



Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in School Psychology: Be the Change

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ABSTRACT

Individually and collectively, it is now more important than ever that we engage in intentional and sustained action to advocate for and advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the field of school psychology. To create positive change and the momentum to sustain it, it is essential that school psychology colleagues, organizations, and entities—including journals—identify how each can contribute to advancing DEI efforts. Herein, the *School Psychology Review* leadership team offers a brief summary of several of our intentional efforts, to date, to advocate for and advance DEI in school psychology scholarship. These actions toward accountability include (a) establishing individual and collective commitments to advocating for and advancing DEI as the foundation of our scholarship; (b) diversifying the journal leadership; (c) diversifying the editorial advisory board; (d) preparing future diverse journal leadership through mentored editorial fellowship programs, especially focused on early research career individuals; (e) mentoring future colleagues by establishing a student editorial board with members from diverse backgrounds; (f) focusing on special topics relevant to diverse and minoritized children, youth, families, and school communities; (g) making available professional-development opportunities and resources; and (h) establishing a journal action plan focused on advancing DEI. All colleagues, organizations, and entities are invited to individually and collectively join us to *Be the Change* in advancing and sustaining DEI efforts in school psychology scholarship.

IMPACT STATEMENT

The *School Psychology Review* leadership team outlines actions to advocate for and advance diversity, equity, and inclusivity in school psychology scholarship. Actions and accountability discussed include: establishing individual and collective commitments; diversifying the journal leadership, as well as the editorial advisory board; establishing journal infrastructures to support further development and contributions of diverse students and early career colleagues; and establishing a journal action plan focused on advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

KEYWORDS

School psychology, diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice

If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As [an individual] changes [their] own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards [them] ... We need not wait to see what others do. ~ Gandhi (1913, p. 241)

United we stand in our commitment to advocating for and advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the field of school psychology (Jimerson, 2020). Each of us understands that there is much more that needs to be accomplished to further advocate for and advance DEI in school psychology. Moving forward from our discussions, efforts, and actions over the past decade, the *School Psychology Review* leadership team joined together in the Fall of 2019

and engaged in developing an infrastructure and collaboration among colleagues to make intentional and purposeful contributions toward advancing DEI in school psychology scholarship. Considering the goals, objectives, and aims of the incoming editorial board and team, since 2019 our mantra has been *Be the Change*. The declaration *Be the Change* is widely attributed to Gandhi (1913), as a paraphrased version of his reflections highlighting the importance of our individual attitudes, efforts, and actions necessary to influence change in ourselves, those with whom we work alongside, and the world. Perhaps most salient is Gandhi's (1913, p. 241) emphasis on individual responsibility to take action and initiative, declaring that

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“we need not wait to see what others do” before acting ourselves.

In outlining the vision for *School Psychology Review*, Jimerson (2020) highlighted the importance of advancing DEI in the field of school psychology. The population of children and families we serve as school psychologists are increasingly diverse. Among the 73 million children in the United States, over 50% are members of racially and ethnically minoritized groups, more than 20% live in poverty, and more than 20% do not speak English at home and are learning English as a second language (e.g., National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). As highlighted by Blake and colleagues (2016),

school psychologists serve the most racially/ethnically diverse population: children in US schools. Therefore, developing a knowledge base that is inclusive of this wide range of perspectives as well as growing a workforce that is reflective of this diversity is essential to effective service delivery... and how to increase diverse scholars and leaders in the profession. (p. 305)

We propose that advocating for and advancing DEI efforts in school psychology scholarship generally—and in *School Psychology Review* specifically—is an important mechanism for change to happen by recognizing and addressing the broader need for improved DEI efforts in our field as a whole.

Considering the contemporary sociopolitical zeitgeist, it has become increasingly evident that, when it comes to DEI efforts, we need to do more, we need to do better, and we need to do it now with an eye toward impactful and sustainable change. The exigency of action and the context during 2020 was clearly articulated in the *School Psychology Unified Anti-Racism Statement and Call to Action* (García-Vázquez et al., 2020). García-Vázquez and colleagues (2020) highlighted the unified commitment of school psychology organizations in the United States (i.e., the American Board of School Psychology, the National Association of School Psychologists, Division 16 [school psychology] of the American Psychological Association, the Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs, the Society for the Study of School Psychology, and Trainers of School Psychologists) and also outlined an action plan for the school psychology community.

Clearly, it will take extensive and persistent individual and collective actions to overcome the systemic oppression, racism, inequities, and challenges that are present in our schools, communities, and society. We recognize that our current DEI efforts are informed by and build upon the efforts of many colleagues who have contributed tremendous leadership and scholarship aimed at advancing diversity and social justice in school psychology (e.g.,

Beeks & Graves, 2017; Blake et al., 2016; Bocanegra et al., 2016; Clark et al., 2012; Grapin et al., 2016; Graves & Brown-Wright, 2013; Graves & Wright, 2009; Goforth, 2016; Gross & Malone, 2019; Harris & Sullivan, 2017; Liu et al., 2019; Malone & Ishmail, 2020; Mena & Rogers, 2017; Newell et al., 2010; Noltemeyer et al., 2013; Parris et al., 2019; Proctor et al., 2014; Proctor et al., 2016; Proctor, Kyle et al., 2018; Proctor, Nasir et al., 2018; Proctor & Romano, 2016; Proctor & Truscott, 2012, 2013; Shriberg & Desai, 2014; Shriberg et al., 2008, 2011, 2013; Smith et al., 2016; Song et al., 2019; Sullivan et al., 2015, 2020; Sullivan & Proctor, 2016; Truscott et al., 2014; Vega et al., 2018; Zhou et al., 2004). We invite each of our colleagues to join us in ongoing and upcoming actions to *Be the Change* in advocating for and advancing DEI in school psychology.

Herein, we highlight the connection between the *SPR* leadership team's DEI efforts and the goals of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), and also offer a brief summary of some of our efforts to date as well as opportunities ahead. These actions and steps toward accountability in our DEI work include (a) establishing individual and collective commitments; (b) diversifying the journal leadership; (c) diversifying the editorial advisory board; (d) preparing future diverse journal leadership through mentored editorial fellowship programs with a focus on early career professionals; (e) establishing a diverse student editorial board; (f) focusing on special topics that emphasize and promote DEI in school psychology; (g) providing professional-development opportunities and resources; and (h) establishing a journal action plan focused on advancing DEI.

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT

The foundation for our collective efforts is our combined commitment to advocating for and advancing DEI in school psychology. This commitment is consistent with two of the five NASP strategic plan goals (National Association of School Psychologists, 2017) focusing on *Social Justice* and *Leadership Development*. Jimerson (2020) highlighted the exceptional opportunity for school psychology journals to help transform the future of scholarship, science, practice, and policy in our field through intentional and purposeful efforts to further engage, involve, collaborate, and communicate with colleagues from underrepresented and marginalized groups:

Moreover, engaging underrepresented and marginalized colleagues with *SPR* is important to (a) secure a greater number and further involvement of underrepresented faculty, students, and practitioners; (b) increase the likelihood of authors who see themselves represented in *SPR* leaders and will consider submitting their scholarship to

SPR; (c) include individuals who are both knowledgeable and sensitive to cultural and contextual considerations particularly salient among underrepresented groups to enhance high quality reviews of manuscripts; (d) encourage submissions of manuscripts that are addressing diverse populations of children, youth, and families; and (e) encourage emphasis on scholarship addressing salient cultural and contextual considerations that are important to advancing science, practice, and policy to support diverse students' academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health outcomes. The participation of colleagues from underrepresented groups and those who share a commitment to the value and importance of diversity and inclusion will also contribute to advancing the diversification of school psychology through involving and mentoring early career colleagues and students, who are the future of school psychology. (Jimerson, 2020, p. 1)

The *SPR* leadership team embraces and adheres to a shared commitment to each of these opportunities to advance DEI in school psychology scholarship. In the following sections, we describe some of our practical efforts to realize these possibilities through reshaping the journal's editorial infrastructure and establishing editorial priorities and initiatives.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

The first phase in establishing the editorial infrastructure was to identify and invite accomplished and distinguished scholars who shared a commitment to—and several who had previous leadership experience with—advancing DEI in the field of school psychology to serve as Senior Editors and Associate Editors. This process included extensive outreach and consultation with many leaders in the field, as well as a widely distributed open call for applications, which permitted colleagues outside of one's immediate scholarly orbit to be included among potential candidates. The leadership team includes Editor Shane R. Jimerson, six Senior Editors – Jamilia J. Blake, Gary L. Canivez, Dorothy L. Espelage, Jorge E. Gonzalez, Amanda L. Sullivan, and Frank C. Worrell—and seven Associate Editors – Prerna G. Arora, Scott L. Graves, Francis L. Huang, Stacy-Ann A. January, Tyler L. Renshaw, Samuel Y. Song, and Cixin Wang.

The composition of the *School Psychology Review* leadership team includes an incredibly strong and accomplished group of scholars and also represents the greatest diversity among leadership in the history of the journal. Additionally, the leadership team is the most diverse of all other journals in the field. The diversity among the leadership team is vast, including geographic locale, type of institution, disciplinary emphasis, areas of specialization, theoretical foundations, methodological expertise, as well as diversity across personal characteristics such as gender,

race, culture, first generation college graduates, childhood poverty, immigration, nationality, languages, and more. Combined with stellar scholarly accomplishments, this diversity among and across members of the leadership team is essential to soliciting, securing, reviewing, and selecting scholarship to be featured in the journal that advances science, practice, and policy related to school psychology. As an indicator of our accountability, whereas people of color represent fewer than 10% of school psychologists generally (e.g., membership of the National Association of School Psychologists, membership of Division 16 of the American Psychological Association, graduate educators in school psychology; see Jimerson, 2020), colleagues from historically underrepresented or marginalized groups comprise 71% of the *School Psychology Review* leadership team.

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

The second phase of establishing the editorial infrastructure was to identify and invite diverse individuals to compose the editorial advisory board. This process included extensive outreach and benefited tremendously from the widely distributed open call for applications, which permitted a broad cross-section of faculty, practitioners, and post-doctoral scholars to be included among potential editorial board candidates. The outreach to colleagues from historically underrepresented or marginalized groups was particularly important to ensure the breadth of expertise and experiences that would be essential to review manuscripts aiming to advance science, practice, and policy in school psychology. Moreover, the tremendous diversity among the colleagues contributing to the editorial board affords greater awareness, sensitivity, and emphasis on cultural and contextual considerations key to further advocating for and advancing DEI in the field of school psychology.

The composition of the *School Psychology Review* editorial board reflects an incredibly strong group of scholars and practitioners and also represents tremendous diversity. In the spirit of accountability, as noted above, people of color represent fewer than 10% of school psychologists (see Jimerson, 2020), the number of colleagues (among those reporting) from historically underrepresented or marginalized groups accounts for more than 35% of the current editorial board.

EDITORIAL FELLOWS

Recognizing the importance of contributing to the next generation of action editors in the field of school

psychology, we have established a *School Psychology Review* Editorial Fellows infrastructure to help support the knowledge and development of colleagues seeking to further advance DEI in school psychology scholarship and contribute as action editors in the future. Utilizing information from the application portal that was open to all individuals who may have interest in contributing to the journal operations, we identified two colleagues to join us as Editorial Fellows: Tamika La Salle and Chunyan Yang. Editorial Fellows work closely with the journal's Editor and leadership team to further expand their skills, knowledge, and talents related to editorial responsibilities.

These efforts aim to build the foundation in managing manuscripts, further refining communication skills, and generally developing skills related to navigating journal infrastructures and editorial processes. *School Psychology Review* Editorial Fellows will engage in a full-range of learning activities, including (a) learning about the infrastructure related to publishing an academic journal, (b) using editorial management platform to identify and invite suitable reviewers, (c) guidance and support in preparing high-quality constructive reviews that will provide authors with valuable feedback, (d) engaging in discussions to identify areas warranting further emphasis, and (e) engaging in outreach to encourage further submissions in their areas of expertise.

STUDENT EDITORIAL BOARD

The third phase of establishing the editorial infrastructure was to develop a student editorial board. In consultation with the *School Psychology Review* leadership team, it was determined that the optimal composition of the student editorial board would begin with the identification of graduate students who worked with members of the editorial board, such that a close mentoring relationship would be present to guide the student review process. The vision for establishing the student editorial board is multifaceted, with a strong emphasis on preparing and mentoring the next generation of colleagues who will become members of editorial boards in the field of school psychology and, eventually, assume leadership roles as action editors and editors.

Participation on the *School Psychology Review* student editorial board provides students with (a) a structured and supportive mentorship experience that introduces them about the peer-review process; (b) an opportunity to receive in-depth exposure to the operation of a scientific journal in the field of school psychology; (c) engagement in the editorial process as a means to encourage their career trajectories toward academia and training in school psychology and related disciplines; (d) exposure to the

latest research in school psychology through firsthand peer review of submitted manuscripts; (e) scaffolding to build scientific writing and feedback skills by critically evaluating submitted manuscripts; and (f) preparation for those seeking to become early career scholars and future editorial board members. With intentional and purposeful guidance to editorial board members, including an open application process for nominating student members, we successfully established a student editorial board that is beginning to contribute to the peer review process. Regarding accountability, the number of graduate students from historically underrepresented or marginalized groups (among those reporting) accounts for more than 75% of the student editorial board.

SPECIAL TOPIC SECTIONS

After establishing an editorial infrastructure that works towards advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion, the next step was to map out editorial priorities and initiatives that were clearly targeted for progressing DEI representation in the scholarship featured in *School Psychology Review*. The first initiative toward this end was to identify special topic sections that would address contemporary issues and next frontiers that inform DEI work in the field of school psychology. As described by Jimerson (2020, p. 2),

SPR will feature high-quality scholarship that includes participants from diverse groups, geographic regions, cultural, and marginalized or underrepresented and underserved groups (e.g., LGBTQ, housing insecure, immigrant-origin, linguistically diverse). Scholarship focusing on diversity considerations, social justice, and diverse populations will be emphasized in general articles as well as in timely special topic sections featuring contemporary science.

Following extensive online consultation with and input from colleagues, the leadership team generated a list of potential special topics that might warrant further emphasis. Following extensive review and consideration of this list, and then the subsequent development of formal proposals, eight special topic sections were selected as immediate priorities for the incoming editorial team, which began managing reviews of manuscripts in June 2020.

The design of the special topic sections permits all interested individuals to prepare and submit a paper for consideration rather than relying exclusively or primarily on invited submission. This design increases the openness and fairness of the process, as all papers are processed through the same triple-blind peer review processes—established in an effort to reduce implicit bias and other challenges—as regular manuscript submissions. Among

Table 1. Forthcoming Special Topic Sections to Be Featured in *School Psychology Review*

- Preventing School Violence and Promoting School Safety
- COVID-19 and School Psychology: Adaptations and New Directions for the Field
- Unlocking the Promise of Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for Linguistically Diverse Students
- Addressing Youth Suicide Through Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention
- Reconceptualizing School Psychology for the 21st Century: The Future of School Psychology
- Theory, Methods, and Practice to Advance Equity and Social Justice in School Psychology
- Promoting the Development of Black Males: Supporting Social, Behavioral, Emotional, and Academic Success
- School Climate, Bullying, and Social–Emotional Learning: Transdisciplinary and Transnational Science Advancing Positive Youth Outcomes

Table 2. *School Psychology Review* Action Plan to Further Contribute to Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in School Psychology

- We will publish articles that will be resources for trainers and programs addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion related to the field of school psychology.
- We will mentor early career psychologists and students, especially those of color, with increased opportunities for collaboration and support.
- We will support school psychology graduate students with collaboration and guidance through providing opportunities, engagement, a mentoring program, and professional development.
- We will actively recruit diverse voices for leadership positions with the journal.
- We will engage colleagues to ensure that diverse voices are represented in reviewing and publishing scholarship in our field.
- We will regularly publish science and scholarship inclusive of voices and perspectives of scholars and communities of color.
- We will address the structural and pervasive challenges related to systemic racism and implicit bias in our journal activities by intentionally building equitable infrastructure around decision making, representation, sensitivity, and fairness in all journal activities.

Note. Adapted from the *School Psychology Unified Anti-Racism Statement and Call to Action* (García-Vázquez et al., 2020).

the eight special topic sections identified as priorities, each specifically highlighted the importance of submissions focused on advancing DEI. Forthcoming special topic sections currently on deck address a range of contemporary issues in school psychology, yet each topic explicitly includes an emphasis on advancing knowledge related to working with and supporting the diverse population of students in schools (see Table 1). We welcome proposals for future special topic sections and individuals interested in proposing a special topic should contact the Editor to discuss your ideas and obtain the special topic proposal guidelines.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Another editorial priority and initiative is the provision of professional development to empower the broader *School Psychology Review* community with competencies that will help increase DEI representation in our scholarship. These efforts are ongoing. We have offered webinars, online courses, readings, and reminders to help all gatekeepers involved with the journal—including senior editors, associate editors, editorial board members, and student board members—be aware of and knowledgeable about implicit bias as well as cultural and contextual considerations relevant to our responsibilities in reviewing scholarly works. We emphasize the importance of kind, constructive, and thoughtful feedback to authors.

There are many opportunities for ongoing professional development related to DEI work for each of us, and we recognize the role of the journal as an influential outlet for promoting further knowledge and collective awareness of the impact and influence of racism, oppression, and discrimination on child development, adjustment,

adaptation, wellness, wellbeing, and education outcomes. Recognition of DEI factors will further enrich future scholarship and science that aims to inform our understanding and practices to support the healthy development of children in our schools and communities. We remain committed to building, promoting, and contributing to professional development that will further advance DEI in school psychology.

JOURNAL ACTION PLAN

The action items outlined in the *School Psychology Unified Anti-Racism Statement and Call to Action* (García-Vázquez et al., 2020) provide guidance for each of us, as individuals and within the context of our collective actions through professional associations and groups, to further advance DEI efforts in school psychology. As briefly outlined in the above summary of some of our activities since 2019, we reaffirm our commitment to ongoing efforts to advance DEI in the field of school psychology. We have outlined our commitments in the *School Psychology Review* action plan to further contribute to advancing DEI in school psychology (see Table 2). We see this journal action plan as a larger, overarching editorial initiative, which motivated current efforts and will continue to drive our ongoing efforts toward advancing DEI into the future.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR CURRENT EFFORTS TO ADVANCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Advocating for and advancing DEI in school psychology is integrally intertwined with our efforts to further establish *School Psychology Review* as a premier outlet for both basic and applied scholarship regarding behavioral,

developmental, psychological, and educational science related to children and the school context. We aim to publish research that informs, advances, and stimulates science, practice, and policy related to school psychology. To accomplish this will also necessarily include scholarship from diverse professional specialties that inform school psychology (e.g., child psychology, child development, counseling, and education) and diverse scholarship, including empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods, single-case), meta-analyses, and systematic reviews. It also requires scholarship that informs prevention, intervention, and support strategies that promote the social, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, mental health, and academic development of all children, youth, and their families. All are invited to contribute to *School Psychology Review*, so please join us and *Be the Change* to advance science, bring science to practitioners, advance practice, and bring science to policymakers who can influence future legislation that benefits schools, children, youth, and their families. It is imperative that we individually and collectively engage in further actions to advance DEI in the field of school psychology.

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