as a search for thematic similarities between individual participants. I retrained myself to view social phenomena discursively, and looked for differences across as well as within participants in the light of post-structural framing of the self and reality as fragmented and multiple.

Although I operated from the critical paradigm, I appropriated Foucault's idea about the productive nature of power into the critical structural orientation of this study. I acknowledge the ontological debates between critical and poststructural paradigms but do not believe they constitute two separate entities with defined boundaries, and Foucault's (1981) work on power straddles this liminal area between the two paradigms. Therefore, I do not believe this transparadigmatic move compromised the coherence of my study. I saw Foucault's ideas about power and discourse as complementary to my data analysis approach without committing myself to poststructuralism.

Implications

Over the past decade, there have been calls for psychology programs to incorporate social justice training in their curricula (Miranda, Radliff, Cooper, & Eschenbrenner, 2014; Shriberg, 2012).) The study has implications for school psychology graduate programs who recognize the importance of the preparing future professionals equipped to work with diverse populations. The study findings suggest that cultural competency coursework that promotes a predominantly cognitivist account of inequality may engender practices in future school psychologists that are targeted toward individual justice rather than social justice.

Although the study focused on school psychology, a similar argument can be extended to the applied psychology as a whole (of which school psychology is a part). The APA Guidelines (2003) for the ethical practice of multicultural research, training, and practice prominently encodes cognitivist discourse as seen by their emphasis on:

- "Knowledge of differences in beliefs and practices that emerge from socialization through racial and ethnic group affiliation" (p. 16)
- "Understanding and recognizing the interface between individuals' socialization experiences based on ethnic and racial heritage" (p. 17)
- "Recognition of the ways in which the intersection of racial and ethnic group membership with other dimensions of identity (e.g., gender, age, …) enhances the understanding and treatment of all people" (p. 17)
- "Knowledge of historically derived approaches that have viewed cultural differences as deficits and have not valued certain social identities" (p. 17).

In response to the increased focus on multiculturalism, the APA (2003) has tried to position psychologists as "*uniquely* able to promote racial equity and social justice" (emphasis mine) because of their "awareness of their impact on others and the influence of their personal and professional roles in society" (p. 382). The field of psychology also offers solutions for social justice that involve reduction of implicit bias through intergroup contact and prejudice reduction workshops (Cohn, 2017; Noon, 2018; Reynolds & Klik, 2016). Many organizations have started mandating these trainings to employees in the aftermath of expensive class action lawsuits that rocked the financial industry in the 1990s and 2000s (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). These modules train employees to recognize their irrational biases about "outgroups" (Reynolds & Klik, 2016) and reduce them but not before assuring them that "everyone possesses bias"

(Noon, 2018, p. 199) toward outgroups. Noon (2018) argued that the popularity of the implicit bias trainings among organizations is due to avoidance of blame or discomfort: "It is convenient to believe that racial discrimination is not a product of our conscious thought but deeply embedded, so discrimination is not really our fault. It is the expression of something unspecified and possibly primeval such as fear of outsiders, threat to the group, or need for group membership and protection" (p. 202). By framing oppressive structures such as racism in power-neutral terms, everyone is assumed to have implicit biases and therefore equally responsible for the prevailing social inequalities. Consequently the way to reduce injustice and inequality is to reduce individual biases and develop more efficient actors equipped with information about other groups to make rational decisions.

Noon (2018) acknowledged the intentions and effectiveness of bias reduction workshops but also criticized the way institutions have come to see these psychological interventions as quick-fix solution rather than the beginning of a long journey to dismantle oppressive structures. The scientific nature of the psychological research backing these programs can be helpful in convincing the skeptics but "it has the traits of a fad suited to a resurgence in behavioral science in an era of big data" (p. 10). I argue that another reason for the popularity of these programs is because they can be easily be plugged into existing institutional setup like an add-on feature without the need for major structural overhaul. This study is thus a part of a broader movement of critical psychologists, and attempts to interrupt the self-positioning of psychology as a professional field with technological solutions to complex social problems.

Recommendations

Current conversations about cultural responsiveness and social justice in school psychology entail a political form of depoliticization. It might be helpful for school psychology

trainers to move their students toward writings or theorists that use a more critical and historically situated view of culture “as something formed through a history of colonialism and resistance” (Parker, 2015, p. 5). Graduate coursework could draw on critical writings that build capacity to appreciate as well as critique literature on implicit bias, prejudice reduction workshops. The coursework could entail literature from critical psychology that “turns the gaze of the psychologist back on the discipline” (Parker, 2007, p. 1) and deconstructs it to look at the ways in which the field is implicated in reproducing and upholding power relations. The practice of cultural responsiveness emerging from this understanding of culture and needs may have a much broader conception of practice than one emerging from a cognitivist understanding of culture. For one, the process to become culturally responsive would involve learning not just the values and norms of cultural groups, but also their histories of oppression and resistance.

There was a lack of clarity among participants about how to translate their desire for cultural responsiveness into practice. The anecdotes provided by many participants did not translate into actions beyond the instrumental use of culture to inform decisions about the most appropriate dis/ability label. This suggests that even though many school psychologists value multiculturalism and desire to be culturally responsive, they have difficulty translating that drive into a transformative agenda for institutional change. Some critical psychologists such as Prilleltensky (2013) suggest a shift to participatory community-oriented action research for ecological wellbeing as the possible next step. The shift from individualism to collective agency enabled by this move can transform schools into institutions that are more responsive to and affirming of historically marginalized populations. The praxis of such a school psychologist would go beyond the instrumental use of cultural responsiveness to ensure the smooth functioning of institutions. For instance, Halliday, Kern, Garrett, and Turnbull (2018) describe a

participatory action research project in a high school in Australia to improve the well-being of students. Halliday, Kern, Garrett, and Turnbull (2018) note that the traditional decision-making process in schools carries paternalistic assumptions about what works best for the students, and often marginalizes student agency. In the PAR conducted by Halliday and colleagues, students conducted, participated, or led various activities to generate collective knowledge about what constituted well-being for them, and how the school administration could foster student well-being. The student-generated knowledge helped change the school policies to be more responsive to student needs, demonstrating the transformative potential of locally enacted PAR. Although the study does not specifically center minoritized students, it serves as an example of how school psychologists could mobilize collective agency to change K-12 institutions for the better. The participatory action not only creates locally-relevant goals beyond those legitimized by institutions but also increases students' sense of agency and relatedness (Halliday, Kern, Garrett, & Turnbull, 2018).

Critical researchers in school psychology should continue to work against the current paradigm of research, and conduct future research that imagines alternate imaginative ways for school psychologists to function. Given the relative newness of critical psychology as well as its marginalization in the arena of mainstream psychology, the field continues to be underdeveloped and undertheorized. The dominance of cognitively-oriented postpositivistic psychology combined with discipline's "rush to application" (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 111) means that critical psychologists continue to struggle for their theoretical work to be recognized in institutional spaces and gain the momentum required to catalyze breakthrough and generate new forms of practices.

As we see an increase in research publications on culture and cultural responsiveness, with equity as their stated goal (Sprague, 2018), the field of school psychology should also increase the space it cedes to critique of these writings. The practice of critique is "not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, [on] what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices we accept rest" (Foucault, 1988, p.154). Based on this framing of critique, future school psychology research on cultural responsiveness (and related discourse of social justice and multiculturalism) may inquire into the ontoepistemic foundations of culture and cultural responsiveness. Researchers may also assess publications, training materials, NASP policies, and research events (e.g., conference presentations, keynote addresses, etc.) that pertain to the topic of cultural responsiveness in terms of their "political utility" and their capacity to serve as a means of "enabling forms of critique and resistance" (Hook, 2001, p. 2). In other words, these future inquiries would look into the ideological underpinnings of cultural responsiveness and the material and discursive consequences they engender. Once school psychology makes space for and actively fosters this sort of critique, the possibility of change emerges - "one can no longer think things as one formerly thought them, [and] transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult and quite possible" (Foucault, 1988, p. 155). The possibilities imagined by Parker (2015) include the emergence of a more progressive discipline that tethers research agendas to community needs rather than interests of university departments, provides socially situated accounts of human activity, replaces the practitioner-client binary with one that is less alienating and more egalitarian, uses research for social transformation rather than reinforcement of existing structures, and makes reflexivity a crucial part of praxis.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Rapport building questions

1. Tell me about your decision to go into school psychology.
    a. Goal: use this to build rapport
2. Tell me about your work environment at your school or schools.
    a. *Note.* If they ask "which school would you want me to talk about", say I would like to hear about both.

Responsibilities as a consultant

3. What is involved in the practice of consultation? What does it look like?
    a. Between 3 and 4, make sure you are able to get general beliefs as well as specific experiences (T)
4. Tell me about your experiences as a consultant in your school or schools.
    a. *Probe <u>if and only if</u> they don't have anything to share:*
        i. Tell me about any specific process (problem solving, etc.)
        ii. Tell me about specific focus (academic, behavior, etc.)
        iii. Has it been a positive experiences (why or why not)?
5. How would you describe the level of commitment your school has to consultation as a service delivery method?

Perceptions of cultural responsiveness

6. What does cultural responsiveness mean to you?
7. How do you think about CR in your personal life?
    a. Prompt: please describe what u think abt CR in personal life
    b. Prompt: please elaborate on any experiences you have had or decisions you've made while thinking CR. In personal life.
8. How does CR inform your day-today practices at work?
9. What is your experience with the idea and practice of culturally responsive consultation??
10. In your opinion, what are some reasons why it is important for school psychologists to be culturally responsive when delivering consultative services?
11. What factors have helped you in becoming culturally responsive? What training related to increasing your cultural responsiveness have you had?
    a. *Probe for training/PD if they don't mention it.*
    b. In what areas related to CR do you feel less prepared?

c. *Note*. If they talk about an aspect of service delivery without connecting it to CR then ask them to connect it to cultural responsiveness

12. Describe an area where you feel you can improve to become a more culturally responsive consultant.
13. What are some examples of a school psychologist who is NOT providing culturally responsive consultation?
14. Prompting:
    a. [IF THEY DON'T MENTION RACE] How do you see race relating to CR?
    b. *What else would you like to add about things like [e.g., gender, SES, language, etc; insert as required]*

15. What else you would like to share or explain regarding your experiences with consultation and cultural responsiveness?

Case vignette

16. For the next few questions, I would like you to consider a specific consultation experience that involved you consulting with or about someone from a different racial background than yours. For example, you could have consulted with a teacher from a different racial background. Or you also could have been consulted with a teacher from the same racial background, but the student who you discussed was from a different racial background. This experience may include a case that evoked comfort or discomfort. <u>Take your time deciding on a situation</u> and let me know when you are ready to answer some questions about it.
    a. (T) Participants can talk either about consulting with or about a person from different racial background. Email me if you have questions about this.
    a. Please tell me about a specific situation or case you were thinking about.
        i. Racial demo background of the people involved
        ii. Nature of the concern
        iii. Role of the consultee (was it teacher, administer, parent… etc.?)
        iv. Setting and grade level involved
        v. More specifics about the case
            1. Was the consultation individual or team meetings?
            2. How often did u meet?
            3. Is it ongoing?
            4. What kind of process did they use (was it problem-solving or something else… etc?)
    b. How did you prepare for this case?
    c. How did racial differences play a role in your case?
    d. What changes did you make in your *usual* consultation processes and procedures to adapt *to any difficulties you encountered*?
    e. Did you seek counsel for this case? Please describe.
    f. Were there any particular culturally responsive principles that you used during this particular case? Please describe.

i. *[if they are not sure what principles mean, tell them any strategies or concepts that they used]*

g. Is there any other information you want to share about this case that I didn't ask that might help us understand what happened?

If there is something about this scenario or another scenario that you forgot to talk about, or want to talk about, feel free to contact me.

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF I.R.B. APPROVAL

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

1/18/2019

Sujay Sabnis
Educational and Psychological Studies
Tampa, FL 33613

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**
IRB#: Pro00028552
Title: School psychologist's perceptions of and experiences with culturally responsive consultation

Study Approval Period: 1/29/2019 to 1/29/2020

Dear Mr. Sabnis:

On 1/15/2019, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):
Protocol Version #2, 3.15.2017.docx

The PI used an unstamped consent form with which to consent subjects. There are no differences between the approved stamped version and the unstamped version signed by the subjects. This non-compliance was not serious and not continuing. No further action is needed.

The IRB determined that your study qualified for expedited review based on federal expedited category number(s):

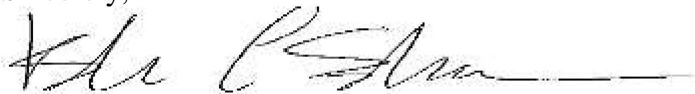
(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with USF HRPP policies and procedures and as approved by the USF IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) business days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,



Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX C

FORM OF INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk

Pro # ___00028552________

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called: **School psychologists' perceptions of and experiences with culturally responsive consultation.**

The person who is in charge of this research study is Sujay V. Sabnis. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. He is being guided in this research by Dr. Jose Castillo.

The research study will be conducted at University of South Florida (USF).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research study is to find out school psychologist's perceptions of and experiences with culturally responsive consultation. Although racial demographics of the US are changing rapidly, there is paucity of research on the role of cultural differences in school-based consultation in which school psychologists play a prominent role. This research study will help to bridge some of that gap by exploring what school psychologists think about cultural responsiveness when consulting with or about people who are of different racial/ethnic backgrounds than themselves.

Why are you being asked to take part?

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you potentially meet the following three criteria for being an eligible participant in this research study:

- Practice in a k-12 school setting
- Utilize student-focused consultation fairly regularly (at least 10% of their time) in their practice.
    - Consultation is, "an indirect service model where consultant and consultee engage in a collaborative problem-solving process in an effort to benefit a client for whom they bear some level of responsibility." (Ramirez and Smith, 2007)
    - 'Student-focused' means consulting with educators and/or parents to improve the outcomes of students.
- Use a problem-solving framework for their consultation.
    - Problems-solving framework typically involves proceeding through the following steps in a recursive manner: (1) identify a problem, (2) analyze the problem, (3) develop an intervention plan and implement it, and (4) evaluate the impact of the intervention plan on student outcomes using data.

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be interviewed twice for a duration of approximately one hour each. Interviews will be conducted in person in a location of your choosing. When face to face interviews are not possible, interview will be conducted through Skype or other computer programs with similar functions. During these interviews, you will be asked about your views and experiences related to cultural responsiveness in school-based consultation. These interviews will be audio-recorded.

The data (recorded interviews and their transcriptions) will be stored on a secure online cloud with access only given to research team members. While transcribing the interviews, all identifying information will be replaced with pseudonyms. The data will be kept for 5 years after the research study has been closed with the IRB. They will be destroyed after that time by deleting the files.

Total Number of Participants

About 14 individuals will take part in this study at USF. A total of 20 individuals will participate in the study at all sites.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You do not have to participate in this research study.

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

Benefits

We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study.

Risks or Discomfort

While we believe asking you about experiences of cultural responsiveness entails little risk, it is possible that you may experience personal discomfort during the interview. If you feel uncomfortable, you can stop the interview. The interview can be continued at a later time or you may suspend your participation in the research study.

Compensation

As an incentive for your participation, a $10 gift card will be mailed to you upon receiving the signed consent form. Ongoing participation in the interviews is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any costs or penalties.

Costs

It will not cost you anything to take part in the study.

Conflict of Interest Statement

There are no conflicts of interests.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. Anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. These individuals include:

- The research team, namely the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, and all other research staff, including the researchers from the other site of this multi-site research study.
- The other site participating in this multi-site research study consists of researchers from Loyola University Chicago, Illinois. We will be sharing identifiable information with them.
- Certain university people who need to know more about the study, and individuals who provide oversight to ensure that we are doing the study in the right way.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an unanticipated problem, call Sujay Sabnis at (813) 484-0124.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

____ __________
Signature of Person Taking Part in Study Date

____
Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

____
Signature of Person obtaining Informed Consent Date

____
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent