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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the literature on gender equity education practices and discusses its implications for risk prevention for all children. The goal of the paper is to provide school psychologists and university faculty with knowledge about the current status of preparation in gender equity education in preservice preparation of school psychologists; and to present recommendations for preservice and inservice education for school psychologists regarding the impact of gender equity education for all children. It discusses the results of a national survey of gender equity education conducted in NASP (National Association of School Psychologists)-approved school psychology programs concerning the implications for the role of the school psychologist as a behavioral and instructional consultant. The results indicated that 61% of the programs responding explicitly taught gender equity. The impact of gender equity practices on the development of risk factors in both boys and girls is discussed. School psychologists can offer suggestions that facilitate gender equity practices such as cooperative learning to recognize the varied learning styles of all children; inservice programs and consultations to help teachers recognize and address the impact of gender stereotyping on both boys and girls; and interventions to address retention rate policies and prevention of high dropout rates. (JDM)

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Running head: GENDER EQUITY EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS

Gender Equity Education:
Implications for Risk Prevention for All Kids
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Poster session presented at the annual meeting of
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Abstract

The purposes of this poster are: to review the literature about gender equity education practices and implications for risk prevention for all children; to provide school psychologists and university faculty with knowledge about the current status of preparation in gender equity education in preservice preparation of school psychologists; and, to present recommendations for preservice and in service education for school psychologists regarding the impact of gender equity education for all children. The results of a national survey of gender equity education preparation in NASP approved school psychology programs is discussed in terms of implications for the role of the school psychologist as a behavioral and instructional consultant. Results indicate that 61% of the programs responding explicitly teach gender equity. Additionally, research and theory is explicitly taught in 44% of the programs while terminology related to gender education is explicitly taught in 50% of the programs. Only 25% of the programs, however, explicitly teach aspects of legislation related to gender equity. A smaller percentage of programs, ranging from 14 to 28% indicated that they saw knowledge of gender equity issues in specific content areas as less or not important. The impact of gender equity practices in education and methods to promote risk prevention for all children as part of the expanding role for school psychologists are discussed.

Gender Equity Education in the Preparation of School Psychologist:
Implications for Risk Prevention for All Kids

The issue of gender equity has received increased attention and concern recently in both the popular press and the scientific community. Discussions of the implications of teaching practices on the healthy development of both boys and girls can be found in the literature of teacher preparation (Sadker,1999). Additionally, controversy has arisen in both the professional literature and the popular press about the implications of unfair practices for both boys and girls (AAUW,1998; Lemann,2000). Various authors have questioned the degree to which educational practices put both boys and girls at risk for educational failure and low self esteem. For example, research has suggested that girls may learn less well in the competitive, individualistic style used in many educational settings while boys are differentially awarded more attention, both negative and positive from teachers and encouraged to engage in higher order thinking than are girls.(Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium,1993). Further, boys may be over identified while girls may be under identified as requiring special education, leaving both groups at risk for inappropriate services and support(MAEC 1993). Additionally, girls may have less access to advanced courses in math, science and especially technology, score lower on high stakes tests despite receiving better grades and exhibit decreased participation in physical education despite research suggesting that such activity leads to higher self esteem and has long term health benefits. Further, while boys continue to drop out of

school and repeat grades at a higher rate than girls, girls are less likely to return to and subsequently complete their schooling than are boys (Sadker, 1999). Much of this research has been completed in the literature around teacher preparation and educational practices. National surveys regarding teaching gender equity practices have been completed for preservice teacher education programs (Campbell & Sanders, 1997). Additionally, at least one national institute has focused on this issue and held yearly conferences (Silber, 1999 & 2000). The literature in school psychology which directly addresses this issue appears to be limited despite the expanding role that school psychologists play in the education and prevention of risk factors in all children. While school psychologists now serve as instructional and behavioral consultants with knowledge of learning and curriculum, it is less apparent that school psychologists are well versed in the issues surrounding gender equity education. This stands in sharp contrast to the Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs (NASP, 1994) in effect at the time this study was developed. The objectives of this presentation are: to review the current literature about gender equity educational practices and implications for risk prevention for all children; to provide school psychology practitioners and university faculty with knowledge about the current status of preparation in gender equity education in preservice preparation; and, to present recommendations for preservice and in service education for school psychologists regarding the impact of gender equity education for children.

Method

Participants

One hundred and twenty-five program directors representing all NASP approved programs as determined from a list supplied by NASP in Spring, 2000 were the participants for this study. Usable responses were obtained from 36 program directors for a return rate of 29%.

Materials

In order to assess how NASP approved programs specifically address training of preservice school psychologists in the issues of gender equity and their possible impact on children in the educational environment, a survey was developed based on the key areas associated with gender equity education. These areas included questions about the knowledge base in gender equity education as defined as research and theory, legislation and terminology as well as particular topic areas such as exceptionalities, culture and family and human development. Questions also were included to assess the areas of assessment, intervention and the hidden curriculum. In the above areas, survey questions asked how the knowledge base in these areas was presented ranging from being explicitly taught to not specifically addressed. Participants also were asked to indicate how knowledge regarding gender equity was assessed in their programs in academic course work and field experiences. Survey questions were reviewed by three faculty members with expertise in school and educational psychology and one faculty member with expertise in the area of gender studies to determine the relevance of the questions to the field. Areas in the Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology (1994) as well as state standards

for credentialing in Massachusetts were reviewed to ensure inclusion of key training areas in the survey.

Procedure

Surveys were sent to the program directors of all 125 NASP approved programs from the list supplied by NASP in Spring, 2000. A second mailing was conducted approximately one month later. Usable responses were obtained from 36 program directors for a return rate of 29%. This relatively low response rate may have been related to several factors. In several cases, surveys were returned indicating that the program director no longer worked at that university or that the address was incorrect. Wherever possible, corrections were made and replacement surveys sent. It is unclear if the other non respondents failed to respond because of time pressures (i.e., program directors receive numerous surveys each year and may choose to respond selectively) or because the topic was not of interest to them.

Results

Analyses of the survey responses indicate that 61% of the respondents endorse that gender equity is explicitly taught in their programs (See Fig.1). However, when analyzing the topics which are explicitly taught, 50% indicate that terminology is taught and 44% indicate that current research is taught. In contrast, only 25% indicate that legislation related to gender equity is explicitly taught (See Fig.2). In terms of educational and psychological foundation areas, 83% indicated that gender equity is addressed in courses on human development while 72% indicated that it is addressed explicitly in courses on culture and family. In contrast, only 56% endorsed that gender equity is explicitly addressed in courses dealing with exceptionalities (See

Fig.3). In relation to school psychology practice, 69% indicated that the impact of gender equity is explicitly taught in courses concerning assessment while 50% indicated that it is addressed in courses concerning intervention. Again, in contrast, only 25% of the respondents indicated that the impact of gender equity on the "hidden curriculum" is explicitly addressed (See Fig.4). Program directors also were asked to indicate how knowledge of gender equity issues was assessed in their programs in terms of academic course work as well as practicum and internship experience. Analysis suggests that research papers and final exams form the primary basis for evaluation in course work while observation and case studies are used in the field experiences (See Fig.5). Finally, program directors were asked to rate how important knowledge of gender equity is in their program in several areas. In terms of research and theory, 69% rated such knowledge as very or somewhat important. In terms of legislation, 61% rated such knowledge very or somewhat important while 58% rated knowledge of terminology very or somewhat important (See Fig 6.). Analyses suggest that there were no significant differences in the way that doctoral and specialist level programs address issues related to gender equity education. More detailed analyses were conducted to explore relationships among such responses as the importance of the topic area (question 6) and the degree to which subtopics are rated as explicitly taught (question 2). Findings indicate that there were significant, positive correlations between the degree to which program directors indicated that the knowledge base of research and theory, legislation, and terminology was explicitly taught and the relative importance of these areas in the the program curriculum ($\tau = .30, p = .0003$; $\tau = .27, p = .0035$; and

tau = .31, $p = .0002$ respectively). Finally, program directors were asked to comment on why gender equity education is perceived or not perceived to be an integral aspect of competency in the curriculum of their programs. Approximately 39% of those who completed the questionnaire responded to this open ended question. Approximately 50% noted that the area of gender equity education typically is addressed as part of multicultural or diversity issues with some program directors noting that this area was of particular import given the changing dynamic in the population of school psychology practitioners and trainers. Approximately 21% noted that they have not considered it to be an issue of relevance or that the faculty in their program did not see it as important. With a similar concern, about 14% wondered what could be eliminated from the curriculum in order to add the area of gender equity which was seen as less important than other core components.

Discussion

The results of this survey suggest that issues of gender equity education in the preservice preparation of school psychologists are given limited inclusion in the curriculum of many NASP approved school psychology programs. While program directors indicated that the topic is explicitly taught in more than 60% of the programs responding, the subtopics included within these areas seem limited. For example, while gender equity issues in terminology, exceptionalities, culture and family, and human development as well as assessment and intervention are explicitly taught in at least 50% of the programs reporting, research and theory, legislation, and the impact of the hidden curriculum receive much less attention. Given that research should inform the

practice of school psychologists as consultants, it is difficult to understand how school psychologists would provide useful interventions without an appropriate knowledge base. Further, given the wealth of information available in the teacher education literature about the impact of the hidden curriculum on the academic and social-emotional development of both girls and boys, lack of a thorough knowledge base in this area raises serious questions about the preparation of school psychologists and their ability to impact practices systemically in the classroom or larger school environment. Finally, but of equal concern is the low endorsement of the knowledge base related to legislation in regards to this topic area. It becomes questionable if school psychologists are well enough informed about the legal issues surrounding gender equity to practice effectively. However, despite the relatively low rankings in some areas, the results suggest that program directors who indicated that areas of the knowledge base were important (question 6) endorsed that these areas are specifically included in their programs (question 2).

The results then suggest that while program directors feel the area of gender equity education is important, specific components of the knowledge base receive limited attention. It is important for preservice and in service school psychologists to develop skills to recognize the impact of gender equity issues in the classroom as well as ways that school psychologists may use their roles as behavioral and instructional consultants to promote equitable practice in this area. The impact of gender equity practices on the development of risk factors in both boys and girls is well documented (MAEC,1993). Implications for school psychology education and practice to combat such practices and

promote risk prevention for all children include the specific inclusion of an appropriate knowledge base in all areas of gender equity education for preservice school psychologists. For in service school psychologists, in addition to expanding the existing knowledge base, programs should be provided to develop consultation skills in the area for practicing school psychologists. School psychologists, given their unique position within the educational life of the school should bring their expertise to the learning environment to develop such programs as: cooperative learning to recognize the varied learning styles of all children; in service programs and consultations to help teachers recognize and address the impact of gender stereotyping on both girls and boys; programmatic approaches to combat the over identification of boys and under identification of girls for special education services; and, interventions to address retention policies and prevention of high drop out rates. Such programs would serve to begin a process to prevent and limit the impact of gender inequity risk factors on all children.

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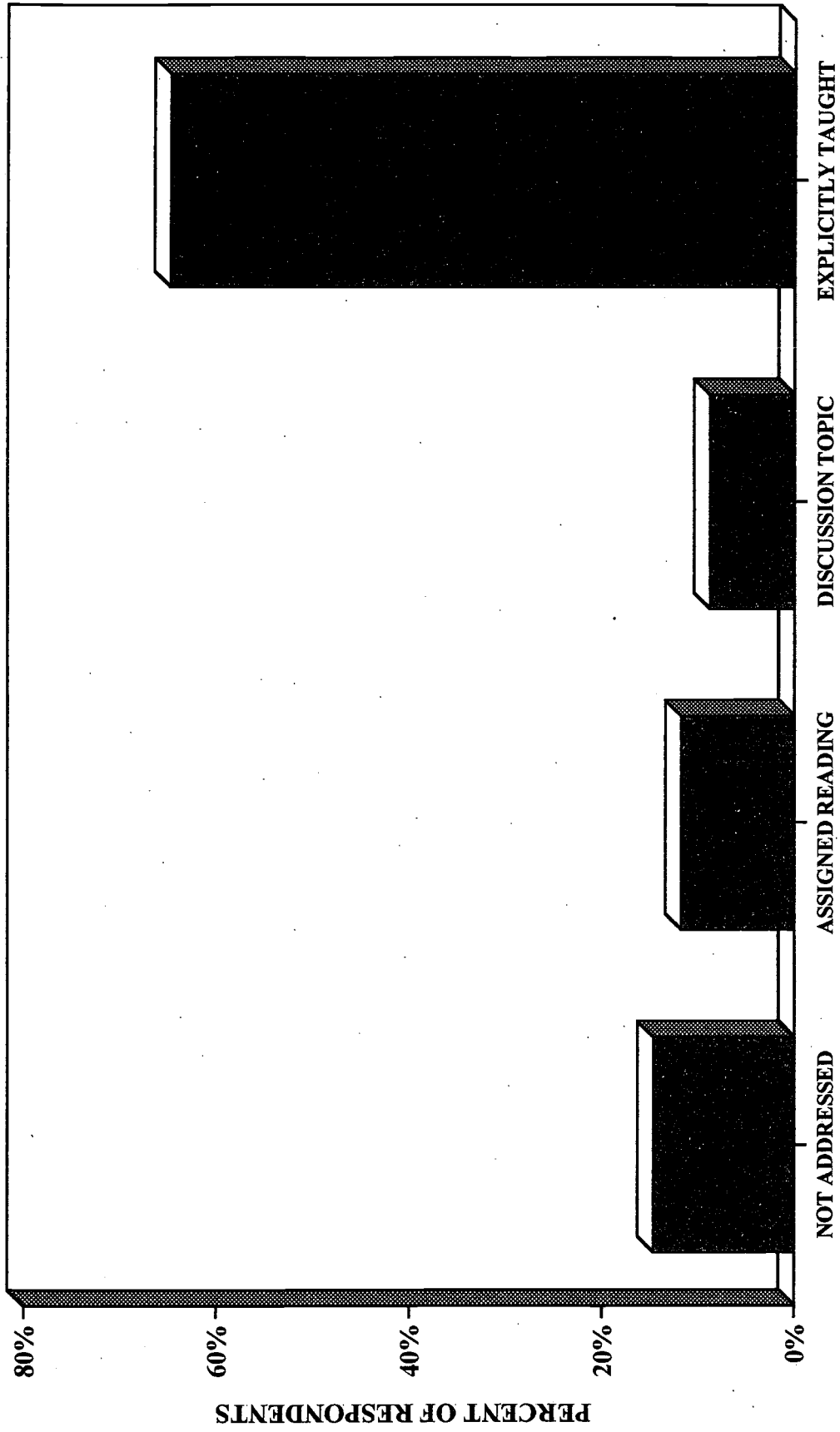
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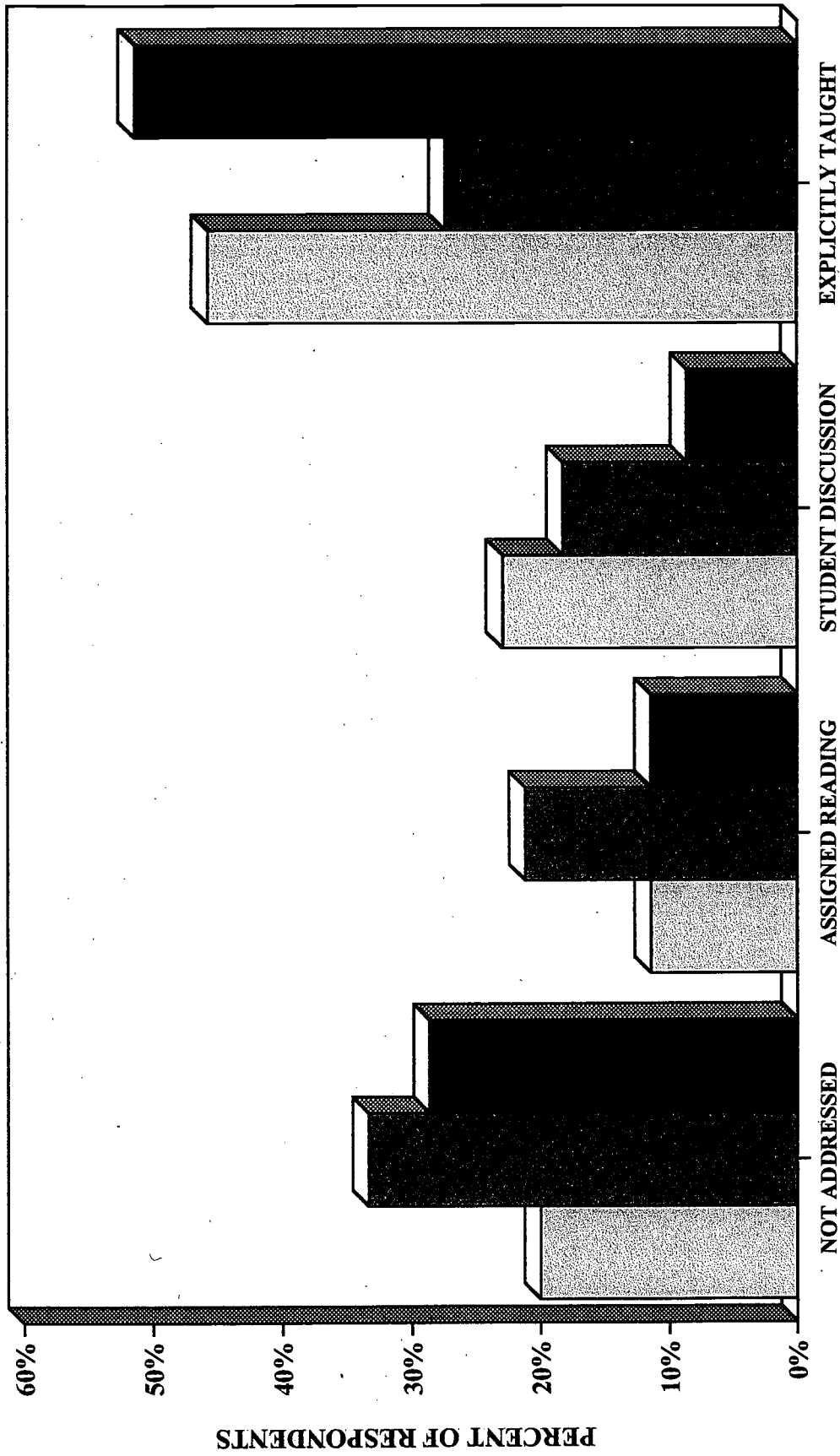
METHOD



WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES HOW THE ISSUE OF GENDER EQUITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS ADDRESSED IN YOUR PROGRAM?

Figure 1

KNOWLEDGE BASE



HOW IS THE KNOWLEDGE BASE OF GENDER EQUITY ADDRESSED IN YOUR PROGRAM IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS?

Figure 2

EDUCATIONAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

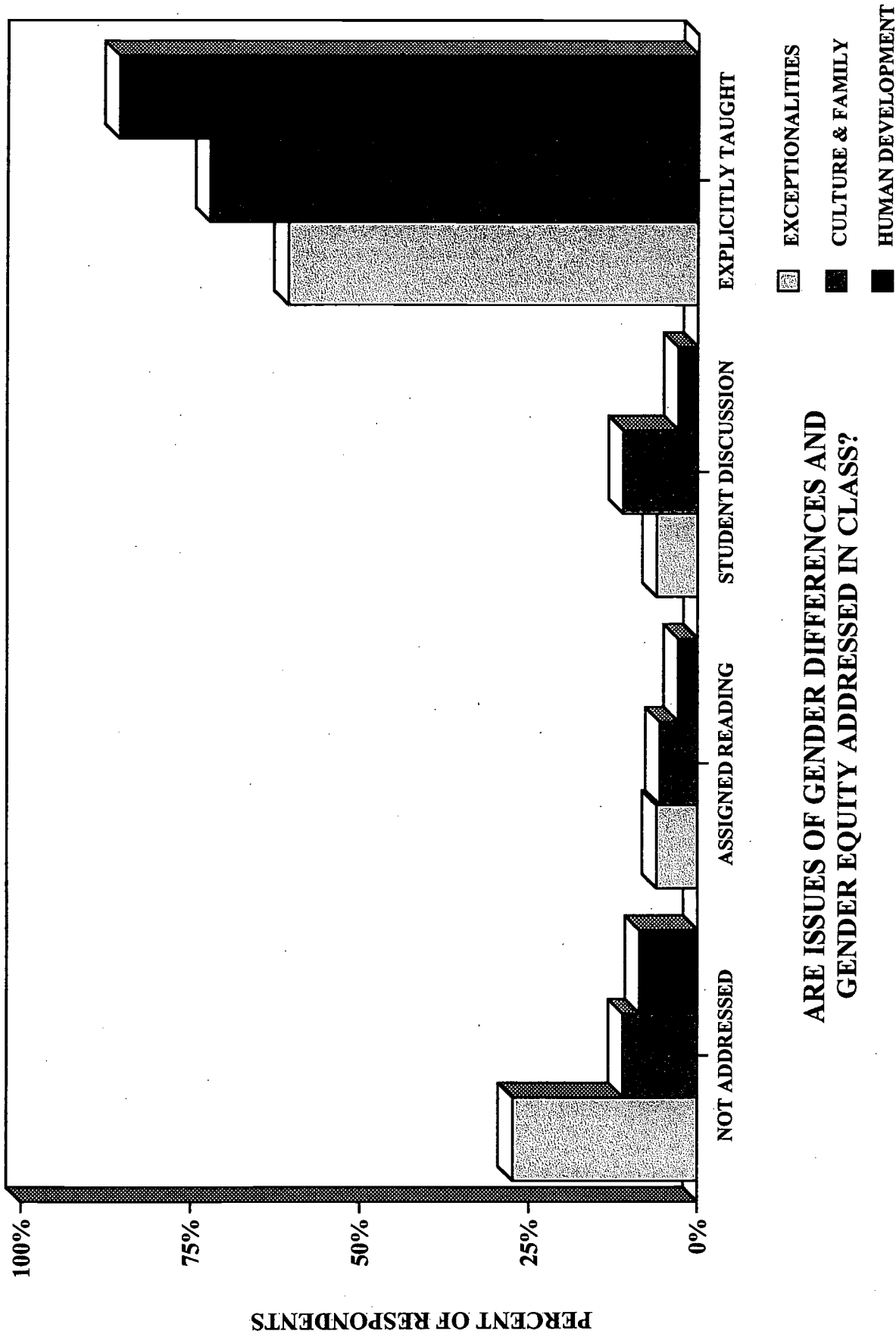
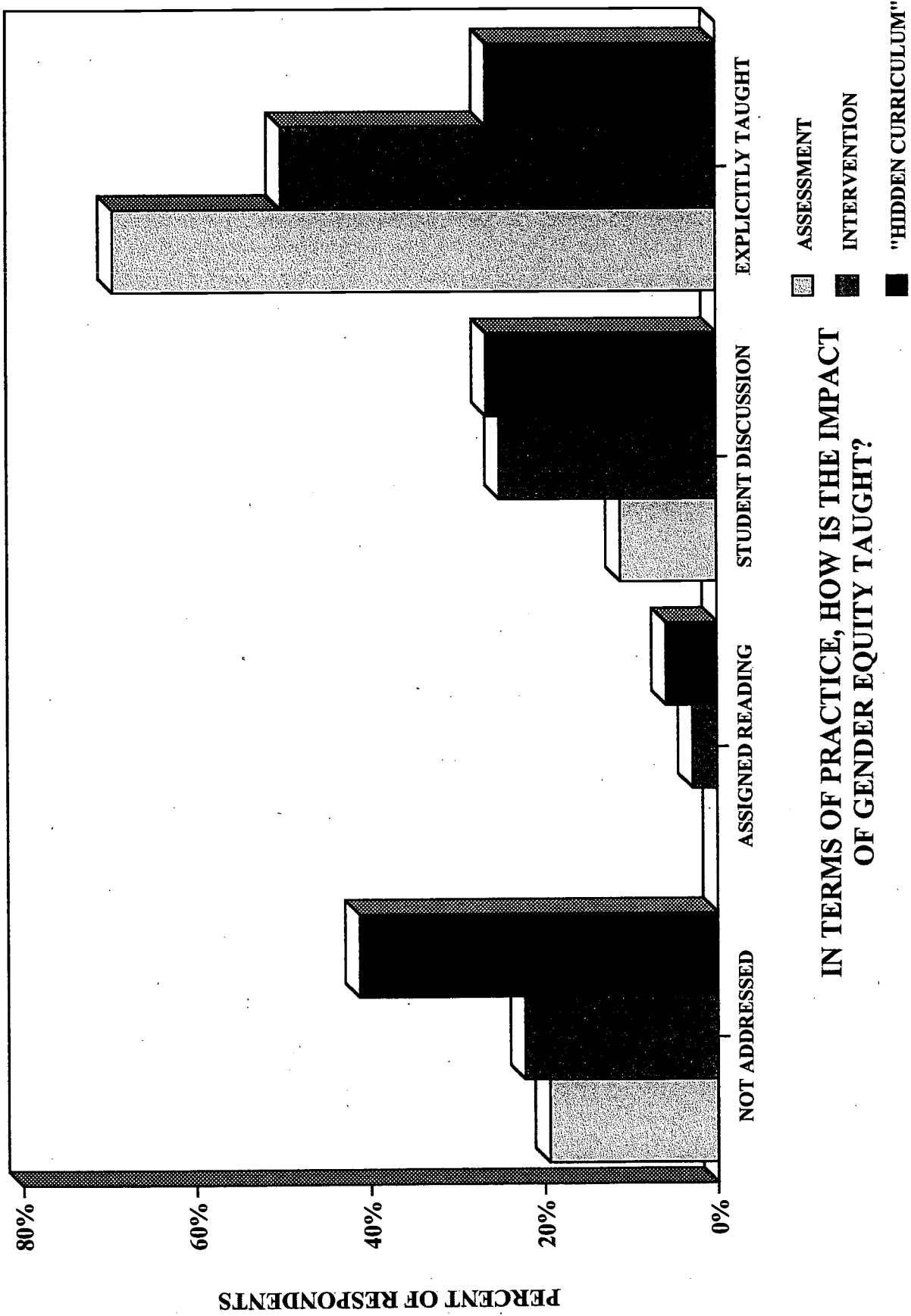


Figure 3

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY FOUNDATIONS



IN TERMS OF PRACTICE, HOW IS THE IMPACT OF GENDER EQUITY TAUGHT?

Figure 4

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY COMPETENCY

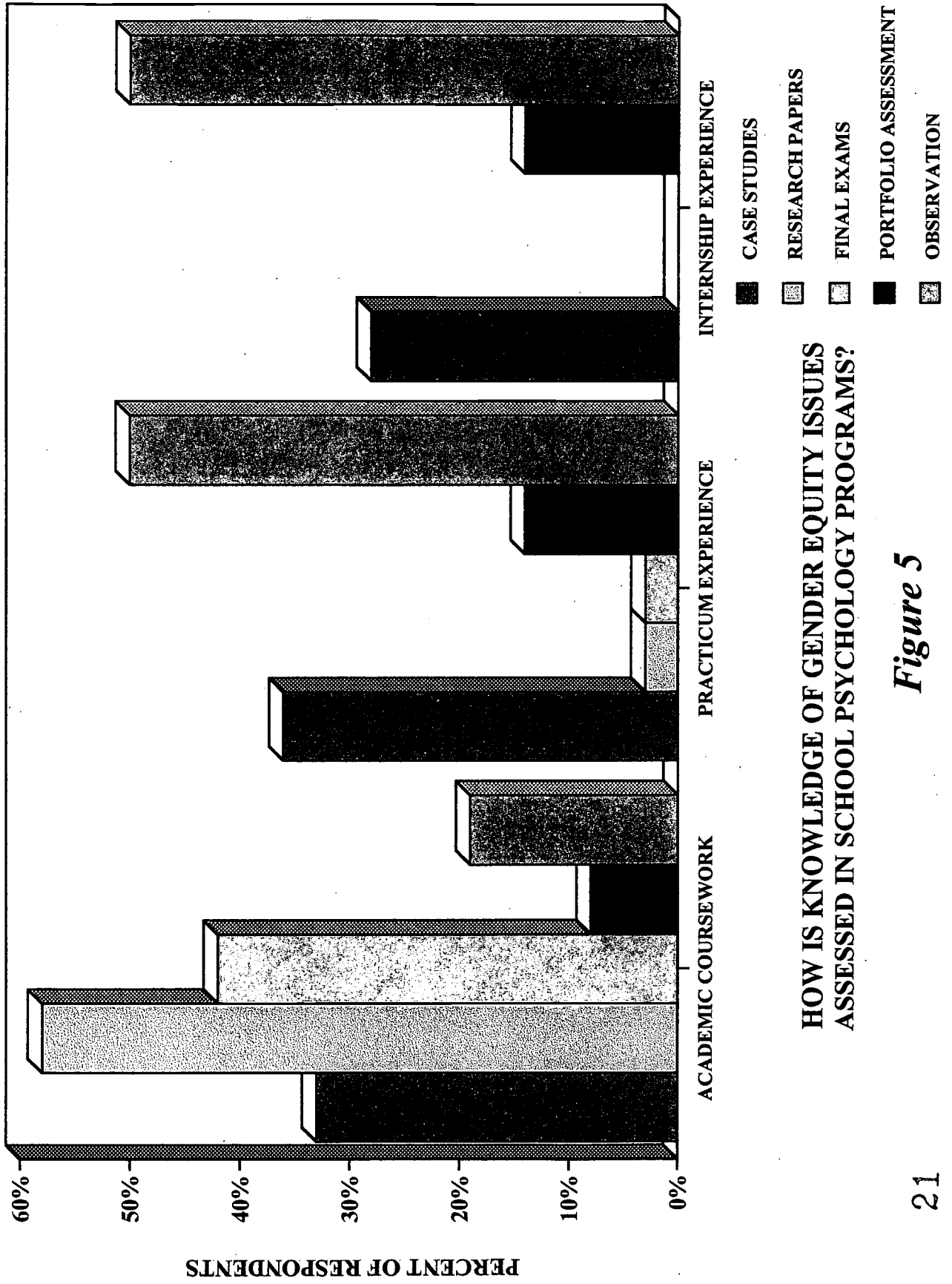
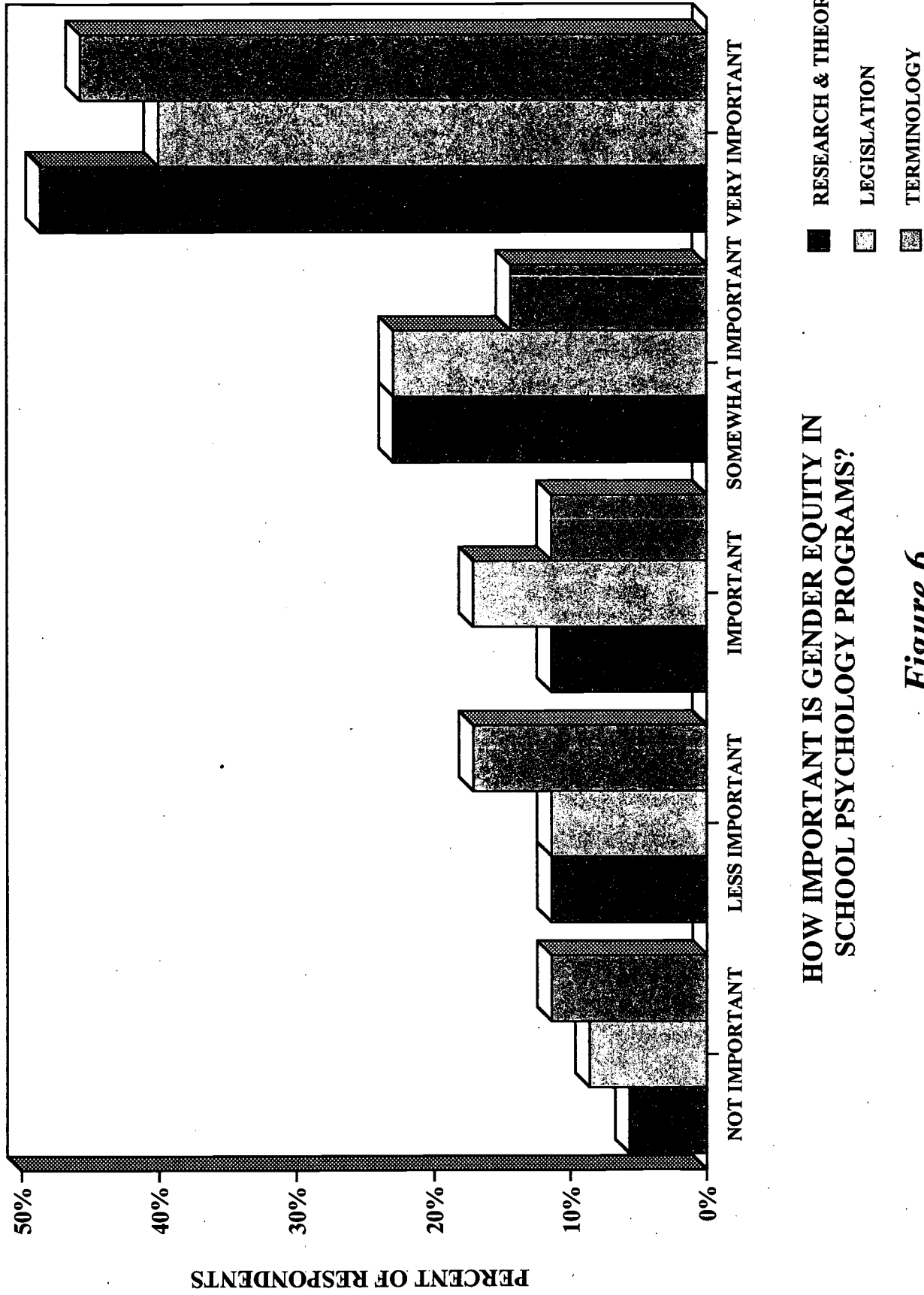


Figure 5

IMPORTANCE OF GENDER EQUITY



HOW IMPORTANT IS GENDER EQUITY IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAMS?

Figure 6



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