

Understanding the Lived Experiences of Students of Color in Graduate Counseling Education: Implications for Educators and Leaders

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Abstract

Graduate counseling and psychology education need a program framework grounded in antiracist recruitment and retention structures and processes to increase the supply of graduate-level counselors of color who are trained to address the alarmingly high rates of behavioral health issues among communities of color in the United States (Williams, 2018). The extant research has suggested barriers to retention and academic success for graduate students of color have included a lack of faculty of color, a dearth of academic supports for students of color, and other forms of structural and interpersonal racism (Ghose et al., 2018). The presentation will share a qualitative study to understand the lived experiences of students of color enrolled in Graduate Counseling Education (GCE) master's-level programs in California, United States, given there have been a limited number of studies focused on the experiences of students of color in masters level GCE in California. A phenomenological approach was used, and participants included 25 students of color from five GCE programs who were enrolled in terminal master's-level counseling and counseling psychology programs in California State University and California private institutions within the United States. The following three main themes emerged in the findings: (a) The Importance of Social Support, (b) Structural and Interpersonal Racism, and (c) Administrative and Leadership Needs. Implications of findings and recommendations indicate social supports, using a Critical Race Theory pedagogy framework, and administrative and leadership needs help to increase sense of belonging, academic success, and retention for students of color in GCE programs.

Keywords: Counseling; Counseling Education; Higher Education; Retention; Students of Color;