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Minority Social Workers' Perspective Regarding the Recruitment and Retention of People of Color in the Social Work Profession

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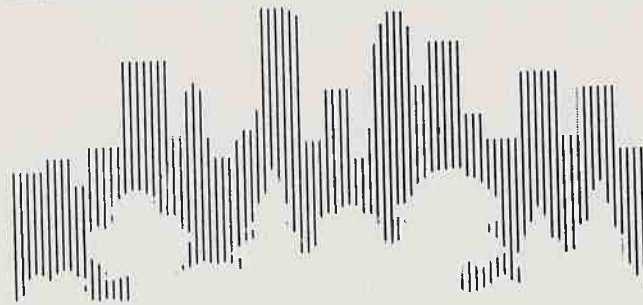
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**MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK
THESIS**

Dana M. Bennett

**Minority Social Workers' Perspective
Regarding the Recruitment and Retention
Of People of Color in the Social Work Profession**

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2001

Minority Social Workers' Perceptions Regarding the Recruitment and Retention of
People of Color in the Social Work Profession

Dana M. Bennett

Submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the degree of
Master of Social Work

AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

2001

Minority Social Workers' Perceptions Regarding the Recruitment and Retention of
People of Color in the Social Work Profession

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By

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

MINORITY SOCIAL WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF PEOPLE OF COLOR IN THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

Dana M. Bennett

June, 2001

Despite the fact that a large portion of people seeking social services are of minority cultural groups, few of the professionals providing those services are people of color. Research indicates that many factors contribute to the recruitment and retention of people of color in the social work profession. This qualitative study of 8 social work professionals of color explored contributing factors from their perspective. Findings suggest that several barriers exist to the recruitment and retention of people of color in the social work field such as racism, lack of support, and lack of understanding of cultural differences. The findings illustrate that these barriers will continue to limit diversity in the social work profession.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter begins with a statement and description of the problem. It continues with a discussion of the significance of the problem in social work and concludes with a statement of the research question.

Background of Problem

The United States has become an increasingly multicultural society. It is estimated that the number of minorities living in the United States is 77.6 million out of a total population of 270 million people. In other words, 29% of the population of this country is comprised of people of color (Keigher, 1999). It is estimated that the Latino population alone in the United States has increased 35% between 1990 and 1998, to a total of 30.3 million (Keigher, 1999).

Hand in hand with the diversity of this country is the issue of racism. Racism has long been a sensitive topic in the United States. Some have charged that, "racism is an epidemic in American [sic] society and so are its effects" (McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992, p. 533). Others state that racism is deeply immersed in U.S. society, and that it affects every aspect of the daily lives of individuals (Keigher, 1999). That being said, one might assume that, since the social work profession operates within a racist society, it too is intrinsically racist in its practices (McMahon & Allen Meares, 1992, p. 533).

Problem Statement

Research on the experiences of racial minorities in this country is extensive; however, most of it fails to address the experiences of social work professionals who are of racially diverse backgrounds (McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992). People of color often are a large majority of the people accessing social services and encountering social

workers. Yet more often than not, the social workers assisting these clients are Caucasian. In fact, most minority clients who seek help expect to be met by Caucasian-helping professionals (Davis & Gelsomino, 1994). The increase in the number of people of color who are accessing services indicates an increase in the need for social workers of color. The low numbers of minority social work professionals suggests the need to evaluate the factors that contribute to the recruitment and retention of people of color into the field.

An issue that arises in literature regarding culturally diverse populations is the terminology that is used to describe these communities. Several terms exist to describe communities of color. The terms "minority" and "people of color" are those most often used. However, arguments have arisen regarding the appropriateness of some of these terms, particularly the term "minority". While at one time the term "minority" was preferred for describing communities of color, it now holds negative connotations of oppression (Lum, 1999). Social work literature still uses the term "minority" extensively to describe communities of color, thus this term will be used in this study interchangeably with other terms that describe this population (Berger, 1989; Garcia & Swenson, 1992; Longres & Seltzer, 1994; Lum, 1995).

Purpose of the Significance of Study

In this society, populations that were once viewed as minority groups are growing at rapid rates (Lum, 2000). The number of individuals of culturally diverse backgrounds who are accessing social services is increasing dramatically. With this increase comes the demand for culturally competent services, and the need for social work professionals who are also of culturally diverse backgrounds, or in other words, who are

bilingual/bicultural. In fact, minority clients often express a preference for interactions with minority social work professionals who are of their same race (Davis, et. al., 1994). The actual number of licensed social work professionals who are from racially or culturally diverse backgrounds is relatively low (Berger, 1989). In order to understand the reason for the lack of minority social workers, it is important to examine the systemic functions that contribute to or restrict the recruitment and retention of people of color within the profession.

Research Questions

The above discussion suggests that the number of people of color in the social work profession is extremely low. This raises issues regarding the recruitment and retention of minorities into the field of social work. What much of the literature does not address is this issue from the perspective of minority social workers themselves. The research question is: What are minority social workers' perceptions regarding the recruitment and retention of people of color in the field of social work? This will be examined from the perspective of minority social work professionals through a qualitative study of their own beliefs and personal experiences in the field.

Summary

This chapter has provided background information about the problem, a statement of the problem to be studied, and has explained the purpose and significance of this study. It has also reviewed the proposed research question that this study will attempt to answer.

The literature review in the following chapter will illustrate pertinent issues in regards to recruitment and retention of minority social workers. Chapter 3 will review

the systems theory and the dual perspective, and apply these theoretical perspectives to this project. Chapter 4 will introduce and explain the methodology used in this study. A presentation of the findings will be presented in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 will conclude with a discussion of the findings of this research and how it relates to the field of social work.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is divided into four sections. The first section will define racism and its implications in the United States. In an attempt to analyze the social work profession as an agent of institutional racism, the second section of the literature review will explore the evolution of the social work profession. The third section will concentrate on recruitment issues in the social work profession with an emphasis on recruitment of people of color. The fourth section will identify retention issues in the field of social work and will explore retention issues specific to minority social workers. Finally, gaps in the literature will be outlined.

Racism in the United States

In this section, definitions of racism and the history of racism are discussed.

Definitions of Racism

Racism is a phenomenon that affects all segments of society, including social work professionals. Several definitions of racism exist; however, to truly understand the nature of racism it is important to understand what is its derivation. The root word of racism is race and the two are often confused. *Race* is a biological term used to classify individuals with similar physical characteristics (Pinderhughes, 1989). *Racism* is defined as the “tendency to use superiority as a solution to discomfort about difference” (Pinderhughes, 1989, p. 89). More clearly stated, it is the “domination of one social or ethnic group over another” (Lum, 2000, p. 194).

Racism is an ideology that takes on several forms: 1) individual racism, 2) institutional racism, 3) cultural racism, and 4) symbolic racism. *Individual racism* involves the personal beliefs and attitudes of an individual that define the self as superior

and others as inferior (McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992; Lum, 2000). *Institutional racism* is the synthesis of individual racism into a set of “core beliefs, values and practices with which the majority of members in a society identify” (McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992, p. 534). It assumes that economic, political and social organizations perpetuate racial inequality in society (Lum, 2000). *Cultural racism* assumes the superiority of one cultural or racial group over another (Lum, 2000). *Symbolic racism*, while rejecting racial inferiority and segregation, assumes that people of a racial minority are intrinsically lazy, unable to control impulses, and undeserving (Lum, 2000). All of these aspects of racism have blended together to form a subconscious and subjective social construct of reality in the United States, one that values racial minorities as “less than” their white counterparts, and thus less deserving and needing of understanding, compassion, and assistance (Ewalt, 1994).

In order to operationalize racism, it is important to understand how it is expressed. Racism is expressed in two ways: through prejudice and through discrimination. *Prejudice* can be defined as the attitudes of an individual or group that express unfavorable beliefs or behavioral intentions towards a person or group who is viewed as different (Lum, 2000). *Discrimination* is preceded by prejudice. It is the “behavioral response to members of a racial or ethnic ‘outgroup’” (Lum, 2000, p. 196). The expressions of racism by an individual or group are the foundations of institutional racism in any society (Gaines & Reed, 1995).

History of Racism in the United States

Central to the understanding of racism is the understanding of the different experiences of racial minority groups and those of the White dominant group in the

United States. The population of the United States is of nearly 30% non-white, yet racism and oppression still exist in this society (Ewalt, 1991). Historically, all non-majority racial groups in this country have experienced some form of racism and continue to experience it. Ethnic and racial stratification systems have been a part of the oppressive history of the dominant culture against people of color for centuries (Lum, 1995).

From the day that European settlers arrived in North America, the Native American people have been subject to genocide, robbed of their lands and have been stripped of their cultural practices and beliefs (Lum, 2000). African Americans were enslaved and brought to the United States against their will and were the targets of severe discrimination and prejudice, which took on the forms of segregation and lynching in the 20th century (Abramovitz, 1996). The Latino population, and especially the migrant worker population, has been exploited by agricultural and service industry in this country (Lum, 2000). And while Asian Americans became major parts of the industrial and agricultural labor force that build the United States, they suffered discrimination. An example of this is the internment of thousands of Japanese Americans in concentration camps during World War II (Lum, 2000). The experiences of each particular group collectively point to a history of dominance, oppression and exploitation of people of color by the White majority society (Pinderhughes, 1989).

Minority groups have traditionally been expected to assimilate to dominant cultural norms. Historically, rather than assimilate and completely lose cultural values and beliefs, minority groups have developed coping mechanisms to combat assimilation. For example, some minority groups such as the African American community have

developed what is called a “healthy cultural paranoia,” which is a fear and mistrust of dominant cultural values in an effort to cope with racism, segregation, oppression, and discrimination (Wilson & Stith, 1993). Persons of minority backgrounds who do choose to integrate are confronted with the task of reconciling their own cultural values and beliefs with predominant social values (Lum, 1995). What often occurs from this is cross cultural integration, in which a person moves back and forth between the dominant culture and his or her own culture (Lum, 1995). These issues are important to the social work profession, particularly when exploring issues of recruitment and retention of people of color within the profession.

Evolution of the Social Work Profession

The evolution of the social work profession in the United States is discussed in this section. Social workers of color in the profession will also be described.

History of Social Work in the United States

Social work was not seen as a profession until the late 19th century (Trattner, 1999). Until that time, charity organizations were the purveyors of assistance to the poor and needy (Trattner, 1999). The basic belief of the Charity Organization Society (COS) was that poor people were responsible for their own problems, and that, by sending “friendly visitors” into the homes of poor people to teach them about moral ways of living, they could “rise out of poverty” (Potocky, 1997). These visitors worked on a volunteer basis. During the Civil War and after, it became evident that these volunteer efforts were not sufficient in solving the problems of poverty and social injustice, thus began the professionalization of social work.

Another driving force for the professionalization of social work was the Industrial Revolution and the massive migration from rural to urban settings (Potocky, 1997). As the population grew in urban areas, so did the social problems of the poor and the need for assistance. During the late 1800s and the early 1900s, the period known as the Progressive Era, greater understanding of the nature of poverty and its causes was gained (Abramovitz, 1996).

The settlement house movement of the late 1800s and early 1900s was a reaction to the failure of charity work. Settlement house workers were social reformers whose goals were to bridge the gap between the classes and races, eliminate sources of distress among the poor and improve urban living conditions of the poor (Trattner, 1999). It viewed the poor as an oppressed population, and that poor environment and other adverse social and economic factors were the basic causes for poverty (Trattner, 1999). However, these beliefs did not apply to all people. While the settlement house approach was based on the philosophy that all cultures are equally valid, people of color were largely ignored by this movement (Potocky, 1997). Blacks were often turned away from settlement houses, as were other minorities and most non-Western and Northern European immigrants (Carlton-LaNey, 1994; Potocky, 1997).

The post-war recession, migration of the white middle class to the suburbs, and the difficulty in securing funding all led to the demise of the settlement house movement by the 1920s. In an effort to attain the status and economic advantages of professionalization, social workers began following Freudian psychoanalytical theory and psychotherapeutic techniques. Poverty was again viewed as the product of personal impulses. Individuals were viewed as having the “ability to change and overcome

difficulty” by adapting to their environment (Trattner, 1999, p. 253). Judgments regarding the abilities of the poor were based on white middle class values and morals (Trattner, 1999).

With the stock market crash of 1929 came the Great Depression, and yet another shift in the philosophy and efforts of the social work profession. The Depression left millions of people without work or resources. This included not only the poor but also a vast majority of the middle class (Trattner, 1999). The fact that so many middle class were in need may have been a contributing factor to the new commitment of social workers to social reform. Because of the Depression, social work was no longer an emergency profession. It was now an everyday part of society (Trattner, 1999).

During the post Depression and World War II eras of the 1940s and 1950s, social work once again moved toward individualized casework. By 1940, federal and state government was linked in the provision of public assistance programs. With the economic boom brought on by World War II, jobs were abundant. However, minorities received little benefit until President Roosevelt issued his Executive Order 8802, which forbade discrimination based on race, creed or national origin (Trattner, 1999). Given that the need for public assistance appeared to be waning, social workers began to move from working in public agencies to private practice. Much of the clientele seen at this time was comprised of white middle and upper class women who had been left alone during the war, not the poor nor those most in need (Trattner, 1999).

The decade of the 1960s brought about great change in the United States both politically and socially. The Civil Rights Movement and civil rights legislation of the time helped to diminish discrimination against racial minorities. Out of the Civil Rights

Movement came a renewed emphasis on pluralism and equality in the social work profession (Potocky, 1997). Beginning in 1965, the Council on Social Work Education (CWSE) required all schools of social work to recruit students and staff from racially diverse backgrounds (Trolander, 1997). It is important to note that while the CWSE imposed these requirements on schools of social work in order to receive accreditation, no school was denied accreditation for not complying with them (Trolander, 1997). In 1969, the Association of Black Social Workers was formed to address the needs of this group. Additionally, social work schools were established in the late 1960s to serve Latino and Native American students (Trolander, 1997).

Even with all of the advancement and evolution of the social work profession, by the 1970s, the needs of the poor and socially oppressed were still present. The interest in social action disappeared, and casework again became the practice of choice for most social workers. As inflation rose in the late 1970s and the country faced economic recessions in the 1980s and early 1990s, attention to the needs of oppressed populations decreased. During the late 1980s and 1990s, federal responsibility for public welfare was shifted to the states and funding for social programs was cut dramatically (Trattner, 1999). What this shift led to was a further separation of social groups, and further disenfranchisement of minority groups in this country.

People of Color in the Social Work Profession

Although the number of minorities accessing social services is high and continually increasing, the number of social workers who are of minority groups has historically been and continues to be alarmingly low (Furgeson, 1996). In a 1991 survey of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) membership, it was found that,

of 83,199 respondents, 419 were Native American, 1,249 were Asian or Pacific Islander, 4,689 were African American, 801 were Chicano, 615 were Puerto Rican, and 72 reported being of other Latino group origins. What this translates to is that the remaining 74,565 of respondents, or 90%, were Caucasian (Ferguson, 1996). It is evident from the data collected that the number of people of color who work in the social work profession is extremely low. Of those social work professionals who are minorities, 25% are self identified as African American. In fact, African Americans make up 51% of all minority NASW members (Gant, Nagda, Brabson, Jayaratne, Chess & Singh, 1993).

The number of minority social workers who hold advanced degrees in the profession is disproportionately low and has continued to decline. The percentage of minority social workers holding Bachelor's degrees in Social Work (BSW) has always been significantly higher than those holding MSW degrees. In a 1985 study, it was estimated that 24% of social workers holding BSW degrees were minorities, while only 14.6% of those holding MSW degrees were minorities (Berger, 1989). There was a rise in the number of African Americans who held Masters degrees in Social Work (MSW) between 1969 and 1973. However, between 1975 and 1987, this number dropped from 12.1% to 7.6%. The percentage of other minority groups having completed MSW programs has held steady at approximately 6.5% since 1971. These findings show that the disproportionately low number of people of color in the social work profession illustrates the need to address issues affecting the recruitment and retention of minorities in the field.

Recruitment in the Field of Social Work

Recruitment of social workers, particularly minority social workers, is explained in the context of strengths and challenges in this section.

Overall Recruitment of Social Workers

Like in many other professions, recruitment of qualified employees in the social work profession is an ongoing struggle (Ewalt, 1991). Agencies are highly dependent on qualified employees to implement programs and services (Ewalt, 1991). Thus, agencies must attempt to meet the expectations of the social workers they wish to recruit.

The literature on recruitment suggests that several components are necessary or expected by social workers when seeking employment. Of all factors in recruitment, salary, fringe benefits, job security and pleasant work environment appeared to be basic expectations of employees seeking work (Ewalt, 1991; Vinokur-Kaplan, Srinika & Wayne, 1994). These aspects become increasingly significant for agencies to consider when there is competition for qualified employees in the field (Ewalt, 1991).

Recruitment efforts must also address the expectations and needs of social workers beyond basic employment benefits. Flexibility, additional benefits such as training, merit increases and autonomy all appear to be central to successful recruitment of social workers (Vinokur-Kaplan, et al., 1994). Social workers have described the ability to exercise personal judgment and the freedom to establish their own appointment schedule as important recruitment incentives (Ewalt, 1991). As the social work profession becomes increasingly career oriented, social workers' expectations of employment increase. Opportunities for promotion and professional development are seen as important factors that attract many social workers to the profession (Ewalt, 1991).

Important to recruitment of social workers is the fact that satisfactory fulfillment of potential employees' expectations is necessary, especially when competition for qualified employees is high (Ewalt, 1991). People are unlikely to accept a position if salary, ability to influence their environment, and sensitivity to their personal values are unsatisfactory (Ewalt, 1991).

Recruitment of Minorities in Social Work

It is arguably true that the above issues pertinent to the recruitment of social workers in general are also true for those social workers who are of minority cultural groups. However, it is imperative to note that the recruitment of minority populations encompasses much more than what may be necessary to recruit their non-minority counterparts. Many of the socio-cultural issues that minority groups face must be addressed to successfully recruit people of color into the social work profession.

The issues that people of color face once they are working in the field directly contribute to their ability to perform and continue to work within it. Many of the barriers that minority social workers face in the field parallel the barriers and difficulties they face outside of it. The social work profession is guided by norms and beliefs that are developed and valued by the dominant group in society. Minority social workers may have to accept professional content and world-view in the mainstream agency that is unfamiliar or conflicts with their own (Benavides, Martin Lynch, & Swanson Velasquez, 1980). Given this possibility, it is extremely important for agencies to consider the broader, less concrete needs of people of color in the workplace.

Several themes arise in the literature regarding minority social workers' expectations and hopes regarding recruitment into the social work profession. In nearly

all instances, people of color expressed the need to have sources of social support and connection available (Aguilar, 1996; Ewalt, 1991; Metscher, Wedel, Dobrec, Wares & Rosenthal, 1994; Wilson & Stith, 1993). When a person of color enters an environment that values dominant cultural norms, he or she is exiled from a natural social support system (Longres & Seltzer, 1994). It is imperative to locate other sources of social support in order to attract minority social workers.

Another important factor to the recruitment of people of color into the social work profession is the presence of minority staff to serve as initial contacts and liaisons throughout employment (Metscher et al., 1994; Wilson & Stith, 1993). Minority staff are important in providing emotional support, mentorship and also in providing a supportive environment in which issues such as race can be discussed (Wilson & Stith, 1993). Having minority social workers on staff has been viewed in many communities as being the most effective tool in recruiting social workers of color into a particular organization (Metscher et al., 1994).

One of the most difficult tasks of recruiting people of color in the field of social work is how to inform minorities of employment opportunities. Individuals who are part of a minority cultural group often live in segregated communities, where access to information is limited. Given that many people of color live in class segregated communities, they have little if any contact with minority professionals (Longres & Seltzer, 1994). One barrier to the success of many minorities in social work may be lack of knowledge or information needed to achieve goals (Aguilar, 1996). Targeting resources within diverse communities is necessary in order to recruit people of color into the social work profession.

Successful recruitment begins with knowing the social support and resources within a community. Word of mouth communication and informal verbal communication within minority communities is an effective tool in recruitment of social workers (Metscher et al., 1994). Within the African American community, traditionally black schools and universities should be targeted for recruitment of social workers (Wilson & Stith, 1993). The importance of the church in the African American community is also an important aspect to consider in recruitment of minority social workers (Wilson & Stith, 1993). A common and effective recruitment tool within the Native American community might involve interactions and presence of Native American staff at social gatherings (Metscher, et. al, 1994). In order to be effective, recruitment efforts of minority social workers must take place within minority communities using modes of communication and information sharing appropriate to each community.

Retention in the Field of Social Workers

This section will explore the retention of social workers, especially social workers of color, in the context of strengths and challenges.

Overall Retention of Social Workers

Many concerns regarding retention of social workers in the field parallel recruitment issues in social work. However, as social workers gain experiences in the field, expectations and factors that influence their decisions to stay change. Over time, economic reasons become secondary to long-term career goals as important issues in retention of social workers (Vinokur-Kaplan et al., 1994). Experienced social workers

begin to look for career opportunities that will facilitate their successful attainment of career goals (Vinokur-Kaplan et al., 1994).

Social workers' goals evolve over time, and complexity of responsibility and increased compensation become important factors in retention (Ewalt, 1991). Advancement opportunities, increased pay and opportunities for professional development quickly begin to outweigh the importance of job satisfaction and organizational loyalty (Ewalt, 1991). Even perceived opportunities for promotion, whether real or not, appear to positively influence staff retention (Vinokur-Kaplan et al., 1994). Successful retention of social workers must concentrate on identifying long-term goals and assisting individuals in attaining those goals.

Several organizational practices common in the field appear to be deadly to the retention of social work staff. The biggest difficulty in retaining social workers appears to be restriction of professional judgment (Ewalt, 1991). Social workers expect the freedom to exercise judgment and participate in decision making. Severely limiting the use of professional judgment and rigidly defining social workers' participation in the organizational structure limit an organization's ability to retain qualified and experienced social work staff (Ewalt, 1991).

Retention of Minority Social Workers

More often than not, minority social workers must participate in cross-cultural integration in their professional lives. This is the process of moving between their own supportive culture and their professional culture, governed by dominant cultural norms (Lum, 2000). Successful retention of people of color in the field of social work includes

not only sensitivity to issues of overall importance to social workers but also attention to internal and external cultural issues that may affect retention.

Segregation and isolation are not uncommon among social workers of color. It is possible that minority social workers may feel isolated, lonely and alienated if no other minority social workers (specifically from their own community) are visible and accessible in the work place (Wilson & Stith, 1993). Individuals may be singled out or given special attention within an organization because of their minority status, which increases feelings of isolation (Wilson & Stith, 1993). People of color are further isolated in the workplace by social segregation that dictates that people of different social positions and groups avoid one another or manipulate each other (Longres & Seltzer, 1994). Mentorship programs, connection to minority professional associations, and having immediate access to experienced minority social workers who serve as role models may counteract these issues that affect the retention of people of color in the social work field (Wilson & Stith, 1993).

Another difficulty in the retention of minority social workers appears to be the actual work assignments and responsibilities people are given. What often occurs in the social work profession is that people of color are hired for entry or low level positions (Olmstead, 1983). Those who are employed at higher level positions are often overworked.

Given that the majority of clients are from minority groups, social workers of color are many times the only workers available who have cultural knowledge important to working with that client population (Gant & Gutiérrez, 1996). When language issues arise for monolingual clients, bilingual social workers are given the added responsibility

of translating or taking on extra clients because of their linguistic abilities, without extra compensation (Gant & Gutiérrez, 1996). It is assumed by the assignment of all minority clients to minority social workers that an individual has complete knowledge of their own cultural group, and places that person in the role of “token” minority worker, or cultural liaison to non-minority social work staff (Wilson & Stith, 1993). The result is that social workers of color often appear to have more responsibilities than their White counterparts, which may eventually lead to difficulties in retention of minority social work staff.

Gaps in the Literature

The available literature regarding the experiences of racism among social work professionals of color appears to have several gaps. The most important discovery is that available literature on this subject is scarce. A plethora of information is available regarding issues of racism and client populations. A great deal of literature is also available regarding the experiences of social work students of color. However, professional social workers have received little attention from the academic world.

Those sparse articles that do exist on this topic appear to have their flaws as well. Most of the available literature, whether it be historical accounts or scientific studies, is focused on the African American community. Very little information on this subject is available regarding other disenfranchised populations, including the Latino, Asian and Native American communities. It appears that much of the available literature is presenting the needs and issues of the African American community as being equal to or representative of the needs and issues of all communities of color.

The accuracy of some of the statistical data presented can be questioned as well. Information for surveys for some of these studies was taken from the National

Association of Social Workers (NASW) database. It may be argued that it is questionable whether or not members of historically disenfranchised populations will enroll in a majority organization such as the NASW. In other words, the data collected from NASW records is not likely to be a representative sample of all social workers who are members of a minority group.

Further research must be done on a national level in order to find other sources of literature on this topic. It is possible that the literature used in this review is not a representative sample of available literature on this topic. However, the studies do suggest that the social work profession participates in a racist society, and in doing so, discriminates against social workers that are of racially diverse backgrounds. The focus of this study is to examine minority social workers' perceptions regarding recruitment and retention of social workers of color today.

Summary

This chapter examined literature regarding racism, the social work profession and issues of recruitment and retention of social workers. Discussion of recruitment and retention of minority social workers was also included. The theoretical framework is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter reviews systems theory and the dual perspective as they relate to diverse populations. The impact of systems theory on diverse populations is discussed, as is the concept of a dual perspective within systems theory. Both of these concepts are central to the understanding of the experiences of social workers of color. These perspectives will be applied to social workers' perceptions of the recruitment and retention of minority social workers.

Systems Theory and Diverse Populations

It can be argued that systems theory may be an appropriate means of evaluating the social work profession, and in particular analyzing the experiences of individuals working within that system. Specifically, systems theory can be used to examine the experiences of social workers that are of culturally diverse backgrounds. Primarily systems theory assumes that all parts of any system are interrelated, and that these parts not only influence one another, but are also influenced by each other (Turner, 1996). Individuals, or individual parts of a system, do not function separately, rather they are constantly interacting with one another to produce an outcome or form a whole (Turner, 1996). Individuals are involved (directly or indirectly) in many different social interactions or social systems.

Systems theory contains four main levels of social systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. The *microsystem* level of interaction is comprised of the face-to-face direct contact that an individual has with other individuals. Included in the microsystem would be family members and friends. *Mesosystems* are the networks of settings that create an individual's social life. These include formal systems

that an individual is involved with such as school, work and church, among others. *Exosystems* are defined as the larger institutions of society. These are formal social structures or organizations that the individual may not be directly involved in, such as government, that have an indirect influence on that person's life. Finally, the *macrosystem* is the larger cultural and subcultural context in which all other systems occur. It is the ideas, beliefs and values that consciously or subconsciously influence decisions in all other aspects of social functioning (Ashford et al., 1997). What all these levels of system create is *a stratified society*, in which some people are privy to better life chances due to factors such as social status, wealth, education, and access to resources (Turner, 1996).

Dual Perspective

The dual perspective of systems theory implies that individuals develop two self-images: the personal and the social (De Hoyos, De Hoyos, & Anderson, 1986). The personal self-image is developed through family and immediate community interactions. This is the nurturing system of the individual's environment. The social self-image is developed through interactions within the larger society. Minority group members may develop poor social self-images because of the racism found in general society and its institutions (De Hoyos, De Hoyos, & Anderson, 1986). This duality is evident in the experiences of social workers of racially diverse backgrounds. In the words of W.E.B. DeBois, the process of becoming an African American involves both pride and shame in membership of a group that is socially defined as negative (DuBois, 1903). This suggests that all racial minorities (in this case African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino

Americans, Native Americans) are hyphenated Americans, "subordinate in the social order whether they wish it or not" (Gains, Jr. & Reed, 1995, p. 99).

Oppressed populations who live between both their nurturing and sustaining environments develop bicultural skills in order to cope (Pinderhughes, 1989).

Biculturalism is the ability to live in two worlds and tolerate the associated conflicts in cultural values and practices. These bicultural skills are essential to groups that have been traditionally denied access to larger societal resources and who also experience exclusion from various social and societal entities. Thus, this duality and movement between two distinct and conflictual cultures is part of everyday life for persons of color (Pinderhughes, 1989).

Application of Systems Theory and Dual Perspective

This theory and perspective provide a framework to guide minority social workers' perceptions regarding recruitment and retention of people of color in the field. Social workers of color must find a balance between the dominant system of the social work field and the nurturing system of their own cultural environment. Attempts to achieve this balance on the part of the social worker and on social work organizations may directly affect the ability to recruit and retain people of color in the social work profession.

Social work as a profession is part of a larger societal system guided by dominant cultural norms and values. Systems theory appears to clarify that any individual interacting with that system will affect as well as be affected by it (Berger, 1989). Social workers of color are equally, if not more so, affected by their interactions with the social work profession than are their Caucasian counterparts. Ethnocentrism, fear and distrust

all inherent in the larger society, as well as in the profession, reinforce stereotypes, exclusivity, increased conflict and decreased cooperation within the social work profession (McGoldrick, Preto, Hines & Lee as cited in Kilpatrick & Holland, 1999). As dominant cultural norms of the social work profession are imposed on minority social workers, the ability for self-development and establishment of self-esteem decreases in the individual (Ashford et al., 1997). These interactions between the societal structure of the social work profession and social workers of color play a role in recruitment and retention of minority staff.

Social workers of color are expected to interact with the dominant or “sustaining” systems of society (Wilson & Stith, 1993). Avoiding interaction with these systems is not an option, because the dominant system is the source of power and financial resources in our society (Kilpatrick & Holland, 1999). Based on the dual perspective of systems theory, in order to enter this “sustaining” system, minority social workers must often leave their own nurturing environments. It is in these nurturing systems that individuals learn “normal” expectations for behavior and attitudes (Ashford, et. al., 1997). To survive in the “sustaining” system, minority social workers are expected to conform to “normal” expectations for behavior within that dominant cultural system. Conflict occurs when there is dissonance between the dominant norms and the individual’s nurturing system norms. As the social work profession is based on dominant cultural norms, values and beliefs, it does not value those normal expectations for behavior from minority social workers’ nurturing system. When social workers of color are expected to conform to dominant cultural expectations regarding “normal behavior” within the “sustaining” work environment, recruitment and retention rates decrease in this

population (Berger, 1989). Therefore, systems theory and dual perspective are two approaches used in this study to view minority social workers' perceptions of their own recruitment and retention.

Summary

This chapter presented systems theory and dual perspective as they relate to minority populations in this country. The next chapter will outline the research methodology used in this study.

Chapter 4: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter describes the research design and methodology used in this study. Important concepts, the study population characteristics, and methods used for obtaining the sample are discussed. Data collection instruments and a plan for analyzing these data are described. This chapter concludes by describing the precautions taken for protecting human subjects.

Research Question

This study investigates the following research question: What are minority social workers' perceptions regarding recruitment and retention of people of color in the social work profession?

Research Design

A qualitative research design of in-depth interviews of key informants was used to examine the subjective personal experiences of people of color and gain a broad understanding of personal experiences of participants in the social work profession. The research was designed to address the issues that contribute to the recruitment and retention of minority social workers.

Qualitative research was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject's personal experiences and beliefs regarding this topic of study. It emphasizes the importance of face-to-face contact with participants in order to personalize and humanize research (Patton, 1987). There are several advantages to this type of research. It is highly effective for studying subtleties of attitudes and behaviors about the participant. It also lends itself to the researcher gaining an in-depth view of an issue from the perspective of

those people who are directly affected by it. It provides the researcher with the ability to present detailed descriptions and illustrations about the topic rather than just giving generalized or superficial information about it.

This study attempted to elicit personal experiential information from social workers of color regarding their beliefs about the recruitment and retention of minorities in the field. It examined individual experiences of a deeper social issue, namely racism. One can assume that all people of color experience racism throughout their lives. However, given that the term “racism” is a concept rather than a concrete idea, every person’s experience of it may be different. It is considered next to impossible to gain valuable quantitative information about personal experiences of racism that would have the same richness of depth and meaning that is possible through qualitative methods (Patton, 1987).

Additionally, qualitative research is especially useful with this type of research topic because there is a lack of both quantitative and qualitative information. Since few studies exist, there are relatively few examples from which to draw comparisons. Qualitative research allows the researcher to compare the themes that are evident in each individual story gathered in a face-to-face interview.

This research design also has several weaknesses. Two main concerns arise out of the nature of qualitative research. First, this type of research seldom yields precise statements about a large population. In other words, findings of qualitative research cannot be generalized to the larger population. The researcher cannot use the experiences of a few participants to describe all persons in the study (Patton, 1987).

Another weakness deals with the subjective nature of qualitative research. From the beginning of this type of study, subjectivity clouds the analysis of the topic. There is potential for extreme biases in sampling given that generally it does not employ probability methods to generalize the results to the population from which the sample was initially drawn. Additionally, the researcher may be looking for particular characteristics in participants and may not be able to exhaust all the selected study persons because of financial constraints. This not only leads to an unrepresentative sample, but also a lack of saturation in the data. The researcher also brings his or her own beliefs and biases into the qualitative study, which affect the interpretation of raw data. Conclusions drawn from the data are often based on the researcher's beliefs or subjective understanding of the qualitative information gathered.

Definition of Concepts

Several concepts included in the research question must be defined in order to understand the nature of this study. Many of these definitions were also defined Chapter 2; however, it is important to address them when describing the research design. The *social work profession* is defined as a profession that lends itself to working with other human beings who are experiencing difficulty, and assisting them in finding solutions to their difficulties (Pinderhughes, 1989). For the purpose of this study, people working in this profession include both bachelor's and master's level social workers. *Minorities* and *people of color* are terms that were used interchangeably to describe four distinct marginalized ethnic populations in the United States (Lum, 2000). These groups included: Asians, African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans. In Chapter 2, these groups were described in greater detail. *Recruitment* is defined as the process by which

social workers are sought for employment by social work organizations (Ewalt, 1991).

Retention is described as the methods used to maintain a particular position in his or her over an extended period of time (Ewalt, 1991).

Study Population

This study examined the personal experiences of 8 social workers in relation to their recruitment and retention in the profession. The study population included social workers in the state of Minnesota who have received either a bachelor's or master's degree in social work. All of the study participants were people of color from four possible ethnic groups: Asian, African American, Latino, and Native American. All of the participants were at least 21 years old. Ages of the participants ranged from 24 to 66 years old. The participant group included 3 Native Americans, 3 African-Americans, 1 Asian and 1 Latino person.

Sample Population

This study was conducted in the Twin Cities metropolitan area (in both Minneapolis and St. Paul as well as the surrounding areas). Approximately 100 minority social workers who are members of the Minnesota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) were contacted through a non-probability convenience sampling to participate in this study. Additionally, personal contacts were made in order to facilitate a snowball sampling of minority social workers in the Twin Cities area. These additional study participants were recruited from community based social service agencies that service minority populations. The purpose of these two methods of sampling was to find information-rich key informants (Patton, 1987). A request was made to the Minnesota Chapter of the NASW to contact all members who

identified themselves as a person of color (Appendix A). Letters were also sent to several organizations requesting study participants. Organizations were selected through various sources: 1) The First Call for Help Directory; 2) the Consortium of Rule 29 Multicultural Mental Health Clinics; 3) through telephone directories of social service agencies; and 4) through community newspapers that cater to the above mentioned ethnic communities. As non-probability convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used, several possible informants were contacted, until eventually they lead back to the same key informants in each community. The sample population of 8 key informants were interviewed face-to-face.

Measurement Issues

As stated earlier, the methodology used in this study is qualitative. In-depth interviews were conducted with individuals that were identified as key informants. When possible, these interviews were carried out in the participants' natural environments for the purpose of gaining a true understanding of their personal experiences.

A standardized open-ended interview was conducted with each participant. A set of questions was created and used during each interview. The purpose was to take each key informant through the same set of questions and in the same sequence in order to minimize interviewer bias (Patton, 1987). This type of interview has several advantages and disadvantages.

Standardized open-ended interviewing is ideal for the reduction of interviewer bias in a qualitative study (Patton, 1987). Since questions and additional probes are written in advance exactly as they are to be asked, the interviewer's effects on the participants' answers are reduced. This method also makes it easier to organize answers

and the interview data for analysis purposes (Patton, 1987). Finally, similar studies are more easily replicated when standardized questions exist, which allows for future comparison of themes of a particular topic area (Patton, 1987).

This method also has disadvantages that other methods do not. While qualitative research may not be as concerned with issues of validity as other methods of research, threats to validity do exist in this method (Patton, 1987). The biggest threat to validity for qualitative research rests in the hands of the researcher. Validity of qualitative research is dependent on the skill, competence and familiarity of the researcher in regards to the research being conducted. It is the responsibility of the researcher to be aware of the possible threats to validity in order to counteract them, if possible.

Other problems with qualitative research include the fact that with a standardized interview, neither the interviewer nor the respondent are able to explore topics that were not addressed when the questions were originally written (Patton, 1987). This may be troublesome in this study, as new issues regarding recruitment and retention of people of color in social work arise during the interview. This method also reduces the extent to which individual differences can be taken into account. Again, this may have been a problem in this study, especially given that social workers from four different ethnic groups were interviewed.

Data Collection

The researcher conducted face-to-face in-depth interviews that lasted approximately one hour in length. Letters were sent out to the Minnesota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, as well as to several community based social service organizations, requesting permission to contact social workers of color affiliated

with these organizations (Appendix A). Once approval from these organizations was granted, letters of introduction were sent to NASW members who identified themselves as minorities and several social workers in community agencies to request their consent to participate in this study (Appendices B, C and D). Potential participants who were interested in participating contacted the researcher directly by phone. Individual interviews were scheduled with each participant. Participants were given the opportunity to ask additional questions before the interview began.

A standardized instrument for measurement was developed for use in all interviews. This instrument consists of 9 open-ended questions pertaining to the personal beliefs of social workers of color in relation to recruitment and retention issues in the profession (Appendix E). All participants were asked the same set of questions. The researcher audiotaped all interviews. Additionally, the researcher observed for any nonverbal or environmental cues that were not recorded on audiotape. Additional demographic information was gathered from participants by the interviewer at the end of each interview (Appendix F).

Data Analysis

Upon completion of the interviews, all raw data were analyzed. Audiotapes of each interview were transcribed. All interview data were reviewed upon completion of the transcriptions. This review consisted of an analysis of the similarities and differences among all of the individual stories. Patterns of interaction between the participant and the researcher were examined. It also addressed the universal themes from the interviews. The goal of the data analysis is to determine what patterns of behavior, beliefs, and communication do all of the participants in the study share. Data analysis

also included looking for responses and interactions that deviate from the general norms of the group of study participants. These were used to help the researcher determine the universality of the information provided and interactions among study participants. Interrater reliability techniques were not used in this study, however would have helped to reduce researcher bias.

Protection of Human Subjects

Before any research is conducted with this particular population, measures were taken to ensure the protection of the human subjects. A formal proposal of this research topic was presented and reviewed by the Augsburg College Institutional Review Board (IRB Approval # 2001-29-1).

Participation in this study was strictly voluntary. Prior to agreeing to participate, potential subjects were informed of the purpose of the study, and all possible risks and benefits. They were asked to sign a consent form, which outlined the proposed study (Appendix G). This was to ensure that all potential participants were given informed consent and that they understood the purpose of the study. In the consent form, the purpose of the study was explained, as well as the conditions of participation, potential risks and benefits of participation, confidentiality issues and the voluntary nature of the study. The consent form also included information to inform potential participants on how they could contact the researcher to ask questions before agreeing to participate. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. They were also encouraged (per the consent form) to ask any questions that they might have about this research. All subjects' identities were concealed throughout the study. The final written research does not include any names or identifying information about the participants that

could impinge on their anonymity. Data collected during this research was only made available to the researcher and thesis advisor. All raw data will be destroyed by the researcher immediately upon completion of the study, as outlined in the consent form.

Summary

This chapter addressed the qualitative methodology that was used in this research study. It described the study population and how a sample of this population was drawn. The chapter also explained the standardized open-ended interview format, and the questions that were asked in each interview as well as the measurement issues. An explanation of data collection procedures and the protection of human subjects were described. In the next chapter, results of the data are analyzed and presented.

Chapter 5: FINDINGS

In this chapter the results of the study are presented. Demographic information about the participants is described. Explanations and examples are given of how the research question was answered. Finally, common themes found in the participants' responses are introduced.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

A total of 8 individuals participated in this study. Six of those participants were female and 2 were male. Participants' self-identified ethnicity varied (see Table 5.1). Self-identified ethnicity in this study refers to how the individual participant identified his or her own ethnic background. The highest ethnic group representation was for both the African-American and American Indian communities. Each of these groups was represented by three participants, or approximately 37% of the participant group. One participant self-identified as Asian and 1 as Mexican-American. Ages of participants varied. Those who participated were over the age of 21. The majority of participants were between the ages of 21-35 (see Table 5.1).

All of the participants who were involved in this study had completed a Master of Social Work degree (see Table 5.1). The sample design also included those social workers with Bachelor's degrees, however, no response was received from this population. Participant's years of working in the field ranged a great deal, anywhere from 1 year of social work experience to 45 years. Fifty percent of the participants had between 6 and 15 years of experience in the social work profession.

Table 5.1: Demographic Information of Participants (N=8)

	N	%*
Gender		
Female	6	75
Male	2	25
Age Range		
21 – 35 years	4	50
36 – 50 years	2	25
51+ years	2	25
Self-Identified Ethnicity		
African-American or Black	3	37
American Indian	3	37
Asian	1	13
Mexican-American	1	13
Social Work Degree Held		
Master of Social Work	8	100
Years in the Social Work Profession		
1 – 5 years	1	13
6 – 15 years	4	50
16 + years	3	37

* Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Findings Related to the Research Question

In order to learn the personal beliefs and perceptions of participants' regarding recruitment and retention of people of color in social work, participants were asked to answer a set of standardized questions as described in Chapter 4 (see Appendix E). Participants were asked to give their own personal beliefs about not only their own experiences as minority social workers, but also their general beliefs regarding recruitment and retention of people of color in the field of social work. The research question and the themes that emerged from participant interviews will now be discussed.

Research Question: What are minority social workers' perceptions regarding the recruitment and retention of people of color in the social work profession?

Several common themes around this research question surfaced as a result of participant interviews. The major themes regarding participant perceptions regarding recruitment and retention of minorities present in all of the interviews were: 1) awareness of the implications of racism for social workers of color; 2) respect of cultural differences; and 3) the importance of providing support for minority social workers.

Awareness of the Implications of Racism for Social Workers of Color

All 8 participants acknowledged that racism has an impact on the field of social work and how minority social workers function in that system. Most of the participants agreed that difficulty in recruiting and retaining people of color in the social work profession has a great deal to do with racism. One participant stated, "Any time you have to stop and think, 'could this be an issue of color' that's bad." Participants explained that racism occurs in the social work profession both in dealing with clients and within organizations. One participant made the statement regarding racism in social work that,

“the profession mirrors society.” One of the main areas of racism that appears to affect social workers of color a great deal relates to the history of racism in social work. The following examples illustrate some of this historical racism.

The history of the American Indians with social workers is one of negative consequences and connotations...because of the history that Indian people had with social workers, and taking away their children and placing them in boarding school. Trying to get the acculturation and assimilation and all that stuff going (08).

I think back and I look at the, like, the boarding school era and how, among other things, chemical dependency, abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse and all of those kinds of things, which were foreign to Native peoples...were kind of learned at that stage in time. Social workers had a lot to do with that (04).

Many young Blacks, I can't speak for others in this one, but many young Blacks have been told...year in and year out, that social work is...we're the gatekeepers for society. Our job is to keep Blacks out of certain communities. Out of certain jobs. To hold us...to hold Blacks down (02).

Even with the negative history and beliefs regarding social workers in communities of color, minorities have still been involved in social work. All of the participants stated that in one form or another, people of color become involved in social work because they want to impact and help their own community. Participants described their own reasons for entering the social work profession, as well as their beliefs about why other minorities enter social work.

I've always worked with different types of people, ages, religions...but the majority of them were always Caucasian. As I was getting ready to go to grad school...I have some expertise as an African American woman who has lived, at least by that time some 40-some years, and I'd like to give back to my community (06).

My personal experience of, I guess, living in a family that had a lot of issues, and its related to my culture I guess, in fact...Led me later in life to work with people who are experiencing some of those same kinds of issues (04).

They want to give back to the community or have a voice in how we are treated as people of color. Also, as a role model in a sense. That's what I see myself as.

When people that I work with, you know, see that I'm a social worker, they go, "African Americans can do that too, oh, OK." (06).

Many participants stated however that working within one's own cultural community is difficult given the history of social work in minority communities. This difficulty also affects recruitment and retention of social workers of color. The following examples illustrate this.

In my own culture later, I found out that being a social worker is like joining the evil, the police, the authority figure that has every power over you. And it's a shaming thing, or being a traitor of your own culture (05).

Your own people, who become your clients, don't trust you because of the history of racism in the profession. Or because of the nature of the situation that brings you together. It's personalized. You have to prove yourself to your clients when you're Black because the first thing they're going to ask is, "What's wrong with

you? You don't want to be Black. You want to be White" if you are part of what's seen as a White, racist profession. And you're constantly trying to prove yourself (02).

I find today its very difficult being a social worker because, one, if you're educated, you're looked at as being a sell-out for going into the field of social work because of the history that Indian people had with social workers (08).

Finally, some participants touched affect that racism has on social workers of color regarding the stereotypes about minorities in this country. One participant illustrated her point through a story about an experience she had in a social work setting.

I'm angry and my voice is deep. I'm not cursing. I'm not making threats, but they just freak out. It's because of my forcefulness. My Blackness. And I don't play. And so it gets to be a stereotype of Black women as vicious and violent (06).

Respect of Cultural Differences

Most of the participants in this study commented on the need for respect of differences in the field of social work. All agreed that this respect is essential to the recruitment and retaining of social workers of color. Central to this idea of respect in the interviews were the issues of best practices in recruitment, different beliefs regarding how social work practice should be done, and openness to new ideas and styles.

Several participants stated that it is crucial that recruitment practices be sensitive to cultural differences and ways of communication in order to be effective.

It's crazy for people to sit around two, three months to wait to go through this process with these agencies. You know, and the big thing is, people need to live.

People need to work. People need to pay their bills. So people aren't going to sit around and wait for a state or county agency to interview, you know, being an American Indian. I don't know what other people of color feel about the whole process... The timely thing really plays a big role. And I think they miss some key individual people for those positions which take such a long time to recruit and interview and things like that (08).

In recruiting people of color to professions... your typical way to recruit people into either the social work field or into a social work organization is to go, of course, to the first things that pop into your head. You talk to high school seniors about what they want to do, or you advertise... or, you know, put it on the Internet or something like that. If you're really serious about wanting people of color in your organization... you're going to need to be far more creative about your recruiting. And for the Indian community, and I would guess for all communities of color, it's so much more about one-on-one contact (01).

Several participants agreed that once people of color have been recruited into an organization, efforts must be made to respect different beliefs and ways of practicing social work, and that listening to these points of view is crucial. Participants described some of these issues regarding practice.

I'd say that if you have the desire and the passion and the motivation to help people, regardless of your education level, I see that as important... I know many people that are not credentialed but that are very effective working in the community. You know for the American Indian population, its having those values of respect, of listening, of treating people as human beings... I would say

sometimes even more than your educational background, is your connection and your knowledge of the community. Your ability to relate with people (04).

I've had more personal and social exposure to different cultures. Drawing upon my differences, and my ability to see things from a different perspective... I think that's a real strength (03).

Often times, a person of color is hired into a majority organization because they're a person of color. I would need to know that my supervisor trusts me to know what to do and trusts me to be doing the right thing in my position and to not be second guessing me. Because I am an Indian person, and I know how to work with Indian people. And it's not for anyone else, you know, it's not for anyone that's not Indian to second guess me in my work about that (01).

I live in the community I worked with. And I will always find someone who could come up to me years later and say something nice... Now, the rules say, ethics say, you don't recognize your client when you are out. But what do you do when your client recognizes you? Well, when your client lives next door? Or when your client's relative lives next door. You get that feedback because you live in the community (02).

When others see you as a very competent, very powerful social worker, as a person of color, you get put down... You're walking that tight rope between your own culture that you're trying to help plus be doing your job on the rules and regulations that you gave to go by if it's a huge agency. You don't feel encouraged or empowered (05).

The agency says, 'do it this way.' And there's an easier way. There's a way you can reach these people that is culturally sensitive. And you can't because the agency won't allow you. You're penalized if you do... The workers' input was sloughed off. One, it was like a double whammy. One, I was a minority, and I was a woman. And people would sort of either not listen to you at all, or listen to you and forget anything you said as if it wasn't important, and that it didn't matter. (02).

African American people in general think in terms of working in teams. Black people are great collaborators. They don't often see themselves standing alone and trying to do a job. They know how to gain assistance and they get others to join in to their work effort... I think there's... a kind of sense of joining in community that we have all grown up with (07).

Importance of Providing Support to Social Workers of Color

All social workers experience job stress and situations for which they require support. Minority social workers also require support for these kinds of stressors. However, in addition to the supports that their Caucasian counterparts need in order to perform as a social worker, people of color need additional supports in order to survive as a minority in profession dominated by majority cultural norms and beliefs (Wilson & Stith, 1993). All participants expressed that many supports are needed in order to effectively recruit and retain social workers of color.

The working environment and how comfortable a social worker of color will feel working there was viewed as one of the more important aspects to recruitment and

retention by 7 of the 8 participants. Participants expressed ways in which social workers of color entering an organization can feel more comfortable.

I think what could limit... people of color in this profession over long periods of time could be unhealthy working environments. Organizations that are themselves having a lot of challenges...and don't have a lot of support for minorities (04).

If you are a good employer, you know, I think you really look at the environment that you are asking this person to come in to. What's it going to be like for this person? And then I think you need to prepare the people that are going to be working with this person. What is it going to be like to have this person come in and be working in this environment? The person of color coming on needs to feel one, accepted and safe, and able to...apply themselves. People coming into those types of positions where that type of thing has not been done, there's all kinds of trouble. One, you're a minority. Two, you're the new kid on the block, and three, you don't know the playing field. I think there has to be some preparation for that (07).

Several participants explained that part of feeling comfortable is knowing that you are not the only person of color in the organization.

If I think about going to say,... a majority population organization, I need to feel comfortable there. And being comfortable probably means see some other people, if not exactly like me, not all not like me, or the opposite of me... Know that I'm not maybe gonna be the Indian representative, you know. Because I'm

one Indian person. I can speak for myself. I can't speak for the whole population (01).

I did not feel the same in our department when I was the lone Black [employee] as I did when there were one or two others. I didn't have anyone to commiserate with. We sort of kept each other...supported each other when times got bad (02). Later on I learned that I was hired because of my skin color, not because of my qualifications...I was the token person of color on staff, because there was no people of color (05).

Along with having other minority individuals on staff, participants stated that having supervisors or mentors of color available would assist in recruiting and retaining minority social workers. Several participants spoke of the important role that supervisors and mentors had played in their careers.

A good friend of my parents who was a social worker when I was a child, she was an African American woman...I guess through all of my youth where we lived in a predominantly African American or Black neighborhood I saw the things that she could change for people in our particular neighborhood (07).

When I was in undergraduate school...I had an Indian professor there...She was very passionate about child welfare. And her passion, I felt her passion (08).

I know for myself...there weren't a lot of Asian people. Or there weren't Asian mentors. A lot of my mentors were just wonderful period. And it didn't matter what ethnicity they were. But I think that if you looked at it and said, 'you know, who do I know that's Asian and is a social worker and can mentor me and give me good advice and give me direction?' I don't. I don't know anybody (03).

The reasons that have enabled me to stay here? I think it's because of a very supportive supervisor who has encouraged me to develop in many, many ways. Has encouraged me to go to school. Has encouraged me to then go on to get an MSW (04).

Financial support was a necessity for recruitment and retention according to 7 of the 8 participants. One participant stated, "The pay sucks!" Another participant said, "People who would have seen their way into social work now say, 'I can go into business. I can go into medicine.' We can't compete as a profession. We don't match those salaries." Other participants also talked about financial support to social workers of color.

I had heard it from someone I was later supervising, and I had just recently interviewed at the agency, so I knew it couldn't be anybody but me. And they said it like this, "You know, we're not going to hire African-Americans and pay them outrageous salaries just because they are African-Americans." And that's how it's viewed. We get the lower pay. Women get lower pay than Whites and Black males. That is not even my thought that, "uh, because I'm Black I'm gonna ask for 100, 150 an hour." I think of my expertise in what I do. I think of my education and my licenses. And I think of the years I've been in the field (06). Lots of obstacles...economics. In order to do this work, you need to be educated. Schools don't have a very good way of recruiting students of color. And if you can't afford it...it's not your fault... And then even after you get the degrees, even graduate degrees, there's still more obstacles... And then to be licensed as a social worker, or be called a social worker, you have to be licensed. More hula

hoops to go through. But if...the color of your skin was White, boy, talk about power and privilege. The doors open up to you (05).

I think that, in a way, money is a big barrier. If I went to a mainstream organization I could probably get paid more. But for an Indian organization, I am paid well (01).

Having a Master's degree as a terminal degree feeds into whether or not people can afford to go all the way through school. I don't know that there is the financial support that existed in the 70s when I was going to graduate school (07).

Flexibility as a support was also seen by nearly all of the participants as essential to the successful recruitment and retention of people of color in the social work profession. Participants stressed the importance of organizational flexibility in several ways.

Know your cultural standards. Know your culture's way of life that you are trying to recruit. And have some flexibility with your personnel policies or in your rules and regs. Understand that family is important, and people may have to take off at the spur of the moment (08).

With the Indian population, family... plays a much bigger role. And if there's something going on with your family, that thing takes priority (01).

The agency has been really flexible for me...we are allowed a certain time off from work...to go to school or to do your school related activities. And that was very encouraging for me. I don't know if I'd have been able to do that otherwise. The agency has been very flexible for me in that way (04).

Finally, more than half of the participants expressed the importance of supporting the career advancement of social workers of color as important to recruitment and retention. Of particular importance to several participants was the availability of leadership roles to minority social workers. One participant stated, "The organized profession has been extremely racist historically, and has not allowed its minority members to take as much of a leadership role." Other participants described similar ideas.

I think minority men have a hard road to hoe. They have a double whammy, you know, and there's no where to go. You know, in a profession where men rise to the top like cream, and you don't rise to the top because there's no place. They don't let you... That ceiling is there. You do all that, you pray to move, and you don't get anywhere. How many minorities head up agencies, mainstream agencies, in this town? Not very many. And you wonder why (02).

Supervisors, directors, administrators... all White males. There were females, but mostly White males in their 40s, 50s and 60s. And when positions opened up for management or supervisor or administrator that I applied for, I was always turned down. It was always somebody else that got hired (05).

When it comes to retaining staff, you know, do they have another area they can move into? Are there other opportunities for them to expand their areas of expertise and continue to grow (07).

Organizations need to give a lot of support. Just that they give equal support... If that individual is skilled or knowledgeable in a certain area, to not be afraid of tapping into that person. So, if that person knows more than you and you're in a

power position, share your power. If a person in an organization, especially an minority person, has reached a level of competency and they have so many gifts to offer somebody else, then its time to move on. Give them encouragement and help them, if they ask for it (05).

Alternative Approaches

Central to many of the participants descriptions of their experiences and beliefs was the idea that in the current system, people of color are and will never be seen as equal. Several respondents noted:

We learned from our parents...especially in my generation and people in their 40s. We had to be 10 times greater. Because of racism, because of...how we were going to be viewed. So we had to come cracking the whip on what we knew and put it forward (06).

We've been socialized by the profession to do things a certain way. And we fall into the same bad habits as they do. Because that's considered professionalism. What happened was that people, in order to be seen as professional, they had to follow lock step what had gone before. And it should have been changed (02).

If I was to get a position in management, and I'm sitting in a room full of people of one culture, I'd have to say Caucasian, mostly males, I become a threat because I begin to ask questions like, "wait a minute"...Remarks and thoughts that I present may be perceived as, "they're telling me I'm racist!" And that makes people scared. The other thing is, "I earned this." But I make the point, "You didn't earn it. It was your God given right to you when you were born." But for us, we have to earn it. But no matter how much we do, as a minority, we can

never earn it in their eyes. They always make up some sort of system that locks us out (05).

Several of the study participants described alternative approaches to the current system of recruitment and retention that they see as failing. Most of the changes described were overall changes in the structure of the social work profession. One participant said, “if you want to recruit people of color to help people of color, there needs to be a lot of changes.” Other participants expressed similar ideas about the need to overhaul the social work profession.

There’s more and more White people going into social services. And it just perpetuates racism more. There needs to be a change from the bottom level up.

And that’s scary for systems that have been in existence for so long (05).

I’m talking about major institutional change. Just, in other words, you know, dump out the old and be receptive to a lot of new things. And then be willing to give them a chance to grow. Not to say, you know, two months down the line, “this isn’t working” and dump it. The other part is the institution. The legal, you know the legislative pieces and the funding pieces are still headed up by White males, primarily, who are no...better informed than the general populace...So...we need to come up with another system (02).

Summary

The 8 social workers of color involved in this study described their own experiences and also commented on their general beliefs about the recruitment and retention of minority social workers. Aspects of the three themes described were present in all of the participants’ responses. Some of the participants offered alternative solutions

to the current system of recruitment and retention. The final chapter is a discussion of these findings as they relate to the literature and theories discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. The strengths and limitations of this study as well as implications for practice, policy and research are outlined in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the major findings of the study. Findings suggest that several factors such as racism, respect for cultural differences and availability of supports all contribute to the recruitment and retention of social workers of color. The chapter also describes the strengths and limitations of the study. It includes implications and recommendations for social work practice, policy and future research.

Discussion

The findings of this study parallel themes discussed in the literature review. Common themes found in both the interviews and literature include awareness of the implications of racism for social workers of color, respect for cultural differences, and the importance of providing support to social workers of color.

In this study, it is evident that the perceptions of most of the participants included the idea that the current state of the social work profession is a difficult situation in which social workers of color are involved. Institutional racism appears to be an underlying cause of the difficulty in recruiting minorities into the field of social work. The findings of this study suggest that this cause has been present since the beginning of the social work profession, and a major overhaul of the profession may be necessary to counteract the current difficulty in recruiting and retaining social workers of color.

Additionally, this study illustrates many of the concrete barriers to the recruitment and retention of minority social workers. While the issues that pertain to the recruitment and retention of the general population in the social work profession are also true for social workers of color, it is evident through this study that additional attention must be given to the specific needs of minority social workers. This study suggests that the

current trends in minority access to the field social work will continue until these specific needs are addressed by organizations as well as the profession as a whole.

Awareness of the Implications of Racism for Social Workers of Color

The 8 social workers that participated in this study all suggested that racism plays a part in the difficulty in recruiting and retaining people of color in the field of social work. The literature defined racism as one social group's domination and oppression over another (Lum, 2000). Several participants described the intrinsic values of the profession as oppressive to persons of non-dominant cultural groups. These findings lend themselves to the idea also found in the literature that institutional racism affects social workers of color (McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992).

Institutional racism is the idea that the core values and beliefs of the dominant group of society perpetuate racism and inequality (McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992). Results of this study indicate that institutional racism has affected the social work profession since its inception. Several participants discussed the historical racism of the profession and how social workers have been involved in the oppression of people of color for generations. Social workers have participated in racist and discriminatory practices towards minority groups as far back as the settlement house movement (Potocky, 1997). Participant accounts include descriptions of how families of color were torn apart by social workers, how minority cultural groups were oppressed by the actions of social workers, and how the social work profession as a whole is viewed by communities of color as part of a larger racist social system. Social work's role in a racist society has put many social workers of color in the precarious position within their

own communities of being known as a “sellout” or a participant in the perpetuation of racism and oppression.

Most of the participants in this study agreed that the institutional racism intrinsic in the social work profession has contributed to difficulties in recruiting and retaining social workers of color. Social work is viewed as part of the larger macrosystem of society that is governed by beliefs and values of the dominant culture that influence all aspects of social functioning (Ashford et al., 1997). Many participants suggested that the fact that the social work profession is based upon dominant cultural practices leads to the exclusion of the values and beliefs of communities of color. Thus, social workers of color are marginalized within the profession which leads to difficulty in the recruitment and retention of minorities in the field.

Finally, the social work profession has been unable to appropriately address the issue of racism in society. It has been argued, both within and outside of the profession, that social work, as an institution based on dominant cultural values, has the main goal and objective of social control. This is to say that the goal of social work is not to assist oppressed populations, but rather that it is to maintain the status quo and values of the dominant culture by providing oppressed populations with just enough resources to avoid revolution (Trattner, 1999). If this is true, it would explain why the social work profession has not been extremely active in fighting against institutional racism, and why recruitment and retention of social workers of color is difficult.

Respect of Cultural Differences

The findings of this study suggest that an awareness and respect of cultural differences is essential in the recruitment and retention of social workers of color.

Participants agreed that communities of color hold beliefs, values and world-views that conflict with those of the dominant culture. Often, minority social workers must accept professional content and world-view in mainstream organizations that conflicts with their own (Benavides et al., 1980). Traditionally social workers of color have been expected to conform and assimilate to dominant cultural norms of the social work profession. Participants suggested that mainstream organizations, as well as the profession as a whole, have completely ignored the cultural values and beliefs that minority social workers hold and that guide their practice.

Recruitment and retention of social workers of color is affected by the unwillingness of the social work profession to recognize and respect these cultural differences. Both the literature and the study findings argue that traditional recruitment practices have excluded social workers of color. Participants explain that recruitment practices must consider cultural differences regarding communication and information sharing in order to effectively recruit minorities into the field of social work.

Once social workers of color have been recruited into organizations, it is important to recognize how participation in a dominant cultural entity affects them. Minority social workers must participate cross-culturally in their professional lives. All oppressed populations develop these bicultural skills in order to maneuver between their nurturing environment of their own community and the sustaining environment of the dominant culture (Pinderhughes, 1989). Although minority social workers must participate with the dominant system of society that governs social work practice, they do not shed their own cultural values, beliefs and practices entirely (Wilson & Stith, 1993).

Another important aspect of respect for cultural differences was suggested by several of the participants. Findings show that many of the participants believe that within communities of color, dual relationships occur, and are unavoidable. The social work profession negates the natural existence of dual relationships in situations where social workers of color work in their own communities. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics states that,

“The social worker should not condone or engage in any dual or multiple relationships with clients or former clients in which there is a potential of exploitation or potential harm to the client. The social worker is responsible for setting clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries” (Lowenberg & Dolgoff, 1996).

Many participants described situations in which clients were neighbors or relatives of neighbors and members of the community. What the NASW Code of Ethics appears to overlook is that, within communities of color, dual relationships are a necessary and vital aspect of community life. This ethical mandate presumes to disrespect cultural sensitivity by mandating social workers to avoid these dual relationships, and in doing so, only adds to the marginalization of social workers of color.

Minority social workers bring with them values and skills intrinsic in their own communities that guide their social work practice. This study suggests that awareness of and respect for these practices that are different from the dominant cultural norms of the social work profession is essential to the recruitment and retention of social workers of color. Several participants described the predicament of minority social workers who use their own cultural values and insights in their practice. To survive in the social work

system, minorities are expected to conform to dominant cultural norms regarding social work practice. The values, beliefs and practices of social workers of color are not often appreciated or accepted, and are often viewed as deviant. However, participants suggested that minority social workers hold beliefs and values regarding social work practice that are more beneficial to many of the individuals receiving social services than those of the dominant culture. Recognition and acceptance of these differences in values and practice is essential to the recruitment and retention of minority social workers.

Importance of Providing Support to Social Workers of Color

Effective recruitment and retention of all social workers includes providing support to individuals to effectively perform their duties. All of the supports that are important to social workers of social workers of non-minority cultural background are equally important to social workers of color. However, while certain supports are necessary for all social workers, minority social workers also need additional supports in order to survive within the dominant cultural system of the social work profession.

While the literature suggests that financial support is important to all social workers, participants in this study expressed the need for additional financial support in order to recruit and retain social workers of color. Oppressed populations have traditionally been denied access to financial supports necessary to participate in higher education (Wilson & Stith, 1993). Without this financial support for education, people of color are often unable to compete in the social work profession that requires formal education and professional licensure. Provision of financial support for education to social workers of color, not only initially but also for advanced study, is an important factor in recruitment and retention.

This study and the literature both suggest that social supports are the most important need of social workers of color. These additional social supports are necessary given that minority social workers must leave their own nurturing environments to join the social work profession (Longres & Seltzer, 1994). Participants suggested that access to other members of their own cultural group through supervision, mentorship and other supportive roles contributes to the ability of social workers of color to function within the profession. Furthermore, the isolation of minority social workers that often occurs in mainstream organizations is lessened if other minority staff are visible and accessible.

Another important support factor evident in this study was flexibility. As the social work profession is guided by dominant cultural norms regarding time, family, and priorities, these same values of communities of color are not often considered or valued. Participants suggested that in order to recruit and retain minority social workers, organizations must be aware of cultural differences that may require flexibility. This is also an important aspect of respect for cultural differences. As the social worker of color must move between his or her own nurturing culture and the dominant sustaining culture, conflicts may arise around priorities and duty (De Hoyos, De Hoyos, & Anderson, 1986). Flexibility includes understanding the different values and priorities that minority social workers may hold, and allowing social workers to make decisions and provide services based on those cultural beliefs. This study suggests that the social work profession will need to become more flexible in regards to the values and practices of social workers of color if it truly hopes to recruit and retain this population.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of qualitative research and of this study are that, by interviewing face to face, the researcher is provided with in-depth understanding of the participants' perspectives and beliefs about a topic. In this study, participants were all social workers of color who have first hand experiences and understanding of this topic. Qualitative research allows for richness of information not found in quantitative methods of research (Patton, 1987).

A limitation of this study was that the researcher is Caucasian. Given that the research was designed from the perspective of a Caucasian person's world-view, values and beliefs, some important information may have been excluded or missed in the interviews. Participants may have been reluctant to open up completely to the researcher regarding this topic given that she is Caucasian. Another limitation is that the small study sample is not representative of all social workers of color. Six of the 8 participants were recruited from NASW membership. As was stated in the literature review, it may be possible that members of oppressed population groups would not enroll in a dominant culture organization such as the NASW. Additionally, all participants in this study held MSW degrees. Although this study was open to both BSW and MSW social workers, no responses were received from bachelor-level social workers, even though the number of minority social workers holding BSW degrees is significantly higher than the number holding MSW degrees (Berger, 1989). Finally, the small sample size of this study does not allow for generalizing to the larger population of minority social workers.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy

The large percentage of people of color accessing social services has not had a great deal of effect on the number of minorities entering the social work profession. In fact, recruitment and retention of social workers of color continues to decline (Berger, 1989). The findings of this study suggest that institutional racism has a great impact on the recruitment and retention of minorities in the field. On a macrosystems level, the social work profession is based on values and beliefs held by the dominant culture of this society, which has historically oppressed and discriminated against minority populations (Lum, 2000). Given the need for social work professionals of culturally diverse backgrounds, it will be increasingly important for organizations to examine their practices and policies that may contribute to institutional racism.

Currently, social workers of color, and all people of color for that matter, are required to conform to dominant cultural norms and beliefs in order to survive (Pinderhughes, 1989). Many of the participants of this study suggested that a complete overhaul of the profession is necessary in order to entice minorities to participate in social work practice. This does not exclusively refer to organizations' need to rethink and redesign their recruitment and retention practices. It also includes overall changes in the access that people of color have to education, financial resources and leadership positions available, and decisions made about communities of color on a political level. What this indicates is that all aspects of society must be aware of and address the implications of racism and how they affect the opportunities of people of color in this country.

Implications for Research

This study includes the perspectives and experiences of 8 social workers of color in Minnesota. This study does provide an in-depth understanding of the perspectives of these 8 participants, however, it is evident that more extensive research would provide a much broader and more generalizable understanding of this topic. The findings presented can be a basis for developing quantitative research. This study could be used for comparison to other research on this topic from various enclaves of minority social workers. Additionally, research may be directed toward recruitment and retention issues specific to educational settings that were not addressed in this study. Future research may also include phenomenological type of analysis in order to gain much richer and more detailed first hand accounts of minority social workers' perceptions regarding recruitment and retention of people of color in the field of social work.

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APPENDICES

Executive Director
NASW or Social Service Organization
Minneapolis/Saint Paul, MN 55---

Dear:

I am a graduate student at Augsburg College in the process of completing a Master's degree in Social Work. One of my required projects for completion of this program is to write a thesis. I have chosen to investigate issues of recruitment and retention of people of color in the social work profession.

The purpose of this study is to understand the factors that contribute to the recruitment and retention of people of color in social work from the perspective of social workers that are people of color. The process consists of a face-to-face interview lasting approximately 1 hour.

I am requesting your permission to contact social workers in your agency that might be potential study participants. Your agency's approval is completely voluntary, as is the participation of anyone who is contacted because of your referral.

Your agency's relationship with this researcher or with Augsburg College will not be affected by your decision whether or not to participate. If any individuals in your agency are referred for participation, their relationship with this researcher or with Augsburg College will not be affected by their decision whether or not to participate.

Thank you for considering this request. I will gladly share the results of this study with you upon request. I hope that will agree to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me anytime at (651) 295-2404. If your agency agrees to participate in this study, please contact me no later than January 5, 2001. I request that if your agency does agree to participate that you (the Executive Director) sign and date this letter below. A copy of this letter will be available to you. Once your agency's consent is received, I will begin to contact individuals in your agency to request their participation in this study.

I greatly appreciate your agency's support.

Sincerely,

Dana Bennett

I give consent for this above named researcher to contact social workers in this agency for potential participation in this study.

Signature and Title (i.e. Executive Director)

Date

**RECRUITMENT / RETENTION OF MINORITIES IN THE SOCIAL WORK
PROFESSION**

STUDY CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study about the factors that contribute to the recruitment and retention of people of color in the social work profession. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a licensed bachelor or masters level social worker in the state of Minnesota. I ask that you read this consent form and ask any questions that you have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by myself, Dana Bennett, as a part of my master's thesis in Social Work at Augsburg College.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to look at the contributing factors in the recruitment and retention of minority social workers. This study is being conducted in order to gain the perspectives on this topic of social workers that are of color.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask that you be willing to do the following: sign a consent form verifying your choice to participate in this study, participate in a face-to-face interview with myself that will last approximately 1 hour, be willing to have the interview audiotaped.

Risks and Benefits of Participating in the Study:

This study does have a potential risk. Given the nature of the study, it is possible that you may experience some psychological distress. You will be asked to describe your personal experiences. It is possible that by describing these personal experiences you may feel some emotional pain or stress. Your level of emotional stress depends on your experiences in the social work profession and your experiences as a person of color. In the event that during the interview, you feel that you are no longer able to continue without suffering extreme emotional or psychological stress, the interview will be ended.

This study also has potential indirect benefits. Few studies have been conducted on this topic, thus you would have the opportunity to participate in a potentially significant study in the social work field. As a participant in this study, your input as a social worker that is a person of color will directly impact the outcomes of this study. Your description of your personal experiences will allow for an examination of this topic from the perspective of people of color. Finally, the outcomes of this study potentially may affect

future practices in the recruitment and retention of minorities into the social work profession.

In the event that this research results in psychological stress or trauma, treatment referrals will be available as needed. Referrals will be made to organizations in your community, and will include a telephone number. Payment for any such treatment must be provided by you or by your third party payer (such as health insurance, Medicare, etc.).

Referral Information:

United Way - First Call for Help
651-291-0211

Abbott Northwestern Hospital – Health Psychology Services
612-863-5369 (Minneapolis Area)

Community University Health Care Center
612-627-4774 (Minneapolis Area)

Hennepin County Mental Health Centers
612-347-5770 (Minneapolis Area)

Hamm Clinic
651-224-0614 (St. Paul Area)

Confidentiality:

The records of this study (tape recordings) will be kept private. I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be kept in a locked file. Only the researcher and the researcher's thesis advisor, Maria Dinis will have access to the records.

Tape recordings will only be used for the purpose of this research study. They will not be used for any other educational or training purposes. Upon completion of this research study, all audio recordings will be erased and destroyed. This data will be destroyed no later than August 30, 2001.

All information gathered is confidential and every effort will be made to protect your anonymity, although anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the small size of the study sample. No names or other identifying information will be used in this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Augsburg College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Dana Bennett. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have any questions later, you may contact her at: (651) 295-2404.

You may also contact the researcher's thesis advisor, Maria Dinis, at (612) 330-1704. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature of Researcher: _____ **Date:** _____

I consent to be audiotaped by the researcher.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Direct quotations may be used in this study. Study participant names will not be used in the study. I consent to allow use of my direct quotes in the published thesis document.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Dear Potential Study Participant:

I am a graduate student at Augsburg College in the process of completing a Master's degree in Social Work. One of my required projects for completion of this program is to write a thesis. I have chosen to investigate issues of recruitment and retention of people of color in the social work profession.

The purpose of this study is to understand the factors that contribute to the recruitment and retention of minorities in social work from the perspective of social workers that are people of color.

Part of my thesis involves interviewing ten social workers of color that are at least 21 years old, have either a bachelor's or master's degree in Social Work, and who are currently working in the field of social work. You were selected as a potential participant because you have been identified as an NASW member who might meet these criteria. If you do meet these criteria, I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your relationship with this researcher or with Augsburg College. All of the information gathered in face-to-face interviews will be kept completely confidential, and will be destroyed at the end of this research study. Every effort will be made to protect study participants' anonymity, although it cannot be guaranteed because of the small sample size of the study. Please see the attached Consent Form for more details regarding your participation in this study.

Thank you for considering this request. I will gladly share the results of this study with you upon request. I hope that will agree to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me anytime at **(651) 295-2404**. If you agree to participate, please contact me directly by phone no later than **April 30, 2001**. At that time, upon your agreement to participate, we will schedule an interview time that is convenient for you.

Your support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dana Bennett

Dear Potential Study Participant:

I am a graduate student at Augsburg College in the process of completing a Master's degree in Social Work. One of my required projects for completion of this program is to write a thesis. I have chosen to investigate issues of recruitment and retention of people of color in the social work profession.

The purpose of this study is to understand the factors that contribute to the recruitment and retention of minorities in social work from the perspective of social workers that are people of color.

Part of my thesis involves interviewing ten social workers of color that are at least 21 years old, have either a bachelor's or master's degree in Social Work, and who are currently working in the field of social work. You were selected as a potential study participant because you work as a social worker in an agency that has agreed to participate in this study. If you do meet these criteria, I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Study participants will be selected on a first-come, first serve basis. Only the first ten respondents to this letter will be interviewed. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your relationship with this researcher or with Augsburg College. All of the information gathered in face-to-face interviews will be kept completely confidential, and will be destroyed at the end of this research study. Every effort will be made to protect study participants' anonymity, although it cannot be guaranteed because of the small sample size of the study. Please see the attached Consent Form for more details regarding your participation in this study.

Thank you for considering this request. I will gladly share the results of this study with you upon request. I hope that will agree to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me anytime at **(651) 295-2404**. If you agree to participate, please contact me directly by phone no later than **April 30, 2001**. At that time, upon your agreement to participate, we will schedule an interview time that is convenient for you.

Your support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dana Bennett

Standardized Interview Questions

What are minority social workers' perceptions about the recruitment and retention of people of color in the field of social work?

Interview Questions

- 1) How did your personal experiences as a minority impact your decision to become a social worker?
- 2) Describe your experience as a person of color of being recruited as a social worker for the position you currently hold.
- 3) Describe the reasons that have enabled you as a person of color to stay in your current social work position.
- 4) In general, what do you think encourages minorities to become employed in the social work profession?
- 5) In general, what do you think limits minorities from becoming employed in the social work profession?
- 6) In general, what do you think enables people of color to continue working in the social work profession over long periods of time?
- 7) In general, what do you think limits the ability of a person of color to continue working in the social work profession over long periods of time?
- 8) What do you think is important for organizations to consider when recruiting social workers who are of color?
- 9) What do you think is important for organizations to consider when attempting to retain minority social workers in their organization over long periods of time?

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Gender: _____ Years of Post-Secondary Ed. Completed: _____

Age: _____ Current Social Work Degree Held: _____

Ethnicity: _____ Months/Years in Social Work Field: _____

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Dana Bennett

FROM: Sharon Patten, Ph.D., Co-Chair (612-330-1723) SKP

RE: YOUR RECENT IRB APPLICATION

DATE: 10 April 2001

I am writing on behalf of the College's Institutional Review Board on the Use of Human Subjects. Your proposed study, "Recruitment/Retention of Minorities in the Social Work Profession" has been approved. Your IRB approval number is 2001-29-1. Please use this number on all-official correspondence and written materials relative to your study.

The IRB committee wishes you every success.

cc: Professor Maria Dinis, Ph.D., Thesis Advisor

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Campus Box #51 • 2211 Riverside Avenue • Minneapolis MN 55454 • Tel. (612)330-1189 • Fax (612)330-1493

