



A Case Study on Undergraduate Community Psychology at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU)

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Abstract

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and the field of community psychology share a similar mission; they both serve individuals from backgrounds impacted by racism or other structural inequalities. Consequently, undergraduate learning environments at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) offer settings for applying community psychology pedagogy, discussing issues related to social justice, and exploring the empowerment of emerging adults. This article presents a case analysis of an undergraduate psychology course that models community psychology pedagogy implemented at an HBCU in the Southeastern region of the United States. The review of course syllabi, a faculty reflection, and a focus group of undergraduate students at the HBCU revealed strengths and lessons learned in course implementation. Reflections underscore the value of community psychology pedagogy; the discussion in this paper advocates for the increased integration of community psychology in undergraduate courses, particularly at HBCUs.

Introduction

For more than a century, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have served the educational aspirations of Black/African Americans. Scholars advocate that HBCUs prepare a significant number of Black/African American students for leadership roles in industry and the professions, especially careers and/or service which contribute to community transformation (Albritton, 2012; Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007; Douglas, 2012; Sydnor, Hawkins, & Edwards, 2010). The careers and research of HBCU graduates evidence their contributions to Black communities directly; in particular, college-trained community leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Huey P. Newton, and Marion Wright Edelman worked to dismantle inequality and document the structural perpetuation of poverty and racism (Douglas, 2012). Stemming from a historic mission to educate racially and economically marginalized groups, HBCUs represent an enduring mission to higher education that challenges

social inequalities (Evans, Evans, & Evans, 2002).

Similarly, community psychology emerged from the protest movements that characterized U.S. popular culture in the 1960s. A theoretical parallel of HBCUs, community psychology aims to empower individuals of diverse backgrounds to address racism and other structural inequalities. As a result of this overlap, undergraduate courses at HBCUs can provide a context for empowering emerging adults from racially marginalized populations to discuss and address issues related to social injustice. With HBCUs continuing to enroll predominantly first-generation students and Black/African American students in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), undergraduate courses can be a setting in which faculty can increase student engagement with the field of community psychology and shift student perspectives in ways that value ecological principles. Such learning experiences can translate into increased engagement of underrepresented

minority students with community psychology.

This paper aims to present a case study of an undergraduate course in community psychology at an HBCU using student and faculty reflections and reviews of course content and objectives. The authors include an overview of HBCUs in the United States to outline a historical tradition of addressing social inequalities in the United States followed by a description of the context and course design. The faculty reflection provides insight into the pedagogy and course structure accompanied by feedback from students. Integrating insight from faculty and students will bridge the gap between the academic motivations of undergraduate psychology students and applications of their learning. The analysis of the course reflections provides insight into student learning outcomes and the challenges in implementing a course in community psychology. Discussion will center on the value of increasing the inclusion of community psychology in undergraduate courses at HBCUs.

An Overview of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

The significance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to the Black/African American community in the United States goes back to educating students in tumultuous political and social times (Albritton, 2012; Evans, Evans, & Evans, 2002). The majority of HBCUs emerged after the end of the Civil War in response to the widespread need to educate formerly enslaved Black/African Americans (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Philanthropists and religious groups with support from the U.S. Freedmen's Bureau chartered HBCUs; and, by the 1930s, there were more than 121 of these institutions. Many HBCUs aimed to prepare students to pursue careers in education and other liberal arts (DuBois, 1903) or on

agricultural and technical trades (Washington, 1895). HBCUs played a pivotal role in the early social mobility of Black/African Americans (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Between 1870 to the 1960s, HBCUs served as the leader in producing Black/African American educators, doctors, and other professionals needed in a highly segregated United States (Allen et al., 2007; Wenglinksky, 1996).

HBCUs met varying degrees of criticism. Scholars who opposed classical education indicated that liberal arts curricula emulated White institutions; and, opponents of practical education pointed out that trade promoted skill sets for Black/African Americans only to continue to work for former plantation owners who wanted to rebuild the South (Allen & Jewel, 2002). Private HBCUs were under the control of and dependent upon White philanthropists or religious institutions (e.g., Methodists; Allen & Jewel, 2002; Allen et al., 2007). In contrast, public HBCUs (especially land-grant institutions) were able to facilitate some shared governance as their missions focused on training in skills like agriculture, carpentry, and masonry (Albritton, 2012; Wenglinksky, 1996). HBCUs faced many social challenges as critics challenged Whites' control over their administration and leadership in a time of hostile racial climate in the United States (Albritton, 2012).

By the end of legal racial segregation in public education and the passage of the 1972 Basic Educational Opportunity Grant program (i.e., Federal Pell Grant), student enrollments at HBCUs (whether private/liberal arts curriculum or public/trade-based curriculum) increased drastically. Between 1976 and 2010, student enrollment at HBCUs rose from 223,000 to 327,000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). HBCU graduates have gone on to become professionals and leaders in communities across the United States (Allen et al., 2007;

Wenglinksky, 1996). HBCUs continue to enroll a significant number of first-generation students from economically disenfranchised communities (Allen et al., 2007; Albritton, 2012; Douglas, 2012; Sydnor, Hawkins, & Edwards, 2010) and graduate a higher percentage of Black/African American students in STEM disciplines at the bachelor's level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). HBCUs account for 21.8% of bachelor's degree conferred in psychology (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). HBCUs remain a top producer of undergraduate psychology students considering only 87 of the 102 offer a bachelor's degree compared to more than 6,000 predominately White institutions (PWIs). Today, HBCUs are beginning to see a more diversified student population. In 2016, roughly half of the HBCUs had 23% of the student body, on average, self-identify as non-Black (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

The relevance of Community Psychology to HBCUs

The mission of HBCUs and community psychology's adherence to principles of social justice may be particularly important to racially diverse students. Community psychology education may be highly valuable and relevant to students attending HBCUs (Henderson, Matlock, Garrett, & Clark, 2017; Henderson & Wright, 2015). Previous research found offering an undergraduate course in community psychology increases students' behavioral intentions to work in settings where they advocate for social justice (Henderson & Wright, 2015). Several bodies of research reveal racially diverse students often possess a higher pro-social justice orientation when compared to their peers and choose HBCUs for their strong commitment to racial advancement (Garibay, 2015; Johnson, 2017; McGee & Bentley, 2017). The work of Lott and Rogers (2011) suggest a belief in solving societal problems is a primary motivator for Black/African

American students pursuing the psychology major. Several other scholars have noted a desire to improve structural inequalities in society often relates to college persistence and career choices among racially diverse students (Garibay, 2015; Gibbs & Griffin, 2013). Principles associated with believing in a just world, improving communities, and advocating for equity reflect similar motivations for scholars who have pursued community psychology (Langhout, 2015; Lichty & Palamaro-Munsell, 2017).

Community psychology remains underrepresented at the undergraduate and graduate level at HBCUs. An initial Google search using "HBCUs" and "Community Psychology" revealed two universities offer a master's program in community psychology, Florida A&M University and Texas Southern University. A scan of undergraduate psychology programs across the 87 HBCUs offering a bachelor's degree revealed only three offered a course in community psychology. The longest standing community psychology graduate program at Florida A&M University includes a program emphasis on increasing student knowledge of the cultural realities and experiences of Black/African American communities (Florida A&M University, 2018). The degree to which this program has translated into other HBCUs' interest in similar programs or garnered undergraduate interests remains nonexistent.

HBCUs produce a significant number of Black/African Americans earning bachelor's degrees in the field of psychology yet there is limited knowledge on the degree to which these students are exposed to community psychology. Explanations for the oversight when it comes to the availability of community psychology courses at HBCUs are speculative at best. Perhaps faculty in psychology departments on HBCU campuses are unaware of community psychology as most departments offer subfields of cognitive, neuro, social and developmental psychology.

In examining more than 350 undergraduate psychology programs across the nation, Stoloff and colleagues (2010) previously found just about 14% offered a course related to community psychology. Bauer and colleagues (2017) analysis of undergraduate general psychology textbooks revealed less than 30% reference community psychology. These findings suggest undergraduate students who attend HBCUs may have limited or no exposure to the field. Regardless of the explanations for the omission of community psychology, undergraduate students at HBCUs who major in psychology remain unaware of the one field that potentially affirms their value orientation towards social justice. The disconnect between a students' value orientation and undergraduate learning experiences potentially creates a gap in practical applications of their education and the discipline of psychology.

Method

Research Design

This research utilized a case study design to identify the characteristics of the undergraduate community psychology course and the experiences of students and faculty in the course. A case study explores both contextual data as well as participants' experiences (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009, 2014). According to Merriam (1998), a case study is an intensive, holistic description analysis of a bounded phenomenon. In this study, a community psychology course at an HBCU and students enrolled in this course represented the bounded phenomenon. The in-depth analysis of the course includes the integration of student perspectives enrolled accompanied by a reflection of course goals and activity from faculty and review of course content. The case study method seeks to provide a description of the context of the undergraduate course, pedagogy, and course experiences in order to understand the value of community psychology on the

undergraduate learning experiences of students at an HBCU.

Context

The study took place in the Department of Psychology at a public HBCU located in the Southeastern region of the United States. This land-grant university received its charter in 1891 to offer separate higher education predominately for Black/African American students. Black/African American students comprise about 78% of the more than 12,000 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the university. The university ranks 6th out of the 102 HBCUs in the United States in terms of "best" colleges and universities (U.S. News, 2019). Psychology is the fifth largest undergraduate major at the university accounting for 11% of the total number of students enrolled in the top ten major programs. The Psychology Department offers a B.A. degree, which provides a diverse set of psychology courses and both basic and applied research.

In fall 2015, the department aspired to develop a Master's program in Health Psychology and hired three faculty with backgrounds in clinical, community, and neuropsychology. The community psychology faculty submitted a proposal in fall 2016 to establish an undergraduate community psychology course in the psychology curriculum as a gateway course and to generate student interest in pursuing doctoral studies. The accepted proposal included a national analysis of community psychology courses offered at predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) like Wichita State University, DuPaul, and the University of South Carolina compared to a limited number of HBCUs to include Florida A&M University. In spring 2018, 18 students enrolled in the first offering of the course and the majority were female (72%) and self-identified as Black/African American (95%).

Course Structure

The faculty integrated a series of 11 selected readings from articles published in the *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *Journal of Community Psychology*, and by other community psychologists instead of a primary textbook. The selection of journal readings over a textbook stemmed from a desire to provide affordable resource options to undergraduate students who were primarily first-generation. Furthermore, the faculty found community psychology textbooks lacked scholars who represented diverse ethnic identities. In contrast, selected readings included perspectives from Black/African American, Indigenous, Southeast Asian, and other scholars who conduct international research (see Appendix A). The key themes in the course covered five competencies in community psychology: (1) ecological perspectives, (2) empowerment, (3) ethical and reflective practice, (4)

prevention and health promotion, and (5) sociocultural competence.

The course structure focused on dialogue and opportunities for students to improve oral communication and information literacy skills through group and individual presentations. Required journal readings led to students submitting summaries, which included identifying challenging or interesting concepts as well as questions from the reading to pose to the class. The faculty devoted about 15-20 minutes of each course period for students to share summaries and answer related questions. In addition to taking notes from the lectures, students were also required to lead discussions on a social issue of their choosing (see Table 1). The faculty created two assignments in the course for students to gain knowledge on how to conduct community research using a report format and a Photovoice project (see Appendix B).

Table 1

Description of Student, Social Issue Project and Identified Ecological Level

#	Code	City, State	Class	Major	Social Issue Topic	Ecological Level
1	Sr. Psych Female1	Charlotte, NC	Senior	Psychology	Gun Violence in Schools	Exo-meso-micro
2	Sr. Psych Female2	Rocky Mount, NC	Senior	Psychology	Post Tornado Efforts in Guilford County	Meso-micro
3	Sr. Psych Female3	Ahoskie, NC	Senior	Psychology	Teacher's Income Inequalities	Exo-meso-micro
4	Jr. Psych Female4	Richmond, VA	Junior	Psychology	Child Brides	Macro-micro
5	Sr. Psych Male1	Elizabeth City, NC	Senior	Psychology	The Effects of Police in School	Exo-meso-micro
6	Jr. Psych Female6	Fayetteville, NC	Junior	Biology	Institutional Racism	Macro-exo
7	Jr. Psych Female7	Washington, D.C.	Junior	Psychology	Forced Female Marriages	Macro-micro
8	Sr. Psych Female8	Morrisville, NC	Senior	Psychology	A Father's Story: In Child Custody	Exo-micro

					Battles	
9	So. Psych Female9	Littleton, CO	Sophomore	Psychology	Mass Incarceration	Exo-meso-micro
10	So. Psych Male2	Lillington, NC	Sophomore	Psychology	Mental Health in the Black Community	Exo-meso-micro
11	Sr. Psych Female11	Charlotte, NC	Senior	Psychology	Child Abuse	Meso-micro
12	Sr. Psych Male3	Henderson, NC	Senior	Psychology	Structural Barriers to Women Leadership	Exo-meso-micro
13	Jr. Psych Male4	Temple Hills, MD	Junior	Psychology	The Relevance of HBCUs	Meso-micro
14	Female14	Rocky Mount, NC	Sophomore	Psychology	Racism	Macro-meso- micro
15	Female15	Temple Hills, MD	Senior	Psychology	Sexism	Macro-exo

Pedagogy

The racial identity of the faculty and value orientation align with pedagogical approaches that promote empowerment and equity in marginalized groups (Levine, Perkins, & Perkins, 2005; Lichty & Palamaro-Munsell, 2017; Rogers & Mosley Wetzel, 2013). Dialogues and reflection used throughout the course focused on disrupting the power imbalance between students and faculty by affirming the cultural realities and experiences of students and positioning knowledge as a shared experience (Au, 1998). On occasions in the course, the faculty would sit down in various places in the classroom in order to dismantle the perception of being the primary source of knowledge and shifting from being in the front or “standing over” students. The faculty would pose questions about topics to guide discussion and facilitate connections between new information and the personal experiences and knowledge of students (Kalogirou & Konstantinos, 2012) The faculty aimed to increase students’ agency by providing opportunities for

students to critique content and frame community issues from an ecological lens (Prilleltensky, 2001). Faculty selected topics that incorporated students’ tacit knowledge with research on affordable housing, homelessness, and mental health in order to challenge students’ attitudes about social inequalities. Practical experiences volunteering in the local community and identifying students’ needs on the university campus integrated in the course aimed to increase students’ behavioral intentions to redress inequalities.

Community Engagement

Community engagement was an essential tenet of the undergraduate course (Harkavy, 2005). The faculty used recommendations posed by Zimmerman and colleagues (2013) to align community engagement assignments to the learning objectives in the course. The course required students to complete a minimum of 20 hours of service to either the university or local community. A group report assignment required students to research a

community topic affecting a local neighborhood and complete a Photovoice project (see Table 2). In the report, students identified factors leading to the issue, which included topics like violence, incarceration, and mental health access. Students were charged with identifying community organizations working to address the issues and including recommendations in their reports to improve awareness on the issue or promote an intervention. Students completed interviews with residents and community

leaders to inform their project findings. The faculty devoted class time to discuss the progress of the project and used tools to help students access community data related to their topic (e.g., U.S. Census). Additionally, students completed a writing reflection on their community service experience including an analysis of how the experience increased their awareness of community needs and how the service the student provided connected to those needs.

Table 2

Description of Research and Photovoice Projects

Topic	Description
Increasing Awareness of Food Deserts	The project included an analysis of food deserts in the county and community members' perceptions. The project identified local efforts to increase community gardening, co-ops, and a farmer's market.
Providing Recreational Spaces for Youth	The project included an analysis of current access to recreational space in a local community. The project compared other recreational opportunities and incorporated peer perceptions regarding places in their community that influenced their positive development.
Preventing Gun Violence Among Youth	The project included an analysis of gun violence at the national and county level and community members' perceptions. The project focused on the impact of gun violence on youth and their communities.
Increasing Economic Development and Empowerment	The project included an analysis of income disparities across households in a local community and access to Black-owned businesses. The project identified local political leaders who are leading efforts to increase businesses and employment opportunities.
Disproportionate Minority Contact in the Criminal Justice System	The project included an analysis of disproportionate minority contact (DMC) in the criminal justice system at the national, state and county level. Members from law enforcement and community members providing their perceptions of DMC and personal accounts. The project focused on services needed to support formerly incarcerated members.

Participants and Sampling

The first author submitted and received Institutional Review Board approval to conduct this study; fifteen student participants were recruited from the first-time offering of the community psychology course. All students provided consent and received an overview of the study intentions. The study used purposeful sampling and participants represented different classifications and states of residency (Table 1). This sampling technique was utilized to ensure the perspectives represented among the participants fostered shared experiences and opportunities to elaborate on ideas about experiences in the course. Seventy-three percent of the student participants were female (N=11), and twenty-seven percent were males. Fifty-three percent of the course were seniors (N=8); twenty-seven percent were juniors (N=4); and, twenty percent were sophomores (N=3). Participants' residency included Colorado, Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. Nearly all students were psychology majors (93%).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data from students were collected using a focus group protocol; the design of the protocol adhered to principles of teaching and learning inquiry outlined in Felton (2013). The design aimed to inquire into the shared learning experiences of students and perceptions of course structure (Massey, 2011). Students were organized into two small subgroups during the last week of class before final examinations; a faculty member representing the research team facilitated discussions through an online platform (i.e., Skype). A graduate student and a faculty member represented the research team; individuals were not affiliated with the university and led all data collection and analyses. The research team included two women who self-identified as African American women. The faculty member,

trained as a community psychologist and professor at the graduate and undergraduate level, served as the research leader. The graduate student identified as a clinical-community psychologist.

The focus group data went through several stages of analysis, including open coding and axial coding. The research team used inductive content analysis due to the dearth of knowledge on undergraduate community psychology education in an HBCU context. Inductive analysis gleams data from the specific to a general narrative in order to gain insight from the perspective of those directly connected to the phenomena (Massey, 2011). As the first step in the data analysis process, the research team reflected upon and shared their biases on the following: 1) undergraduate training in community psychology, 2) Division 27's outreach to minority serving institutions especially HBCUs, and 3) perceptions of HBCUs. The two research team members wrote memos immediately after the focus group, listened to audio recordings separately to identify codes, and continued to reflect on their biases to acknowledge where biases influenced both coding and theme development. More specifically, upon the transcription of data, the research team identified initial concepts. The team discussed preliminary thoughts about the data and initial concepts to address internal consistency. Team members coded transcripts inductively to define codes and generate emergent themes independently. Afterward, to confirm code structure, the team read the transcriptions in order to verify codes and make changes accordingly. The researchers repeated this coding process continuously until they agreed on themes that established consensus. Finally, a third member of the research team conducted an audit trail to confirm trustworthiness and dependability of qualitative findings.

Reflections on the Course

It is important to acknowledge the faculty teaching the course and the majority of students enrolled in the undergraduate community psychology course self-identified as Black/African American (95%). Previous research indicates racially diverse students often possess a stronger orientation to social justice beliefs and community involvement compared to other students (Garibay, 2015; Gibbs & Griffin, 2013). Anchoring course reflections in the racial identity of faculty and students shed light into the overall motivations for teaching and enrolling in the course. A majority of students indicated enrolling in the course due to an interest in learning about community psychology, taking a course with the faculty of record, and gaining insight on whether the field would be an option for graduate school. The faculty designed and taught the class from the lens of critical pedagogy with the intentions to advance student knowledge in the field of community psychology and to think critically about issues related to social injustice (Friere, 2002). The course focused on community psychology principles and topic areas addressing the competencies outlined by Christens and colleagues (2015) (see Appendix B). Active learning strategies included case studies, facilitated discussion, and think-pair shares in the course. Analysis of student responses indicates a majority perceived the class as "insightful, engaging, and motivating" and perceived the class improved their "critical and creative" thinking.

Alternative Perspective of Psychology

The analysis of student responses in the context of course content revealed three major themes emerged in the course experiences. The first theme included how the course provided an alternative perspective of psychology. This theme, an alternative perspective, represents the

examination of people in an ecological context and underscores the significance of understanding individuals nested in different settings. Community psychology often provides an alternative perspective in psychology by broadening student perspectives beyond individual factors and mental health pathologies to focus on well-being and related social determinants (Linney, 2000; Martin, Lounsbury, & Davidson, 2004). Most of the psychology majors shared they were unaware that a field in psychology examines human behavior beyond individual factors. Students discussed how they were able to gain knowledge on how multiple systems influence human behavior. Many mentioned how this course offered an alternative perspective compared to other psychology courses on campus or resonated with concepts learned in courses outside of psychology like political science and sociology. Unlike other psychology courses which explored individual perspectives, this course examined community/group perspectives; and, an introduction to the ecological model changed how students thought critically about psychology. One male student stated:

... the course provided a different perspective (Interviewer: When you compare it to what?) other psychology classes would offer. I know because I practically took every psychology class that is offered on campus. This [course] looks at a community or group perspective, which caused me [to] think different[ly] [than] what I would usually...most courses focus on the individual level, but this course began to look at context looking at the other social-ecological kind of levels [such as] the micro to the macro.— Senior, Male 1

Promoting an alternative perspective to psychology helped some students think about the important role the community plays on

the individual. When psychology students pursue graduate programs in fields that examine the impact of social factors on health and well-being, then an undergraduate course in community psychology may provide a foundational perspective. One female student shared:

A lot of us psychology students want to [work] in public health and community health. ...[for] all the students that I know that want to do those kind of jobs, this course really helps. I never found the kind of perspective that constantly [gets people] talking about globalizing and coming together...the individual just isn't as strong as the community [which is] something I didn't start preaching until after I had this class.—Senior, Female 15

Empowered Social Change

The second theme that emerged from our analysis is empowered social change. Analysis of student responses and faculty reflection suggest the course engaged students in framing issues from first-order to second-order social change. First-order change incorporates ameliorative strategies to social problems that emphasize effective individual and group efforts to traverse and function within social educational, governmental, and political institutions (Linney, 2000). Contrary to first-order change, second-order change uses transformative strategies that target oppressive social structures and attempts to organize individuals as well as groups to develop more equitable, effective social structures (Martin, Bowles, Adkins, & Leach, 2011). Course content included journal readings and guided discussions on the role of students in driving social change. Analysis indicates students began to think about strategies to change local, state, and national issues faced by communities of color. The faculty modeled empowerment practices by giving students the opportunity to identify a social issue to address and having students

facilitate a discussion with the intentions to promote awareness of the issue or to promote a call to action. Student interests drove the topics and provided them with a forum to educate others about an issue and propose a solution. One student mentioned:

... my social issue of the day [was about what happened in] Greensboro recently... a tornado hit. So, I was [more] focused on disaster relief; and, I went out into the community where a lot of the homes [had been] devastated. I provided resources for people to get involved so they could...bring donations [and] things of that nature...[I also studied] what other policies and procedures could help Greensboro be more prepared for future, God forbid, future disasters.—Senior, Female 2

Another student commented:

I did my social issue on the connection between police and students within the school systems [to study] incidents going on in society [that are] causing tensions...[especially] how [students and police can] work better to cooperate.—Senior, Male 1

HBCUs Alignment with Community Psychology Principles

The third theme that emerged from the analysis was HBCUs' alignment with community psychology. Particularly, we propose this theme speaks to how community psychology and HBCUs both embrace a shared history of using education as a tool to increase individual and collective knowledge in transforming oppressive systems. For instance, as previously mentioned, HBCUs continue to serve the educational aspirations of Black/African American students and prepare graduates to become advocates and leaders (Albritton, 2012; Douglass, 2012;

Sydnor, Hawkins, & Edwards, 2010). Similarly, community psychology has promoted values congruent with HBCUs' foci such as cultural relativity, dismantling social inequalities, and advocating for social change (Society for Community Research and Action, 2018). Analysis of the student reflections indicated the faculty's pedagogy played a significant role in facilitating the connection between the social justice aspirations of students and practical application. A student discussed:

...I'm just gonna go off the top of my head to what I'm feeling right now. Well, the class itself, I felt like is a big need on universities especially HBCUs, concerning you know. Uh, within the black community, we need a lot of community involvement to prosper in some shape or form. Um, as far as future endeavors. At first, I wasn't going into community psychology, but you know after working with Dr. X and you know, she helping me understand community psychology a lot more especially in taking this class, uh, it helped me increase my ambition on getting my degree from community psychology. So as far as values, I want to help the community more so the class was very insightful on how to do that and which route to take.—Senior, Male 1

The students mentioned that many of them possess a strong desire to be more active in their community and to address some of the social challenges communities of color face. Topics such as mental health, incarceration, and police brutality became central to discussions in the course. These collective experiences not only resonated with the students but also helped them form connections with their future aspirations. One female student commented:

I think the class was really important because all of us want to get involved in some form of public service helping people. I think this class helped have a better understanding of the importance of getting to know the community that you're trying to work in and help so that you can better know that community. I think we all kind of learned that; and that added value to not only our studies now, but [also] our future careers.—Junior, Female 4

Discussion

The review of course content accompanied by reflections from the students indicate undergraduate community psychology education is valuable to students attending HBCUs. Students used a variety of terms to describe the course including insightful, motivating, and relatable. The course structure provided space for students to question content and integrate common knowledge with content knowledge. One active learning strategy used in the course included the questioning method, a way to promote dialogue in courses by encouraging students to address two central questions, i.e., how does this concept apply to what they saw in their community and what relevance does the concept had to them (Kalogirou & Konstantinos, 2012). Albritton (2012) argues HBCUs often offer students learning experiences that value the cultural realities of Black/African Americans, induces positive racial pride and a larger sense of commitment to one's communities. The analysis of course reflections suggests students gravitated to this kind of pedagogy and valued bringing in their cultural realities into the course.

Most of the students, if not all, had a desire to improve social institutions in the United States, whether that was in the criminal justice system or schools. Many had a personal connection with the topic selected

for their social issue and the Photovoice project used in the course. One student, who had recently lost two friends to suicide, was working through her grief while doing the Photovoice project on mental health awareness. A reading selected for a course discussion, Langhout (2015), prompted students to lead a discussion on the physical and emotional toll of social justice work. Faculty and students were involved in a dialogue that acknowledged coping strategies students exercise in their daily lives and the value of self-care. The faculty acknowledges the course provided some flexibility to integrate pauses or divergence from the topical areas and discuss current events such as the shooting deaths of Black men in the media and the students' well-being. Pedagogy that constructs spaces for students to express their vulnerability may be a critical aspect of how to apply community psychology principles to well-being in teaching environments. These considerations in the course may have influenced how students perceived the professor and the course.

Findings from course reflections indicated the undergraduate students wanted to learn theories and skills that helped them develop interventions to social problems or tackle policies affecting their communities. The integration of selected readings and facilitated discussions by the faculty helped make connections between community psychology and career and personal interests for students. Since many of the students expressed an interest in pursuing careers related to mental health the reading Reyes Cruz and Sonn's (2011) led to a dialogue on decolonizing mental health and acknowledging how the mental health system often negates to acknowledge the sociohistorical context of communities of color. On numerous occasions, when students expressed their career interest the faculty member would relate their interests to theories and frameworks in community psychology.

The course provided opportunities for undergraduate students to apply the content learned in the course to their local community and to propose potential solutions to issues such as food insecurity, incarceration, and gun violence. Previous research indicates increasing opportunities for students to engage in community settings allows them to recognize inconsistency between applying theory to practical problems (Schlehofer & Phillips, 2013; Zimmerman, Kamal, & Hannah, 2013). Increasing applied experiences helps shift student thinking about what is actually possible in the real world in terms of addressing change. A previous analysis of Black/African American students in an undergraduate community psychology course revealed community engagement experiences promoted a higher sense of global connectedness and advocacy (Henderson et al., 2017). Integrating community engagement and service into the undergraduate course may have not only broadened students' awareness of their local community but increased personal agency (Meyers, 2009; Stenhouse & Jarrett, 2012).

Our findings also reveal the value the community psychology course offers to this HBCU and students. One student mentioned how the course inspired him to pursue a degree in community psychology and increased his desire to help the community more (Senior, Male 1). HBCUs, similar to other institutions, seek to train students to enter the workforce and respond to societal challenges. HBCUs need more opportunities to enhance educational opportunities for students that extend beyond social mobility and prepares them to be active agents in addressing systems' change (Albritton, 2012; Allen et al., 2007). HBCUs must continue the legacy of preparing civil and human rights advocates and the next generation of research scholars who are working to reduce social inequities. Increased awareness of community psychology at HBCUs can enhance

community psychology pedagogy in undergraduate education as well as increase the pipeline of underrepresented minority students in doctoral programs. The findings from the analysis suggest such course experiences have practical benefits to the professional development of students and career interests. Continuing this continued legacy can leverage increased collaboration between HBCUs and the Society for Community Research and Action.

We acknowledge some challenges in teaching the undergraduate course to students at the HBCU. Students indicated they enjoyed the course but expressed that the course needed to extend across two semesters. Requiring students to engage in the community as well as focusing most assignments on their experiences presented a challenge for the students. Implementing community engagement without an established community partner served as a challenge to course implementation. Henderson and colleagues (2017) indicate community partnerships with other organizations are critical in the undergraduate learning experiences at HBCUs and provide a way to centralize student projects. The course in this study, alternatively, did not have an established community partner and students worked on several different topics rather than a central theme. The course was taught only a year after the faculty began their appointment at the university. Increasing more planning time for the course and possibly extending the course across two semesters can potentially solidify community partnerships and centralized community engagement activities. The authors acknowledge this may be challenging considering the undergraduate course was an elective versus a major requirement; there is a strong push to reduce the number of hours needed to complete a psychology degree in the Department of Psychology at the university rather than increase them.

Limitations

There are some limitations to the findings and paper. For one, the positive course reflections may be an indicator of a learning environment where faculty and students share similar racial identities. We acknowledge students and faculty were predominately Black/African American. It is possible sharing similar racial identities allow faculty and students to build strong emotional connections and a sense of membership (Albritton, 2012). These shared identities potentially influence the learning environment and students' perceptions of trust when disclosing issues related to race and other intersecting identities. Second, the power dynamic between the faculty and students may also influence student responses to the focus group questions. Although the framing of the focus group protocol questions required students to think about the potential weaknesses and challenges in the course, students reported very minimal issues. It is possible responses may be biased by students' belief the faculty would evaluate their performance in the course more favorably if experiences reflected positive responses versus negative ones. We acknowledge all transcripts were deidentified and the faculty member had no way to link responses back to individual students. We also acknowledge the conclusions generated from the student reflections are limited to the context of this university. The HBCU provided a broad range of racial identities for Black/African American students but this paper did explore these differences nor aim to provide generalizations for students attending Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). The findings from this course experience may not apply to other racially/ethnically diverse students or university settings. Last, as mentioned, the value orientation of the faculty guided the pedagogy used in the course and structure of the learning environment. There may be something

unique about the faculty's pedagogical approach and the ways they engaged with the students that we were not able to capture in this paper. We propose there is a need to conduct more research in the context of undergraduate community psychology education and scholarship devoted to the unique pedagogical practices community psychologist use in the classroom.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to describe an undergraduate course in community psychology through a case study design at an HBCU. Findings reveal the course was valuable to students and provided relevant experiences related to their future aspirations and career interests. Findings suggest the undergraduate community psychology course provided opportunities for community engagement and students to engage a sense of agency in addressing community challenges. We propose increasing student engagement with community psychology at the undergraduate level has several benefits for Black/African American students. Undergraduate experiences potentially change how students think about their individual capacity to address systemic change and career identities. Increasing opportunities for Black/African American students to learn about community psychology may be a foundation for engagement in the Society for Community Research and Action and doctoral programs in community psychology. The Society for Community Research and Action has a strategic focus to increase the number of undergraduate students who engage with and learning about community psychology and the HBCU context may be one setting often overlooked. This paper positions the HBCU context as a critical setting to do more outreach and strengthen scholarly inquiry at the undergraduate level.

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Appendix A

Course Schedule with Selected Readings

Week	Day	In-class Focus Content	Assignments
A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY			
1	T, 1/9	Introduction, Expectations, the Journey Here Why Community Psychology?	Core Values
	TH, 1/11	Principles & Values of Community Psychology	Due: In-class 2-minute essay
2	T, 1/16	Read 2-minute essay Position, power, and privilege	Course Reading: Transforming Community Psychology- S. Riger Completed 1/17 for class discussion
	TH, 1/18	Reading Discussion Understanding Community	Group Assignments (Exchange & Plan of Action)
VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY			
3	T, 1/23	Empowerment	Course Reading: What's wrong with empowerment? S. Riger Completed 1/24 for class discussion
	TH, 1/25	Reading Discussion Individuals and Context	Course Reflection 1 Due: Online, 11:59, 1/26
4	T, 1/30	Racial and Social Justice	Course Reading: Understanding, Resisting, and Overcoming Oppression: Toward Psychopolitical Validity-I. Prilleltensky Completed 1/31 for class discussion
	TH, 2/1	Reading Discussion Inequality vs. Inequity	
ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES			
5	T, 2/6	Ecological Metaphor Points of Leverage	
	TH, 2/8	Course Discussion	Movie: Gaining and Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street Community Research Report Topic Due: In class, February 8th
CULTURAL REALITIES			

6	T, 2/13	Pre (Colonized) Framework	Course Reading: (De)colonizing Culture in Community Psychology: Reflections from Critical Social Science-Cruz and Sonn Completed 2/14 for class discussion
	TH, 2/15	De (Colonized) Framework Reading Discussion	"I Am" My Community Due: Online, 11:59 PM, Friday 2/16
7	T, 2/20	Dimensions of Diversity	Course Reading: Empowering the Silent Ranks: The Southeast Asian Experience Completed 2/21 for class discussion
	TH, 2/22	No Class (Online Assignment) Reading Discussion	Course Reflection 2 Due: Online, 11:59, 2/23
PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION			
8	T, 2/27	Types of Prevention	Course Reading: Sociopolitical Development-Watts et al. Completed 2/28 for class discussion
	TH, 3/1	Intervention Skype Speaker: Regina Jackson, Director East Oakland Youth Development Center	Community Research Report Progress Report Due: In class, March 1st
	T, 3/6	SPRING BREAK	
	TH, 3/8		
9	T, 3/13	Theories of Change	Course Reading: Beyond the colonial divide: African diasporic and Indigenous youth alliance building for HIV prevention-Wilson et al. Completed 3/14 for class discussion
	TH, 3/15	Reading Discussion Sociocultural Prevention and Intervention	
METHODS IN COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY			
10	T, 3/20	Research Methods in Community Psychology	Course Reading: Participatory action research.-Baum et al. Completed 3/21 for class discussion
	TH, 3/22	Reading Discussion: Photovoice-Other Methodologies	

11	T, 3/27	Youth Participatory Action Research	
	TH, 3/29	Community Research Report (in class)	Course Reflection 3 Due: Online, 11:59, 3/30
RESILIENCE FRAMEWORKS			
12	T, 4/3	Understanding Stress & Coping Pt. 1	Course Reading: Narratives of resistance: (Re) Telling the story of the HIV/AIDS movement – Because the lives and legacies of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour communities depend on it. Completed 4/4 for class discussion
	TH, 4/5	Reading Discussion Understanding Stress & Coping Pt. 2	
13	T, 4/10	Resilience	Course Reading: “It Really Takes a Village”: A Socio-Ecological Model of Resilience for Prevention Among Economically Disadvantaged Ethnic Minority Youth.- Henderson et al. Completed 4/11 for class discussion
	TH, 4/12	Reading Discussion Survival vs. Thriving - Resilience	
14	T, 4/17	Well-Being	Course Reading: Considering Community Psychology Competencies: A Love Letter to Budding Scholar-Activists Who Wonder if They Have What It Takes-R. Langhout Completed 4/18 for class discussion
	TH, 4/19	Reading Discussion Community and Social Change	
15	T, 4/24	Community and Social Change Pt. 2	
	TH, 4/26	Community Report Presentations Peer Evaluation	Course Reflection 4 Due: Online, 11:59, 4/27
16	T, 5/1	Community Report Presentations Peer Evaluation	
	TH, 5/3	Community Report Presentations Peer Evaluation	Post Assessment
TUESDAY, 5/8 FINAL COMMUNITY REPORT UPLOADED INTO BLACKBOARD, 11:59 PM			

Appendix B

Description of Core Course Assignments

- 1. I AM MY COMMUNITY:** The purpose of this assignment is to allow students to locate two individuals in your community and interview them and identify similarities and difference. Interviews must include individuals who are different from students (e.g., age, social status/class, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) and must connect their values, beliefs in the values and beliefs of others about community.
- 2. COMMUNITY RESEARCH REPORT:** The purpose of this assignment is to allow students to gather data (qualitative and quantitative) in order to develop a community research report. The report provides the following: Topic, an introduction, method, results, and recommendations. The method section should include the procedure outlining how you gathered data from interviews with residents/students, site observations, and obtained information from the census tract or another online outlet. Results should include a summary of the issue, current barriers, and two models of successful programs around the issue.
- 3. PHOTOVOICE PROJECT:** The purpose of this assignment is to model photovoice methods using content from your community research report. Wang and Burris (1997) indicate " Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. As a practice based in the production of knowledge, photovoice has three main goals: (1) to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers." The final project included a presentation and a 4-minute video project.