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Child and Interviewer Race in Forensic Interviewing

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the potential effect of child race and interviewer race on forensic interviewing outcomes. The results of the regression analysis indicated that child race and interviewer race had a significant effect on interview outcome category (no findings, inconclusive, or findings consistent with sexual abuse). Furthermore, the results indicate that the interaction of child and interviewer race had predictive value for rates of findings consistent with sexual abuse but not in the direction predicted. Cross-race dyads had significantly higher rates of interview outcomes consistent with sexual abuse. These findings suggest that more research into the effect of race on disclosure of child sexual abuse is needed.

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In 2011, child protective services (CPS) agencies nationwide reported receiving a staggering 3.4 million allegations of child maltreatment. CPS investigated and substantiated only a fraction of these allegations. However, over 60,000 of the cases that were ultimately substantiated contained allegations of sexual abuse (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012).

As part of the investigative process in child sexual abuse cases, CPS workers commonly use forensic interviewing services offered by child advocacy centers (CACs). The National Children's Alliance (NCA) estimates that in 2011, over 185,000 forensic interviews occurred in conjunction with CACs nationwide (NCA, 2012). The results of these interviews are often used in legal proceedings, not only to determine custody but also in criminal proceedings against the accused. The sheer number of interviews, coupled with the enormity of the stakes involved and the many factors involved in the forensic interview process itself, have resulted in a field that has been extensively examined.

As part of this examination, researchers have scrutinized many factors affecting the disclosure of child sexual abuse. However, one area that has remained largely unexplored is the effect of child and interviewer race on

disclosure (Springman, Wherry, & Notaro, 2006). The present study examines the effect of child and interviewer race on disclosure of child sexual abuse within the context of forensic interviews conducted in a CAC setting.

American helping professionals live and practice in a country where race and racial issues are very sensitive topics to broach (Sue, 2015). In spite of a national movement to increase knowledge and respect for cultural diversity and diversity-related issues in the field of child maltreatment (Behl, Crouch, May, Valente, & Conyngham, 2001), the impact of the history of racism in our nation is evident still today.

Life experiences largely determine the way in which people interact with those who are racially and culturally similar or dissimilar to them (Staats, 2014). While some adopt a color-blind approach to dealing with people of a different cultural or racial background, the reality is that when a person walks into a room, race and gender are immediately perceived, perhaps triggering bias. When a child is interviewed in a child-friendly setting by a trained forensic interviewer, does the child consider the race of the interviewer, and if so, what does that child do with the information? Alternatively, does the interviewer consider the child's race when conducting a forensic interview, and is the interview conducted differently for African-American and Caucasian children either consciously or unconsciously?

Literature review

Despite the potential relevance or impact of race on an interview outcome, there is very little direct guidance to be found in either forensic interviewing protocols or empirical research investigating this issue (Springman et al., 2006). Decisions pertaining to whether a child is interviewed by someone of a similar racial background may be based on speculation, personal experiences, or agency policy/protocols. In many cases the question may be a non-issue since agencies may lack an ethnically or racially diverse forensic interviewing staff.

Forensic interviewing protocols

Practitioners might look to forensic interviewing protocols for guidance on the issue of race within the interviewing context. There are over 700 CACs nationwide that adhere to national accreditation standards (National Children's Alliance, 2012). Services differ, but generally, the forensic interviewing services offered in conjunction with CACs include investigative techniques supported by the NCA and the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) (Hlavka, Olinger, & Lashley, 2010). Most CACs utilize one of several nationally recognized interviewing protocols; the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol (formerly referred to as RATAC) and NICHHD are two examples (Anderson et al., 2010). Race and diversity are not specifically

addressed in the rapport-building sections of these protocols, although the intensive trainings such as the five-day ChildFirst (formerly known as Finding Words) training, for example, includes discussion of and literature on cultural competence issues. Nonetheless, there are no guidelines for child and interviewer race matching or mixing in these protocols.

Related areas

For practitioners of forensic interviewing who attempt to find guidance on the issues within the professional literature, there are currently three general areas that are relevant to the establishment of best practices: the effect of race in the context of professional counseling relationships, the effect of race in the context of the field of child sexual abuse in general, or the body of research that attempts to identify predictors of disclosure of child sexual abuse. While none of these areas directly address the issue of race in the forensic interviewing context, each lends some guidance that can be valuable.

Literature examining the effect of race in the context of professional counseling relationships has moved from attempts to quantify the effect of race to a consensus that cultural competence is the best practice for addressing racial differences between the counselor and client (Cabral & Smith, 2011; Sullivan & Cottone, 2010; Swift, Callahan, Tompkins, Connor, & Dunn, 2015). Cultural competence stresses the importance of understanding both the counselor and the client's cultural context, with attention to language differences and other details that may contain hidden meaning (Chao, 2012). Above all, cultural competence calls for awareness of cultural differences in attitudes and beliefs, knowledge of the worldview of culturally diverse clients, and the use of appropriate skills (Chao, 2012). In a meta-analysis, matching the race of the counselor and client, without more, was found to have no positive effect on the outcome of the counseling experience (Cabral & Smith, 2011).

Within the field of child sexual abuse prevention and response, some research has examined the issue of race and ethnicity. However, these studies have focused on racial and ethnic differences in symptom presentation (Clear, Vincent, & Harris, 2006), differences among ethnicities in the experience and meaning of child sexual abuse (Ullman & Filipas, 2005) and characteristics of child sexual abuse within certain ethnicities (Futa, Hsu, & Hanson, 2001). Although knowledge of this body of research could increase the cultural competence of a forensic interviewer, it sheds little light on the effect of the race of the child and interviewer on the forensic interview itself.

In attempting to determine what predicts the disclosure of child sexual abuse, researchers have examined many factors. These factors include the child's developmental level, gender, relationship to the perpetrator, severity of the abuse, age at the time of the forensic interview, consequences of disclosure to the child and family, caregiver support, and the child's

perception that he or she is responsible for the abuse (Crisma, Bascelli, Paci, & Romito, 2004; Goodman-Brown, Edelstein, Goodman, Jones, & Gordon, 2003; Lippert, Cross, Jones, & Walsh, 2009; Paine & Hansen, 2002). There is scant attention paid to the effect of race on the disclosure of child sexual abuse.

Interviewer and interviewee race

The authors found only three studies specifically focusing on interviewer and interviewee race and its effects on disclosure of negative events such as child sexual abuse. First, Dunkerley and Dalenberg's 1999 analog study involved artificial nonabuse scenarios and evaluated disclosure rates related to positive and negative secrets. The study revealed that only 20% of African-American children disclosed a negative secret to a Caucasian interviewer but almost 67% disclosed to an African-American interviewer. The study further showed that 60% of Caucasian children disclosed a negative secret to an African American interviewer and almost 83% disclosed to a Caucasian interviewer (Dunkerley & Dalenberg, 1999). In sum, although there were differences in the rate at which African-American and Caucasian children disclosed negative secrets, the authors posited that race matching of the interviewer and child strongly predicted disclosure of a negative secret.

In contrast, Dailey and Claus (2001) found that matching adult client and interviewer race did not increase the disclosure of child sexual abuse. The authors gathered retrospective data on 8,276 clients and 22 interviewers from intake interviews conducted with adults seeking publicly funded substance abuse treatment. The intake interview included use of the Addiction Severity Index (ASI), a structured interview that includes questions on history of abuse. Although Caucasian interviewers and female interviewers elicited more reports of abuse and Caucasian males were more likely to report abuse, the researchers found that matching interviewer and client race, age, or gender did not increase nor decrease the likelihood of disclosure of child sexual abuse (Dailey & Claus, 2001).

Although these articles shed some light on race and disclosure, neither involved children being interviewed as part of an ongoing investigation of child sexual abuse. However, in 2006, Springman and colleagues published research retrospectively examining actual forensic interviews of 220 alleged child sexual abuse victims using the interview protocol disseminated by the National Children's Advocacy Center (NCAC). They found that the child's and interviewer's race "significantly predicted degree of disclosure" (p. 109), though not in the way Dunkerley and Dalenberg's research would suggest. While Dunkerley and Dalenberg (1999) found that same-race dyads strongly predicted disclosure of a negative secret, Springman and colleagues found that cross-race dyads resulted in a *greater* degree of disclosure than same-race

dyads. This finding was the opposite of that hypothesized by the study authors prior to beginning their research (Springman et al., 2006).

The present study

The current lack of agreement in the limited research examining the role of race as a factor that may influence disclosure of child sexual abuse indicates the need for further study of this important issue. Dunkerley and Dalenberg (1999), using artificial interview scenarios, concluded that race matching significantly increased disclosure of negative secrets. However, two studies specifically examining the disclosure of child sexual abuse utilizing actual client data did not support that conclusion, though the results were subtly different. Specifically, Dailey and Claus (2001) found that race matching did not increase disclosure by adults while Springman and colleagues (2006) found that race *mixing* increased the likelihood of disclosure by children. Additional investigation is warranted to further examine the potential impact of race on disclosure in order to give better guidance to practitioners.

The purpose of the present study is to examine the potential effects of the race of the child and the interviewer on forensic interview outcomes, specifically concerning child sexual abuse. It was expected that interviews conducted by interviewers of the same race as the child would lead to more interview findings consistent with sexual abuse than cross-racial dyads.

This study includes real-world data in a retrospective analysis of existing files of forensic interview outcomes in cases of alleged child sexual abuse involving African-American and Caucasian children at a CAC in a rural, southern state. Interviews were conducted by six forensic interviewers, three African American and three Caucasian, all trained in the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol: RATAC (Rapport, Anatomy Identification, Touch Inquiry, Abuse Scenario, and Closure). Although addressing the implications of racial issues as they relate to forensic interviews encompasses far more than just African Americans and Caucasians, this study is limited to these two groups as the population of the state in which the CAC is located is 37% African American and 60% Caucasian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Methods

Participants

This retrospective analysis included 522 cases of suspected child sexual abuse. The study included all interviews conducted between 2000 and 2009 in which the child's race was identified as African American or Caucasian; there was an interview outcome of findings consistent with child sexual abuse, inconclusive, or no findings; and the interviewee was aged 2 to 17 years. Furthermore, only interviews

Table 1. Child and Interviewer Race.

| | Percent | N |
|--------------------|---------|-----|
| Child | | |
| Race | | |
| African American | 44% | 231 |
| Caucasian | 56% | 291 |
| Interviewer | | |
| Race | | |
| African American | 50% | 3 |
| Caucasian | 50% | 3 |

supervised by the clinical director were selected, as a means of assuring consistent analysis of the interview results.

As this is a retrospective study of deidentified existing charts, the relevant institutional review board deemed it exempt from the need for IRB approval. All interviews included were conducted for the purpose of investigation of the allegations of sexual abuse and ensuring the safety of the child. Child and interviewer race is summarized in Table 1. African-American children composed 44% of the cases ($n = 231$) and Caucasian children composed 56% of the cases ($n = 291$). There were 96 males (18.5%) and 426 females (81.5%) in the sample. All children were aged 2 to 17 years with a mean age of 8.43 years. Boys ($M = 6.70$ years, $SD = 3.16$) were significantly younger than girls ($M = 8.84$, $SD = 4.04$, $t_{(520)} = -4.86$, $p < .0001$). Caucasian children ($M = 7.77$, $SD = 3.91$) were significantly younger than African-American children ($M = 9.29$, $SD = 3.92$, $t_{(520)} = -4.39$, $p < .0001$). Complete data were available on all participants and thus all analyses utilized the full sample of 522 cases.

Six agency interviewers who worked between March 2000 and July 2009 conducted the interviews included in this study. Three African-American interviewers conducted 43.7% of the interviews ($n = 228$), and three Caucasian interviewers conducted 56.3% of the interviews ($n = 294$). The interviewers were female with the exception of one African American male interviewer, who conducted 4.8% of the interviews. All interviewers were trained in the use of the CornerHouse RATAC model of forensic interviewing and maintained ongoing continuing education. There was no deliberate racial or gender matching as available interviewers alternated interviews as referrals were received.

Interview setting and procedures

The forensic interviews were conducted for investigative and safety evaluation purposes. The CAC accepted referrals from law enforcement, the Department of Human Services Family and Children's Services, and the District Attorney's Office. The CAC follows a multidisciplinary team approach to serving possible child victims; therefore, interview requests

were screened by a trained case manager or forensic interviewer to avoid multiple extensive interviews as well as to ensure there was reasonable suspicion the abuse may have occurred. Reasonable suspicion constituted either disclosure of abuse by the child, a witness to the abuse, medical evidence of abuse, or other behaviors indicating abuse (i.e., sexually inappropriate behavior). Forensic interviews were conducted only if the requesting agency was present to observe the live interview. All interviews were audio- or videotaped and were conducted in a child-friendly, neutral setting at the CAC. The clinical director directly witnessed, supervised, and/or evaluated all interviews included in this study.

Independent variables

The race of the child and the race of the interviewer served as dichotomous predictor variables. Each of these independent variables had two levels: African American (coded as 0) and Caucasian (coded as 1).

Outcome measure

There were three potential interview outcomes based on the report provided by the child during the interview: *no findings*, *inconclusive*, or *consistent with sexual abuse*. Interview outcomes had been determined following each interview by the forensic interviewer and clinical director working in conjunction to evaluate several factors provided by the child during the interview. The factors included, but were not limited to, the content, consistency, and feasibility of the report; the child's ability to provide peripheral details and sensory information; the affect and demeanor of the child during the interview; and the ability of the child to explain the report.

Analysis

Observed frequency data was calculated using all 522 cases. An ordinal logistic regression analysis was conducted utilizing SPSS 20.0 to assess the influence of the race of the child and of the interviewer on interview outcomes (no findings, inconclusive, and consistent with sexual abuse). The race of the child and the race of the interviewer were both treated as dichotomous variables (African American or Caucasian). Model fit and assumptions were tested and odds ratios were calculated for each level of interview outcome as a function of both predictor variables as well as for their interaction.

Results

Interviewer and child race was mixed in 54.2% and matched in 45.8% of the interviews (see Figure 1). Three interview outcomes were predicted from the data: no findings, inconclusive, and findings consistent with sexual abuse. The majority of the interview outcomes fell into the consistent with findings of sexual abuse interview group (61.7%), fol-

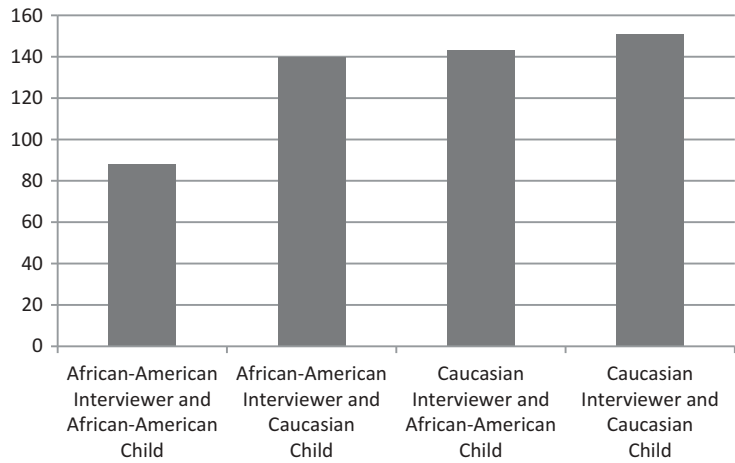


Figure 1. Number of cases by interviewer race and child race.

Table 2. Interview Outcomes by Race of Child and Race of Interviewer.

| | % | n |
|--|------|-----|
| Findings Consistent with Sexual Abuse | 61.7 | 322 |
| Matched Interviewer/Child | | |
| African-American Child and Interviewer | 10.3 | 54 |
| Caucasian Child and Interviewer | 14.6 | 76 |
| Mixed Interviewer/Child | | |
| African-American Child and Caucasian Interviewer | 19.2 | 100 |
| Caucasian Child and African-American Interviewer | 17.6 | 92 |
| Inconclusive | 24.5 | 128 |
| Matched Interviewer/Child | | |
| African-American Child and Interviewer | 3.1 | 16 |
| Caucasian Child and Interviewer | 8.6 | 45 |
| Mixed Interviewer/Child | | |
| African-American Child and Caucasian Interviewer | 6.3 | 33 |
| Caucasian Child and African-American Interviewer | 6.5 | 34 |
| No Findings | 13.8 | 72 |
| Matched Interviewer/Child | | |
| African-American Child and Interviewer | 3.5 | 18 |
| Caucasian Child and Interviewer | 5.7 | 30 |
| Mixed Interviewer/Child | | |
| African-American Child and Caucasian Interviewer | 1.9 | 10 |
| Caucasian Child and African-American Interviewer | 2.7 | 14 |
| Total | 100 | 522 |

lowed by inconclusive interview findings (24.5%) and no findings (13.8%) (see [Table 2](#)).

The full model, including child race, interviewer race, and an interaction term of the two predictors, was tested for the 522 cases. Because the majority of the cases fell in the highest category of the dependent variable, findings consistent with sexual abuse, a complementary log-log link function was utilized. Goodness of model fit was examined utilizing Pearson chi-square and deviance measures. A good fit was found for the model ($X^2_{(3)} = 7.37, p = .06$; $D_{(3)} = 7.44, p = .06$). The difference between the two log-likelihoods was examined to determine if the null hypothesis that the model without the predictors is as good as the model with the predictors could be rejected. The difference ($X^2_{(3)} = 14.6, p < .002$) indicated that this null hypothesis could be rejected and that the model including child and interviewer race and an interaction term with these two predictors is a better predictor of interview outcome.

A test of parallelism indicated that there is a difference in the regression coefficients for the three categories of case outcome ($X^2_{(3)} = 7.44, p = .06$). Although the proportion of variance accounted for according to Nagelkerke's R^2 is low ($R^2 = 0.33$), this should be interpreted with caution as the variance in a 3 level ordinal variable, particularly when the majority of responses are in one of the categories (findings consistent with sexual abuse in the current study), is restrained. Overall, the model had statistically significant ability discriminate between findings consistent with sexual abuse from inconclusive or no findings results ($c = .589, p = .001$). The parameter estimates indicated that the race of the child ($\beta = .678, p < .001$), the race of the interviewer ($\beta = .511, p < .006$), and the interaction of their race ($\beta = -.883, p < .003$) were all significant predictors of the interview outcome (see [Table 3](#)).

Analysis of interview outcome rates by the race of the child was conducted to examine potential differences. While the results were not statistically significant, African-American children were more likely to have an outcome consistent with sexual abuse compared to Caucasian children and less likely to have an inconclusive finding or no finding compared to Caucasian children ([Table 4](#)). [Table 2](#) indicates the percentage of children by race in each interview outcome category.

It was expected that interviews conducted by interviewers of the same race as the child would lead to more findings consistent with sexual abuse than cross-racial dyads. Wald chi-square tests demonstrated support for a significant interaction between interviewer race and child race (see [Table 3](#)); however, the

Table 3. Ordinal Regression Analysis Predicting Interview Outcome.

| Variable | <i>B</i> | SE | Wald Statistic | <i>p</i> value |
|------------------------|----------|------|----------------|----------------|
| Child's Race | .678 | .193 | 12.37 | .0001 |
| Interviewer's Race | .511 | .186 | 7.53 | .006 |
| Child*Interviewer Race | -.883 | .295 | 8.96 | .003 |

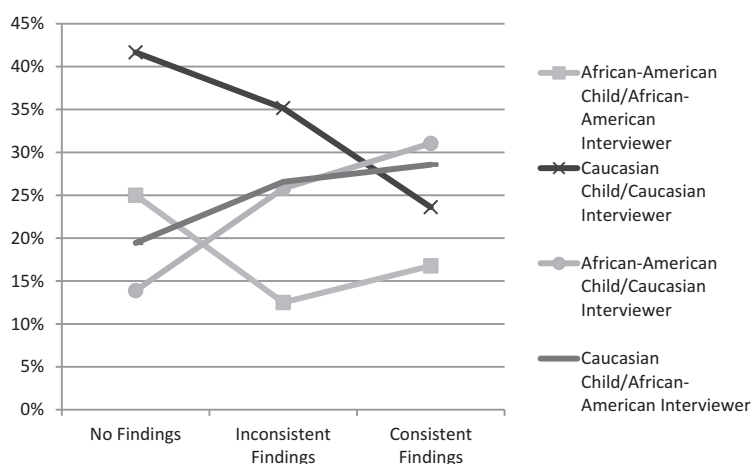
Table 4. Odds for African-American Child's Interview Outcome.

| Outcome | Odds Ratio | Confidence Intervals |
|---------------|------------|----------------------|
| Disclosure | 1.46 | 0.96–2.22 |
| Inconsistent | 0.72 | 0.48–1.09 |
| No Disclosure | 0.78 | 0.28–2.15 |

Note: Caucasian child's interview outcome was utilized as the reference group.

Table 5. Odds of Disclosure Compared to Non-disclosure or Inconsistent Interview Outcome.

| Race Dyad | Odds Ratio | Confidence Intervals |
|---|------------|----------------------|
| Caucasian Child and Caucasian Interviewer | 1.0 | |
| African-American Child and Caucasian Interviewer | 2.31 | 1.43–3.72 |
| Caucasian Child and African-American Interviewer | 1.91 | 1.18–3.05 |
| African-American Child and African American Interviewer | 1.57 | 0.92–2.68 |

**Figure 2.** Interview outcome by race of child and interviewer in percentages for each interview outcome category.

interaction was not in the direction expected. Examination of the odds ratios indicated that findings consistent with sexual abuse were more likely in cross-racial dyads than in same-racial dyads (see [Tables 2](#) and [5](#)). African-American children interviewed by a Caucasian interviewer had 2.31 increased odds of having a finding consistent with sexual abuse compared to a Caucasian child interviewed by a Caucasian interviewer. Caucasian children had 1.90 increased odds of findings consistent with sexual abuse when interviewed by an African-American interviewer compared to a Caucasian interviewer. This interaction is depicted in [Figure 2](#).

Discussion

The current investigation further explored some of the conflicting findings from the previous literature by examining the effect of the race of the interviewer and the race of the child on forensic interview outcomes in a real-world setting in the rural South. The results of this study challenged the main predicted outcome. As anticipated, the race of the child, the race of the interviewer, and the interaction of these variables did significantly influence interview outcome. However, these data indicated that findings consistent with sexual abuse were more likely in cross-racial dyads compared to same-racial dyads. It is important to note that while these results are statistically significant, the effect size is not large.

Child race

The Dunkerley and Dalenberg (1999) analog study strongly suggested that African-American children would be less likely to disclose sexual abuse than Caucasian children. However, Springman and colleagues (2006) failed to find evidence to support this prediction, finding instead that the African-American children in their study were slightly more likely than Caucasian children to provide a detailed account of sexual abuse. The results of the present study continue in the direction of the Springman results, with African-American children being significantly more likely to have the interview outcome of findings consistent with sexual abuse than Caucasian children.

Dunkerley and Dalenberg cited studies finding that African Americans distrust mental health services in general, and services provided by Caucasians in particular, as a possible explanation of their findings. However, the Dunkerley study does not indicate any special efforts toward rapport building or cultural competence by the interviewers. Both of the interviewing protocols and training programs involved in Springman and colleagues (2006), and the current study give attention to rapport building and cultural competence. It is possible that attention to these factors ameliorated the effects of this distrust. This explanation is consistent with findings from the counseling literature indicating that cultural competence (which includes attention to rapport building) is the best practice for addressing racial differences (Cabral & Smith, 2011; Sullivan & Cottone, 2010; Swift et al., 2015).

Interaction of child and interviewer race

Dunkerley and Dalenberg's (1999) analog study also suggested that interviews conducted by interviewers of the same race as the child might predict more findings consistent with sexual abuse than cross-racial dyads. However, Dailey and Claus (2001) found that race matching did not increase

retrospective disclosures by adults. Next, Springman and colleagues' 2006 study provided some evidence that race mixing increased disclosures by children, although the effect size was "quite modest" (p. 109). The findings of the present study are consistent with the Springman findings on the interaction of child and interviewer race. In the present study, the probability of having a finding consistent with sexual abuse is statistically significantly greater for African-American children interviewed by a Caucasian interviewer compared to Caucasian children interviewed by a Caucasian interviewer. Likewise, Caucasian children were more likely to have a finding consistent with sexual abuse when interviewed by an African American interviewer compared to a Caucasian interviewer. The Springman study and the present study have strikingly similar findings (2.76 and 2.31 increased odds respectively for African American children and 1.91 and 1.90 increased odds for Caucasian children with mixed interviewer race).

While the findings of the present study appear to support the findings of the Springman and colleagues (2006) study, there are differences that warrant consideration. The present study involved a much larger sample size ($n = 522$ versus $n = 220$), more interviewers ($n = 6$ versus $n = 3$), and slightly larger effect size. In addition, the outcome categories in each study were different. In the present study, the outcome categories were dictated by agency policy (no findings, inconclusive, and findings consistent with child sexual abuse). In the Springman and colleagues (2006) study, the outcome categories were developed by the authors and included no disclosure, tentative disclosure, and disclosure with detailed account of activities. What remains unknown is the effective difference between the present study's category of "inconclusive" and the Springman study's category of "tentative disclosure."

Implications

The process of a child disclosing maltreatment can be burdened with difficulties, such as being interviewed by several professionals from different disciplines, not being believed, feeling ashamed, and not feeling supported. The goal of a forensic interview is to provide a safe, supportive, and respectful space that removes impediments to disclosure without crossing the line into excessive suggestiveness (Gries, Goh, & Cavanaugh, 1996). To conclude from this study that cross-racial dyads are the best way to promote disclosure of child sexual abuse would be incorrect. At most, this study may be said to show some support for the Springman findings that could lead to the conclusion that race-mixing is not a barrier to disclosure. However, as Springman and colleagues wrote, "These results may not demonstrate clinical utility for drawing conclusions regarding the likelihood that children will differentially disclose sexual abuse as a function of their own race and the

race of the forensic interviewer” (2006, p. 109). Further research is needed to draw firm conclusions about the effect of race on forensic interviewing.

The interviewers in both Springman and the present study used a semi-structured forensic interviewing protocol for the interviews, allowing the interviewer to emphasize (or deemphasize) portions of the protocol in response to the specific circumstances of a particular child. However, both protocols emphasize the importance of rapport building. As previously discussed, one potential implication of this study is that the culturally competent interviewers followed the protocol guidelines and paid particular attention to building rapport.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

A limitation of this retrospective study is the lack of random assignment of interviewees to selected interviewers. Although there is great value in the examination of “real world” cases, there is a real need for a well-designed randomized study on this issue in which the potential influence of the race of the child and interview can be more carefully examined. This study did include six interviewers, but two interviewers conducted approximately 60% of the interviews. In addition, there was only one male interviewer involved. An important control was that one clinical director supervised all cases and worked with the interviewers to determine how to categorize the results. All interviewers received the same training in the RATAC protocol as provided by CornerHouse.

Moreover, due to the demographics of the state in which the interviews were conducted, the present study involved only African Americans and Caucasians. The effects and implications of other races, such as Native American or Hispanic, should also be studied. Furthermore, other factors that influence culture, such as religion, region, sexual orientation, and age, should be studied.

The implications of the use of the RATAC protocol and the NCAC protocol need to be explored. While this study (using RATAC) replicated the major findings of the Springman and colleagues (2006) study (using the NCAC protocol), more information regarding the impact of using the two protocols would be valuable. Further investigation could help in crafting amendments to existing protocols that provide guidance to clinicians regarding the impact of child and interviewer race. In addition, further investigation could result in helpful additions to agency policy.

The present study has potential interest for professionals beyond forensic interviewers. Health care providers, victim advocates, police officers, prosecutors, child protection professionals, and others involved in child welfare could benefit from these findings. Further research into the impact of race for other professionals working in the field of child maltreatment is needed.

In addition, more is becoming known about the long-term health impact of adverse childhood events (ACEs) such as child abuse, sexual trauma, and witnessing domestic violence (Felitti & Anda, 2010). As health professionals move toward screening patients for these events, a deeper understanding of the effect of race on disclosure could prove valuable. Although race may be a sensitive topic in this country, it is a topic that must be acknowledged and explored to determine its effect on helping relationships.

Compliance with ethical standards

All procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation (institutional and national) and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2000. Informed consent was obtained from all patients for being included in the study.

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