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European American Students' Supports, Challenges, and Perceptions of Their Peers of Color

Crystal Nicole Gayle
University of Rhode Island, crystal.n.gayle@gmail.com

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EUROPEAN AMERICAN STUDENTS' SUPPORTS,
CHALLENGES, AND PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PEERS
OF COLOR

BY

CRYSTAL NICOLE GAYLE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

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OF
CRYSTAL NICOLE GAYLE

APPROVED:

Dissertation Committee:

Major Professor

Margaret Rogers

Mary Clair-Michaud

Ginette Ferszt

Nasser H. Zawia

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to examine the experiences of European American students as they obtain advanced degrees in psychology. The study investigated what European American students find supportive and unsupportive as they pursue their doctoral degrees. The participants of this study consisted of 12 graduate students. Qualitative methods were employed, and data obtained through semi-structured interviews was analyzed using content analysis. The interviews revealed factors that students believe have facilitated their success in graduate school, as well as challenges experienced during graduate school, and the types of strategies they used when faced with obstacles. The participants were also asked about the experiences of their peers of color within their graduate programs. The results showed that the European American students have multiple factors that have facilitated their success in graduate school such as support from faculty, mentors, other students, and self-motivation. Participants also reported negative experiences such as lack of program structure and interpersonal challenges. In terms of strategies they used when faced with obstacles, the majority of participants stated that they relied on family and friends outside of school as well as engaged in self-care practices such as exercising. When asked about their perceptions of the experiences of their peers of color, most participants stated that their peers of color often feel uncomfortable within their graduate programs. One limitation of the study was that this study utilized audio-recorded telephone interviews, which may have impacted the rapport between the researchers and the participants. Another limitation of the study was that the participants were recruited from similar networks, which may have led to them

responding in a similar manner. Future research should replicate this study to examine if doctoral students in disciplines other than psychology have similarities or differences in the factors they find supportive and challenging during their graduate studies.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my mother, Johnnie Hall, who has always helped me reach my dreams. Mom, thank you for your selflessness, support, and love.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The present study sought to examine the challenges and supportive factors experienced by European American psychology doctoral students as well as elucidate how they perceive the experiences of students of color in their programs. While the United States (U.S.) often projects an image of equality amongst its citizens, this ideology is unfortunately not the reality for many of the individuals living here (Pewewardy & Frey, 2002). Horrific events such as the enslavement of African Americans, the extermination of and isolation of Native Americans, and the exploitation of African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos/as and Asian American individuals have created social, economic, and educational inequalities that continue to permeate this country (Walker & Jones, 1998). As a result of the well-documented history of racial and ethnic discrimination in the U.S., research shows that measures assessing racial and ethnic discrimination consistently show that people of color report more frequent experiences of discrimination than European Americans (Feagin, 2001; Marger, 2008).

While the number of students of color enrolling in colleges and universities has been increasing over the years, including enrollment in advanced degree programs like psychology (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015), students of color on predominately European American campuses report more negative experiences than their European American counterparts (Pewewardy & Frey, 2002). Furthermore, while students of color report more negative experiences, European American students report higher levels of satisfaction and more positive campus climates than their racial

and ethnic minority peers (Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003). Specifically, European American students report greater peer support, more social integration, lower levels of stress, and better relationships with faculty than their peers of color (Maton, Wimms, Grant, Wittig, Rogers, & Vasquez, 2011; Williams, 2002; Wynne, Guo, & Wang, 2014). These data highlight serious discrepancies in the experiences of European American psychology graduate students as compared to their peers of color. Yet, at this time, we know little about specific graduate school experiences of European American students and what they find helpful and challenging as they obtain their advanced degrees. In addition, there is a paucity of research examining European American students' awareness and perceptions of the experiences of their racially and ethnically diverse peers as they work towards the completion of their graduate degrees.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although European American individuals are still the majority obtaining advanced degrees in the U.S., the number of racial and ethnic minorities pursuing these degrees is steadily increasing. Therefore, it is critical to examine how the change in the racial make-up of students is impacting how they are interacting with one another. While previous quantitative studies have examined negative influences affecting European American graduate students as they work towards their doctoral degrees (Doran, Kraha, Marks, Ameen, & El-Ghoroury, 2016; El-Ghoroury, Galper, Sawaqdeh, & Bufka, 2012; Rummell, 2015), there have been few qualitative studies exploring factors that European American students find challenging and helpful during their graduate studies, and no information exists about European American student perceptions of the experiences of their peers of color within their graduate programs.

It is important for universities to encourage European American students' to support their classmates of color to create more genuine and empathetic relationships between European American students and their peers of color. This increase in support can lead to more positive experiences for students of color (e.g., fewer feelings of isolation) and ultimately it may increase the number of racially and ethnically diverse students obtaining their doctoral degrees in psychology. This positive change may also create a more welcoming and supportive learning environment for these students. In order for European American students to effectively support their peers of color, it is important to examine factors that help European American psychology doctoral students succeed in their graduate programs.

Encouraging Factors for European American Students

Previous quantitative research has examined factors that European American students find helpful as they obtain their advanced degrees. The following sections draw from research performed in psychology and will identify various factors European American students deem supportive and helpful as they pursue their graduate degrees.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a critical component that graduate students utilize to successfully navigate through their programs. Several studies have explored student perceptions of mentoring. European American students identify successful mentorships as an important factor as they obtain their graduate degrees in psychology and in other fields (Bowman & Bowman, 1990), as do students of color (Maton et al., 2011). For example, Rice, Suh, Yang, Choe, and Davis (2016) examined both White international and domestic graduate student-advisor relationships from varying fields, including psychology. International ($n = 434$) and domestic ($n = 387$) students completed the Advisory Working Alliance Inventory (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001), which assessed the students' advising experiences, perceived academic stress, and desire to change advisor. Working alliance is comprised of three dimensions: rapport (i.e., how well the advisor and advisee interact interpersonally), apprenticeship (i.e., the degree to which the advisor aids the professional development of the advisee), and identification-individuation (i.e., how much the advisee wants to be like the advisor) (Johnson & Kaslow, 2014). The results showed that international and domestic students did not differ in their ratings of working alliance, academic stress, or desire to change

advisors. The results also showed that a strong working alliance with advisors was related to less academic stress and desire to change advisors. Additionally, international students who felt disrespected by their advisors were more likely to be academically stressed than domestic students. Furthermore, structured mentoring experiences were associated with lower stress and less desire to switch mentors, and this effect was similar for both international and domestic students. This study shows the importance of working alliance for European American graduate students; other dimensions of mentoring may also be important to them.

Another dimension of mentoring and working alliance that psychology graduate students identify as an important factor to successfully complete their graduate program is strong social and emotional support from their mentors. A study conducted by Taylor and Neimeyer (2009) examined graduate school mentoring within clinical, counseling, and experimental psychology programs. The sample consisted of European American psychology graduate students ($n = 336$) who completed a web-based survey. The results revealed that counseling students perceived higher levels of overall satisfaction and higher levels of socio-emotional support (e.g., their mentor conveyed empathy for the concerns and feelings discussed with them) when compared to clinical students. This finding suggests that counseling students had a better working alliance in regards to rapport with their mentors than did clinical students. In addition, the experimental students reported more instrumental support (e.g., their mentor helped them with a presentation) than the other graduate students. The experimental students had a better apprentice relationship with their mentors, which is another aspect of working alliance. The third aspect of mentoring,

which was networking, did not differ among the three types of graduate students, but was found as an important aspect of mentoring for these students. Networking involved the participants' mentors facilitating their contacts with other professionals in their field. Another type of mentoring that can also be beneficial to European American psychology graduate students is peer mentoring.

Peer mentoring, in addition to mentoring from advisors, has also been seen as a supportive factor for graduate students in counseling psychology programs. A study conducted by Murdock, Stipanovic, and Lucas (2013) examined how counseling psychologists improved their students' professional identities by developing a co-mentoring program that paired master's- and doctoral-level counselors. The participants consisted of 28 European American counseling psychology graduate students. They utilized letter writing and email to support the development of these mentoring relationships over the course of a semester. This study measured the effectiveness of the co-mentoring program based on interview data and written artifacts. The participants' responses revealed several themes of support including how fostering co-mentoring relationships between students can strengthen both groups' professional identity development when they are provided with a platform to engage in the mentoring process. Through the co-mentoring process, the doctoral participants reported strengthened professional identity, recognized similarities and differences between mentoring and counseling, developed collegial relationships with their master's-level co-mentors, and acknowledged the need for developing boundaries with clients.

From the examination of previous literature, it is clear that mentoring is an important factor European American students rely on during their psychology graduate studies. Mentoring can provide social, emotional, as well as professional support for graduate students. This aspect of support is particularly important for students of color obtaining their advance degrees. A qualitative study conducted by Gayle (2016) utilized semi-structured interviews to examine what psychology doctoral students of color found supportive and unsupportive in their programs. The results showed that the participants found factors such as mentoring, social support, peer support outside and inside their program, familial support, and financial support essential to successfully completing their degrees. The findings also revealed that the students of color found their mentors to be most helpful if they were also individuals of color and/or conducted multicultural research. It is unknown whether European American psychology graduate students prefer mentors of the same race or if they gravitate toward working with mentors that research specific topics; however, the current study explored this.

Social Support on Campus

Previous studies have indicated that peer support/social integration and connections are important for European American doctoral students in psychology and in other disciplines. For example, Wynne et al. (2014) discussed a creative project designed to help graduate students in the dissertation writing process cope with writing anxiety through peer support. According to Onwuegbuzie (2001) “Fifty percent of doctoral candidates from graduate programs in education never complete their degrees, with as many as 20% of students giving up at the dissertation” (p. 560).

The participants in the writing anxiety group met weekly and worked collaboratively to meet their writing goals by monitoring their progress and encouraging each other. This type of group was found to alleviate anxiety related to perfectionist thinking. The group was designed to be a closed group, which means that the group retained its original group members over the course of the group sessions and gained no additional members after the first group meeting. The group consisted of eight to 10 European American students and met twice for two hours each session. The students reported that the peer-writing group gave them encouragement to complete their dissertations and more confidence in their writing ability. This study shows the significance of even minimal peer social support to help European American psychology graduate students manage stress. It is also important to examine how other forms of social support and coping have helped students.

Other studies have examined how social support relates to the amount of stress experienced by European American doctoral students in psychology. An investigation conducted by Nelson, Dell-Oliver, Koch, and Buckler (2001) studied how coping styles and social support served to moderate levels of stress, distress, relative health, and success of 53 European American graduate students in clinical psychology. The results showed that graduate students with higher grade point averages were more likely to cope with their stress by accepting the demands of graduate school, engaging in religious activity, venting their emotions to others, and seeking emotional social support. The participants reported that the highest stressors relating to graduate school were coursework, dissertation work, their financial situation, the internship application process, practicum placement, daily hassles, time management and availability, and

work with clients. The graduate students with higher psychological distress (i.e., higher General Health Questionnaire Total scores) were more likely to report greater stress regarding their spirituality, practicum work, and relationships with supervisors, professors, and friends. Additionally, they were less likely to cope with their stressors by seeking out emotional social support. These students were also more likely to experience less social support from family and close friends and report fewer contacts with mentors or professors.

Other studies examined the amount of social support experienced by a diverse group of students. More specifically, research has examined the discrepancies between European American and students of color perceptions of the quality of social support available to them while attending the same universities. A study by Williams (2002) examined the amount and types of social support reported by ethnic minority and majority doctoral students during graduate school. The participants consisted of 803 European American, 292 African-American, 179 Asian American, 151 Hispanic, and 29 Native American doctoral students (N = 1,454). All participants completed the Doctoral Student Survey, a 65-item measure that assessed students' perceptions of social support, experiences in a doctoral program, and background characteristics. Williams (2002) found that European American doctoral students reported more positive perceptions of the academic environment than African American doctoral students and higher rates of program satisfaction than their counterparts. Also, African American doctoral students reported more negative perceptions of the social environment than did European American, Asian American, and Hispanic doctoral students. Lastly, European American doctoral students reported fewer program issues

and more social support, however, African American and Hispanic doctoral students reported negative perceptions about social integration and support.

These studies are vital in showing how social support is related to the satisfaction of European American psychology graduate students and students of color. In addition, self-care is another important component that has been correlated to students successfully navigating through their graduate programs.

Self-Care

Research has indicated that self-care is a key factor that European American graduate students rely on to maintain positive mental health, as they pursue higher degrees (Burkhart, 2014; El-Ghoroury et al., 2012; Rummell, 2015). A study conducted by Burkhart (2014) investigated whether clinical psychology graduate students were more vulnerable to experiencing stress and mental health concerns than other student populations. More specifically, the study looked at the effectiveness of the Integral Life Practice (ILP) as a self-care model intervention for these students. The ILP consists of a set of conscious deliberate activities that focus on improving individual's mental, physical, and emotional health (e.g., eating a balanced diet and exercising regularly). Five European American participants engaged in a 10-week intervention that taught fundamental principles of ILP (e.g., developing a more balanced lifestyle, creating and maintaining meaningful relationships, increasing self-awareness, and developing an individual's sense of spirituality). The intervention entailed 10 weekly 90-minute meetings. The first 30 minutes of each session was focused on completing weekly measures, reviewing previous goals, and discussing individual achievements. The next 30 minutes consisted of psycho-education about

various ILP components (e.g., mindfulness, nutrition, spirituality, and exercise). And the last 30 minutes was dedicated to completing experiential ILP activities (e.g., deep breathing, meditating, or creating positive self affirmations) and goal setting for the following week. The findings revealed that the clinical psychology participants were less likely to utilize effective self-care strategies compared to students in different fields (e.g., medical students). The findings also showed that the intervention improved perceived wellness, adaptive functioning, and decreased previous mental health concerns. This is one example of an intervention that successfully increased the overall use of self-care for these graduate students. The next study discussed a specific aspect of self-care; stress management.

Myers et al. (2012) explored factors related to stress management among European American psychology graduate students focusing on the self-care practices and perceived stress among 488 graduate students across the U.S. The majority of these students were European American (87%). The results indicated that psychology graduate students, who indicated that their household income was less than the cost of living, reported more perceived stress than their peers who did not have this financial burden. After controlling for the effects of the demographic variables, cost of living to income ratio, relationship status, and age, the researchers found that self-care practices were found to be significantly related to perceived stress among psychology graduate students. For example, better sleep hygiene practices and strong social support were related to lower levels of perceived stress. These findings highlight the importance of graduate students managing their stress levels as an aspect of self-care while obtaining their advanced degrees.

In determining a complete picture of European American psychology graduate students' experiences, it is equally important to examine the challenges that these students face. The following section will discuss the challenges for European American graduate students as they pursue their advanced degrees.

Challenges for European American Doctoral Graduate Students

Many studies have identified negative experiences reported by European American psychology doctoral students as they pursued advanced degrees. In one such study, Doran et al. (2016) found that debt loads were related to the negative experiences of these students. The participants were asked about their amount of student loan debt in addition to how it negatively impacts their personal and professional lives. The results indicated that current debt loads are substantially higher than in the past decades. In addition, the participants contributed more than two-thirds of their loan debt to direct educational costs. Also, participants obtaining their Psy.D. degrees reported significantly less university-based funding available to them than Ph.D. students. This study emphasized that debt is one of the main concerns for European American psychology graduate students. High levels of stress in regards to debt as well as stress related to their graduate programs were also a challenge for these students.

Additional studies have documented other challenging experiences for European American psychology graduate students. Rummell (2015) conducted a national survey of clinical and counseling psychology graduate students to better understand how they experience and cope with stress related to their large workload. The results revealed that the students often expressed stress in their physical and

mental health symptomology. Of the students that were surveyed, 49% of the participants reported clinically significant anxiety symptoms, about 39% reported clinically significant depressive symptoms, and more than one-third of the participants (34.82%) reported clinically significant symptoms for both anxiety and depression. Also, more than half of the students reported chronic physical health symptoms (e.g., headaches), which increased with greater workload.

Similarly, El-Ghoroury, Galper, Sawaqdeh, and Bufka (2012) conducted a large-scale survey that examined psychology graduate students' stressors and coping strategies. The results revealed that more than 70% of the graduate students reported stressors that interfere with their optimal functioning in terms of managing their academic responsibilities, finances/debt, anxiety, and work and school life balances. Furthermore, the leading barriers to completing their degrees were lack of time and the cost of their graduate education.

As a whole, these results reveal common factors (e.g., lack of financial support, increasing amounts of debt, high levels of stress, and the lack of the use of positive coping strategies) that European American graduate students believe affect their success in obtaining advanced degrees. At present, little is known about how European American graduate students perceive the experiences of their peers of color within their graduate programs. The following section explores what is known and what remains unknown about European American students insights into the experiences of their racial and ethnic minority classmates.

Perceptions of the Racial Climate Across Different Student Groups

Research has indicated that European American students have more positive graduate school experiences than students of color across multiple disciplines including psychology (Fischer, 2010; Pieterse, Carter, Evans, & Walter, 2010). Research conducted by Fischer (2010) examined the long-term effects of stereotype threat on nearly 4,000 college students who matriculated into 28 selective colleges and universities as first-time freshmen. The sample included 998 European Americans, 959 Asians, 916 Latinos, and 1,051 African Americans. The results revealed that Black and Hispanic students reported a significantly higher negative campus racial climate and lower social satisfaction than European American students. Additionally, Black and Hispanic students were considerably less likely to graduate on time than their European American and Asian counterparts. The results also showed that the students of color felt that their academic performance would be seen as a representation of their racial group, while European American students did not. These pressures led to lower performance and decreased satisfaction with college among those students. Similar experiences and stressors were not reported by European American participants and instead, they reported a more positive college experience than their students of color counterparts. Other studies have shown consistent findings in regards to discrimination and racial climate for students of color.

Similarly, Pieterse, Carter, Evans, and Walter (2010) investigated the association among perceptions of racial and/or ethnic discrimination, racial climate, and trauma-related symptoms with 289 racially diverse college students (i.e., 170 (55%) White and/or European American, 71 (23%) Asian and/or Asian American, and

47 (15%) Black and/or African-American). The results showed that European American students reported significantly lower levels of perceived discrimination than Asian and Black students. In addition, European American students reported that the racial climate was significantly more positive than that reported by Black and Asian students. Similar findings were also found by Gayle (2016), who examined the supports and challenges of students of color obtaining their doctoral degrees in psychology. The results revealed that the students of color believed their European American peers had more enjoyable experiences in their graduate programs and that their European American counterparts did not relate to them or understand their experiences. Thus, it is imperative to examine the perceptions of European American graduate psychology students to gain clarity on the differences of experiences between these two groups of students.

Purpose of Study

The present study used semi-structured interviews to examine what factors European American students find supportive and challenging in their psychology doctoral programs. The study also investigated the helpful strategies these students use when faced with obstacles or stress, how European American doctoral students perceive the experiences of their classmates of color, and how they can better understand and support these students in their doctoral programs. This study answered two main research questions:

1. What are the supportive and challenging experiences of European American psychology graduate student as they obtain their advanced degrees?

2. What are the perceptions of European American psychology graduate students' experiences of their peers of colors within their graduate programs?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Participants

Twelve European American graduate students obtaining their doctoral degree in psychology participated in semi-structured, audio-recorded telephone interviews. The sample included women ($n = 11, 91.6\%$) and one man ($n = 1, 8.4\%$). Participants ranged in age from 24 to 41 ($M = 29.6, SD = 5.08$). Participants reported that they lived in New York ($n = 4, 33.3\%$), Georgia ($n = 3, 25\%$), Connecticut ($n = 1, 8.3\%$), Maine ($n = 1, 8.3\%$), Massachusetts ($n = 1, 8.3\%$), Pennsylvania ($n = 1, 8.3\%$), and Virginia ($n = 1, 8.3\%$). All participants identified their race or ethnicity as European American ($n = 12, 100\%$). All of the participants stated that they speak English ($n = 100\%$). The participants also reported some second language fluencies including Spanish ($n = 4, 33.3\%$), German ($n = 2, 16.6\%$), and French ($n = 1, 8.3\%$). In terms of marital status, eight (66.6%) participants reported being single, and four (33.3%) were married. All of the participants were attending predominately White universities.

Measures

The participants responded to a set of demographic and personal background questions and interview questions. Below is a description of the measures used.

Demographic and Personal Background Questions. The participants responded to 11 demographic and personal background questions. The four demographic questions included gender, age, marital status, and race/ethnicity. The seven personal background questions asked about university attended, graduate program enrolled in, year in graduate program, highest degree, first generation

graduate student status, graduate program specialty, and if participants attended the same undergraduate school as their graduate programs.

Interview Guide. In addition, participants responded to five semi-structured interview questions (Appendix B). The semi-structured format allows for openness and flexibility throughout the interview process (Kvale, 1996). The semi-structured interview questions included experiences about what facilitated participants' success in graduate school, challenges they experienced throughout their graduate program, the strategies they use when faced with obstacles in their programs, and the perceptions of their peers of color. The semi-structured interviews were chosen for this study because this format allows for follow-up questions, although the interview questions are predetermined. This format also provides an opportunity to learn and explore the individual experiences of the participants (Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 2006).

Procedure

Prior to the execution of the study, the University of Rhode Island Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the methods and procedures. Next, the participants were recruited through snowball sampling, which is a process of identifying individuals who are in the same social network. More specifically, participants were recruited by sending recruitment emails to professional contacts and psychology LISTSERVS at universities (See Appendix D). The recruitment letters included information regarding the purpose of the study, the contact information of the researcher, and the IRB status of the project. Conversations with colleagues in psychology were also used to generate potential participants.

Potential participants were contacted and sent a recruitment letter (see Appendix D), as well as a consent form (see Appendix C) that described the study goals and the risks and benefits related to participation in the study. The consent form included information about how participants' confidentiality would be maintained, as well as information regarding the use of the telephone interviewing and audio recording to meet the study criteria. The participants were asked if they had completed at least one year of graduate school within a psychology program, if they were in good academic standing, if they identified as being a European American individual, and if they attended a predominately White institution where there is racial diversity in their psychology doctoral program. The participants who met these requirements were asked to sign and return a consent form to the researcher. Following this, semi-structured audio-recorded phone interviews were conducted with each participant that lasted about 30 to 45 minutes. A second interview was scheduled if supplementary information or clarification was needed or if technical difficulties occurred during the interview. After the completion of the interviews, each participant was given \$20 as compensation for their participation in the study.

All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. Each audio-recording and transcript was reread and checked multiple times to ensure accuracy. The transcribing process provided the researcher with the opportunity to develop a deeper familiarity and understanding of the data, as well as served as the initial analysis of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Any identifying information was removed from the transcripts, and pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity and to maintain the confidentiality of the interviewees. Additionally, the research team,

which consisted of the lead researcher and the two research assistants, continuously reflected on how our personal biases and beliefs may have impacted how the data was interpreted. The research team conducted on-going discussions about reflexivity, which is the process of the researcher influencing the findings throughout the research process (Hale, Treharne, & Kitas, 2007).

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. While the demographic data was analyzed quantitatively, the interview data utilized a qualitative descriptive approach. The purpose of a qualitative descriptive study is to create a comprehensive summary of events in the everyday terms of those events (Sandelowski, 2009).

Content analysis was used to analyze the data obtained from the interviewees.

Researchers describe content analysis as a flexible method to analyze text data (Cavanagh, 1997; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The aim of a conventional content analysis is to describe a phenomenon. In the beginning stages of the analyses, each interview was listened to and read several times to obtain a general impression. Next, text that represented the initial research questions were identified. Then, two researchers independently read the data word by word to derive codes by highlighting the exact words from the text that capture the key concepts (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). These codes came directly from the text and became the initial coding scheme. The researchers then compared and discussed the codes until complete agreement was reached. The researchers applied the codes to each question, then met to discuss their findings. This process continued until the data in all of the interviews was coded. The researchers also made notes of the similarities and

differences across interviews. The findings are presented using descriptions of graduate student's experiences, and quotations are used to enrich the results (White & Marsh, 2006).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an essential aspect of conducting qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined four criteria for evaluating research findings: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility refers to the focus of the research and how well the data and analysis address the intended focus. Transferability refers to the applicability of the findings, while dependability describes the consistency of the findings. Confirmability relates to the neutrality of the findings (Polit & Hungler, 1999). The researcher ensured trustworthiness in a variety of ways. The investigator conducted informal member checking to ensure appropriate understanding of the participants' responses. Next, two researchers analyzed and interpreted the data in order to reduce bias. In addition, an audit trail was completed, which means an additional researcher observed and monitored all of the steps taken until the completion of the study. Trustworthiness was also established by maintaining communication with an individual who is an expert in qualitative research.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Demographic and Contextual Data

Participants provided personal background information about (a) their highest degree, (b) what graduate program they attend, (c) their graduate specialty, (d) their year within their graduate program, (e) their status as a first generation graduate student, and (f) if they attended the same undergraduate university as their graduate program. Table 1 shows that there is great variability in the highest degrees that the participants had obtained thus far.

Table 1

Participants' Highest Degree

Highest Degree	<i>n</i>	%
Masters of Arts	5	41.6%
Masters of Education	5	41.6%
Bachelor's Degree	2	16.6%
Masters of Public Health	1	8.3%
Masters of Science	1	8.3%

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported having more than one master's degrees.

Table 2 presents the degree programs and psychology specialties of the participants. The majority of participants were pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology, and the greatest number were specializing in school psychology.

Table 2

Graduate Program Attended and Graduate Specialty

Programs Attended	<i>n</i>	%
Ph.D.	11	91.6%
Psy.D.	1	8.3%
<i>Graduate Specialty</i>		
School Psychology	6	50%
School and Clinical Combined Program	2	16.6%
Clinical Psychology	2	16.6%
Counseling Psychology	1	8.3%
Developmental Psychology	1	8.3%

Note: N = 12.

Table 3 provides a breakdown of participants' year of study within their graduate program. Most participants were in their second or third year of their graduate program.

Table 3

Year Within Graduate Program

Year Within Graduate Program	<i>n</i>	%
Second	4	33.3%
Third	4	33.3%
Fourth	2	16.6%
Fifth	1	8.3%

Note: N = 12.

Participants also reported if they were first generation graduate students and if they attended the same undergraduate university as their graduate program. The majority of participants stated that they were not first generation graduate students ($n = 9, 75\%$). Moreover, all of the participants attended a university that was different from their undergraduate institution ($n = 12, 100\%$).

Research Questions

The results of the interview findings are organized by the two research questions. For each research question, descriptive tables are used to summarize the various categories or explicit messages that were stated by the participants.

Research question # 1: What are the supportive and challenging experiences of European American psychology graduate student as they obtain their advanced degrees?

The first interview question asked participants to explain what has been good about their graduate program since they were accepted into it. Table 4 represents the six categories that emerged.

Table 4

Once You Got Accepted into the Program, What Has Been Good About It?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
High quality training (e.g., clinical training, research experience, structure of program)	6 (50%)
Collaborative environment	5 (41.6%)

Other students, cohort, classmates	4 (33.3%)
Supportive faculty	3 (25%)
Funding (e.g. fellowships, stipends assistantships)	2 (16.6%)
Negative experiences (e.g., mentor leaving)	1 (8.3%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported more than one response category.

High quality training (e.g., clinical training research experience, structure of program). The majority of the participants indicated that one aspect of their program that they really enjoyed is the high quality training they receive. One participant described how she learned a lot of practical counseling skills from her classes:

Well, first of all I enjoyed the first two years or so of classes because it was a lot, I'm in a counseling program, and it was a lot of the practical skills of how to counsel and how to do group therapy, and those classes were very, like, I just found them very, like, informative and helpful, and I really, I learned a lot throughout those.

Collaborative environment. Five of the participants stated that they really like the collaborative environment that their program has. For example, one participant reported:

It's a very supportive environment, it's not very competitive at all, we're all just kind of rooting for one another, and we're a smaller, or a small division within our department, so we have a nice sense of community. I think that's the best thing.

Another participant stated:

I feel very supported in both my research and clinical work, and not just by my mentor. It's followed by all the faculty and then also supported by my cohort and, like, other students, and it's a very collaborative program, and it doesn't feel like, of course it's competitive, but there's definitely a sense of, like,

community and collaboration.

Other students, cohort, classmates. Another aspect that participants liked about their programs is the other students. One participant said:

I feel that my cohort specifically, I have really good relationships with them and they've been super supportive through all the things we've been going through.

Supportive faculty. Other students discussed how they like how supportive their faculty members are within their programs:

I think my mentor, like the match that I made with him, both like the content of the research lab and just his general style, and a way of being really supportive has been just like excellent.

One student on a pre-doctoral internship stated:

To be more specific I think I really, really loved my professors in my program, and I miss them actually right now but I see them at conferences and you know when I go back to visit. So, I think that was a huge plus, like the fact that I connected with the professors, and I'd say it was more, it wasn't like a personal level. It wasn't like we hung out after work or anything like, that it was just more that I felt sort of like intellectually understood by them, and I felt that they shared like a lot of the passion that I had for education and policy and research. And so, it was like, I think that part of being a happy adult is finding your people sort of and, which is easier said than done, and I think like I felt like I sort of among the academic crowd, sort of found my people.

Funding (e.g., fellowships, stipends assistantships). Two of the participants indicated that funding is an aspect of their program that they like. One participant spoke directly about how her research fellowship gives her more freedom within her program:

So, what I would say, the best part of my program was, is for me because of my special sort of situation is that when I started I was awarded a dean's research fellowship. It's like provided by the College of Education, which is where the department is, and they pay way more money than a regular sort of graduate assistantship, and most of those students who get, like, regular graduate assistantships have to work, like, either in a lab or they have certain

hours they're supposed to work. It's a little more strict than what I've had, and since I'm a dean's fellow, I'm not held to anything. It's sort of like when your advisor needs you to do work, you do it, and that's kind of it. So because I was a dean's fellow, when I switched advisors and we didn't really have overlapping research interests, that has given me a lot of flexibility, and my advisor has sort of been like, you know, you and I don't overlap, you have this money so your funding isn't tied to me, so feel free to, like, go and explore and do whatever it is you wanna do.

Negative experiences (e.g., mentor leaving). Although this question asked what participants enjoy about their graduate programs, one student shared an example of a negative experience that they had:

Well, okay, so I feel like I should say first is that I've had sort of a different experience because my advisor left. So I came to this university to work with a faculty member, and then at the end of my first year he told me that he was leaving. Which unfortunately didn't really leave space to apply if I was interested in going somewhere else. It didn't really leave space for that because I wouldn't be able to start the new program until my third year, in which case you're already in your third year, it doesn't make sense to change. But what I will say is that because of that, my research interests didn't really overlap with anyone else in the department.

In a follow-up to the first interview question, participants were probed with two additional questions. The first probe asked, "What works and what does not?" in their graduate programs. Table 5 represents the two categories that emerged.

Table 5

What Works and What Does Not?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
What does not work (e.g., lack of faculty support, course load, internal stress, outdated course content, program structure, funding)	12 (100%)
What works (e.g., structure of program, supportive faculty, course content, practicum, experiences, networking, flexibility)	9 (75%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported more

than one response category.

What does not work (e.g., lack of faculty support, course load, internal stress, outdated course content, program structure, funding). All of the participants mentioned factors that they do not like about their programs. For example, one participant discussed how she does not have a good relationship with her mentor:

Well, you know my fit with my mentor is a little estranged at this point, just because my interests have changed over time. So, his research doesn't fit mine as well as when I started, and his style is very different from a style that I would probably find more helpful, so that's like one of my biggest difficulties in grad school.

Another participant stated that the lack of funding is a huge problem within their program:

Things that do not work...I guess at this point, I'm feeling it quite a bit just because the program isn't, wasn't funded, so in the first couple of years I was able to do, like, I had two research or graduate assistantships, so that kind of offset the cost of tuition. Like, I ended up only having to really pay half price tuition for the first few years. But as you get into like the later years, like right now, they didn't let me keep doing the assistantship, so it's become, like, harder and harder to keep financing the program without just having to, like, keep taking out more and more loans. And I haven't really found them to be very supportive of the fact that some people don't have money to just, like, keep paying and paying.

What works (e.g., structure of program, supportive faculty, course content, practicum, experiences, networking, flexibility)? Participants stated many aspects of their program that work for them:

I really liked being a graduate research assistant. That was like a great opportunity with a crazy amount of work, but I met a lot of people through my research, and I learned a lot by doing a big research study. And then when I took research classes it all made sense to me, 'cause I'd, I'd, I'd like sort of have an example of how you know, like all these different ideas about how you do research cause I'd done them already. So that was great.

So I really like the cohort model, especially in my school, we sort of have an unofficial school motto: collaborate to graduate. And my cohort takes that very

seriously. So we work together as much as we can to make sure that everyone in the cohort is getting what they need. So we help each other a lot. We have a google account, so like, we each have our own private google account, but we have a google drive so that we can share files, and we can work together on individual projects. That helps us to keep organized. Then we use the google calendar to make sure that everyone knows about due dates. We have a group chat through group-me, where we communicate constantly, and we have individual ones for different classes and different group projects. So as far as what my program does, what my cohort specifically does, we do a lot to collaborate and to work together to make it where everyone is, basically, so everyone's getting what they need.

The second probe asked “What has helped you to handle it?” This probe refers to the characteristics of the program that do not work for them. Seven categories of responses emerged (See Table 6).

Table 6

What Has Helped You to Handle It?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Support (e.g., family, friends, colleagues, pets)	8 (66.6%)
Self-motivation and self-advocacy	5 (41.6%)
Professors and mentors	2 (16.6%)
Previous professional experience	2 (16.6%)
Maintaining boundaries	1 (8.3%)
Self-care	1 (8.3%)
Nothing has helped	1 (8.3%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported more than one response category.

Support (e.g., family, friends, colleagues, pets). The majority of participants discussed how they rely on different types of supports to handle the aspects of their programs that do not work for them. One stated:

I think, I don't know for you guys but, for me, like, being able to sometimes have a session, a venting session, you know, with other doc students, so where you can all, where you feel like, less isolated. I think that one of the main problems with doctoral programs, and this is just, like, my program, I can't speak for others, although, you know, I've heard similar types of things from other people, but like, it's so isolating, because you lose your friends, you lose your life, you know, you lose your family in some ways, and your life gets stuck in quicksand, and everybody else is sort of moving forward around you. And it becomes very, very isolating and, like, you're doing all this random research, and people don't care, and they don't really know, and it's, like, it's just like the hours are long, right, just like all the things you know about it, and it becomes very, very isolating. So for every once in awhile when I have the chance to catch up with the other doc students that I don't see regularly, and just being able to chat with them and sort of normalize some of my anxiety and some of my frustrations, and they were, like, "Oh, I feel similar," you know, about that sort of thing and also can help.

Self-motivation and self-advocacy. Five participants stated that it was their own self-motivation and self-advocacy that has helped them deal with aspects of the program that do not work for them. One participant reported that it is her strong motivation to graduate that helps her get through the program:

In terms of, like, motivation to keep going, I've just, almost like the motivation to end and finally, like, get out of the program has motivated me to like get things done. Like to, to be self-motivated and actually, like, do my proposal on time, and now I'm recently trying to do my data analysis and stuff and really take a lot of initiative because I feel the closer, the sooner I can get that done the sooner I can meet my goal.

Professors and mentors. Two participants stated that their professors and mentors helped them with aspects of their programs that were challenging to them:

I just recently got some advice from one of our faculty members who's not in charge of giving us revisions but who is just involved, and she understands the situation. And she just kind of said, you know, you

guys are doing what all you can do, you know, you're being really good grad students, just, you know, keep like, just, just, keep like being prepared for kind of every scenario.

Previous professional experience. Other participants stated that they rely on their previous professional experience when aspects of their program are difficult to navigate:

So as far as their organization as how they have structured the program, what's helped me is my experience, because I was raised by a special ed. teacher, and then I taught special ed. and now I'm in school psychology, which is very, very, deeply, deeply ingrained in the special ed. world when you're in an actual school. So I have that experience that I can fall back on, and then when I don't have that experience that's relevant to a situation I go ask my mom, because she taught special ed. for 30 years. Like, she was a teacher and she was an administrator, and she was a head for a while, so when I don't have that experience I have other people that I can fall back on who have had that experience.

Maintaining boundaries. One participant stated that maintaining boundaries with individuals in the program helps with getting through aspects of the program she dislikes:

I think definitely, like, keeping boundaries. I think with, you know, just kinda setting some boundaries with, like, how much I share with my cohort or, like, comparing how much work we're doing or just not participating in conversations that involve, like, grades and that kind of stuff. Like, you know, oh, well, I stayed up until, you know, whatever hour finishing this, and, you know, so I try to stay out of those conversations which isn't good. I can let other people have them if they want to, and step away without judging it or feeling left out, so that's been helpful.

Self-care. Another participant said that engaging in self-care helps with handling disliked aspects of the program:

Self-care for sure. Whether that be, like, working out, and I'm not like a yoga person. I need my hard-core cardio, so, like, sweating, so that's my own self-care.

Nothing has helped. One person stated that nothing had helped in dealing with the aspects of the program she does not like. This participant described a very stressful practicum experience:

It was just really stressful, like, honestly, I was, like, coming home and crying. I couldn't sleep at night. I was so stressed. I just didn't want to go back, and I knew that she didn't like me and didn't want me to be there, and so it was, like, but I had to be there to get my hours in, so it was just like, you know, then I try and think about how I could make her happy and everything. She was bad about remembering, like, she just kind of didn't kind of remember, like, to bring food or just had, to, like, fill her water bottle, and I sort of did things to take care of her to try and, like, make her nicer towards me, you know. I think I was there for six weeks before I got switched, and I called friends and cried, it was just really a stressful placement.

The second interview question asked students “What has facilitated your success in graduate school? What kinds of things have helped you in your program?”

Table 7 provides a break down of the participants’ responses.

Table 7

What Has Facilitated Your Success in Graduate School? What Kinds of Things Have Helped You in Your Program?”

Categories	n (%)
Other students (e.g., advanced students)	5 (41.6%)
Mentors, advisors, faculty	4 (33.3%)
Self-motivation, drive, upbringing	4 (33.3%)
Family support	2 (16.6%)
Collaborative environment, program flexibility	1 (8.3%)
Technology (e.g., computer programs and systems)	1 (8.3%)
Work-life balance	1 (8.3%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported more than one response category.

Other students (e.g., advanced students). Five of the participants said that other students, particularly classmates and advanced students, helped facilitate their success throughout their graduate programs. For instance, one participant stated:

My classmates were really supportive in terms of sharing things, you know. You know, we had to, like, share assessments in assessment classes, and people were pretty good about remembering when we all had to trade off. If the student didn't have enough, you know, people are pretty responsible and like respectful for the most part.

Mentors, advisors, faculty. Some of the participants stated that mentors, advisors, and faculty within their programs facilitated their success in graduate school.

One participant spoke about how her mentor has helped her:

I have an advisor that's very gun-ho about everything. She's always, like, pushing me to do a lot of work and to do better and to really improve my skill level in the specific research that we do.

Self-motivation, drive, upbringing. Four participants stated that it is their own drive and motivation that has facilitated their success in graduate school. One participant reported:

I mean, the only other thing that I would say is, sort of my, like, own motivation and discipline really, like, I think that I am, I have some perfectionist tendencies which both sort of help and hinder the process. And I would say just, you know, you have to be, like, a self-starter, I think, to get through any doctoral program. You know, if you can't do it on your own, like, it's not gonna happen. So you have to really be able to, like, advocate for yourself in the most polite way possible but push for, like, really push for what you need when you need it.

Family support. Two participants stated that the support that they receive from their families help them to be successful in graduate school. One stated:

I'd say my family support has been very helpful, it's a little complicated but, my family is definitely helpful and supportive of, like, my career path, and they have been able to help out here and there with money, so, like, that has been helpful.

Collaborative environment and program flexibility. One participant said that their program's collaborative environment and flexibility have aided in the facilitation of their success in graduate school. One student discussed the flexibility of their program:

Okay, well, I think they give us a lot of opportunities to kind of pick and choose additional things that we want to do. So, like, I am more interested in doing, like, clinical work and assessment, and I have the opportunity to pick up extra opportunities to do that. But it's not, like, required, which I think that's nice to be able to intentionally do things that I feel like I'm good at and that I want to do to just to kind of remind myself why I'm doing it. And, yeah, I think being able to, like, kind of create the balance that I want, between, like, practice and work.

Technology (e.g., computer programs and systems). One participant discussed how various technological programs have helped facilitate their success in graduate school:

I don't know if this is normal or not, but computer programs have helped me a lot. I know that sounds weird, but I'm sure I'll probably be the only person to give you that answer, but different computer programs have made the annoying aspects of grad school easier. So, I'm one of those people who needs a massive amount of organization, and if I don't have it then I get annoyed, and I get confused. So when it was, when we first started the program and we were just given you know 50 research articles to read every other week, keeping track of those became very daunting to me very quickly. Especially considering that my first semester I was printing everything, and then I realized that I can't, I can't do that. I can't keep track of that much paper. So someone introduced a program called Noterro, and this program keeps track of all of your articles so that they're nicely organized.

Work-life balance. Another participant discussed how having a healthy work-life balance has facilitated their success within the graduate program:

Well I guess in general I try to, like, keep a good work-life balance, so it's, like, helped a lot that I'm in a relationship with somebody who's, like, completely in a different field and isn't involved at all with the academic world, because it kind of like balances me out. So I'm not always, like, on the weekends and stuff I try really to just, like, relax when I can and do different things and, like, socialize with people. So in the longer terms that's helped me to, like, stay sane almost and not get too caught up in the, all of the stress and stuff of classes and, you know, interviews and all that.

In addition to the second interview question, participants were probed with seven additional questions. The first asked students, "Are your supports located in your program, such as fellow peers? Four categories emerged from participants' responses (See Table 8).

Table 8

Are Your Supports Located in Your Program, Such as Fellow Peers?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Cohort, upper-level students, friends	8 (66.6%)
Faculty and staff	5 (41.6%)
Family, friends outside of school	2 (16.6%)
Students in other programs	1 (8.3%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported more than one response category.

Cohort, upper-level students, friends. The majority of participants said that the supports located within their programs came from their cohort members, upper-level students, and friends. One participant described how close her cohort members are:

My cohort was, like, extremely close with each other and they were really, really, you know, they shared whatever knowledge they figured out on their

own was always, like, relayed in groups, e-mails, and things like that so you couldn't really fall through the cracks with requirements. You could always find the little piece of paper that, like, wasn't listed, you know, in our graduate student handbook or whatever or, like, some people applied for loans, and they had experienced knowing how to do that, and that helps out a lot.

Another participant discussed how the other students in her lab were a big source of support:

Yeah, so we have, well, I work in a, I work in a lab that has students, like, in it all the time, kind of. Like it's the center for several research projects that a lot of students work on. And so, just having that space is a nice support because it really facilitates all of that kind of collaboration and stuff like that. We also have a student organization that sets up kind of more formal, like, kind of buddy or mentoring relationships. And so that's helpful too because of that, that really breeds like cross-cohort sort of, like, information sharing and it's, it's nice to receive support from older students or students who are further along in the program, but it's cool just when you also get to give that support to people.

Faculty and staff. Five participants stated that faculty and staff were a big support for them within their program:

So, supports within my program, so I have two advisors, technically I have three advisors. So every one of us that's in the cohort has an advisor for the Masters in the EDS, and then every person in the Ph.D. program has a Ph.D. advisor. So my program likes to double up with a Ph.D. advisor, so I don't have a Ph.D. advisor. I have two, and they work together on a lot of different stuff and with a lot of different students, and they have very different styles so you get that exposure to radically different ideas, which helps me to broaden how I'm thinking about things and how I approach problems. But then the fact that I have both of them, both of my Ph.D. advisors, when it comes time for me to apply for stuff, scholarships, grants, articles and whatever else, I have two people who are willing to read through all of my stuff and help me and help me give suggestions and their suggestions are never the same.

Family, friends outside of school. Two students stated that their family and friends outside of their program are a big source of support for them. One stated "But then also just, you know, like family members and friends from home, things like that."

Students in other programs. One student discussed receiving a lot of support from students in other graduate programs:

So we have, like, a doctoral lab, and I think I saw when I toured URI they had just put in, like, a new building, right, and there's, like, a new student, yeah. So having, like, and I think you guys had a doc lab as well or something like that, so having a doc lab where you can connect with other doc students. So I ended up sort of connecting with students from other programs because that lab is just for, like, all the doc students on the floor. And so I think that has been helpful. Connecting with students from other programs and becoming friends with some of them...you know, having the EDS students, I don't know what it's called up there, but down here the Masters plus degree that they named for practice is called an EDS, so, you know, becoming friends with the EDS students and maintaining relationships with them after they left has been helpful.

The second probe asked about additional factors that facilitated the participants' success in graduate school by asking "Are your friends people of color or are they from different races?" Table 9 shows how the participants' responses fell into two different categories.

Table 9

Are Your Friends People of Color, or Are They from Different Races?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Majority people of color	8 (66.6%)
Majority Caucasian	4 (33.3%)

Note: N = 12.

Majority people of color. The majority of participants stated that most of their friends were people of color. Participants stated:

So, I have a mix of friends. I have, like, in terms of my close friends, I have one friend who grew up in New Jersey, but her family is originally from India. She's in the doc program one year behind me, so I'm her mentor. And then I've got another friend who is Black in phenotype, you know, generally would be considered Black, but she says she is part South American Latina, and so she

doesn't necessarily identify herself as Black, she sort of feels more Latina than she feels Black. So, yeah, and then I'm trying to think who else are my close friends, among the doc program, I mean, I guess generally speaking I usually don't have a lot of close White friends, but I mean, if I'm somewhere that's diverse, I tend to have a more of a mix of friends.

I mean, most people in my program are White, but some of my closer friends are actually people of color. I would say Indian and Dominican, and I mean there's a mix, there's a mix, but the people that I'm probably am most in contact with, I never reflected on this before, happen to be like, you know, Latina or, you know, Indian.

Majority Caucasian. Four participants stated that the majority of their friend groups within their graduate programs were not individuals of color. Two participants said:

I would say, well, the majority of the people in our cohort are White, Caucasian, like me. I would say some of the closest people to me, one in particular, is also White, and she is also my age.

Honestly, not many, I mean a few, but most of them are Caucasian.

As seen in Table 10, the third probe asked participants "What about faculty, such as mentors," in terms of facilitating their success within their graduate programs. The responses fell into two categories, as listed below.

Table 10

What About Faculty, Such as Mentors?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Faculty, advisor as mentor in program	11 (91.6%)
Miscellaneous response (e.g., student mentoring program)	1 (8.3%)

Note: N = 12.

Faculty, advisor as mentor in program. Almost all of the participants stated that they had a faculty member or advisor in their graduate program that served as a mentor to them. Some responses included:

Yeah, I mean, I think that, I mean honestly, I felt like my professors always liked me like as a person. So I think that helped a lot to make me feel like I was welcomed when I was, you know, on campus or in the offices and that I was appreciated, and I felt like they liked having me around, and they would bounce ideas off of me or ask me questions when they worked through changes that were going on and stuff, and so I felt like, you know, my opinion counted to them, about just anything. So I did really appreciate that. They definitely supported my research interest even though I think it started from a place of, like, anger because I came in after quitting teaching after 10 years. I was angry about a lot of the changes in public education, that turned into researching the policy that led to those changes, and then that research base became the kind of platform that went into my research about policy regarding school psychologists, and that became my dissertation. And so I felt like they just supported me. They supported my questions, and, you know, they were always there to have meetings with me. Like, my advisor and I will text each other at random times of, like, day or night, even on holidays. I remember it was, like, Christmas two years ago, and I was working on my kitchen table on my lit review for my dissertation proposal, but I didn't know that's what it was at the time, and she did. I texted her a question, and she texted me back, and she gave me the answer but said, you know this is a holiday, right, and she said no worries, I work every day, so it's fine, I'm just letting you know, right, it's a holiday.

Yeah, so when I get feedback it's super helpful, and it's really considerate. My advisor particularly is very dedicated to, like, giving good feedback and working with students. He says that's one of his favorite parts of his job, so that's really helpful because, just because it's really specific feedback to you, it's not just general feedback (laughs) that you would give to any grad student, so that's nice. And then, like I said, too, kind of helping find other opportunities to have other sort of internship experiences or other kind of professional experiences while you're in the program. And then also other opportunities for different kinds of research, 'cause a career in academia, you know, getting as much research experience during grad school, is really important, so they definitely value that, and they will, if you're interested in something they will help you kind of get on the project or figure something out, connect you with other students, so that's nice, too.

With my mentor, just the fact that he, like, reaches out to me and, like, encourages me to meet with him individually and doesn't, like, yes he, like, suggests that we be proactive but he really, he really does the work on his end,

as well, to make sure that we, like, he knows that we know that we're supported.

Miscellaneous response (e.g., student mentoring program). Another participant discussed a response that was unrelated to the interview question. They discussed an unofficial student-mentoring program:

So, one of the things that my program does for some reason, is they set it up so on interview day you come in and you are paired with a student who is already in the program, and that is your buddy. So, on interview day you go in, and you have someone with you the entire time, for interview day, which is a little rattling at first, but it's really nice that there's literally no chance of you just being sat alone somewhere. You got someone that you can talk to, who you can ask questions of, who will give you their honest opinion, which I really liked. But then once you're in the program, your first year you're assigned a mentor, so every second year in our program has a first-year buddy. Mentees essentially, and you can go to that person with any question. So if you need to know about where to go for something or how something works or how a professor is, that's what that buddy, what that mentor is built in for. But then also within that we sort of have, it's more of an unofficial thing so it's not something our program does but something we all have actually ended up doing in the Ph.D. cohort is we sort have paired up with an older Ph.D. student. So, like, the person that I talk to most is a sixth year in the program, she's in her final year, and she's on her doctoral internship right now. And last year, I don't know if I could have done it without her. I don't know if I could have made it through everything without her, just because she knew all the professors. She knew what they expected, and she knew what hints and tips to give. Also, because it is a psychology program, she was very good at building ideas and knowing when I needed that affirmation that I was doing well.

The fourth probe asked, "What has helped at the university level and if anything, on campus" has facilitated their success in graduate school. The responses fell into five categories (See Table 11).

Table 11

What has Helped at the University/Anything on Campus?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Does not utilize any university/campus resources	6 (50%)

Campus resources (e.g., recreation center library, writing center, counseling center)	4 (33.3%)
University funding	4 (33.3%)
Graduate student organizations, workshops, university presentations	3 (25%)
Connections to professors and supervisors outside of their programs	2 (16.6%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported more than one response category.

Does not utilize any university/campus resources. Half of the participants stated that they do not utilize any university or campus resources. One participant stated that their university has many resources, but they have not had the opportunity to use any of them:

Well, so, there are a lot of university-level programs and resources that I have available, but I don't actually use any of them.

Campus resources (e.g., recreation center, library, writing center, counseling center). Four participants stated that they use a variety of campus resources. They noted:

Yeah, yeah, working at the test kit library. I mean, I have had access to those, I have had access to those materials. That's been helpful.

Oh, to facilitate my success, yes, I did. I put in a petition to the graduate studies office to transfer 45 of my credits from my Master's degree into my doctoral program, even though they weren't technically supposed to. And after getting, you know, writing an essay and getting letters of recommendation and submitting my transcripts, it came back, and they approved it, which no one said was gonna happen. Everyone said that they were never going to approve my petition, and they did. Yeah, people who worked there for 20 years said it would never happen, don't even try. I decided to try anyway, because you gotta try for the things you want. And they came back and said yes, and so that

saved me, like, a whole year of coursework, plus, you know, the \$60,000 in tuition it would of cost.

University funding. Other students stated that university funding has

facilitated their success throughout graduate school:

Something else that has helped is that they do offer funding to travel to conferences, so I wouldn't be able to do that if I didn't have funding for that. And I guess along those lines I'm fully funded for the whole, the whole time I've been here. I've been set up on my professors' grant, I'm sure life would be very different for me if I didn't have that security.

Another participant spoke about how their university provides them with research funding:

I do know that we have a lot of research funding available through the university. They're very, very supportive of our research efforts whenever they're able to.

Graduate student organizations, workshops, and university presentations.

Three students stated that they have found university organizations, workshops, and presentations particularly helpful to them:

At the university level... so, sometimes we bring in speakers that are really interesting, and I'm also involved with, so there's, it's like an urban education think tank, and it's with another department in our, in our college, and that's cool. So, it's like interdisciplinary, so, you know, I meet a lot of grad students in other programs, and that's specifically about urban education, and that's one thing I'm passionate about. So that's cool, too, because we explore some diversity issues from there, and support each other in writing, so that's a cool program.

Connections to professors and supervisors outside of the program. A

couple of the participants stated that professors and supervisors outside of their psychology departments have helped them be successful within their graduate programs:

Yeah, I think having been at this school before in a different program, I have professors in other departments that are really supportive, as well, even just having been on different research projects before.

The fifth probe asked participants how financial aid assistance has facilitated their success within their graduate programs. Table 12 illustrates how students' responses fell into four categories.

Table 12

What About Financial Aid Assistance?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Fully funded	5 (41.6%)
Financial aid or loans	4 (33.3%)
Fellowships and scholarships	2 (16.6%)
Research and teaching assistantships	2 (16.6%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported more than one response category.

Fully funded. Five participants stated that they were fully funded within their graduate programs. They stated:

Oh, yeah, oh that's awesome. Yeah. So I have, all of, almost all of the grad students in our department and in our college are eligible for graduate research assistantships. And all of the doc students in our program are funded by those, and so that's that, it's great 'cause it comes with a stipend, but it also comes with a full tuition waiver. And so, that's definitely a support, I did not think of this. I would, I would not be in school without a tuition waiver. So yeah, so that's certainly facilitates my success just on, like, on the most basic needs kind of level is that it's not costing me anything to pursue this degree. So that's really great.

It is, yeah, so we are guaranteed funding, well I think at, you know, the particular center that I'm at, were guaranteed funding for five years. So, and then my advisor has been, like, tremendously helpful in extending my funding another year. I'm one year past when people usually leave. Yeah, so, but some

students do. I think a lot of students who aren't, like, in our program is kind of split into two different sections, and students who are in part of one section tend to have to find teaching assistantships and things like that, versus students in the other section tend to be funded on grants.

Financial aid or loans. Some of the participants stated that they rely on loans to fund their graduate education:

So, we are not a fully funded program, but we do get partial funding, and then, I'm also a teaching assistant, so I get funding for that from my lab and, then, student loans or FAFSA.

Fellowships and scholarships. Two of the participants stated that their graduate education is funded by fellowships and scholarships:

So, I got a scholarship, which was really nice of them. I think it ended up being a package I don't know, something like \$65,000 total, which sounds like a lot, except for my university, yeah is so expensive. Still, you know, it was, like, still expensive for me, I mean I took out the maximum student loans, and since I'm older and have like a strong financial history, I didn't really qualify for as much aid as some of the younger people.

So I applied at the beginning before or after I decided that I was coming to this university. I applied, and I think you submit, I think, your transcripts and you submit, like, a letter, you get a letter of recommendation at least from your new advisor, and you submit sort of your own letter to the dean of, like, all the things you've done and what you're gonna do and why you deserve it. So the stipend that other doc students came into to my year with was \$10,000. It covers tuition, and they cover, like, a stipend, but you still have to pay for, you know, your healthcare, activity fees, books, which people get irritated about it, but what are you gonna do. So for me, like, I would of had to pay out-of-state tuition, so they covered my tuition, and then the other students who came into my year came in with a \$10,000 stipend. Myself and another girl who are dean fellows get \$27,000 a year.

Research and teaching assistantships. Other students said that they were funded by research and teaching assistantships. One reported:

Yeah, so I took out loans for my first semester, and now I have an assistantship. So, I have half tuition and a stipend coming in. Yeah, it's not guaranteed, however, I mentioned before, I work at the Institute of Disabilities, so they just kind of have a reputation for keeping people who do good work, so

I really try to do good work. However, I know it's not guaranteed, but generally, in the program the trend is you sort of pay for your first year and then seek something out your second year, most places hire people who are second year and beyond.

The sixth probe asked participants if they are involved in diversity issues research. Three categories emerged from participants' responses and are described below.

Table 13

Are You Involved With Other Students and Faculty in Diversity Issues Research?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Conducting own diversity issues research or working with students/faculty on diversity issues research	7 (58.3%)
Miscellaneous responses	4 (33.3%)
Not working on diversity issues research currently	1 (8.3%)

Note: N = 12.

Conducting own diversity issues research or working with students/faculty on diversity issues research. The majority of participants stated that they were currently working on diversity issues research. They stated:

So yeah, my pre-dissertation, which is for us, it's kind of like, I don't know, it's like a research study we have to run. And you have to do it prior to dissertation, and you have to get it kind of signed off on. So basically we have to do some sort of research study, it can be a secondary data analysis, it doesn't have to be a original collection, and it has to be an article that is publishable, and certainly, like, my advisor made me submit mine recently. And so my, my pre-dissertation was on positive behavior support and seeing if it decreased in proportionalities between Black and White elementary kids in Georgia.

Yeah, so in the, in my second year I did, I kind of was sort of assisting with a study on Black masculine identity, it was a qualitative study, so I did a couple of the interviews and transcriptions.

So, we are a clinical Ph.D. program with the health emphasis program because each one of our labs has a primary health issue that we focus on, and my lab is an anxiety and panic lab, but we focus on asthma. And asthma is a huge issue, especially, in New York, right now especially in low-income communities, especially in the Bronx and that falls into predominately Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Black populations, so we work with parent-child dyads assessing how asthma and perception of your symptoms is affected by the parent/child relationship, by levels of anxiety, by lots of different factors.

Miscellaneous responses. A few participants described factors that were not related to their participation in diversity issues research. One participant talked about her previous profession as a teacher:

So, well, when I was a teacher I was on the equity team for my school for six years, and I ran, like, lead professional development and culturally responsive instruction, and we worked closely on the achievement gap at our school, and we did close the achievement gap actually for graduation rate. Yeah, so we got an award for that and everything, but we weren't able to close it for academic achievement.

Not working on diversity issues research currently. One student stated that they are not currently working on diversity issues research:

I was for the first three years, I was on a research team examining, like, basically trying to validate a career measure for inner city youth, and it was focused a lot on youth of color and making sure the measure was valid and stuff and using it ultimately to, like, try to, like, promote STEM, STEM careers among that population.

The seventh and final probe for the first interview question asked participants, “Do you feel included within your program?” Two categories emerged from participants’ responses (See Table 14).

Table 14

Do You Feel Included Within Your Program?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Feels included within program	11 (91.6%)

Does not feel included within program

1 (8.3%)

Note: N = 12.

Feels included within program. The majority of students reported that they feel included within their graduate programs. One student stated:

Well, you know, to be honest, I like, I felt included among the doctoral level people, and there weren't even that many of us at the time. Like, the program's changed and has gotten bigger, but, but I think I felt included among doctoral level people for the most part, and I mostly felt included among the staff and professors.

Another student stated:

Generally speaking. A lot of the work that I do is at one of our regional campuses. So that does kind of pull me away from them quite a bit depending on the semester and how often I'm at the main campus as compared to the regional campus. But when I'm here I always feel very included, regardless of the situation, and, you know, people are very welcoming and forward even though I don't see them in person as often as I would if I were here more often.

Does not feel included within program. Only one participant stated that they did not feel included within their graduate program. They stated:

No, not even a little bit. Why am I not included...One, I tend to be someone with lots of opinions, you can probably tell already, and in my program, that's not always what they want. And if I'm being, like completely honest, like completely, completely honest, as a White student, you are not particularly a priority in my program. They push for students to make it through, and as a White student you're not necessarily, I don't know, you're not necessarily a priority. This is my perception of it, is that there are other people that get better treatment, and it tends to fall from my perception and perceptions of others a little bit along race lines, depending on the student.

The third interview question asked participants "What kinds of challenges have you encountered during your graduate studies?" Table 15 provides a breakdown of students' responses.

Table 15

What Kinds of Challenges Have You Encountered During Your Graduate Studies?

Categories	<i>n</i> (%)
Program structure, administrative challenges	6 (50%)
Age, interpersonal and social challenges	5 (41.6%)
Lack of support from advisors, faculty, supervisors, mentors	5 (41.6%)
Time management, workload, work-life balance	5 (41.6%)
Financial hardships	2 (16.6%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported more than one response category.

Program structure, administrative challenges. Half of the participants stated that their program structure and administrative challenges create difficulties for them within their programs:

In general, the program itself can be very disorganized and, like, some simple things such as if you give somebody an add/drop form you, like, half the time it will get lost or something before it gets to where it needs to be. So I've had to deal with a lot of stupid administrative issues. But then on a bigger scale, just kind of, you know, not getting our comps results back for three or four months, and, you know some people are finding issues with that because it kind of inhibits your planning for the future, like if you can get things done on your timeline. Also, like, my mentor is very, like, I think she likes me a lot, and she's supportive in that way, but lately when I've asked her for help on things like analysis or certain things she's kind of like, oh, email so and so or that's out of my league, you need to talk to this teacher. And sometimes that professor doesn't answer her email for like weeks. In that sense, it's been frustrating, because it's a little bit scattered.

Age, interpersonal and social challenges. Five participants stated that interpersonal and social challenges create difficulties for them within their programs.

One stated:

The biggest thing for me in the beginning was age, I just felt, you know, just a little bit older, and it was a little harder to relate in some ways to some of my cohort, but that washed away pretty quickly. And it helps when I said okay, it's okay to have boundaries here, but we're all in this program to learn the same thing. So that was one of the social challenges in the beginning.

Another student stated:

Yeah, well, I remember, like, the first year I was there, well, there have been a bunch of things, it was the first year that I was there. I think for like the first six months or so, I think my classmates weren't really sure if I was, like, kind of with the professors or with the students, sort of, even though I was in their classes. And I remember when it was time to eat lunch in between classes, there was this big area with all these round tables and chairs, and they would all sit at the tables with their friends because there are these clicks within the thing, and when I walked by they would all stop talking and just stare at me as I walked by.

Lack of support from advisors, faculty, supervisors, mentors. Other

students stated that the lack of support that they receive from their advisors, faculty, supervisors, and mentors is one of the main challenges for them:

Yeah, I think, you know, so like, obviously the mismatch between me and my advisor, a lot of it has to do with him being more hands off. And I think that's really unhelpful when I don't have any other, like, I don't come from, like, a college family, so I don't really know what I should be doing all the time, and it also feels really, it just feels like I, I always kind of battle with feeling like I don't, like, belong here. Or just, you know, like, like this is such a weird thing to do coming from where I'm from, and like, no one quite really understands it, and so it's like, that's been a challenge.

Time management, workload, work-life balance. Five of the participants

reported that they have a very difficult time managing their program's high demands:

Well, I think it is too much work, yeah, too much is asked for us, like in the amount of work being assigned. I also thought that the comps were very difficult, they were nine hours. Yeah, it's insane, it was nine hours for, like, three weeks in a row, it was very hard to study for it, and yeah, I mean I just think it's a little bit too much.

Financial hardships. Two of the participants stated that their financial hardships are a challenge for them within their graduate programs. One participant stated “Financial hardships, you know, trying to get extra jobs like babysitting and stuff and really not having the time for it.”

In a follow-up to the third interview question, participants were probed with three additional questions. The first probe asked, “Have you ever felt ignored or isolated?” Table 16 provides a summary of the two categories that emerged from participants’ responses.

Table 16

Have You Ever Felt Ignored or Isolated?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Has not felt ignored or isolated	8 (66.6%)
Has felt ignored or isolated	4 (33.3%)

Note: N = 12.

Has not felt ignored or isolated. The majority of participants reported that they have not felt ignored or isolated within their graduate programs. One student stated “I wouldn't say, no, I wouldn't say I felt, like, ignored or isolated.”

Has felt ignored or isolated. Four participants stated that they have felt ignored or isolated within their program:

Yeah, yeah, I mean, certainly think that, yeah. Yeah. I mean, yeah definitely there have been times where, so let me think. So, first my cohort was not super close and that sucked because I was new to Atlanta, and it was just really hard to make friends, so having my cohort not be super supportive, like, that kind of sucked. Just because you kind of feel, I just felt isolated because of that, because once they all left it was just sort of like ehh. So that makes me feel isolated. I think that having different research interests than the rest of the department and sort of falling off their radar makes me feel kind of isolated.

The second probe to the third interview question asked, “Have you ever experienced stereotyping or micro-aggressions?” The majority of participants stated that they have experienced stereotyping or micro-aggressions. Four categories emerged from this question.

Table 17

Have You Ever Experienced Stereotyping or Micro-aggressions?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Experiences with stereotyping and/or micro-aggressions from peers	6 (50%)
Experiences with stereotyping and/or micro-aggressions from faculty, clients, and department	4 (33.3%)
Has not experienced stereotyping or micro-aggressions	3 (25%)
Miscellaneous responses (e.g., discussions about social class)	1 (8.3%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported more than one response category.

Experiences with stereotyping and/or micro-aggressions from peers. Half of the participants stated that they have experienced stereotyping and micro-aggressions from their peers:

Not, like, on a personal level. I don’t think I’ve been micro-aggressed or...actually, one time, with this one guy who actually, like, I don't wanna say, like, ironically he was in charge with a lot of the diversity stuff. Because he was in charge of it, but I felt like he micro-aggressed me often about, like, my sexual orientation. Like, he would say things like, if I was wearing a dress, like, because, I’m not straight so if I was wearing a dress he’d be, like, “Oh you look very feminine today.” Like, I don’t know we were talking to some other people, like, we were at a dinner, and he kind of pointed to a girl and was, like, “Oh she has nice boobs, right?”

Another participant explained:

One thing that may count as something more like stereotype threat is fellow students and some faculty often ask me if I have children yet. I do not. These questions are likely innocent and potentially complementary, maybe implying that they might think I'll be a good parent? But they weigh very heavily on me as a person who experienced two consecutive pregnancy losses before coming back to school. Once they ask me about having kids, I get a sense of what they think I "should" be doing at this phase of life, and knowing that I have failed twice at that is difficult to process each time it comes up. I sense implied judgment and wondering and whispering, which may or may not actually be happening, but the thought of it makes me anxious and tired.

Experiences with stereotyping and/or micro-aggressions from faculty, clients, and department. Other participants discussed how they experienced stereotyping and micro-aggressions from faculty, their clients, and their program's department. One student described how their clients are sometimes mistrustful of her because she is Spanish speaking but not a person of color:

Yeah, I think I understand, I can't think of anything like super specific, but, like, in regards to or actually this isn't really a micro-aggression, but I speak Spanish, but I'm not of Spanish-speaking descent. So I think that in my program, like, with, with participants and people that we work with in like a research so not like people I work with but with people I'm working with in like a research setting. I think they make assumptions that I don't understand certain things or that I, like, because of, because of how I appear, but then when they know that like I speak Spanish. I'm more culturally competent than I may appear at first glance, that, like, there's assumptions that are made about maybe limitations of my competency in therapy or, like, understanding their experience or those kinds of things.

Has not experienced stereotyping or micro-aggressions. Three participants stated that they have not experienced stereotyping or micro-aggressions within their graduate programs. One stated, "I don't think towards me, so it would be hard, I know there is another girl in my program who had said she has experienced things, but I

haven't personally."

Miscellaneous responses (e.g., discussions about social class). One participant provided a response that was unrelated to the interview question. They discussed how students within their program often complain about how poor they are:

I think in graduate school it's often an argument of who's the poorest, I don't know if you've ever had that experience. Yeah, it's sort of like, who's worse off than me, you know what I mean, it's sort of like ehh, and if you're not bitching about it then I don't know. Yeah, I think graduate school can tend to be a bit of a who's the poorest bitchfest.

The final probe for the third interview question asked the participants "How did you end up dealing with challenges you encountered?" As shown in Table 18, there were four main ways that students handled their challenges within graduate school.

Table 18

How Did You End Up Dealing With Challenges You Encountered?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Ignored the situation and/or avoided faculty and peers	3 (25%)
Confronted the person and/or asked questions during the situation	3 (25%)
Talked to friends and/or peers	2 (16.6%)
Talked to advisor, professor or faculty	1 (8.3%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants did not respond to this question.

Ignored the situation and/or avoided faculty and peers. Three of the participants stated that when they encountered challenges within their graduate

programs they ignored the situation or avoided the individuals that caused them problems:

Well, with him I just kind of, I kind of, didn't really interact with him much, and he, I didn't really say anything at the time because I didn't really know how to respond. Also, sometimes I didn't think about it until after and I was like, wow, that was kind of messed up.

Confronted the person and/or asked questions during the situation. Other participants stated that they confronted the individuals that caused challenges for them:

So, all the challenges that I've actually had to face are kind of small and petty, and I'm blunt and generally don't care, so. Whenever I get the feeling that someone is acting in a homophobic way, I have no problem calling them on it. But I also know that part of that comes from how I was raised, so Southern Baptist family which I do not identify as, in South Georgia, I'm a White male, I'm kind of big, I've got most the major privileges. So, from a young childhood, from a young, like, ever since I was a young child I was raised to say whatever I thought. And that's kind of how I approach these situations. I've gotten more polite in how I deal with it, like when I was in high school, and people were much, much more blatant with what they said, I would yell and cuss, and in grad school you can't do that because that's considered inappropriate. So, so I politely called them on it.

Talked to friends and/or peers. Two participants stated that they talked with friends and peers when they encountered challenges within their graduate programs. One stated, "I've made friends with people who are in kind of similar situations."

Talked to advisor, professor or faculty. One participant stated that they discussed their challenges with advisors, professors, or faculty within their programs:

I seek supervision. I discuss it both in, like, individual and group supervision. And, yeah, I think it's important to not let those things like fester and to talk about them.

The fourth interview question asked participants “What kind of strategies do you use when you are faced with obstacles in your program?” Half of the participants stated that they rely on support from their friends and family. Table 19 provides a breakdown of their responses.

Table 19

What Kind of Strategies Do You Use When You Are Faced With Obstacles in Your Program?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Support from family and friends	6 (50%)
Self-care (e.g., exercise)	3 (25%)
Support from faculty and staff	3 (25%)
Perspective taking, problem solving, and self-motivation	1 (8.3%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported more than one response category.

Support from family and friends. Half of the participants stated that they utilized support from friends and family when faced with obstacles within their programs:

Probably, you know, talking with other students, because my sister’s a professor, that’s helpful because it gives me the other sides perspective. And since she was a grad student, she also, you know, since she did a Ph.D. she also understands, and so I can talk to her. Oh the other thing, my mom was a school psychologist. When I was just getting raked over the coals last year on practicum, by the end of the year she was reading every report I was submitting before I submitted it because my feedback from my other supervisor was either so poor or delayed, and it wasn’t helpful, and so like one of my supervisors last year didn’t give me feedback on reports until May. So, like, the end of the school year right before I was finished, she gave me, like,

feedback on three or four reports, had me finalize them and then give them to her.

Self-care (e.g., exercise). A few of the participants stated that they relied on self-care to overcome obstacles within their programs. One stated:

Yeah I, I am big into, like, self-care, so I cook a lot, and I really enjoy that, I also exercise and try to make sure that I'm exercising when I'm really, like, you know, really stressed out or fitting it in 'cause, like, I know the research, even if it doesn't feel good, at the time. And I do schedule, like, social events with friends outside the program just to get some distance from it.

Support from faculty and staff. Other students stated that they rely on support from faculty and staff when faced with challenges:

Let me think, let's see. I guess. I guess one strategy I've used is really, like, trying to find one person, like one professor or, like, one teacher or something that can have your back and really just, like, not getting lost in the larger program in general, 'cause I know that all of the professors are very busy, but if you can like make a connection with one particular professor, that really helped, because then they can write you, like, recommendations, they almost, like, have your back more when it comes to, like, the administrative issues.

Perspective taking, problem solving, and self-motivation. One student talked about the use of perspective taking, problem solving, and self-motivation when faced with obstacles in graduate school. The student stated, "I just try to, like, keep in mind by saying that this, too, shall pass, so, like, whatever challenges I'm going through, it'll go away eventually."

In order to receive more information about strategies used when faced with obstacles, participants were asked what else got them through tough times in their graduate programs. Four response categories emerged from this interview question, and Table 20 provides a breakdown of their responses.

Table 20

What Got You Through Tough Times?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Friends and family support	5 (41.6%)
Self-care (e.g., music, hobbies, vacations, etc.)	5 (41.6%)
Perspective taking, self-motivation	2 (16.6%)
Faculty support	1 (8.3%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported more than one response category.

Friends and family support. Five of the participants stated that their friends and family got them through tough times in graduate school. One student stated, “Definitely, just, like friends, family, my significant other, like, leaning on them for support when I’m really stressed out or anxious.” Another participant said, “I have a lot of support from, like, my boyfriend.”

Self-care (e.g., music, hobbies, vacations, etc.). Other students stated that they engage in self-care to get them through tough times:

I also just, I think also the breaks that I plan, like, I remember my first year I went to Vegas for spring break and, you know, took a good chunk of time, like a good five days off with nothing school related. So yeah, planning...and I still try and take, like, breaks pretty often. So stuff like that is helpful. I played a lot of tennis for a little while last summer until I realized I had to work on my dissertation, but yeah, hobbies, also staying friends with people who are not in my program. Like people from the ski club I used to be in, I still see them every once in awhile, and I’ll go meet them in the mountains.

Prospective taking and self-motivation. Two of the participants stated that they rely on perspective taking and self-motivation to get them through tough times.

One student stated, “No, I just think that, like, pushing through.”

Faculty support. One participant reported relying on support from faculty to get them through tough times in their program. They stated, “The professors that I mentioned earlier have been awesome.”

Each participant was probed to discuss how faculty, students, or family have helped them overcome obstacles within their graduate programs. Table 21 provides a break down of the participants’ three response categories.

Table 21

What About Faculty, Students, or Family?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Relied on faculty, students, or family for support	10 (83.3%)
Discussed mistrust of faculty members	2 (16.6%)
Relied on aspects of the program (e.g., courses and seminars)	1 (8.3%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported more than one response category.

Relied on faculty, students, or family for support. The majority of participants stated that they rely on faculty, students, and family members to overcome obstacles in their programs:

Yeah, the close relationship I have with the faculty member where I work, that’s been really helpful, and I’ve gotten, like, you know, it helps in terms of both getting information and coming up with kind of solutions to whatever issues come up.

Another student stated:

I guess definitely, definitely, like, keeping in touch a bit with peers, like, I have that one friend in my cohort who I’m close to. It makes things easier to, like, keep track of, you know, if I have questions about an assignment or if I’m

confused about the way something works, having people that I can reach out to in those circumstances. So that's been helpful.

Discussed mistrust of faculty members. Although this question inquired about ways in which faculty members have been sources of support, two participants discussed how they do not trust their faculty members:

So, faculty members, like I said, some of them are post docs and they've become faculty members now, like, maybe one that I trust but it's changed a lot, so I don't feel as comfortable or open, and, you know, it doesn't. I can't even say why that it is I think it's just 'cause I know how closely they talk with other faculty members now and that there's a different authority to it, so I just feel like it could impact me, you know, whether the person meant to or not so I don't feel comfortable talking to faculty.

Relied on aspects of the program. One participant stated that they relied on aspects of their program for support when faced with obstacles:

I think that, I don't know if you guys have this, but when we're all on practicum we had a practicum class that met once a week where people would talk about cases, that was helpful in terms of getting through sort of the tough times of practicum. What else is helpful, we have a doctoral seminar, so once a month all the doctoral students have to go to a class for two hours on Friday afternoon, it kind of helps to touch base with people then, it makes me feel a little less isolated. You can talk about like, like, administrative things that you don't understand, so I say chapter one of our two chapter dissertation isn't particularly well-defined, and so, like, I'll reach out to other students for help on, "Wait, what goes into my prospectus?"

The third probe asked participants what types of family support have been helpful and important to them when faced with obstacles in their graduate programs.

Table 22 provides a breakdown of the three response categories that emerged.

Table 22

What Types of Family Support Have Been Helpful and Important to You?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Emotional support, words of encouragement, and/or visits	5 (41.6%)

Financial support	5 (41.6%)
Academic support	1 (8.3%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants did not respond to this question.

Emotional support, words of encouragement, and/or visits. Five participants stated that the emotional support that they receive from family members is particularly helpful to them. One participant discussed how she really enjoys visiting her family:

Yeah, I mean, like, my family, I'm very close with them, it's just like they have like a lot of issues. So I think talking with them is helpful, even though it can be a mixed bag, so I do talk to them on the phone once a week. I do visit them because they live out near me, or kind of close by, so I visit them.

Financial support. Other students stated that they heavily rely on their family for financial support:

Yes, yes there's a lot of family support that has been very important to me. At one point I was between apartments. Like, I had signed a lease and everything to move out of one apartment and into another, but then the apartment wasn't ready in time. It had, they had a flooding issue or something, and I ended up living with my parents for like six weeks or so while going to grad school. And they just were completely fine with it, it didn't, it didn't phase them at all. They said, "Oh you need to move in for a little while? Okay, come on." I mean, don't get me wrong, it sucked. I love my family, I do, but I also love having my own shower.

Academic support. One participant stated that she relied on her family for academic support:

Yeah, so I'm in a school psychology program and my mom is a physical therapist, my sister is a speech language pathologist, yeah, my sister's an optometrist, and she does a lot of, like, vision behaviors. So it's very, like, oddly streamlined. So we talk about this stuff at home, which is great, and you know, I don't feel isolated from my family being in school. I can tell them, okay, I'm studying, you know, ABA, and they know what I'm talking about. That makes it more fun, I guess, in a way. Grad school can be pretty isolating,

you know, you have your nose in a book 24/7, right? So, you know, it doesn't limit me in terms of what I can talk about with my family, or, you know, 'cause we're all very close, so it hasn't been too bad in terms of not being able to relate to them or check in with them on certain things.

The last probe for the fourth interview question asked participants if they utilize anything on campus when faced with obstacles in their graduate programs. Two response categories emerged from participants' responses (See Table 23).

Table 23

For Strategies, Do You Use Anything on Campus?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Does not use anything on campus	6 (50%)
Takes advantage of facilities on campus (e.g., gym, library, financial aid office)	6 (50%)

Note: N= 12.

Does not use anything on campus. Half of the participants stated that they do not utilize anything on campus to help them overcome challenges in graduate school:

I don't really know, like, grad school is kind of different. I don't know how your program sets up, I don't really, we're not on campus. I don't really understand campus, or like, I don't know anything about the university really, or my program. I would never, like, seek out anything through my program my university, because it's not really my university, like, I just feel so separate from it.

Another stated:

I mean, I have the opportunity, but I don't really use it, like I could go to faculty and, like, formally discuss things in that way, but I haven't felt the need to use that.

Takes advantage of facilities on campus (e.g., gym, library, financial aid office). The other half of the participants stated that they do utilize resources on

campus when faced with obstacles. Two students stated that they use their university's library often:

Well, actually, the interlibrary loan system, for articles. Huge, huge. I would die without them. They're so fast, they're so amazing. They get you articles in less than, usually by the end of the day, and that is huge when you're, like, writing a paper and struggling, and you need something that we don't have. They have, like, a huge library, I would have to say. There's, like, very rarely a time where I have to submit, like, an article that they don't have it, it's an interlibrary loan system. They're so fast, and they're so helpful. Yeah, that's been helpful.

Definitely the library, I, like, use the library a lot to study in, sometimes I find books or whatever. Also, the computer lab has all, like, the analysis software and stuff, so when I was taking classes I would always use the computer lab to do my work. The gym not so much, and, actually, I work at the counseling center. So, yeah, I don't go there for my therapy but mainly the other types of resources, financial aid office, that kind of thing.

Research Question # 2: What are the perceptions of European American psychology graduate students' experiences of their peers of color within their graduate programs?

The fifth interview question asked the participants about their perceptions of the experiences of their peers of color within their graduate programs. Table 24 provides a breakdown of their responses.

Table 24

What Are Your Perceptions of the Experiences of Your Peers of Color as They Pursue Their Degrees? What Do You Think Are the Similarities and Differences Between Your and Their Experiences Within Your Graduate Program?

Categories	n (%)
Program is not diverse, students of color feel uncomfortable, no emphasis on multiculturalism, no faculty of color	6 (50%)
Discomfort (e.g., students of color are treated differently, viewed as	3 (25%)

being aggressive, often are asked to speak for their entire race)	
Similar experiences (e.g., lack of supports, financial burdens, ageism)	2 (16.6%)
Diverse faculty, students of color feel included, emphasis on multiculturalism, students of color support each other	2 (16.6%)
No differences in academic experiences	1 (8.3%)
Miscellaneous responses	1 (8.3%)

Note: Total does not equal 12 (100%) because some participants reported more than one response category.

Program is not diverse, students of color feel uncomfortable, no emphasis on multiculturalism, no faculty of color. It is important to note that half of the participants stated that they perceive the students of color as having mostly negative experiences. One student stated how her program lacks diversity:

Yeah, I definitely feel that it's difficult to be a minority in our program for many reasons, but I think specifically, like, there's just, like, I think some people might be used to feeling like a minority. But in our program it's, like, so White, that I think that can be even more tough, like, this might be their first experience of feeling, like, so not surrounded by people of color. I feel like that's actually a limitation to my program because we preach a lot of, like, multiculturalism and cultural competence and stuff like that, but it's not really reflected in the student body, and I also think that, like, just the research, the way the research has been done traditionally, it's, like, very White and of, like, college educated. I just feel like there's, they might feel, like, misrepresented in both the research setting and the clinically supportive setting. I think it's important to, like, for people of color to see that, like, there is an avenue for success, and it's not really mirrored in our faculty.

Another student discussed how other White students in her program do not see the importance of discussing multicultural issues:

Yeah, so she's from India, she is, like, a darker skin color, and I know she thinks that it impacts her, and she, like, wants to talk about this and how it's, like, perceived differently or how, I don't know. I never really knew how to phrase it the right way, but she feels like that it does make a difference for her, and she just loves to talk about it. But there are some students who feel that, like, it's not true and it's not important, so they think she shouldn't bring it up all the time.

Another participant discussed how she witnessed students of color within her graduate program experience micro-aggressions:

Okay. Yeah, so, I mean, I think you asked earlier about micro-aggressions towards me and, like, I said no, I haven't really experienced that so much but I've seen it, like, like, I've seen it towards some of my peers of color in the program. Yeah, so sometimes in classes, like, you know, 'cause we talk about diversity issues a lot, but sometimes in classes, like, (laughs) like, I saw another one of my classmates who was White turn around...we were talking about, we were talking about dealing with, you know, or, like, helping, effectively helping, like, people, kids of color in school, and one of the girls who's White turned around, looked at...there's two black girls in my cohort, and turned around and was like, "Well I would really love to hear your opinion, about duh, duh, duh..." (laughs) And so, like, I don't, you know, it's just kind of stuff like that where you're dealing with...we live in the south, and, you know, we're at a progressive institution but it's, like, there's just...I don't know.

Discomfort (e.g., students of color are treated differently, viewed as being aggressive, often are asked to speak for their entire race). Three of the participants stated that they believe students of color are treated differently than White students in their program. One stated:

So, the people of color in my program, I do feel like their experience is different. There is one girl in my cohort who was actually...so one girl in my cohort was mixed up for another person of color in one of our classes on, like, several occasions by our professor, so that I thought just was inexcusable. And, you know, but that was, you know, even talking about this right now to you, like, why didn't I speak up, why didn't any of us speak up for her, you know, I don't know (laughs), but so that was one thing that I know is different.

Another participant discussed how she witnessed students of color within her graduate program experience micro-aggressions:

Okay. Yeah, so, I mean, I think you asked earlier about micro-aggressions towards me and, like, I said no, I haven't really experienced that so much but I've seen it, like, like, I've seen it towards some of my peers of color in the program. Yeah, so sometimes in classes, like, you know, 'cause we talk about diversity issues a lot, but sometimes in classes, like, (laughs) like, I saw another one of my classmates who was White turn around...we were talking about, we were talking about dealing with, you know, or, like, helping, effectively helping, like, people, kids of color in school, and one of the girls who's White turned around, looked at...there's two black girls in my cohort, and turned around and was like, "Well I would really love to hear your opinion, about duh, duh, duh..." (laughs) And so, like, I don't, you know, it's just kind of stuff like that where you're dealing with...we live in the south, and, you know, we're at a progressive institution but it's, like, there's just...I don't know

Similar experiences (e.g., lack of supports, financial burdens, ageism).

Two of the participants stated that the White students and the students of color experience the same obstacles within their programs. One stated:

Yeah, well yeah, and then my friend, she's the one I was just talking about, you know. She felt the same way I did about how awkward it was to be older than everyone else and to have so much experience and to be older than you know most of the professors and have more experience than they did. And so all the frustrations that I felt as a first year doc student, she felt the exact same way for the same reason. And so I guess we sort of bonded over, you know, having the same experience but a year apart, and she could come vent to me and I would understand where she was coming from, and I'd buy her a beer, and we'd call it a day.

Diverse faculty, students of color feel included, emphasis on multiculturalism, and students of color support each other.

One student believed that students of color felt included because there is a big emphasis on multiculturalism within their program:

Well, so, we've always had professors of color in my program, and one of them quit after their first year and then we hired someone else because we had an opening. I mean, but we didn't hire one person of color to replace another, it just sort of happened that way, but I think she was a finalist for one position and, like, two people quit. But anyway, so we've always had, like, successful, like, role models for people of color in our program as professors. And so I guess in terms, so my two close friends, with whom one is the one who people probably consider to be Black although she doesn't necessarily consider herself Black all the time, but, and than the other, her family is from India, but

I'd say that, I'd say that I've never heard either of them say that they didn't feel, you know, a part of the program or welcomed. And sometimes when we have discussions about culture, race, or whatever or, you know, SES or whatever in class, I remember my friend making comments in class about how she has felt stereotyped in her life sometimes, but I don't think she's ever felt that way in our program, like by people in the program, but you know my university, my program also has a strong commitment to inclusive excellence and a really strong commitment to research in the area of sort of diversity, so you know. So I think that I would have been sort of surprised if there had been stories like that, I mean, I think, I'm trying to think of anything else that would be sort of similar, yeah, I don't know.

Another participant stated that the students of color within their program have created their own network of support for each other:

I have noticed that the people of color kind of, 'cause it's mostly women of color in the program. They sort of like, it's like, have their own group, which is not, like, I don't have a judgment about that, but I've noticed it. And they're, it's super fun (laughs) to interact with them, but, like, I have noticed that that's true. And that happened with, like, the two girls who are African American are in my cohort, kind of like, almost immediately sort of bonded and sort of became close friends and, like, were definitely not as close with the other students. And I've noticed that, too, that the cohort below us, five women of color in it, actually, and that they are just like, are kind of this tight-knit group, and that's awesome, but, like, I think that maybe, I think that there's probably a support that goes into that, that is very helpful for them.

No differences in academic experiences. Another participant stated that there is no difference in the experiences of White students or students of color, especially when it is related to academics. They stated, "I think in terms of grades it's the same, I think for the most part the program is the same, I don't think it's harder or easier for them."

Miscellaneous responses. One participant did not directly answer the question but instead described how different the students of color were within their program and how they think they are brilliant individuals:

I feel that they, oh gosh. So that's a little difficult to answer for my peers, just because all three of them are at drastically different points. One of them already has two master's degrees and worked as a social worker for, I think over a decade. Another one has done research for a handful of years and taught English in Korea, and another one came straight out of undergrad. So my perceptions of them and how they're pursuing their degree is drastically different for each of them. On the whole, my perceptions of them are that they are incredibly qualified and just, just brilliant. They, they really are. Like, I'm not that smart (laughs). I say that I'm smart, but that's about it. They have, they, they view situations so different from me that when we're talking it, it makes me question my world-view, which is wonderful, and that's how you learn. So my biggest perceptions of them are just that they're all really, really qualified for whatever they do.

The last interview question probed the participants about the presence of students of color within their graduate classes and their responses are depicted in Table 25.

Table 25

Have You Had Any Students of Color in Your Classes?

Categories	<i>n (%)</i>
Has had students of color within classes	12 (100%)

Note: N = 12.

Has had students of color within classes. All of the participants stated that they have had students of color within their classes throughout their graduate careers.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The current study used semi-structured interviews to examine what European American psychology doctoral students find supportive and unsupportive as they obtain their doctoral degrees in psychology. The study also explored the type of coping strategies European American students utilize when faced with obstacles in their program and examined their perceptions of the experiences of their peers of color as they pursue their degrees. The participants also discussed the similarities and differences between their experiences and those of their peers of color within their graduate programs.

Encouraging Factors for European American Students

Participants stated what they found to be supportive in their graduate programs. When asked what has been good about their graduate programs, half of the participants ($n = 6$) stated that they like the high-quality training they receive from their programs. In addition, five stated that they enjoy the collaborative environments of their graduate programs. In a study by Gayle (2016), which examined what psychology doctoral students of color found supportive and unsupportive in their graduate programs, 75% of the participants stated that they felt like they had no support and did not feel a part of their program's community when asked about the supports located within their programs. European American doctoral students often report more positive perceptions of their academic environment and have higher rates of program satisfaction than their peers of color (Williams, 2002).

Additionally, four participants reported that they found support from other students, cohort members, and classmates. The participants stated that these students helped them to navigate successfully throughout their graduate programs and supported them throughout difficult times. Almost half of the participants also responded similarly when asked what has facilitated their success in graduate school. Their responses were also consistent when asked whether there are supports located in their program, such as fellow peers ($n = 8$). Previous studies have found that peer support and social integration are related to European American students successfully navigating throughout their graduate programs (Williams, 2002; Wynne et al., 2014). In Gayle (2016), half of the participants stated that other students, cohort members, and classmates were key sources of support for them as well.

Within the present study, another important finding in regard to what has been good about their graduate programs were supportive faculty members. In addition, when participants were further probed to discuss what works for them in their graduate programs, 75% stated supportive faculty as one of those factors. Also, when participants were asked what has facilitated their success in graduate school, four participants stated that mentors, advisors, and faculty facilitated their success. Participants also mentioned the support they received from faculty and staff when asked if they received peer support from their program. Moreover, when they were asked if they believed faculty and/or mentors aided in their success in graduate school, 91% of participants stated that these individuals have. Previous studies have discussed the importance of mentoring for European American students and found that successful mentorships were an important factor that was related to these students

successfully obtaining their degrees (Bowman & Bowman, 1990; Rice et al., 2016; Taylor & Neimeyer, 2009).

Although many participants reported support by faculty, participants revealed factors that they do not like when probed to discuss what does not work for them in their graduate programs. They stated factors such as the lack of support from faculty, or their course load, internal stressors they experience, outdated course content, program structure, and lack of funding for their programs. Participants ($n = 9$) also reported aspects that they did like, such as their program's structure, supportive faculty, course content, practicum experiences, networking, and the flexibility of their program. This finding is consistent with past research that has found that mentoring, faculty support, and networking opportunities are important facets of support for European American students (Bowman & Bowman, 1990; Rice et al., 2016; Taylor & Neimeyer, 2009). However, the participants statements about the logistics and flexibility of their program's layout as being a source of support is a unique finding not previously discussed.

When participants were probed to explain how they handle the aspects of graduate school that do not work for them, the majority stated that their family, friends, colleagues, and pets help them, while others ($n = 5$) stated that their own self-motivation and self-advocacy help them get through graduate school. This was a central idea that participants discussed throughout a few interview questions, including what has helped facilitate their success in graduate school. This finding is unique to this study and has not been reported in past studies examining the experiences of European American students. However, these findings are consistent with Gayle

(2016), which found that psychology doctoral students of color believed that their internal drive was a factor that has facilitated their success during graduate school.

Participants also described what has facilitated their success in graduate school and what kinds of things helped them in their programs. For this particular question, participants stated responses that were discussed in the previous interview question, such as support of other students ($n = 5$), mentors, advisors, and faculty ($n = 4$), and self-motivation and drive ($n = 4$).

Participants also disclosed whether their friends were people of color or from different races. The majority of graduate students reported that their friends were people of color. The participants who reported that their friends were majority White stated that their graduate programs did not have much racial or ethnic diversity. This was a distinctive finding because research has not explored if European American psychology doctoral students who have diverse friend groups have higher levels of satisfaction in graduate school. This finding may support the need for graduate programs to have more diverse students as a way to increase the levels of satisfaction not only for students of color (Maton et al., 2011), but also for European American students, as well.

Participants also described what resources at the university and campus level have contributed to their success in graduate school. Of note, half of the participants ($n = 6$) stated that they do not utilize any university or campus-level resources. However, other participants ($n = 4$) utilized campus resources such as the recreation center, writing center, and counseling center. Some participants ($n = 4$) stated that they utilized funding from the university (e.g., travel grants and research fellowships),

while others ($n = 3$) stated that they are a part of graduate student organizations and attend university workshops and presentations. Research suggests that European American students that are involved in their campuses' activities tend to be more satisfied with their studies (Williams, 2002).

Furthermore, the majority of participants stated that they receive some form of financial aid assistance to help pay for their tuition and living expenses. Participants reported that they receive funding from loans, fellowships, scholarships, and assistantships (e.g., research and teaching). Five participants reported that they are fully funded for the entire duration of their graduate programs. Additionally, other participants ($n = 4$) stated that they rely on financial aid or loans to fund their graduate education.

Participants also discussed whether they were involved in diversity issues research with other students or faculty. The majority of students ($n = 7$) stated that they were conducting diversity issues research on various topics such as disproportionalities between Black and White students in the public schools, Black masculine identity, and asthma rates in low-income communities. Some participants ($n = 4$) responded to this question with responses that were unrelated to the question. For example, one participant discussed her previous teaching job before entering graduate school. This study found that the European American students that conducted diversity issues research are very invested in this area of their graduate studies.

Participants were also probed to discuss whether they felt included in their graduate programs. Nearly all of the students stated they felt included within their programs for a variety of reasons, such as feeling welcomed by other students and

staff. On the contrary, Gayle (2016) found that the majority of the graduate students of color did not feel included in their programs for various reasons such as being the only student of color and feeling excluded from their cohorts. This finding is not surprising because past studies have found that White students often experience more positive experiences and more feelings of belongingness than students of color (Ancis et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2007).

Challenges for European American Students

The participants also encountered many challenges throughout their graduate studies. Half of the participants ($n = 6$) stated that they experience administrative challenges and issues with the program structure. Students reported that it is very difficult to get important documents signed because of the disorganization of their programs. Other participants ($n = 5$) stated that they experience interpersonal and social challenges. A few participants described how being decades older than their cohort members created challenges for them. Others discussed challenges they encountered from the lack of support from advisors, faculty, supervisors, and mentors, while others still stated that they have a difficult time managing their time, workload, and work-life balance. These findings extend previous literature because past studies do not examine European American negative experiences in terms of program structure, administrative and interpersonal challenges, and lack of support from faculty.

Students were then probed to describe whether they have felt ignored or isolated throughout their graduate studies. The majority ($n = 8$) of students stated that they have not felt ignored or isolated within their graduate program. But four

individuals stated that they have felt ignored or isolated for various reasons, such as not having close relationships with cohort members. Gayle (2016) found that there were various challenges that the participants of color encountered. For example, participants reported that they did not feel like their professors supported them. They also stated that their faculty never congratulated them on their accomplishments. Many participants also stated that they had difficult times finding diverse practicum sites and experiences. Other participants stated that their faculty members displayed favoritism toward the White students. This finding supports previous literature, which states that European American students feel more satisfied with their graduate schools compared to their peers of color (Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003).

The participants were also asked if they ever experienced stereotyping or micro-aggressions in their graduate programs. Half of the participants stated that they have experienced stereotyping and micro-aggressions because of their sexual orientation and because some participants had not started families yet. Other students ($n = 4$) described instances in which clients of color were mistrustful of them because they were White. Three participants stated that they never experienced stereotyping or micro-aggressions within their programs. These findings are unique because they discuss how European American students experience discrimination because of their sexual orientation and interactions with their clients of color. These specific challenges were not identified in previous literature about European American graduate students in psychology.

The participants also described how they dealt with the challenges they experienced in graduate school. They did so using several strategies including

ignoring the situation, avoiding the faculty and peers involved, and/or confronting the people that they were having the challenges with.

Strategies Used When Faced With Obstacles

The European American students described the strategies they used when faced with obstacles in their graduate programs. Half of the participants stated that they relied on family and friends when faced with obstacles and similar to previous studies, students stated that they utilized self-care (e.g., exercise) when faced with obstacles (Burkhart, 2014; El-Ghoroury et al., 2012; Rummell, 2015). A few students stated that they relied on support from faculty and staff. The participants responded with the same responses when probed to discuss what got them through tough times. When the students ($n = 5$) were asked what type of familial support has been helpful to them, they stated that they received emotional support, words of encouragement, and visits. Additionally, five students reported that they receive financial support from their families. Lastly, when participants were probed to describe if they utilized anything on campus when faced with obstacles, half of the participants stated that they did not, while the other half stated that they use their universities' gym, library, or financial aid offices. These findings were consistent with previous literature, which also found that students of color rely on faculty, family, and friends when faced with obstacles in graduate school (Gayle, 2016).

Perceptions of the Experiences of Their Peers of Color

Participants were asked to describe their perceptions of the experiences of their peers of color as they pursue their doctoral degrees in psychology. Most of the participants stated that their graduate program is not diverse and that students of color

often times seem to feel uncomfortable. They also stated that students of color may feel uncomfortable because there is no emphasis on multiculturalism within their programs, and there are also no faculty of color. The participants were also probed to see if they have had students of color in their classes; all ($n = 12$) of the participants responded that they have. Gayle (2016) found that the psychology doctoral students of color felt like their programs only included them to display to the public that they had racially diverse students within their programs. Additionally, half of the individuals in the study felt as though they were ignored or isolated within their programs solely because they were ethnic minorities. Moreover, the majority of the participants stated that they experienced frequent racial stereotyping and micro-aggressions from their departments, peers, faculty, and clients. These responses highlight the differences in experiences between European American students and their peers of color.

It is important to note that when participants were asked about the experiences of their peers of color, many stated that they were very uncomfortable answering this interview question. Some participants stated that they were embarrassed because they never thought about the experiences of their peers of color, while others stated that they were embarrassed because they experienced their peers being treated differently but turned a blind eye and never did anything to address these behaviors.

Limitations and Methodological Considerations

There are various limitations and methodological considerations that should be discussed when interpreting the findings of the current study. This study employed a small sample size to understand the experiences of European American doctoral psychology students. A larger sample size would have allowed for a more diverse

group of participants from various geographical locations and a greater understanding of what European American students find supportive and challenging and the perceptions of their peers of color.

Another limitation of this study is the recruitment strategies that were utilized. It is possible that participants were recruited from similar networks. As a result, this study could have attracted European American students that have similar experiences and perceptions. Therefore, the findings of this study do not reflect the experiences of all European American doctoral psychology students and are unique to the 12 participants.

Additionally, conducting the interviews over the phone can be seen as a limitation of the study. Conducting in-person interviews would have allowed the researcher to develop a better rapport with the participants. This could have allowed the participants to share more personal and detailed information during the interviews.

Directions for Future Research

Future research may further probe the experiences of European American students as they obtain their advance degrees to get a better understanding of why they have not become advocates for their peers of color despite noticing differences in treatment. The majority of participants in the present study stated that they have witnessed the differential treatment of their peers of color but have not done anything about it. It is hoped that this information could make the experiences of all graduate students more fair and just.

It would also be important to interview the faculty and staff members at various psychology doctoral programs to see if they are aware of the differences of

experiences between their European American students and their peers of color. The results of this study could be the first step in ensuring programs are making systemic changes to make the experiences of all students positive and equitable.

Moreover, it would also be vital to examine how faculty and staff address instances in which their psychology doctoral students have reported instances of stereotyping and micro-aggressions from their peers or faculty members. These results would encourage programs to incorporate protocols to include within their programs' procedural manuals as well as to make additions or corrections to existing policies that may not be effective.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to look across other disciplines to see if the experiences of doctoral level European American students and students of color are similar, especially within school psychology programs. These findings are important for school psychology programs because by 2050, people of color are expected to make up the majority of the U.S. population and children of color will represent 62% of the country's school-age students (U.S. Census, 2010). This means that it is even more vital to have students of color enter and successfully complete doctoral programs within school psychology.

Appendix A -Demographic Form

- What is your gender? _____
- What is your age? _____
- What state do you live in? _____
- What languages do you speak? _____
- What is your marital status? _____
- What is your highest degree? _____
- What is your race/ethnicity? _____
- What graduate program do you attend? _____
- What year are you within your graduate program? _____
- Are you a first generation graduate student? _____
- What is your graduate specialty? _____
- Did you attend the same undergraduate university as your graduate program?

Appendix B – Interview Guide

[Hello, may I speak to _____ please.] This is Crystal Gayle; I am a DOCTORAL student from the Psychology Department at the University of Rhode Island. I recently contacted you about participating in a phone interview regarding factors you find supportive and challenging within your graduate program. Thank you again for agreeing to participate. As noted in the consent form, this study is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question and/or discontinue the interview at any time. Let's begin.

(Ensure that equipment is working properly, if technical difficulties arise, re-schedule the interview with the participant.)

1. Once you got accepted in the program, what has been good about it? Probes include:
 - a. What works and what does not?
 - b. What has helped you to handle it?

2. What has facilitated your success in graduate school? What kinds of things have helped you in your program? (Probes include:
 - a. Are your supports located in your program, such as fellow peers?
 - b. Are your friends people of color or are they from different races?
 - c. What about faculty, such as mentors?
 - d. What has helped at the university level/Anything on campus?
 - e. What about financial aid assistance?
 - f. Are you involved with other students and faculty in diversity issues research?
 - g. Do you feel included within your program?

3. What kinds of challenges have you encountered during your graduate studies?

- a. Have you ever felt ignored or isolated?
 - b. Have you ever experienced stereotyping or micro-aggressions?
 - c. How did you end up dealing with challenges you encountered?

4. What kind of strategies do you use when you are faced with obstacles in your program? Probes include:
 - a. What got you through tough times?
 - b. What about faculty, students, or family?
 - c. What types of family support have been helpful and important to you?
 - d. For strategies, do you use anything on campus?

5. What are your perceptions of the experiences of your peers of color as they pursue their degrees? What do you think are the similarities and differences between your and their experiences within your graduate program?
Probes include:
 - a. Have you had any students of color in your classes?

Appendix C– Informed Consent Form

The University of Rhode Island
Psychology Department
142 Flagg Road
Kingston, RI 02881
Phone: (401) 874-2193
Fax: (401) 874-2157
Project Title: European American Psychology Graduate Students' Supports,
Challenges, and Perceptions of Their Peers of Color.

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

You have been invited to take part in a research project described below. You should feel free to ask any questions you may have. If you have more questions or concerns later, you may contact Crystal Gayle, Student Investigator, at (718) 877-2535. You may also contact Dr. Margaret Rogers, Principal Investigator, at (401) 874-7999.

Description of the project:

This dissertation research study involves responding to a series of questions regarding experiences of European American graduate students in psychology doctoral programs.

What will be done:

If you decide to take part in this study, your part will involve participating in an interview lasting about 30-45 minutes that will be audiotaped and transcribed.

Risks or discomfort:

The possible risks or discomforts of the study are minimal.

Benefits of this study:

If you choose to participate, your answers will help increase the knowledge base about positive factors graduate students experience to successfully navigate through their programs. You will also receive \$20 for your participation.

Confidentiality:

Your participation in this study is confidential. Identifying information will be removed from the transcripts and pseudonyms will be used. None of the information will identify you by name. All data will be maintained in a locked facility at the University of Rhode Island.

Decision to quit at any time:

There are no consequences for not participating in the study and you may refuse to answer any question. If you decide to take part in the study, you may elect to discontinue your participation at any time.

Rights and complaints:

If you are not satisfied with the way this study is performed you may discuss your complaints with Crystal Gayle at (718) 877-2535 or Dr. Margaret Rogers at (401) 874-7999, anonymously, if you choose. In addition, if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the office of the Vice President for Research, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, telephone: (401) 874-4328.

You have read the Consent Form. Your questions have been answered. Your signature on this form means that you are over 18 years old, understand the information, and agree to participate in this study.

(Signature of interviewee)

(Printed name of interviewee)

(Date)

Audio Recording:

I hereby give my consent for audio recording:

(Signature of interviewee)

(Printed name of interviewee)

(Date)

Enclosed are two copies of this consent form. Please keep a copy of this form and return a signed copy to Crystal Gayle via e-mail to Crystal.n.gayle@gmail.com

Thank you for your time and help in this study. Your assistance is greatly appreciated!

The University of Rhode Island
Psychology Department
142 Flagg Road
Kingston, RI 02881
Phone: (401) 874-2193
Fax: (401) 874-2157

Project Title: European American Psychology Graduate Students' Supports And Challenges And Their Perceptions of The Experiences of Their Peers of Color

Appendix D-Recruitment Letter/Recruitment Email

Dear prospective participant,

I am a doctoral student in the School Psychology program at the University of Rhode Island. As part of my dissertation research project, under the direction of my major professor, Dr. Margaret Rogers, I am conducting a study on **the graduate school experiences of European American students obtaining advanced degrees in psychology**.

Participants will take part in an audiotaped phone interview relating to their graduate school experiences. Any information that is provided will be strictly confidential and your name will not appear in any reports resulting from the study. The interview will address questions about participants' experiences during graduate studies. More specifically, there will be questions about the types of support they consider helpful and the challenges they have encountered during their time as a graduate student. In addition, there will be questions to address their perceptions of the experiences of their peers of color within their graduate programs. The interview is expected to last about 30-45 minutes. Participants will also be given \$20 as compensation for their participation.

Individuals that meet the following criteria may be eligible to participate:

- Students who have completed at least **one** year in a graduate doctoral psychology program.
- Students who have a **3.2** grade point average or better.
- Students who identify as **European American or White**.
- Students who attend a predominately European American Institution where there is racial diversity in their psychology doctoral program.

Please contact me (Crystal Gayle) if you are interested in participating in this study at the contact information listed below, or feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Crystal Gayle, M.A.
(718) 877-2535
crystal.n.gayle@gmail.com
Doctoral Student
School Psychology Program
University of Rhode Island
Kingston, RI 02881

Margaret Rogers, Ph. D.
(401) 874-7999
mrogers@uri.edu
Full Professor
School Psychology Program
University of Rhode Island
Kingston, RI 02881

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