

Walking the Walk? Examining Social Justice and Anti-racist Training Efforts in School Psychology



Jennifer M. Cooper, PhD, Jill B. Jacobson, PhD, & Kisha M. Radliff, PhD

INTRODUCTION

Following the murder of George Floyd in summer 2020, calls to address systemic racism and to integrate anti-racist approaches within the field of school psychology (García-Vázquez et al., 2020; Truong et al., 2021) were adopted. Scholars emphasized the need to dismantle oppressive systems within graduate preparation programs (Cooper et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2020) consistent with social justice training models (Miranda et al., 2014). Findings from a national survey examining current anti-racism and social justice pedagogy within school psychology graduate programs are presented herein.

METHODS

Faculty members (N=94) in U.S. school psychology graduate preparation programs completed a survey focused on social justice and anti-racism training efforts during the 2020-2021 school year. All procedures were approved by the researchers' IRBs. Sample breakdown was:

- 80% female, 19% male, 1% other
- 77% white, 13% Black, 4% AAPI, 3% AI/AN, 1% MENA, 1% other, 5% Latinx/e
- 74% of faculty worked at PWIs, 22% at HSIs, 3% at AAPISI and 1% at HBCUs

RESULTS

- 44% of programs reported **integration** as the training model used to address social justice and 37% reported a **separate course**
- 38% strong agreed that the program assessed students' **knowledge** related to social justice; 33% students' **awareness**; 20% students' **dispositions**; and 18% students' **skills**
- 57% of programs reported efforts to assess **program climate**, of which 68% specifically focused on issues facing **historically marginalized groups**

83% of graduate educators reported modifying course syllabi during the 20-21 year to increase representation of BIPOC scholars and equity/diversity issues in the following ways:

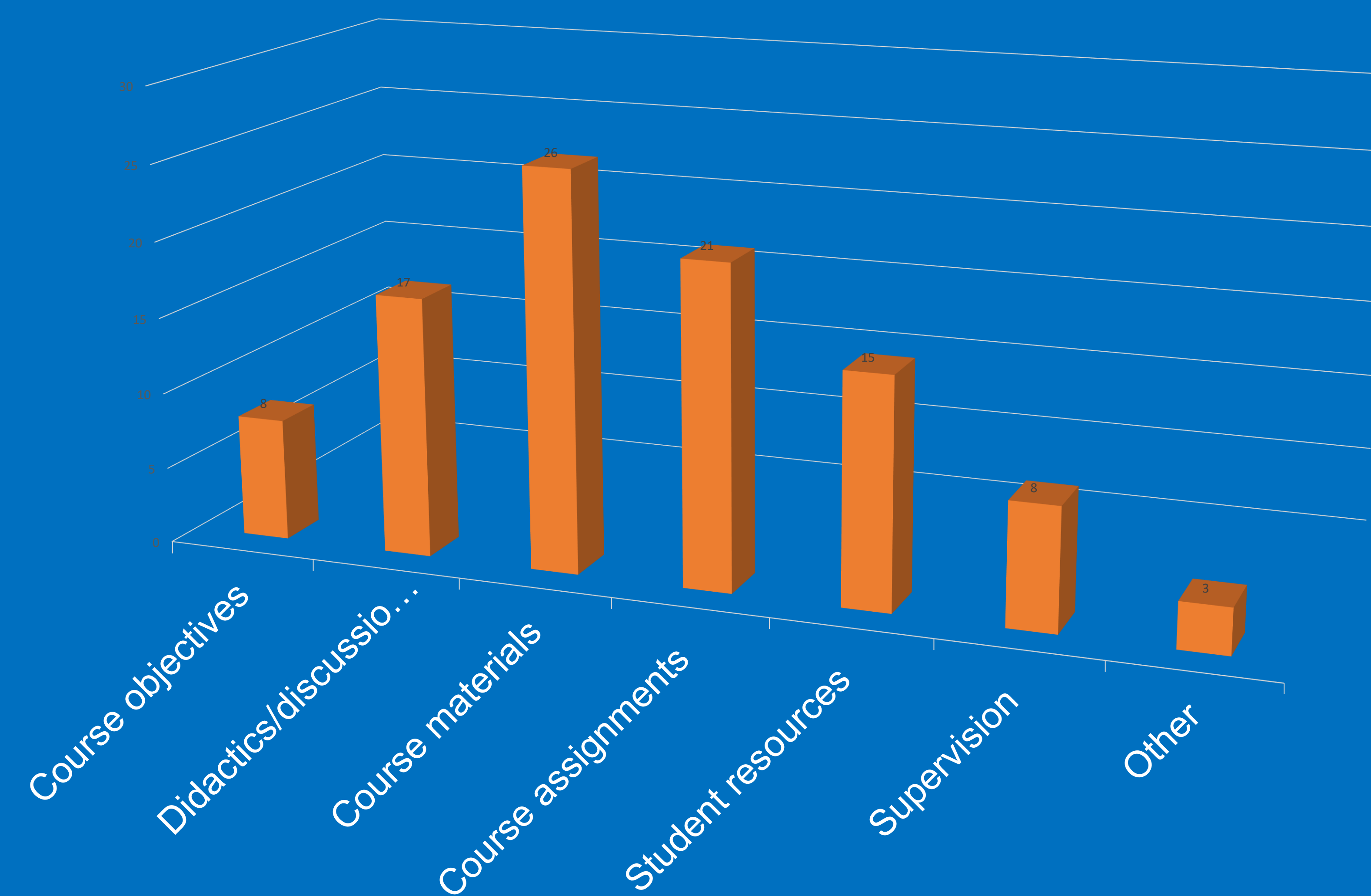


Figure 1. Changes Made to Course Syllabi

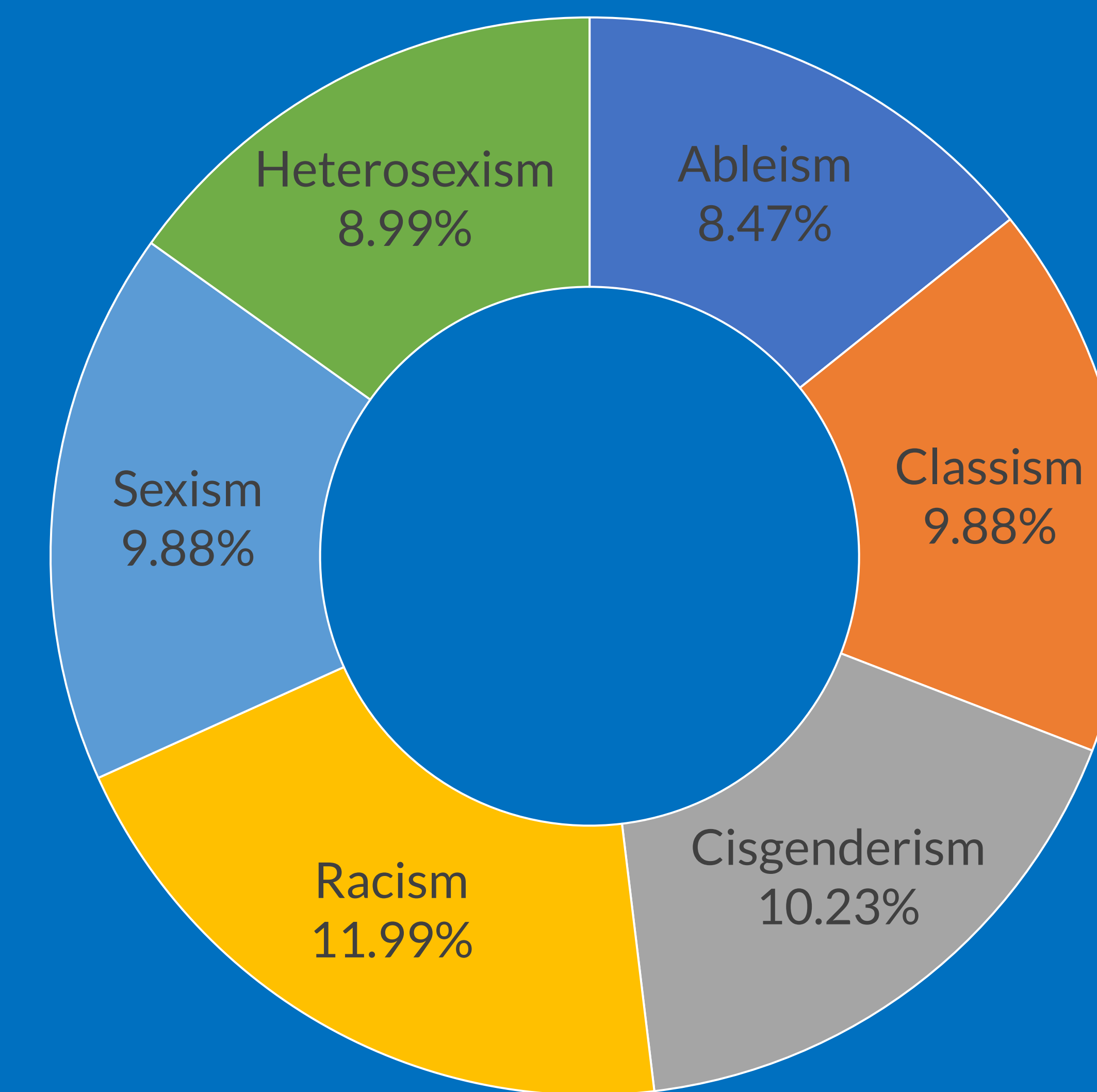


Figure 2. Social Justice Issues Discussed

RESULTS (CONT'D)

- 71% of programs signed on to the *School Psychology Unified Anti-Racism Statement*; however, only 29% encouraged students to read it
- 19% of faculty reported that the development of **publicly shared class activities/assignments** would be helpful in adopting anti-racist practices, followed by 12% endorsing **professional development** and 11% **faculty accountability groups**

DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

Many faculty in school psychology programs reported taking steps to enhance their program's commitment to social justice, such as signing the *School Psychology Unified Anti-Racism Statement*, revising course syllabi, and assessing program climate. However, there is much work to be done. Less than half of faculty reported an integrated model for addressing social justice, and few programs comprehensively assess students' awareness, knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to social justice. Additional resources and supports are needed to (a) bring all faculty on board with our field's commitment to anti-racism, and (b) implement critical changes and action steps to improve school psychology training.

REFERENCES

Cooper, J. M., Williams, S., & Shriberg, D. (2020). Training school psychologists as social justice change agents: Current practices and future directions. *Trainers' Forum*, 37(2), 1-9. <https://tsp.wildapricot.org/forum>

García-Vázquez, E., Reddy, L., Arora, P., Crepeau-Hobson, F., Fenning, P., Hatt, C., Hughes, T., Jimerson, S., Malone, C., Minke, K., Radliff, K., Raines, T., Song, S., & Vaillancourt Strobach, K. (2020). School Psychology Unified Antiracism Statement and Call to Action. *School Psychology Review*, 49(3), 209-211. DOI: 10.1080/2372966X.2020.1809941

Miranda, A. H., Radliff, K. M., Cooper, J. M., & Eschenbrenner, C. R. (2014). Graduate student perceptions of the impact of training for social justice: Development of a training model. *Psychology in the Schools*, 51(4), 348-365. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21755>

Truong, D. M., Tanaka, M. L., Cooper, J. M., Song, S., Talapatra, D., Arora, P., Fenning, P., McKenney, E., Williams, S. A. S., Stratton-Gadke, K., Jimerson, S. R., Pandes-Carter, L., Hulac, D., & Garcia-Vázquez, E. (2021). School psychology unified call for deeper understanding, solidarity, and action to eradicate anti-AAPI racism and violence. *School Psychology Review*, 50.

Williams, S., Stratton-Gadke, K., Cooper, J. M., Fenning, P., & Valley-Gray, S. (2020). Call for action for anti-racism in school psychology training programs. *School Psychology Training and Pedagogy* (formerly *Trainers' Forum*).

jennifer.cooper@yu.edu @DrJenniferCoop
jillbj@umd.edu | radliff.2@osu.edu | @KRadProf