



# Exploring Diversity: Perspectives of Underrepresented Individuals Practicing Within the Child Life Field



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## Introduction

- The purpose of this study was to explore the state of racial and ethnic diversity in the field of child life.
- The demographic changes in the pediatric population are significant and magnify the importance of addressing racial, ethnic, and cultural disparities in health and healthcare as a variety of groups are experiencing poorer health status and access to care.
- Benefit to cultural diversity in the healthcare setting.
  - Reduced healthcare disparities.
  - Increased access to culturally competent healthcare services.

## Methods

### Participants

9 self-identified racial and ethnic minority CLSs

### Procedures

- In-depth interviews consisted of open-ended questions.
  - CLSs' perception of diversity
  - Personal experiences
  - Helpful supports and barriers
  - Recommendations to recruit and retain a diverse group of CLSs in the field
- Exploratory analysis approach used to analyze each interview transcript.
- Developed codes and used thematic analysis.



FORMERLY CHILD LIFE COUNCIL

## Results

### Perceived lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the child life field

- The child life field is not diverse.
- Majority of CLSs are White female.

### Challenging experiences working with co-workers

4 participants reported that they are the only minority and reported negative emotions about being the "only one"

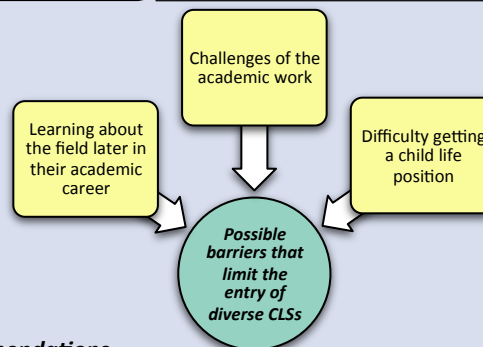
• "I think I felt isolated at times being the only minority during my internship among other student interns and child life specialists." (Black CLS)

7 participants did feel isolated, disconnected, disrespected, or had difficulty relating to their co-workers

• "At times nursing staff may treat you differently and not give you the respect as a professional." (Black CLS)  
• "I think it was always that fear inside that 'Am I going to be treated differently? Is someone not going to like me because I am not the same?'" (Black CLS)

Primary coping strategy: Supportive figures

• "I think...the type of mentors who are more encouraging and more accepting of who I was and how I was...really helped to make me more confident in who I am and to be comfortable in the way that I view things." (API CLS)



### Recommendations

1. Take initiative to increase awareness of the child life field early.
2. Increase accessibility of the field through alternative entry programs.
3. Have the ACLP educate other disciplines about child life.
4. Offer scholarships for underrepresented individuals.

## Discussion

- It is crucial to take the possible barriers into consideration when recruiting diverse CLSs to increase diversity in the child life field.
- **Underrepresented CLSs are experiencing subtle discrimination in their workplace.**

*"Forms of discrimination that pervade society, are less visible, often very ambiguous for those experiencing it, not easily recognized as discrimination."*

Subtle discrimination is a major concern as it impacts the well-being of the minority.

The experience of everyday discrimination on the job → lower perception of job satisfaction and additional stress = adversely affect the physical health of the minority individual and influence the retention rate.

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