

DISSERTATION

**AN EXAMINATION OF CRITICAL FACTORS IN THE K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL
SETTING THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE OVERREPRESENTATION OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION
AN EXAMINATION OF CRITICAL FACTORS IN THE K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL
SETTING THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE OVERREPRESENTATION OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

The overrepresentation of African American males in special education emotional disorder programs has been one of the most problematic issues facing educators in recent years (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006). For over three decades both advocates and educators have been interested in the overrepresentation of African American males in special education (Dunn, 1968; Artiles & Trent, 1994; Gollnick, 2006; Losen & Orfield, 2002; Gresham, 2005). Artiles and Harry (2004) suggest that overrepresentation in special education placement is a problem when African American males are placed in special education classes when they do not have a disability. They also state that it is a problem if the placement in special education limits their opportunities for positive MISSING WORD. African American males are one and a half times more likely to be labeled as emotionally disturbed (ED) than other non-black students and are placed in special needs programs more frequently than their peers, both males and females (Coutinho & Oswald, 1998; Harry, 1994). Consequently, the overrepresentation and inappropriate placement of African American males is a cause for public concern.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the experiences of African American males in special education Emotional Disorder (ED) programs in the

K-12 public school setting. First, this study will examine what the experiences are like for African American males who were placed in special education. Second, this study should lead to information on the type of service students receive. Third, the findings will inform teacher education programs as to the kinds of classrooms and training perspective teachers need to meet the needs of African American male students more effectively. Fourth, the findings will lead to further research studies on the experiences of African American males in special education programs. The participants for this study were 10 African American males placed in special education (eleventh and twelfth grade). In this study the researcher used a phenomenological study to examine what special education was like for African American male students. The interviews were administered in a school district in the south. The data were collected, coded, analyzed and discussed. The results of this study showed that African American males in special education ED programs want to go to college or professional school, their parents were misinformed (tricked), their teachers didn't care about them, the teachers had low expectations for the students and the teachers didn't understand their culture.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

“All men are created equal and have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (Preamble United States Constitution).” Although this statement is part of the United States Constitution, it also holds significance when discussing the purpose of special education, and the overrepresentation of African American males in special education. This topic has been discussed and examined by many researchers from the perspective that the overrepresentation of African Americans is due to a variety of factors such as parents’ knowledge of special education rights, the flawed referral process, racial discrimination, and teacher training (Harry & Anderson, 1994; Kunjufu, 2005; Oswald, Coutinho, Best, & Singh, 1999; Patton, 1998).

Over the last several decades, there has been a concern in the literature that African American elementary and secondary students with disabilities are overrepresented in special education placement even though these students do not meet the criteria of a handicapping condition as defined by law (Harry & Anderson, 1994). This concern has been found to be particularly true for African American male students who are perceived to have behavioral or disciplinary problems. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of African American male students in high school who have been placed in special education for emotional disorders. This chapter is organized as follows: (a) need for study; (b) problem statement; (c) purpose of study; (d) research

questions; (e) definition of terms; (f) delimitations of the study; (g) assumptions and limitations of the study; (h) significance of study; and (i) researcher's perspective.

Need for the Study

The racial imbalance in special education has long been a concern of professional educators (Dunn, 1968). The Office of Civil Rights identifies discrimination as a major reason African Americans are placed in special education (Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, 1995). Patton (1998) contends that the legacy of overrepresentation among African American male students in certain special education programs is rooted in historic education discrimination that precedes the adoption of special education programs in the United States. Rizvi and Lingard (1996) assert that in the developing discourse surrounding current education reform efforts, former notions of social justice that emphasized the importance of past oppression and disadvantages experienced by racial and ethnic minorities have been replaced. Harry and Anderson (1994) noted a pattern that is evident in special education classes throughout the United States: (a) African American males are overrepresented in all disability categories; (b) African American students between the ages of 6 and 21 are overrepresented in Emotional Disorder and Mental Retardation classifications; (c) African American males are overrepresented in all disability categories between the ages of 14-21; and (d) students labeled mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed are most likely to be served in separate classrooms or buildings. Dunn (1968) stated the overrepresentation of minority students and economically disadvantaged students are being placed in classes for the educable mentally retarded four to eight times more than their White peers.

The struggles for equal education for African American students have historically been challenging (Irvine, 1990). Brown (2001) elaborated on this discussion when she described the failure of the American educational system for African American students.

She wrote:

This can be equated with educational apartheid. Factors such as school tracking of African American students, drop out rates, suspension, expulsion rates, lack of access to quality education and culturally inappropriate and insensitive instruction vividly reveal a stark picture of abysmal conditions and mediocre education imposed upon African American children in educational programs. (p. 2)

Concerns about racial discrimination and violations of civil rights are raised when African American youth are consistently misidentified and disproportionately placed in special education programs (Reschly, 1996). Reschly states,

African American males have traditionally been denied opportunities to excel in our society, disproportionately selecting them for special education placement appears to be a continuation of the practice of treating them as innately inferior, which is wrong by any standard and does not meet their need to a free and appropriate public education. (p. 29)

The United States educational system is perhaps the direct contributor to the overrepresentation of African American males in special education. According to Johnson (1997), parents and educators may have an incentive for placing children in special education programs. For example parents put their child in special education to receive extra income from sources to pay bills. Johnson further states that public school systems are embracing programs to receive more money allowing reimbursement to be used not only for special education costs but to increase spending.

Problem Statement

In our society, young African American men are at a higher risk of being unemployed, being involved with the criminal justice system, and committing suicide

(Watkins & Kurtz, 2001). Since the inception of special education, African American males have been overrepresented in special education programs, which is a direct cause of this population being overrepresented in the penal system in the United States (United States Justice Department, 1997). The overrepresentation of African American male children and youth in special education programs for students with learning disabilities, severe emotional or behavioral disorders, and mental disabilities has remained a persistent reality in American public schools even after more than 20 years of recognition (Artiles & Trent, 1994). The overrepresentation of African American students, particularly African American males in special classes for learning disabilities (LD), mental retarded (MR) and emotional and behavioral disorder (EBD) is prevalent in many school districts throughout the country (Kunjufu, 2005; Serwatka, Deering & Grant, 1995). African American males are often placed in restrictive and self-contained classrooms, rather than in classrooms for students with mild disabilities (Grant, 1992). National efforts to reduce the percentage of African American males in ED special education programs have failed (Chinn & Hughes, 1987; Oswald, Coutinho, Best, & Singh, 1999; Parrish, 2002). As a result of these decisions, a segment of American society is being denied appropriate services and opportunities to interact and acquire worthwhile social and educational values (Patton, 1998).

Several authors have made a convincing case that African American males in the United States are members of an "endangered species" (Gibbs, 1988; Irvine & York, 1993). African American students are 2.88 times as likely as White students to be identified and placed in MR programs, 1.92 times as likely to be identified and placed in ED programs, and 1.32 times as likely to be identified and placed in SLD programs

(Parrish, 2002). Patton (1998) states, in spite of all the studies and scripting of this issue, the proportion of African American males identified as mentally disabled has not changed much from 38% in 1975 when those students constituted 15% of the school population. In 1991, African American males made up 16% of this nation's school population and 35% of the special education population (Harry & Anderson, 1994). Further, it is well documented that African American males are particularly overrepresented both in disciplinary practices and in certain special education categories and typically receive their special education in segregated classrooms or buildings (Harry & Anderson, 1994).

The provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA) intended to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to all students enrolled for special education services (IDEA, P.L. 105-17, 1997). However, in a 1995 report from the U.S. Department of Education, Congress did not find students from different ethnic and economically disadvantaged backgrounds to be equal with their White or economically advantaged peers. Instead, the combination of being poor, minority and from an urban environment put this demographic group at risk for education failure, inappropriate placement decisions and poor educational outcomes (U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the experiences of African American males in special education Emotional Disorder (ED) programs in the K-12 public school setting. First, this study will examine what the experiences are like for African American males who were placed in special education. Second, this study should

lead to information on the type of service students receive. Third, the findings will inform teacher education programs as to the kinds of classrooms and training perspective teachers need to meet the needs of African American male students more effectively. Fourth, the findings will lead to further research studies on the experiences of African American males in special education programs.

Research Questions

This study on African American male students' experience in special education emotional disturbance programs used a phenomenological study to examine what special education was like for African American male students. The researcher used a modified in-depth phenomenological qualitative interviewing approach. Seidman's (2006) approach uses in-depth phenomenological qualitative interviewing approach. Seidman's approach for research in education provides in-depth phenomenological interviews to ascertain the narrative experience of African American males. According to Seidman, in-depth interviewing is a method that combines life history in three interviewing sessions. Modified were made in this study. Instead of using three sessions the researcher used one session. This approach uses open-ended questions to build upon exploring the participants reconstruction of their experience. This approach has three interviewing sessions that last between sixty and ninety minutes. In this study, the researcher used a modified in-depth interviewing approach. The levels of questioning were conducted in one session. The questions were formatted as follows: (a) background information about the participants (Describe your elementary experiences); (b) investigating how individuals recall events in relationship to their personal thoughts and actions (Detail of Experiences); and (c) exploring the meaning and impact of the phenomenon on

participants (Reflection of meaning). The three levels of questioning were arranged in the following format:

1. Explain your early experiences in special education
2. Explain a typical day for you (Start from the time awake to time asleep).
3. Given your experiences in special education, what do you see yourself doing in the future?

The following questions are the overarching research questions:

1. What are the experiences of African American males in special education emotional disorder programs?
2. What do African American males think about the type of education they are receiving in special education?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions have been adapted from 1997 IDEA Final Regulations.

1. **African American:** African American is the term used to define the ethnic group which historically has been referred to as Afro-American, Black, Negro, or Colored. Americans referred to as African American have ancestral ties to both the continent of Africa and to America. African American is the terminology currently being used by the United States Census to define Americans with this ethnic origin.

2. **Low Socio Economic Status (SES):** This variable will be defined by a student's participation in the free or reduced lunch programs on their campus. This criterion for SES is used in Federal programs' calculation formula to determine the allocation of monies to local school districts in the U.S.

3. **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** is the document developed at an IEP meeting that sets the standards by which subsequent services are deemed appropriate.

4. **Consent** means that the parent has been informed of all information relevant to issues being questioned. Consent is to be given in the parent's native language to assure their understanding of the matter. Consent is given once the parent understands that consent is not mandatory, is only given when they feel it is appropriate, and can be revoked at any time.

5. **Placement** defines the educational placement of a child with a disability. Placement also is a decision made by a group of people, most importantly the parents, who have knowledge of the student and understand evaluation outcomes.

6. **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** is the goal that to the greatest extent possible, children with disabilities are educated with children who are non-disabled; and that removal from the regular education classroom is only done if services that the exceptional student needs cannot be offered in a regular education setting.

7. **Mental Retardation (MR)** is defined as significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing along with deficits in adaptive behavior, and manifested during a developmental period that affects a student's educational achievement harmfully.

8. **Emotional Disturbance or Emotional Disorder (ED)** is a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time, and to a marked degree that adversely affect a child's educational performance: (a) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (c)

inappropriate types of behavior or feeling in normal circumstances; (d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fear associated with personal or school problems. An ED can include schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.

9. **Disproportionate representation** refers to the overrepresentation and underrepresentation of minorities in special education programs (National Research Council, 2002).

10. **Overrepresentation** refers to the identification of a particular group served in special education that is higher than their population in general education (National Research Council, (2002).

Delimitations of Study

The delimitations to this study include the following:

1. African American males in public high schools were targeted for this study due to their higher than expected representation in ED classrooms.
2. For purposes of this research study, only African American males in emotional/behavioral special education programs enrolled in one school district in the South will be used.

Assumptions and Limitations of Study

The first limitation of this study is that data was only collected from African American males from one school district. This school district is urban and may prohibit the generalization of certain aspects of the findings to other rural, urban or suburban settings. Therefore, particular overall generalizations may not be a proper use of the

findings of this study. Second, 10 African American male students that are currently juniors or seniors in high school will participate in the study. Participants will be in an Emotional Disorder (ED) special education program. Third, this study focused on one group of minority students, African American males. Other minorities and gender groups may have different experiences in special education programs. The persistent overrepresentation of African American males in special education warrants concentrated examination. Establishing confidentiality and using open-ended interview questions, the researcher attempted to minimize this limitation of the study.

One of the assumptions that exist is that a proportion of African American males served in special education should be equivalent to their representation in general education if there is no bias or inherent racism (MacMillan & Reschly, 1998). MacMillan and Reschly noted, “When the proportion of a given ethnic group enrolled in a given category exceeds the proportion of that ethnic group in the school population, the interpretation suggested is that the disproportion is due to discrimination” (p.2).

Significance of the Study

Unlike studies that have focused on the overrepresentation of African American students, this study focuses on what the experiences were like for African American male students in high school settings in the South that were placed in ED programs. What makes this study unique is that it captures the experiences of African American males who were placed in special education ED programs associated with a phenomenon.

The issue of the overrepresentation of African American males in special education programs is an important and fast growing problem in special education. This is mainly due to the lack of enforcement in special education laws. In 1997, Senators,

Congressmen, officials of the United States Department of Education, parents of children with disabilities, and other individuals interested in improving the quality of education for children with disabilities passed the Individuals with Disabilities Act Amendments of 1997. IDEA 1997 was important to the national environment because there was no law prior to 1997 that mandated the federal government to collect special education enrollment data by race/ethnicity; 32 states collected this data. Six of the 32 states use this data to monitor disproportionate representation. Therefore, because there is no commonly agreed upon “standard” or formula for computing disproportionate representation, the criteria for determining disproportionality vary from state to state. According to the United States Department of Education (1997), the lack of consistent criteria and limited collection of disaggregated enrollment data hinder the examination of disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education. The overrepresentation of African American males in certain special education programs has been a persistent problem negatively affecting large numbers of African Americans and their families, the field of special education, and society at large (Patton, 1998).

African American male students are systematically and effectively excluded from the benefits of numerous educational opportunities by being relegated to special education classrooms (Irvine, 1990). General education teachers are the main people held accountable for this overrepresentation. They deal with the same children day to day. Through the year, teachers come to know their students extremely well. They know what type of personality a particular student has, their abilities, their grades, how well the child does socially, and any type of problems that the child may have. Grossman (1995) noted

that "African American males are much more likely to be enrolled in special education programs for students with developmental disabilities, behavior disorders, emotional disturbances, and learning disabilities" (p. 8). The overrepresentation of minority students in special education programs including those designed for students with learning disabilities and the educable mentally retarded has been plaguing schools.

Researcher's Perspective

Narrative data are fundamental to qualitative research. These data are most frequently collected from the individual accounts of events, feelings, thoughts, and perceptions. The researcher's responsibility is to gather enough description from the voices and stories of the participants to be able to form themes, patterns, and relationships in order to develop meaningful interpretation for others who did not hear the participants themselves. In a sense, the researcher "speaks" for the voices and stories, which form the narrative. It is essential for the researcher to share some personal history to offer the reader perspective and insight about the research process.

I am an African American male who was born and raised in Plaisance, Louisiana. I attended a predominantly African American school from first grade to tenth grade. This school consisted of approximately 500 students (95% were African American). During my eleventh grade year, I attended the new high school (Northwest High School) that brought a predominantly White high school and a predominantly African American high school together. In elementary, middle, and high school I participated in sports and earned many honors. In addition, I was class president from sixth grade to eleventh grade and was Student Council President my senior year.

I chose to attend a university that was similar to my high school. I chose Southern University and A & M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. While in college, I developed an appreciation for teaching and educating. I earned a bachelors degree in Secondary Education with an emphasis in social studies education/special education and a master in Administration/Supervision.

I began my teaching career after graduation where I taught in the inner city middle school and most of the students were at risk. After two years, I was promoted to head basketball coach of a high school program and special education teacher. I taught there for three years and noticed many problems with the structure of the special education programs and that African American males represented the majority of the population. I was then hired to be the head basketball coach and a social studies teacher at a predominantly White high school. I also noticed that African American males represented the majority of the population in special education.

I chose to attend a predominantly White Doctoral Research-Intensive institution to pursue a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership. I decided to do research on a topic that I was very interested in at the practitioner level *The Overrepresentation of African American Males in Special Education Programs K-12 Public School Setting*. After researching this topic, I decided to focus on the experience of African American male students who were placed in special education. There were several studies that dealt with overrepresentation of African American students; however, there were no studies that actually spoke for African American males who are placed in special education programs.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine relevant literature related to the overrepresentation of African American males in special education programs in public school settings. The review of literature indicates that various studies have examined the overrepresentation of African American students, but there have been no studies examining the experiences of African American males in special education. The review of literature focuses on research related to various factors that have been documented to contribute to the overrepresentation of African American males in special education programs in public school settings since the inception of special education. The review of literature includes 6 sections: (a) background; (b) history; (c) school program; (d) teachers; (e) students; and (f) summary.

Background

For more than three decades both advocates and educators have been interested in the overrepresentation of African American males in special education (Dunn, 1968; Hilliard, 1990). African American males are one and a half times more likely to be labeled as emotionally disturbed (ED) than other non-African American students and are placed in special needs programs more frequently than their peers (Coutinho & Oswald, 1998; Harry, 1992). The overrepresentation and inappropriate placement of African American males is a concern at this time. The public concern remains that although

America's student body is becoming more and more diverse, children who are non-white, non-native-English-speaking, or poor continue to be identified more frequently as having disabilities and to be served in more segregated placement than their peers (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Coutinho & Oswald, 1998).

The racial imbalance in special education has long been an issue of professional educators (Dunn, 1968). Dunn shocked the academic community when he criticized the discriminatory tendency to overrepresentation and placement of minority students in special education classrooms. Larson (1975) found that the race of a student was a significant determinant of teacher referrals for students to educable mentally retarded (ED) programs. In addition, he found that African American males were referred to ED significantly more often than Caucasian males. The overrepresentation of African American males in certain special education programs has been a persistent problem negatively affecting large numbers of African American families, the field of special education, and society at large.

Patton states that the sociopolitical and historical roots of the disproportionate representation problem addressed predate the field of special education, with origins as early as 1619. Willie, Garibaldi & Reed (1991) state that unequal treatment can be traced back to the arrival of African Americans to the United States. Watkins and Kurtz (2001) document a variety of factors, both at home and in school that contribute to African American young men's high-risk status. For example, more African American children are raised in poor, single-parent families than children of any other racial or ethnic group (Mincy, 1994). Approximately 50% of African American young men live below the

poverty line, and 42% live in single-parent households (Gibbs, 1988; Irvine & York, 1993).

African American children of single-parent homes are more likely than children from two-parent households to experience behavioral problems and to drop out of school, and research indicates that these problems are exacerbated when the child is male (Mincy, 1994). This problem is exacerbated by the fact that many African American male youth today fail to receive a quality and life-enhancing education in precisely those special education programs in which they are often inappropriately placed (Heller, 1992, Hilliard, 1992). The special education label worn by these students often serves as a stigma, producing negative effects on the bearer of the label and others interacting with the stigmatized individual (Goffman, 1963).

In 2001, Rod Paige, Secretary of Education, testified before Congress, stating:

For minority students, misclassification or inappropriate placement in special education programs can have significant adverse consequences.... The stigma of being misclassified as mentally retarded or seriously emotionally disturbed, or as having a behavioral disorder, may also have serious consequences in terms of the student's self-perception and the perception of others, including family, peers, teachers, and future employers.

This limited exposure with the core academic curriculum continues the spiral of "lower levels of achievement, decreased likelihood of post secondary education, and more limited employment" (Markowitz, Garcia, & Eichelberger, 1997, p. 3).

Concerns about racial discrimination and violations of civil rights are raised when African American youth are consistently misidentified and disproportionately placed in special education programs (Reschly, 1996). Reschly further states that African American males have traditionally been denied opportunities to excel in our society; disproportionately selecting them for special education placement appears to be a

continuation of the practice of treating them as innately inferior, which is wrong by any standard and does not meet their need for a free and appropriate public education.

A body of research on the overrepresentation of African American males in special education has been established (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Chinn & Hughes, 1987; Coutinho & Oswald, 1998; Dunn, 1968; Parrish, 2002). Currently, African American males are significantly overrepresented in classrooms for students with Emotional Disorder (ED) at a rate that is over one and a half times more than their White peers (Oswald, Coutinho, Best & Singh, 1998; Parrish, 2002). Figure 1 indicates the total number of students in Emotional Disturbance programs. African Americans represent 26.65%, Whites 62.6%, Asians 1.26%, Hispanics 8.12% and Indians represent 1.23% (United States Department of Education, 2002).

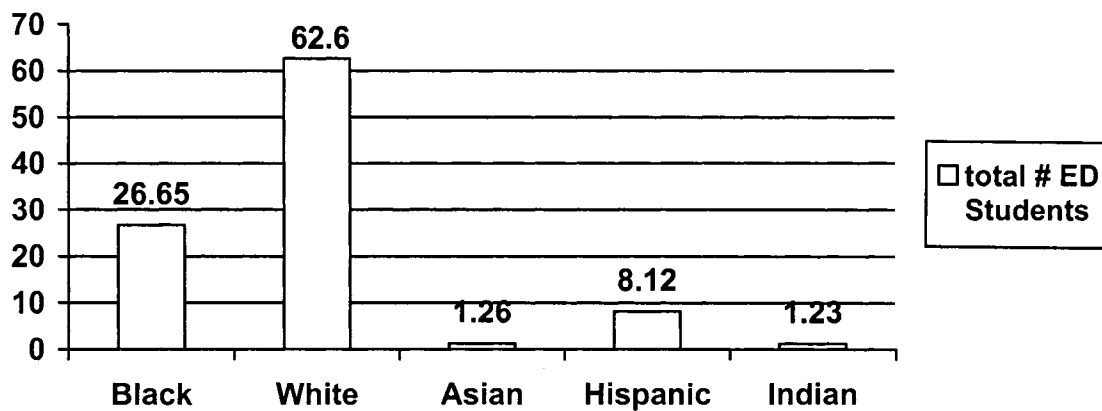


Figure 1. Racial/ethnic composition percentage of students' ages 6-21 emotional disturbance 2000-2001

The total population of public schools in the United States is indicated in Figure 2. African Americans represent 14.41% of the population, Whites 62.95%, Hispanic 17.47%, Asian 3.8% and Indian 0.98%.

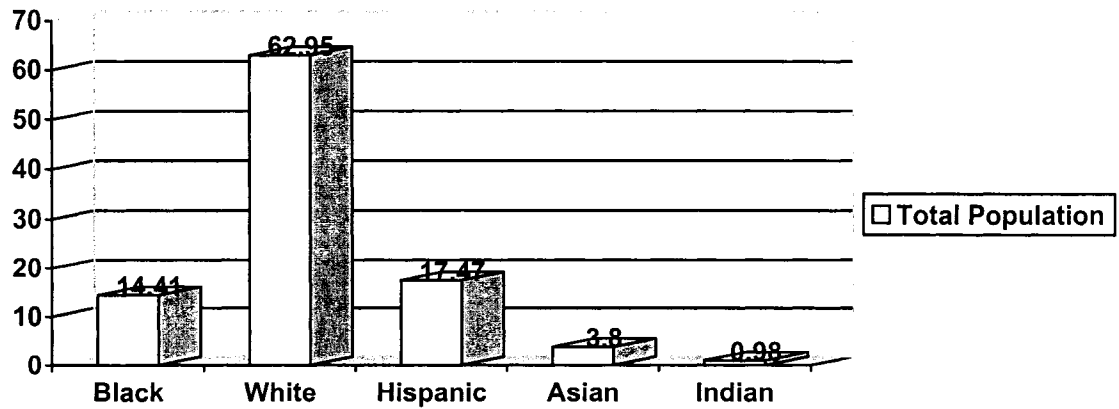


Figure 2. National 2000 census population (percentage) for children ages 6-21 by race/ethnicity for the school year 2000-2001

As shown in Figure 3, in Louisiana the total population for students in Emotional Disturbances is: Indian .66% Asian 1.29% African American 67.85%, Hispanic .82% and White 30.7% (United States Department of Education, 2002).

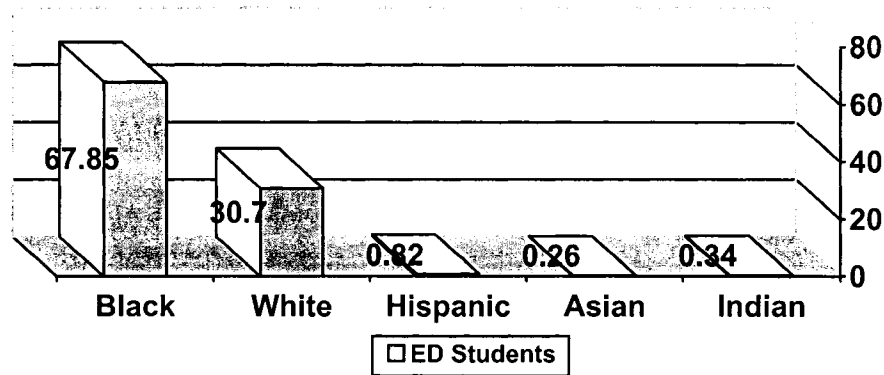


Figure 3. Racial/ethnic composition percentage of students ages 6-21 emotional disturbance programs in Louisiana

African Americans in Emotional Disturbance programs in Louisiana represent 67.85, which is 41% higher than the national average. White students in ED programs represent

30.7% of the population in Louisiana and 62.6%, which is 31.9% lower than the national average.

History

History of Education for African Americans in the United States

Patton (1998) explained that the dilemma of less than equal treatment could be traced back for over 300 years since the forced arrival of Africans to America. The African American students' educational experience in the United States has been subjected to exclusion by the dominant culture through slavery, Jim Crowism, and by special education placement (Butler, 1993). Dunn (1968) described special education placement practices as "morally and educationally wrong" (p.5) and argued that special education classes do not adequately address the needs of socio-culturally different students with learning problems. Special education is a place where students who could not be taught were placed (Dunn, 1968). In addition, Dunn stated that the students placed in special education were disproportionately minority males. Education for African American children has never been a high priority for the political leadership in this society (Staples, 1982). African American children had a rich educational heritage on the continent of Africa prior to enslavement in America; the African American child has been generally excluded from the educational movements (Butler, 1993). Butler states,

...there was an exclusion of the African American child from American education history due to that child's slavery status; despite being enslaved, many isolated instances of African Americans achieving high levels of education in spite of the oppressive restrictions of slavery. (p. 24)

Dunn's (1968) observations became a catalyst for recognizing and drawing a parallel from racial discrimination in general education and the inappropriate placement of largely minority male populations in special education. Before *Brown vs. The Board of*

Education (1954), one system for African Americans and one for Anglo Americans existed. The separate education systems were part of what historically was referred to as Jim Crow in which all of society was divided by law according to racial demarcation (Staples, 1982). The desegregation of the educational system and continued isolation and separation of African American children in the education experiences was a part of Jim Crow laws in the South (Butler, 1993). Many resource pullout educational models have been utilized to segregate students perceived as difficult to teach by some general educators unwilling or unable to meet the individual education needs of students (Parrish, 2002).

History of Special Education

Special Education is a complex educational design to support and serve children with disabilities, not be primarily a separate place to send students who need help in order to learn to their greatest potential (Losen & Welner, 2001). In most cases the need for special education services is initially identified when children exhibit cognitive academic delays and/or affective behavioral difficulties at school or at home, causing the teacher and/or parent to refer the child for educational evaluation as a precursor to receiving services within the special education system (Grossman, 1995).

Prior to the *Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975*, educational services were limited for children with disabilities within the public schools. Society rejected children with disabilities, providing no education services for them; basically, they hid them in closets and attics away from the public view (Parrish, 2002). Segregation of children with disabilities remained prevalent prior to the turn of the twentieth century. These children were not accepted into public schools but rather were

serviced in asylums, residential settings, or private schools with specialized teachers who were overseen by parents—a practice common in that time in Europe (Marshell, 2001).

From the turn of the century parents voiced much discontent about the kinds of services their children were receiving. Society as a whole manifested the need for increases humane educational intervention for students with disabilities (Marshell, 2001). Some states began to establish day school classes within totally segregated sites, in which disabled and non-disabled students were within the same building; it was not uncommon to find classrooms for students with disabilities far away from those classrooms for students without disabilities (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 1992).

Within the last 50 years, the American system of education has seen changes in the laws that regulate how students receive free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Beginning with *Brown vs. the Board of Education* (1954) there has been an insurgence of legal cases pertaining to equity, FAPE and the fair treatment of all individuals regardless of their ethnicity or disabling condition. *Brown vs. the Board of Education* is thought to be the most important civil rights case in the 20th century because it overturned separate but equal doctrine. This amendment stipulates that the states may not deny any person within its jurisdiction equal protection under the law found in the Fourteenth Amendment. “This amendment stipulates that the states may not deny any person within its jurisdiction equal protection under the law” (Yell, 1998, p.4). This case proved to be the first of many steps toward ensuring equality in American schools and service delivery. The struggles for equal access to appropriate education for African American students were being systematically excluded from the benefits that routinely accompanied educational opportunity (Irvine, 1990). Brown (2001) elaborated on this discussion when

she described the failure of the American educational system for African American students.

Litigation

During the early 1970s, there was litigation over the placement of minority students in classrooms for mentally retarded (MR). Two cases that were important to minorities being overrepresented in special education classrooms were *Diana v. State Board of Education* (1970) and *Guadalupe Organization v. Temp Elementary School District No.3* (1972). These cases uncovered unethical practices, inadequate personnel, and poorly administered special education programs. The results helped to pave the way for future legislation such as The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) which later became the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and was reauthorized in 1997 to become P.L. 105-17.

Two additional cases proved to be major milestones in the 1970s era of special education litigation. After the civil rights movement, these federal cases helped to establish legal rights for children with disabilities (Reschly 1996). They also provided legal precedents for other cases to be won in favor of students with disabling conditions and their rights to equal access to FAPE (Reschly, 1996). The first case was *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971). The suit named 13 school districts in an argument concerning students with MR that were not receiving a public education because of the states denial of their constitutional rights. The ruling in this case ordered schools to provide students with MR between the ages of 6 and 21 with public education (Turnbull, 1993).

The second case was *Mills v. Board of Education* (1972). This class action suit was filed against the District of Columbia's board of education on the part of all students with disabilities who were out of school. Seven students with various disabilities (including problems with behavior and MR) were representative of a class action suit that involved over 18,000 students who had also been denied a public education in the district. The judge in the case granted students with disabilities the right to public education regardless of the severity of the disabling conditions. As a result, standards were set for public schools to comply with the legal mandate, which also helped to prohibit school systems from denying educational services to black students because schools lacked fiscal resources (Turnbull, 1993).

These two cases affected how public schools would later provide alternative education programs for students with special needs. The important legal cases of the 1970's found that the public school assessment practices were biased toward the majority student population. As a result, judgment mandated that the nondiscriminatory assessment procedures be used in screening students for placement decisions (Daugherty, 2001). In addition, the Part B requirements of IDEA for nondiscriminatory testing classification and the due process safeguards against misclassification were also influenced by the litigation of the 1970's (Jacob-Timm & Hartshorne, 1998).

In the case of *Larry P. v. Riles* (1979) the plaintiffs argued that six African American children identified as EMR were inappropriately placed in special education and that these placements negatively affected the students educationally and socially. This was one of the first major court cases involved in the bias toward African American students. The disagreement centered on the issue that while African American students

made up 28.5% of the student population in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD); they comprised 66% of children placed in ED classrooms. These students' placements into special education were based on the administration of one IQ test. After more than 12 years in court, the Ninth Circuit Court ruled in favor of the students and the (SFUSD) was ordered to discontinue the use of non-validated intelligence (IQ) tests (Russo & Talbert-Johnson, 1997).

The primary concern in the *Larry P.* case was the overrepresentation of African American children in Mental Retarded (MR) classes, when compared to their numbers in the general population (Kubiszyn, 1996). As a result of the decision that was found in favor of the plaintiffs, the category of EMR was eventually eliminated for the special education system in California in 1986 (Reschly, 1991; 1996). After the *Larry P.* case, the process by which children were identified as being at risk for special education placement changed. More emphasis was placed on efforts to treat learning and behavior problems before referring that child for formal evaluation (MacMillan & Reschly, 1998).

In contrast to the findings of the *Larry P.* case was the case of *Parents in Action on Special Education (PASE) v. Hannon* (1980) which surmised that IQ was but one part of a larger process to classify students as MR (Reschly, 1991). The judge ruled that while eight items on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) and one item on the Stanford Binet were culturally biased against African Americans, the use of such items was not seen as inappropriate (Rothstein, 1995; Zurcher, 1998). The vastly different ruling on these similar cases showed that it has not been abundantly clear what discriminatory practices cause an overrepresentation of minorities in special education, and thus, further study is warranted.

The case of *Larry P. v. Riles* (1979) was one of the most influential legal decisions pertaining to the overrepresentation of African American students placed in special education needs classrooms (Smith, 2001). The *Larry P.* case also has had implications for changing special education litigation and legislation. Consequently, the findings of the case have affected the methods by which state and national efforts are monitored and seek to ensure equity in special education referral and placement decisions. This trailblazing case was later followed by additional legislative efforts such as the reauthorization of IDEA (1997), and both called national attention to cultural bias in assessment as a contributing factor to the overrepresentation of minority students in special education (Daugherty, 2001)

Legislation

In the 19th and 20th centuries, compulsory attendance laws changed the treatment of individuals with disabilities who historically had been excluded from an education in class with their non-disabled peers (Daugherty, 2001). Daugherty states that Rhode Island was the first state to pass compulsory attendance laws in the 1840s. By 1918, all other states had similar laws in place (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1983). These laws afforded individuals with disabilities the opportunity to receive a public education, although many of them still received inadequate service. The legal cases of the 1950s, through the 1970s led to federal legislation to protect the civil rights of individuals with disabilities as well as the rights of others (Yell, 1998).

In the United States, to identify a student for special education services and ensure that student with equitable treatment under the law is no small matter. For this reason, the provisions of the IDEA intended to provide a free and appropriate public education

(FAPE) to all students enrolled for special education services IDEA (P.L. 105-17, 1997). The first major law regarding the education of students with special needs was passed in 1975 and was called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act or Public Law 94-142 (Losen & Welner, 2001). The purpose of the PL 94-142 Act was to assure that all handicapped children have a free appropriate public education, which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs. The Education Act for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975 was passed to assure that the rights of handicapped children and their parents or guardians are protected, assist states and localities to provide for the education of all handicapped children, and assess and assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate handicapped children. The term “free appropriate public education” is defined as special education and related services which: (a) have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; (b) meet the standards of the state educational agency; (c) include an appropriate preschool, elementary, or secondary school education in the State involved (IDEA, 1997). In 1990 and 1997, this law was reauthorized and the name was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The provisions of IDEA entitle every student with a disability to a free appropriate public education (FAPE), an education in a least restrictive environment (LRE) that is consistent with his or her educational needs, and nondiscriminatory evaluation procedures.

During the reauthorization of IDEA, Congress expressed its concerns regarding the disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic minorities (P. L. 105-17, 1997). Congress also recognized the problems associated with misidentification and misclassification and called for increased efforts to reduce the associated intensification

of problems. Misidentification refers to inappropriately recognizing students from racial and ethnic minority groups as students with a disability (Patton, 1998). The decision for the classification did not adequately consider language differences, the student's culture or the instructional practices. In order to ensure appropriate services, school personnel must provide suitable assessment techniques and increase the accuracy of the identification and placement procedures, when identifying students with special needs. Once students and their special needs are properly identified, special education services must provide the support needed by students with disabilities to reach their developmental, academic, and social outcomes that will give them greater opportunities to return to mainstream classrooms. In theory, this law documented that eligible students are to receive specialized training, tutoring and extra attention from teachers, counselors and other professional support (Losen & Welner, 2001). Losen and Welner noted that many others have experienced unnecessary isolation and been confronted with fear, prejudice and stigmatization.

IDEA states, “greater efforts are needed to prevent the intensification of problems connected to mislabeling and high dropout rates among minority students that are misclassified, segregated, or inadequately served” (Harry & Anderson, 1994, p. 55). Special education can instead contribute to a denial of equality of opportunities with a devastating result in communities throughout the nation. However, inadequate and inappropriate referral, assessment, and evaluation procedures used either to refer students for possible inclusion in special education, or to determine their placement in special education contribute greatly to the large number of African American male students in these programs (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Patton, 1998).

The issue of overrepresentation of African American males in special education programs continues to be a dilemma in American education and society. Ultimately, these dilemmas are related to underlying assumptions about difference (Artiles, 1998). Artiles stated, "Difference has been equated with deviance or stigma and thus, sameness is a prerequisite of equality" (p. 35). It is not surprising, therefore, that traditional treatments of difference ultimately reaffirm difference and offer options that signal the deficits or disadvantages typically associated with difference. Special education has historically faced the dilemma of affirming or ignoring difference. Since the inception of special education programs, African American males have been disproportionately placed in special education classes (Harry & Anderson, 1994).

History of Special Education Services for Students with Emotional Disturbance

The treatment of deviant or bad individuals falls into three phases. Coleman and Webber (2002) describe these phases as segregation, transition and service phase. The segregation phase was a period of time that began in the early middle ages and ended in the 1600s. The chief concern was to separate deviant individuals from society in general. The transition phase, which began in the 1700s and ended in the 1800s, was a time period when various advocate groups were established and served to provide humane treatment to mentally ill individuals. During this time, many training schools were also established. Lastly, during the service phase (1900s to the present), efforts were made to assist people with disabilities to become integrated and functional members of society. This phase is most important to the history of service for students with ED, because of the immense changes that have occurred during this time period for African Americans.

Special education services were developed with the assistance of psychology

(Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003). However, the historical roots of special education services for students with ED are not easy to pinpoint (Kauffman, 2001). By the end of the 18th century, procedures had been put in place for teaching students with sensory problems (Winzer, 1998). During that time period, terms such as “idiots” and “insane” were used to describe students with mental illness (Kauffman, 2001, p. 64). Kauffman further states that during this period, one of the first psychiatrists, Phillippe Pinel, became known for what was called “moral treatment” when he began working with those patients that had been confined and mistreated for years in the Bicetre Hospital in France. This method of service delivery was predicated on the use of respect, kindness and high behavioral expectations for the patient being taught. Pinel’s methods were successful and as a result of this success, his methods were used through the first half of the 19th century in working with the mentally ill (Coleman & Webber 2002).

In the early part of the 19th century, efforts were made to educate students who were thought to be “idiotic” and “insane.” Students, who exhibited similar attributes, would later be serviced in classrooms for students with MR and ED (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003). Using Pinel’s moral treatment as a yardstick for success, by the middle of the 19th century, educators began to provide services that included asylums for students with ED (Coleman & Webber, 2002; Kauffman, 2001). During the 1870s, classrooms were formed to serve students whose behavior was deemed to be unruly. Oftentimes, these classrooms were filled with students who teachers termed as “street wise” or “naughty” (Stafford & Stafford, 1996). Even then, subjective measures such as teacher judgments were used to place students who appeared to be different from the mainstream into a special classroom setting.

Teachers and schools were faced with the challenge of providing educational services for an increasing number of students who needed teaching in separate classrooms from their non-disable peers. Hallahan and Kauffman (2003) wrote about the exclusionary techniques of this time period saying, “the courts typically found that disruptive children or those with mental retardation could be excluded from schools for the sake of preserving order, protecting teacher’s time from excessive demands, and sparing children the pain of seeing others who are disabled” (p.28).

Concerned about the influence that culture had on educational performance, Terman (1916) cited that African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans routinely tested poorly and suggested that they be steered toward practical training in special classes. In the early 1900s, ethnicity was also believed to cause the social condition related to poverty (Terman, 1916). During the 1930s, ethnicity was seen as the impetus for mental deficiency (Smith, 2001).

History of Schools in Louisiana

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, black and white Americans lived lives that were separate and unequal, in law as well as in fact (Bankston & Caldas 2002). Bankston and Caldas state:

Louisiana is also historically important for race relations in America. Legal segregation in the United States received Supreme Court approval in 1890 with *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, a case from Louisiana. The integration of schools in New Orleans in the early 1960’s became a national focus of attention. The Louisiana gubernatorial campaign of former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke brought not only national attention, but given his surprisingly broad conservative support, bears on the question of race in Louisiana. (p.12)

In 1896, segregation law in Louisiana became the legal basis of segregation throughout the South. In that year, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a Louisiana law requiring the

immediately made outlaws of every public school district in the South that had refused to allow African American children to attend White schools. Initially, however, nothing happened. Public officials in the south, from school principals to state governors, simply refused to comply with the court's decision. Therefore, the court followed up with *Brown II* a year later in 1955, when it ordered southern school districts to desegregate with "all deliberate speed" (DeVore & Logsdon, 1991).

In Louisiana, African Americans males are overrepresented in the following categories: (a) Emotional Disable (ED): (b) Learning Disable (LD), (c) Mental Disable (MR) and (d) Mild Mental Disable (EMR) (Lanser, 2003). According to The Lanser Report (2003), African American males make up 54% of ED, 39.1% LD, 43.1% MR and 46.7% EMR. While White males account for 24% ED, 27.1% LD, 16.7% MR and 14.8% EMR, respectively, they are far less than their African American male counterparts (Lanser, 2003).

New Orleans School System

New Orleans was the first parish in Louisiana to begin school desegregation. Federal Judge J. Skelly Wright ruled in 1956 that public schools formerly reserved for Whites were required to admit African American students who lived within the school's residential boundaries (DeVore & Logsdon, 1991). According to DeVore and Logsdon, opposition to this change was strong; the New Orleans school board appealed Wright's decision and it was not resolved until 1960, eight years after it was initially filed. Initial efforts to integrate New Orleans public school systems were met with loud and nationally publicized opposition. Lloyd Rittiner, elected president of the New Orleans Parish School Board, sent out a short opinion poll to parents of every child in the public school system.

racial segregation of railroad cars was constitutional, establishing the “separate but equal” doctrine (Vincent, 1999). Before reconstruction, Louisiana state law forbade formal education for slaves. Free black children, including the children of mixed-race elite, were generally educated either at home, in private schools or in parochial schools, although some light skinned children of African ancestry attended public school by passing for White (DeVore & Logsdon, 1991). DeVore and Logsdon further state, on March 22, 1864, Nathaniel Banks, the general of the commanding Union troops occupying Louisiana, set up a separate board of education for Louisiana’s African American population under the direction of an abolitionist Quaker Union soldier, B. Rush Plumly. Bankston and Caldas state:

The end of Reconstruction meant the end of these first efforts at desegregation of Louisiana schools, as well as the beginning of the end of African American political participation. Even though school desegregation had received the endorsement of some enlightened Whites, it was extremely unpopular with the White population in general. The admission of African American students to the elite Upper Girls High School in New Orleans resulted in three days of rioting resulting in the deaths of an African American man and child. (p. 24-25)

By the mid-twentieth century, Jim Crow laws mandated segregation in virtually every area of life in Louisiana. In New Orleans, streetcars had a movable sign reading “colored” to indicate the area in the back of the car where all identifiable African Americans were required to sit (Vincent, 1999). If more Whites entered the car than the white section could comfortably fit, the sign was moved back, and the African American passengers would have to crowd into fewer seats.

In the landmark 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education*, the high court unanimously ruled that the doctrine of “separate but equal,” established by the same court in 1896 was unconstitutional. This momentous decision

Rittiner asked parents to indicate if they would rather keep school open with a little integration or close down. The majority of White parents (82%) said they would prefer to shut the schools down and almost all African American parents (95%) said they would prefer to accept some integration (DeVore & Logsdon, 1991). Governor James Davis did, in fact, attempt to close down the New Orleans Parish public schools.

East Baton Rouge Parish School System

Baton Rouge, the capital city of Louisiana, and its associated public school district, is the second largest urban area in Louisiana. Forty plus years ago in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ordered an end to segregation in public education. Requiring African American children to attend racially isolated schools, the Court was convinced, generated feelings of inferiority that could last a lifetime. Although the effect of the decision was to end racial isolation in education the underlying purpose was to improve life opportunities for African American children (Fossey & Garvin, 1995).

Brown v. Board of Education did not immediately affect the East Baton Rouge School District, according to Fossey & Garvin. A desegregation suit was filed against the district in 1956, and desegregation efforts didn't begin until 1981 when a federal court issued a comprehensive order to desegregate East Baton Rouge Public Schools (EBR). This order required the district to begin busing school children to achieve better racial balance among its 100 school sites. The school system operated under the federal court's original mandate for 48 years (Vincent, 1999).

Research shows that suspensions seldom benefit the child suspended (McFarland, 1995). Instead, they deprive already marginal students of educational time making it

more likely that such students will permanently drop out of school (Louisiana Department of Education, 1996). According to the Louisiana State Department of Education, African Americans are far more likely to be suspended from an EBRP school than any other race. Of the 8,929 middle school suspensions given during 1992-1993, African Americans received 85%. African Americans received a large number of EBRP expulsions as well (McFarland, 1995). Of the 361 EBRP middle school students who were expelled during 1992-1993, 91% were African American.

Nationally, minority students are more likely than white students to be placed in special education where many fail to achieve academically. For African American male students, their disproportionate representation in special education is especially high. In East Baton Rouge Parish, as in many of the nation's school systems, African American males are overrepresented in self-contained special education classes. In 1995, about 61% of the school populations were African American students, but African American students represent 78% of self-contained special education students (Louisiana Department of Education, 1996).

African Americans in Special Education

Nationwide minority students are more likely than White students to be placed in special education, where many fail to thrive (Fossey & Garvin, 1995). During the 1986-87 school year, African Americans and Hispanic students comprised 30% of the school age population, but they comprised 35% of the students classified as seriously emotionally disturbed (SED), 40% of the students classified as trainable mentally retarded, and 42% of all students classified as educable mentally retarded (Gartner & Lipsky, 1989, p.10).

For African American students, their disproportionate representation in special education is especially high. African Americans were only 16% of the total school enrolment in 1986-1987, but comprised 35% of the EMR students, 27% of TMR students, and 27% of the SED students (Harry and Anderson, 1994). Harry and Anderson further states that African American children are twice as likely to be placed in special education as White children. According to the Louisiana Department of Education (1997) in East Baton Rouge Parish, African Americans are overrepresented in self-contained special education classes. In 1995, about 61% of the school populations were African American students, but African Americans represented 78% of the self-contained special education students. Over a 20-year period, the percentage of African American students in self-contained special education classes has risen (McFarland, 1995). In all special education classifications, African Americans are overrepresented at every age level. In the schools, 75% of special education students are African Americans (Pack, 1996). Pack further states that in high school African Americans make up 75% of special education enrollment.

School Programs

Education Inequality

The U.S. educational system is perhaps the most direct contributor to the present predicament that African American males are facing due to their incentive gains (Johnson, 1997). Johnson states that public school systems are embracing programs to receive more money. According to Johnson, these programs allow reimbursement to be used not only for special education cost but to increase overall spending. Johnson (1997) cited the \$5-10 million a year in reimbursements that the schools and the parents receive.

Therefore, parents and educators are placing students in special education programs, who perhaps do not belong there, simply for monetary gains (Johnson, 1997). It appears that everyone has an incentive to expand special education, but nobody has an incentive to rush an audit in special education programs in public schools. The state grant program provides formula grants to states to assist them in covering the excess costs of providing special education services to children with disabilities. Funding for this program currently is provided on an academic-year basis through appropriations in two separate fiscal years: (a) a forward-funded appropriation which is available July 1 of the current fiscal year and (b) an advance appropriation available October 1 of the next fiscal year (Smith, 2001). Although the program has been funded by two separate appropriations since 2001, funding does not need to be authorized separately because all of the funds for an academic year could be provided in one appropriation. Parents and educators may have an incentive for children placed in special education programs. For example, parents might put their child in a special education program to receive extra income from sources like social security or Medicaid, to pay bills, and rent (Johnson, 1997).

Historian James D. Anderson's (1988) analysis of the public schooling for African Americans in the South described how pathological notions of difference underpinned educational planning and decision-making where African Americans were concerned. Education, as he notes, was mainly geared toward helping African Americans accept and adjust to their own subordinate role in society--a role that was premised upon racist myths of mental inferiority. Anderson highlighted the ideological struggle between northern philanthropists and southern White school reformers on the one hand, who

avored an industrial education for African Americans, and the laboring classes on the other, who fought to create an educational system in support of their own freedom.

Similarly, historian David Tyack's (1974) analysis of urban education in the United States during the period from 1890 to 1940 paints a picture of injustice based on skin color, cultural differences, and poverty. Such injustice reflected an ideology of schooling premised in large part on the assumption that individual differences, often related to race, ethnicity, and ability, were pathological or inferior in nature, and required specialized instruction. During the early part of the 20th century, Tyack (1974) explained, intelligence testing and eugenics policies and practices heavily influenced social and educational practices. Mass intelligence testing in schools provided the primary method through which school officials--imbued with the power to select, measure, and define students through such tests--would classify students, and deliver instruction tailored to assess ability. As a result, secondary education was differentiated into tracks, vocational schools were established, and special classes were developed in order to address the cognitive and social problems that resulted from the increasing heterogeneity (i.e., poverty, racial, ethnic, and ability differences) in schools brought about by urbanization, immigration, and compulsory attendance laws during the early 1900s.

African American males, who were commonly perceived as having low mental ability or were disruptive, were often classified as Emotional Disturbance and assigned to special classes for "defective children" (Tyack, 1974). Tyack adds, "These children were therefore positioned at the bottom of the educational system, and were often segregated or excluded from public education" (p. 230). In addition, Tyack (1974) states, "Such discriminatory practices were premised upon White Americans' assumption of African

American intellectual inferiority, which some psychologists sought to validate through the use of IQ tests” (p. 231).

Testing is also a major issue in special education. IDEA calls for assessment of each student (Smith, 2001). To protect against biased testing, IDEA puts the following restrictions on testing: (a) testing must not be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis; (b) testing must be administered in the child’s native language; (c) testing must measure whether a child has a disability not the child’s English proficiency, testing must include a variety of tools; and (d) testing must be administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel (IDEA, 1997). One of the six major principles of this law includes nondiscriminatory identification and evaluation. This means that schools “must use nonbiased, multifactor methods of evaluation to determine whether a child has a disability and, if so, whether special education is needed” (Smith, 2001, p.27). The testing cannot discriminate in any way including race, culture, or native language. If one test marks a child as having a learning disability, it cannot be the sole evidence. Multiple tests must be used.

Formal schooling, which seemed to be a right and entitlement for Whites, was systematically orchestrated to exclude and marginalize African Americans (Bullock, 1967). According to Bullock, prior to 1954 the consistent under funding of African American schools was an ongoing practice, contributing to the inferior schooling that African American students received. Bullock (1967) explained that during the 1914-1915 school year, expenditures for public education in the southern states exceeded \$72 million, but only a little over \$8 million was spent on the separate black schools. Even when the population of school-age African American children increased within some

states, significant disparities remained between monetary allocations to public schools for African Americans and Whites (Bullock, 1967). Such inequitable funding practices compelled African American citizens to contribute additional funds and resources to support public schooling for their children. This voluntary contribution was paid in addition to the property taxes that African Americans already paid to support public education (Anderson, 1988). Despite these contributions, however, some Southern rural communities with significant percentages of African American adolescents still had few public high schools for these youths to attend (Anderson, 1988).

African American teachers, whose salaries were significantly less than those of White teachers and who had to work with inferior equipment in overcrowded classrooms, were expected to produce the same results as White teachers whose working conditions were far better (Bullock, 1967). More than merely conditions of inequality, the above factors reflect "a process of racial oppression extending throughout the South" (Anderson, 1988).

The disproportionate placement of African American males in separate special education settings and the impact of such placements upon their future life chances are some of the issues that have come to the forefront of discussions surrounding inequities in education (Agada & Obiakor, 1994). Although some African American youth do experience social and academic problems, many of these youth are misclassified, unnecessarily isolated from their peers, poorly educated, and thus, inadequately served (Agada & Obiakor, 1994). Federal law mandates that students identified with disabilities are to be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The overrepresentation of African American males in restrictive, segregated placements therefore raises serious

questions about educational equity. According to Agada and Obiakor, to the extent that these problems occur, special education clearly leads to the denial or "watering down" of educational opportunity for some students.

Instructional activities in special education classrooms often tend to reflect a deficit approach to instruction; such activities include isolated skill training, worksheets, and rote learning (Heshusius, 1989). Ladson-Billing, (2001) states:

Rather than acknowledging students' personal, social, and cultural meanings and contexts as beginning points for teaching and learning, these instructional practices emphasize instruction in bits and pieces of information in an additive and linear format rather than a complex and dynamic process, that ignores social and contextual elements such as the various personal meanings, intents, and experiences that students bring to learning and that also inform the ways in which they construct, recreate, and share knowledge. (p. 63)

According to the United States Department of Education (1997), the lack of consistent criteria and limited collection of disaggregated enrollment data hinder the examination of disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education.

Teachers

Teachers' Perceptions and Learning Styles

General education teachers are held accountable for this overrepresentation. They deal with the same children day in and day out. Throughout the academic year, teachers come to know their students extremely well. They know what type of personality a particular student has, their abilities, their grades, how well the child does socially, and any type of problems that the child may have. According to Reschly (1980), some educators responsible for teaching African American male students are not aware of the

cultural differences and backgrounds of African American students, and therefore view these differences as a learning disability.

Since teachers are the people that spend the most time with students, consequently they refer students to special education a large majority of the time. This puts most of the responsibility on the teacher. The huge problem with this is that once a child is labeled as mentally retarded, the label is never removed (Patton, 1998). Researchers who question the practices that lead to this disproportionate and overrepresentation of African American male students in particular types of special education classrooms suggest that this phenomenon may occur in part because of cultural differences of African American students and the way the educators view these differences (Gilbert & Gay, 1985; Reschly, 1980). Educators must be aware of the cultural differences that manifest through intelligence testing and interactions in the classroom.

Bullock (1967) offered additional empirical evidence suggesting teacher bias in the study that determined that twice as many African American students were identified as behaviorally disordered than White students, with more African American students identified by White teachers as opposed to African American teachers. The researchers found that teachers were able to accurately identify pupils with reading difficulties regardless of the pupil's race and gender (Coutinho & Oswald, 1998; Harry, 1992). Shinn, Tidal & Spira (1987) concluded that gender and race must be considered as factors affecting teacher decision-making. Inadequate education in the United States school systems has perpetuated the behavior of African American males. These notions have them perceived to be bad therefore placing them in special education programs (Allen-Meares, 1996).

One of the dominant stereotypes concerning African American males that White teachers hold is that they are hostile, angry, and prone to violence (Carby, 1998). Carby asserts that, “the motion picture industry and the news media shape much of how White America perceives African American males” (p. 10). For example, the motion picture industry and the news media have taken the movement styles of African American males, such as their walking style, and present them in a manner that invokes fear in the majority population (Carby, 1998). Carby noted that teachers lowered their expectations of the academic abilities of African American students who spoke in what is referred to as “street slang.” In contrast, teachers raised their expectations concerning the academic abilities of African American students who used Standard English in the classroom.

Teachers have been noted to view behaviors that are culturally appropriate in students’ families, among their peers, and in their communities as overly aggressive, inappropriate, negative, rude, intimidating, and threatening (Kunjufu, 2005). Teachers also might perceive the walking styles of African American adolescents as inappropriate behavior that compromises their success in the general education classroom (Irvine & Armento, 2002). Irvine and Armento further state, that as diverse students become more tenacious in their efforts to maintain their cultural identity, teachers who are unfamiliar and inexperienced with student diversity often overreact and impose unenforceable rules and expectations.

In 2002, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) published an administrator’s guide addressing the overrepresentation of African American students in special education. This guide indicated that while everyone has biases that can affect decision-making and actions, these biases only became problematic when they were harmful to

groups or individuals. Studies have shown that many teachers expected middle class White students to perform better than minority students, even when predictors such as achievement test scores, school history and grades predicted alternate results (Grossman, 1995; Singhal, 1999; Trujillo, 1986). In response to the literature on teachers' attitudes and expectations, Townsend (2000) wrote, "Understanding that there is greater variance within ethnic groups, teachers can identify some general behavioral style that may cause dissonance between their own experiences, values and belief system and those of their African American students" (p.385). Ogbu (1982) suggested that school failure for African American children, came as a result of cultural discontinuity in school. Hale (1994) adding to the discourse about the effects of teachers and student cultural discontinuity says:

Most elementary school classes are taught by women with the result that a female orientation is created in the classroom. As we enter the twenty first century, inner-city classrooms will increasingly contain a majority of African American children being taught by White female teachers. White female teachers tend to be more comfortable with and knowledgeable about the behavior of White female children and, to a lesser degree, White male children. (p. 191)

Researchers have suggested that while individuals maintain certain biases, most educators do not believe minority students to be genetically inferior. However, research also has suggested that many teachers' action do not show parity with these beliefs (Grossman, 1995; Singhal, 1999). At the practitioner level, teacher and parent training is a problem. There is a lack of appropriate professional development for teachers in regards to the placement of African American males in special education (Gillis-Olsion, 1986). Teachers' perceptions of culture-related identities and their manifestations in the classroom are especially relevant to school achievement by students (Gay, 2000). African American male students' chance of school achievement increase when they, like their

non-African American schoolmates, experience education with teachers who understand their socio-cultural knowledge and take into account cultural factors when designing, implementing, and evaluating instructions (Boykins & Bailey, 2000).

Reports about culture and learning styles consistently agree that within a group, variations among individuals are as great as commonalities. Even as we acknowledge that culture affects learning styles, we know that distinct learning style patterns do not fit a specific cultural group (Dunn, 1997). According to Dunn,

The first is the set of observation-based descriptions of cultural groups of learners. For the most part, people who are familiar with each group have written these descriptions to sensitize people outside the culture to the experiences of children inside the culture. They have often contrasted minority students' learning patterns with European-American students' ways of learning and the school practices designed for such students. (pp. 74-75)

Researchers have identified typical learning patterns among African Americans (Hale-Benson, 1986; Hilliard, 1989; Shade, 1989); Mexican Americans and Native Americans (Bert & Bert 1992, More, 1990; Shade, 1989). Research about the African American culture showed that students often value oral experiences, physical activity, and loyalty in interpersonal relationships (Hilliard, 1989; Shade, 1989). These traits call for classroom activities that include approaches like discussion, active projects, and collaborative work. Descriptions indicate that Native American people generally value and develop acute visual discrimination and skills in the use of imagery, perceive globally, and have reflective thinking patterns (Bert & Bert, 1992; More, 1990; Shade, 1989). Thus, schooling should establish a context for new information, provide quiet times for thinking, and emphasize visual stimuli. In contrast, the observers describe mainstream White Americans as valuing independence, analytic thinking, objectivity, and accuracy. These values translate into learning experiences that focus on competition,

information, tests and grades, and linear logic. These patterns are prevalent in most American schools.

Bennett (1986) warns that ignoring the effects of culture and learning style affects all students. According to Bennett, “if classroom expectations are limited by our own cultural orientations, we impede successful learners guided by another cultural orientation”. “If we only teach according to the ways we ourselves learn best, we are also likely to thwart successful learners who may share our cultural background but whose learning styles deviate from our own” (p. 116). Some argue that teachers play a special role in representing their own culture. Hale-Benson (1986) noted, “it is incumbent upon African American professionals to identify the intelligences found especially in African American children and to support the pursuit of their strengths” (p. 8). Hale-Benson further states, “We all have learned successfully from teachers who differed from us in learning style or culture and often, these were masterful, caring teachers” (p.10).

Garibaldi (1991) surveyed teachers in the New Orleans Public Schools and found that 60% of the teacher polled did not expect their African American male students to go to college. Sometimes our own motivation helped us learn in spite of the teacher. Yet teachers of all cultural backgrounds and style will have to work conscientiously to provide equity for students as classrooms increasingly reflect the diversity of our society.

The Referral Process & Bias Testing

Referring elementary school students to special education is a process that varies among school districts and states. In most cases, the referral may begin with the classroom teacher, as they are more frequently exposed to the students in the educational setting (Downs, 2003). Downs further states, for teachers to identify a student’s problem

a particular teacher should be able to clarify specifically what they observed. In the case of SED placement, which does not rely on standardized assessment instruments, the teacher's decision to refer a child is the most crucial step in the process (Harry & Anderson, 1994). Harry & Anderson (1994) states, this process may begin with any behavior that causes discomfort for a classroom teacher (p.94). In a time when research is providing evidence that there are many different types of emotional and learning disabilities, it is important to specifically identify the student's symptoms so the proper steps for an accurate diagnosis can be made (Doyle, 1990). The influence teachers can have on the referral process is very strong (Giesbrecht & Routh, 1979; Parrish, 2002; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Richey, 1982). Ysseldyke et al., elaborate that, in personal discussions with other professionals and based upon their first hand experiences, teachers may refer a specific student to begin the process so they can have the child removed from their classroom, even if it may be for two hours out of the school day. This is especially true if the teacher is having problems managing the student's classroom behavior. The reality of this issue is 68% of students referred end up actually being placed in a special education program (Ysseldyke et al., 1997). It also needs to be emphasized that a referring teacher's attitude towards the student and the information that is reported by the teacher can have a considerable impact on the perspective referral team members (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Richey, 1982).

Young African American males have been disproportionately identified as appropriate for referral for resources in special education classes (Hilliard, 1990). Biased referral and assessment procedures of ethnic minority students have been reported in the literature (Cumings, 1986; Hilliard, 1990). Unfortunately, the chances of being placed in

special education increase substantially once the referral process is initiated (Artiles & Trent, 1994). A referral leads to psychological testing, and testing often results in placement in special education classes (Bahr, Fuchs, Stecker, & Fuchs, 1991). According to Watkins and Kurtz (2001) to be young, African American, and male in school is to be a member of a high-risk group.

Patton (1998) contends that the legacy of overrepresentation among African American male students in certain special education programs is rooted in historic education discrimination that precedes the adoption of special education programs in the United States. Rizvi and Lingard (1996) assert that in the developing discourse surrounding current education reform efforts, former notions of social justice that emphasized the importance of past oppression and disadvantages experienced by racial and ethnic minorities have been replaced. Throughout the literature, the identification and assessment processes, IQ test, and practitioner bias are most frequently cited as contributing to overrepresentation. Critics of the identification process view use of the IQ test as a major source of bias affecting overrepresentation (Reschly, 1980; Hilliard, 1992). Hilliard has repeatedly asserted that standardized tests do not reflect the cultural experiences of African American male students and what they know. Similarly, Kauffman (2001) concludes that IQ tests are culturally biased in favor of White students who constitute the representative sample of American students that provide the normative or standard range of knowledge on which these tests are based. Cumings (1986) argues further that by failing to test previous learning experiences of minority students, IQ tests lack construct validity.

The evaluation process is also affected by bias. Bias comes into play as professionals interpret legislation set forth by the federal government. The research suggests that school professionals should place less confidence in tests when deciding if a student qualifies for special education services (Patton, 1998). Professionals should include informal student information, such as student work.

Racism

Schools respond to and reflect the larger society. Therefore, the education profession can also expect to find racism in schools. Expressions of racism may be less common in schools today than in the past, but racism does not just exist when schools are legally segregated or racial epithets are used (Nieto, 2004). Nieto noted that racism and other forms of discrimination, particularly sexism; classism, ethnocentrism, and linguistic prejudice? have a long history in our schools, and their effects are widespread and long lasting. Nieto further states, “In a society where race is so strongly related to individual, family, and community conditions, it is extremely difficult to know what part of the inequalities are caused by discrimination within the school” (p.24). Unconscious racial bias, stereotypes, and other race-linked factors have a significant impact on the patterns of identification, placement, and quality of services for minority children, and particularly for African American children (Nieto, 2004).

The issue of discrimination by White teachers with African American students is a significant problem. Irvine (1990) found that White teachers have more negative expectations for African American students than for White students. An analysis of large urban school districts found that as the proportion of African American teachers in a school district increased, the proportion of African American students assigned to special

education classes, suspended, or expelled decreased (Irvine, 1990). Bahr et al. (1991) examined whether teachers' perceptions of difficult-to-teach students were racially motivated. In this study, teachers were asked to nominate a difficult-to-teach student out of a pool of equal numbers of African American and White students most in need of referral for psychological evaluation and placement in special education. The results indicated that teachers rated African American difficult-to-teach students as more appropriate for referral than their White counterparts.

Female teachers, White female teachers in particular, are integral in the development of Black boys in America (Kunjufu, 2004). Kunjufu states, "Since the *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* case, desegregation has more than ever brought African American males into contact with White teachers" (p.83). Patton (1981) noted that 83% of all elementary teachers are females. Of the African American children placed in special education, 85% are boys (Kunjufu, 2004). White males also suffer from a female-run classroom, but when placed in special education rather than EMR, they are usually classified learning disabled (LD), where the curriculum and teacher's expectation remains challenging. Morgan (1980) notes:

When blacks enter first grade the stories they create express positive feelings about themselves in schooling situations, but by the second grade students' stories express 'negative imagery of the teacher and school environment,' and by the fifth grade the overall feeling expressed by students is that of cynicism. In other words, upon entering school in primary grades, black children possess enthusiasm and eager interest; however, by fifth grade the liveliness and interest are gone, replaced by passivity and apathy. I found after the third grade the achievement rate of blacks began a downward spiral, which tended to continue in the child's academic career. (p. 33)

For many African American males, the special education process begins on the first day of their school careers (Harry & Anderson, 1994). Harry and Anderson also note

that the typical classroom presents for African American males an unfamiliar mode of learning and behavior. The majority of public elementary and secondary school teachers in the U.S. are women and predominantly White women; yet the majority of students in these schools are predominantly non-White (Harry & Anderson, 1994). Most teacher programs typically do not address the implications of this differential experience based on race and gender (Hale-Benson, 1986). Several traditional males' behavioral profile exacerbates the average White female teacher's negative view of them (Harry & Anderson, 1994). Herrera (1998) conducted a study of the disparities in representation of White and African American males in special education in 10 cities; the racial composition of the teaching staff was also studied. Herrera (1998) found "that a relationship between the number of African American male students placed in special education and the percentage of school districts with White teachers had the highest percentage of African American male placements in special education." (p.12)

Kunjufu (2004) has observed that the aggressive verbal "volleying" of African American males is interpreted as hostile and threatening by the White female culture of schools. Some teachers misunderstand and interpret their behavior as fighting, when actually they were trying to relieve tension and avoid a fight. A large number of African American males are labeled as having a disciplinary problem or being Educable Mental Retardation, and often suspended because of the dozen or playing around (Kunjufu, 2004). It is important for female teachers to understand that African American boys value their peers, their walk, rap and style more than anything else. Teachers are not going to sway these boys to their way of thinking with a condemnation of things the boys value (Kunjufu, 2004).

Cultural Differences

Serwatka (1986) had found that African American students tended to be overrepresented in special classes where placement was based upon standardized tests. Standardized tests used with African American students have also been characterized as a contributing factor in the constriction of certain educational opportunities (Hale, 1986). In her review of the literature, Kimberly Peterz (1999) cites problems with cultural competency among assessors as well as intrinsic problems with the construction of the assessments as chief among the reasons for the consistent finding that African American students are more likely to score as mentally retarded. Patton (1998) called for a thorough-going rethinking of the "science of assessment," which, he asserts, tends to generate a methodology that affects not only the way we measure events, but the number of possible outcomes that we can conceive and their meaning. Patton argues that when assessment systematically over-selects a specific grouping as "disabled" then the whole discourse needs to be examined. He asserts that it is simply not acceptable that African American students are systematically tested, diagnosed as mentally retarded, and moved into special education at a disproportionate rate.

The discussion on race focuses on the problems minorities are experiencing; these groups, particularly African Americans and Hispanics, are too often seen as a burden to society because of what they cost taxpayers, rather than as groups that add to the economy and the social and cultural fabric of our society (Grief, Harbowski, & Maton, 1998). African Americans, in particular African American males, who engage in certain behaviors that represent artifacts of their culture-such as language (Ebonics), movement

patterns and a certain appearance have been found to be referred at greater rates for special education placement (Neal, McCray, & Webb-Johnson, 2001).

Serwatka et al. (1995) states, “the lack of awareness about African American culture on the part of public school professionals allow for myopic perception of African American students that has to do with racial and cultural biases, while others are a by product of the actual conditions that disproportionately affect African American males” (Serwatka, Deering, & Grant, 1995, p. 48). Students from different cultural backgrounds, African American males in particular, may be placed in special education programs simply because educators, administrators and professionals are predisposed to see them as problematic (Cuban, 1989). Some educators responsible for teaching African American students are not aware of the cultural differences and backgrounds of African American students and typically view these differences as a learning disability (Reschly, 1980).

Students

Recent Research

Recent research, commissioned through the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, described the extent to which African Americans and other minority children are identified as disabled and educated in restrictive special education environments (Oswald, Coutinho, & Best, 2002). Losen and Orfield (2003), provide a troubling picture of ongoing overrepresentation and segregation of African American children within special education classrooms in U.S. schools. For example, an analysis of information pertaining to enrollment and disability categories reveals that African American students nationwide are nearly three times more likely than Whites to be labeled MR, almost two

times more likely to be labeled ED, and almost one and a half times more likely to be diagnosed with LD and not included in general education classrooms (Oswald, Coutinho, & Best, 2002). Oswald et al further state:

Individual states are identified, the likelihood of African American overrepresentation in the category of MR or ED may range anywhere from two-to-six times that of Whites. (p. 5) For example, African American students in Nebraska were six times more likely to be identified as ED and over four times more likely to be labeled as MR in Connecticut. (p.4)

The risk of identification of African Americans within the ED category increases in states where African Americans are most heavily concentrated, with the highest levels of overrepresentation occurring in several of those states with a history of racial apartheid, for example, Mississippi, South Carolina, Louisiana, North Carolina, Florida, and Alabama (Parrish, 2002). African American males especially are disproportionately represented within these categories, and are more often segregated in special classrooms (Harry & Anderson 1994)

In another research study, Garcia-Fieros and Conroy (2002) sought to determine the extent to which African American students designated as ED are educated in restrictive placements. An examination of district level data from ten urban school districts revealed not only that disproportionate numbers of African American students are represented within the categories of MR, ED, and LD across most of the ten districts, but also that these students constitute significant percentages of those populations of students so labeled who spent more than 21% of the school day outside the general education classroom. Garcia-Fieros & Conroy (2002) state:

In Atlanta, for example, 99.21 percent of students designated with MR are excluded from general education more than 21 percent of the time, and African Americans make up 96.98 percent of this MR population. (p. 39)

These research findings indicate that the disproportionate identification of African American youth within high-incidence disability categories and segregated class placements go hand-in-hand, raising serious issues about educational inequity. This troubling picture of overrepresentation and exclusion therefore warrants consideration of how African American males are positioned and constructed as disabled within the organizational and disciplinary discourses of school.

The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education Report (PCESE, 2002) reveals that teacher referrals account for more than 80% of the students who are identified with high-incidence disabilities and placed in special education settings. Other studies also confirm that teacher judgment is a significant factor in the identification and placement of students in special education (Artiles, 1998; Pernell, 1994). Patton (1998) states, "It appears, then, that the placement of students within special education is closely tied to the assumptions that teachers make regarding the cultural backgrounds and learning styles or differences of students within their classrooms" (p. 25). These assumptions are too often rooted in deficient thought such as the belief that students lack motivation, possess limited intellectual ability, and come from an inadequate home environment, and little, if any, consideration is given to examining the ways in which educational environments significantly impact the personal and educational experiences of these students (Valencia, 1997). The ways in which African American males mediate school life, for example, are influenced both by the various cultures and experiences that constitute their backgrounds and by the ways in which these are recognized and interpreted in schools (Ferguson, 2001). Ferguson states:

I recognize that in the best of circumstances some African American adolescent males will still experience academic and social difficulties in school, but practices

of overidentification and continued placement of these individuals within restrictive classes are clearly evident when one examines the overrepresentation data across racial categories. Attributions of disability deflect attention from the ways in which these students are marginalized by constructions of normalcy that privilege the White, middle- and upper middle-class, able-bodied male. (p. 50)

These constructions often reflect the tacit norms and assumptions of those from within what Lisa Delpit refers to as the "culture of power," but may also reflect the assumptions of African American middle-class teachers who do not identify with the students that they teach (Linton, 2001). Abnormality then comes to be defined as the extent to which certain lifestyles and behaviors vary from the mainstream, and the construct of disability is made available to support a medical orientation and response toward these differences (Carrier, 1986).

Poverty

Poverty problems seem to be a hot issue in most special education debates. African American students are two and a half times more likely to be identified as having mild mental retardation and about one and a half times more likely to have behavioral disorders or emotional disturbance when compared to their peers (Smith, 2001). As degree of poverty increases, African American students are more likely to be identified as having mental retardation and less likely to be identified as having emotional disturbance. It is evident that families below the poverty line can more than likely not afford educational items such as books. Those under the poverty line are also more than likely undereducated themselves. Therefore, there is no push for their children to be well educated. Poverty is an important aspect to consider in the overrepresentation of African American males in special education (Kunjufu, 2004). Many times poverty is directly

linked to one's culture. Kunjufu further states, that African Americans are more likely than their White counterparts to attend schools that do not have adequate resources. These schools lack features such as fully licensed professionals; preschool; related, supportive and transitional services; extracurricular activities; appropriate class sizes; testing accommodations; state of the art physical facilities; and instructional and assistive technology (Kozol, 1991). Obviously, not all people understand cultures other than their own. This may contribute to the overrepresentation of minorities in special education.

Summary

The review of literature examined the overrepresentation of African American males in special education. The issue of the overrepresentation of African American students in special education programs has a negative consequence that affects African American males. The problem has negative implications for these students' school performance and dropout rate. According to Oswald et al. (1999), "the dropout rate is 86% higher for African Americans than for White. More than 50% of African Americans in large cities drop out of school" (p. 23).

The overrepresentation of African American males has raised concerns about these students being placed on a separate track, which deny them access to the general education curriculum. This separate and unequal education can be viewed as a form of discrimination against African American males (Patton, 1998; Smith, 2001).

Special education classrooms are known to have a low student-to-teacher ratio. This provides the student with better help due to more one-on-one time with the teacher. Because IDEA called for individualized education programs, the student is also given an advantage because a curriculum is set up especially for him or her. Students' rights and

funding are also guaranteed for special education students. It sounds impossible to go wrong with special education. However, students who are placed in special education may not need special instruction and are missing out on the quality of education they could receive in the general education classroom. According to Garcia-Fierros & Conroy (2002), mislabeling of African American males students as having a disability and being in need of special education services may result in inappropriate services. In addition, African American male students are labeled as qualifying for special education services and are placed in a restrictive education setting. Garcia-Fierros and Conroy further state, the national percentage rates of all students with a disability are 37% African American students, 43% Hispanic students, and 55% White students that are being included in regular education classes.

New flexible identification systems need to be developed that change depending on the individual's situation, family, culture, and region. It also needs to be sensitive to issues such as how long the child and family have lived in the United States, their economic status, and the child's prior educational experience. While not all minority groups are overrepresented in special education, most are. Teachers biased testing, poverty, racism, and culture all contribute to this overrepresentation. IDEA is sometimes not an effective law in upholding the fair representation of both majority and minority groups in special education. In order to solve the problem, teachers must become educated about different cultures, testing must be given in the language the student is fluent in, and books and other educational tools must be made available for those below the poverty line.

The overrepresentation of African American students, especially African American males, is due to biased testing and the cultural misunderstanding of African American people (Gilbert & Gay, 1985). Some educators responsible for teaching African American students are not aware of the cultural differences and backgrounds of African American students, and therefore view these differences as a learning disability (Reschly, 1980). Researchers who question the practices that lead to this disproportionate overrepresentation of African American students in particular types of special education classrooms suggest that this phenomenon may occur in part because of biased testing practices and because of the cultural differences of African American students and the way the educators view these differences (Gilbert & Gay, 1985; Reschly, 1980). Educators must be aware of the cultural differences that manifest themselves through intelligence testing and sometimes in the classroom. This dilemma of African American overrepresentation in special education will not be resolved until changes are made in helping teacher understand cultural differences, new culture-sensitive testing practices, and more involvement with the referral process for evaluation purposes.

The literature review covered in this chapter revealed that there are many factors that contribute to the overrepresentation of African American males in special education. Studies seeking to answer the question of disproportionality/overrepresentation in special education have existed for nearly thirty years, yet the problem has not subsided. No studies have examined what special education is like for African American male students that are overrepresented in ED classes. This study will fill the information gap in the research by examining the experiences of African American males placed in special education programs.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The disproportionate population percentages of African American male students in special education in comparison with their population percentages in the regular education curriculum have been well documented in the literature by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP, 2001). Therefore, the purpose of this study will be to examine the experiences of African American male students who were placed in special education programs. The actual population for this study included ten African American males who are currently enrolled in an urban school district in the Southern region of the country. This chapter include the following sections: (a) research design, (b) rationale, (c) participants, (d) data collection, (e) data analysis, and (f) validity and reliability. With this information, school counselors, teachers, and other appropriate school personnel will be more informed of the experiences of African American males in special education programs.

Research Design

Qualitative research is a methodology that values the participants' views in an interactive process that allows the participants to create the data for the research through their own voice or words (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). According to Creswell (1998):

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explores a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

Creswell (2003) presented a similar perspective on qualitative research when he noted that qualitative analysis is a way to understand naturally occurring phenomena in their natural state with direct quotes and descriptive data. Patton also suggests that qualitative research designs provide an opportunity for the researcher to become involved personally with the informants in an unobtrusive and non-threatening manner. The researcher takes interviews transcript, field notes, and other participant-related documents and analyzes them as they appear.

A qualitative research design utilizing interviews will be employed with African American male students who were placed in special education emotional disturbance (ED) programs from the South. Ten African American male students in ED high school were included in this study. Each interview was conducted in a face-to-face format and ranged from sixty to ninety minutes. Qualitative methodology is recommended when the focus of research is on the textual descriptions of participants' experiences. The qualitative approach is good for allowing participants to be studied in their entirety, valuing the introspective and subjective nature of human science research and the process is inductive (Creswell, 2003).

Speculation continues to exist on the cause of this long-standing problem. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to: find out what the experiences were like for African American males who were placed in special education ED programs, which may lead to an in-depth understanding of how and why overrepresentation occurs. Secondly, this study could impact on the type of services students are receiving. Thirdly, the findings will inform teacher education programs as to the kinds of classroom and training perspective teachers need to meet the needs of African American male students more

effectively. Fourth, the findings will lead to further research studies on the experiences of African American males in special education programs.

Rationale for Qualitative Design

My research questions focused on the experiences of African American males in special education ED programs. My goal was to describe the experiences of special education ED programs for African American males. It is impossible to describe these experiences in numbers; therefore a qualitative design enables me to represent the voices of my participants. According to Dumbuya (2000), Guba and Lincoln (1995) exposed the field of education to an emergent theory in qualitative research. Qualitative research involves an interpretative research approach to its subject matter. This means that in a qualitative research study, things are studied in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them.

Creswell (2003) defined qualitative research as a research procedure, which produces descriptive data using people's own written or spoken words, and observational behavior. This approach directs itself at natural settings and the study is not reduced to an isolated variable or to a hypothesis. When we reduce people to statistical aggregates as in the case of quantitative studies, we lose sight of the subjective nature of human behavior. It is therefore necessary for the researcher to be open and up front with his or her aims and goals, and to be cognizant of his or her own social and political biases (Myrdal, 1969).

Supporters of positivism believe in the existence of a single reality that can only be discovered through a deductive approach, while advocates of qualitative research believe in the existence of multiple realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1995; Chiza, 1994; Patton,

1990). Supporters of qualitative research typically provide a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of cases. This wealth of information emerges from the participants' past experience and events, as they recall them. This increases understanding of situations studied, but also reduces generalization (Patton, 1990).

The advantage of in-depth information from a small number of people can be very valuable, especially if the participants are information rich (Patton, 1981). Therefore, the sample of qualitative research must be judged on context and not on sample size.

Qualitative inquiry focuses more on information richness than on sample size. Besides, the main rationale for using life histories is that a human instrument is sufficiently flexible to adjust to complex situations.

Maxwell (1996) identifies five research purposes for which qualitative studies are especially suited. These include understanding meaning for participants in a study, understanding the context in which participants act, identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, understanding the process by which events and actions take place, and developing causal explanations. This study is an example of Maxwell's first research purpose: understanding the meaning, for the participants, of the identified phenomenon (special education). Study results may also assist in understanding the context in which participants act. The possibility of identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences is required by the stance of openness (Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

Qualitative research also has an advantage for addressing three practical purposes (Maxwell, 1996). The first of these is "generating results and theories that are understandable and experientially credible, both to the people you are studying and to others" (p.21). Since one of the purposes of this study is to help in-service and pre-

service teachers understand parent perspectives, the generation of understandable and experientially credible results and theories is critical. A qualitative approach is justified by the research purpose of understanding the meaning of the phenomenon of special education to the participants and the practical purpose of generating understandable and experientially credible results for use in teacher education. Stories help us to understand phenomena. Qualitative research is well suited to discovering details of a phenomenon for use in the construction of a story.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology refers to several related philosophies joined by a rejection of scientific realism (Schwandt, 1997). According to Schwandt, phenomenologists are opposed to the idea that genuine legitimate knowledge can only be had by rejecting the way we perceive the world of everyday life as appearance. Phenomenologists attempt to put aside prevailing understanding of everyday phenomena in order to describe them without prejudice (Hammond, Howarth, & Keat, 1991).

I followed the traditional existential phenomenology to focus on the experience of everyday life as it is internalized in a subjective consciousness of an individual (Schwandt, 1997, p.115). Existential phenomenology typically involves the exploration of the life-world of a group of individuals but often focuses on only a small portion of the life world. Creswell (1998) used existential phenomenology to discover the essential structure of a caring nurse-client interaction from the perspective of the client. Tesch (1990) describes the phenomenological researcher as discerning themes for the purpose of gaining insight. Gaining insight is a good description of my purpose in conducting this study.

Location and Setting for the Research

I chose to conduct this study in an urban school district located in the Southern region of the country which has a population of 46,910 students. The total percentage of African American students in this school district is 75.8 percent and the total percentage of White students in this district is 20.9 percent. I recruited participants through the public school district in the area.

Sample and Participants

Sampling decisions included what school district to study, population of students to investigate, sites and individuals to select to interview, and what other sources of information to use (Maxwell, 1996). My sampling techniques were chosen based on the accessibility and function of each sampling decision.

I chose convenience sampling as the method for selecting the school district. Although generally not recommended (Patton, 1998), convenience sampling is deemed appropriate for particular situations. According to Weiss (1991), convenience sampling is the only feasible means to proceed when attempting to acquire information about a group for which it is difficult to gain access. The districts had two qualifiers. First, it had to have an overrepresentation of African American male students in special education Emotional Disturbance programs. The overrepresentation is the assumption that the proportion of a particular group served in special education should be equivalent to their representation in the general education if there is no bias or inherent racism (MacMillan & Reschly, 1998). Second, the district will allow me access and cooperate with the plan of study. Although overrepresentation of African American male students in special education programs is a prevalent phenomenon in many school districts throughout the

United States; gaining access to these sites is difficult. Therefore, the district that I selected was accessible because of my previous working relationship in the system.

Participants

In order to achieve an in-depth understanding of the experiences of African American males in special education ED programs, African American male students were the chosen minority group that the literature reviewed and revealed their disproportionate representation throughout history and in many of the disability categories, particularly Emotional Disorder. Ten African American males in special education ED were chosen because of my own particular interest in this group given that I am an African American male researcher and the literature indicates that African Americans have been overrepresented since the inception of special education. Convenience sampling was used and explained specifically under sampling. In this school district in the south specific focus was placed on African American males in anED programs classrooms were in 11th or 12th grade and had been in ED program for two or more years.

Data Collection

The participants were selected from a list provided by an Administrator of the school district. Informed consent forms were signed by parents allowing their child to participate in this study. Participation was completely voluntary and participants were free to leave the study at any time. There weren't any consequences for either not participating or stopping participation. Copies of the interview questions were distributed to each participant, two weeks prior to the interview. Individual interviews were the primary data collection technique for this phenomenological study. Face-to-face

interviews were conducted. The length of the interviews was approximately one hour to one and a half hours. The researcher recorded all interviews with a tape recorder in order to capture what had been said. Then the tapes were transcribed and themes emerged. Seidman's (2006) approach was used in this study. Seidman's approach uses in-depth phenomenological qualitative interviewing approach. Seidman's approach for research in education will provide in-depth phenomenological interviews to ascertain the narrative experience of African American males. According to Seidman, in-depth interviewing is a method that combines life history in three interviewing sessions. Modified were made in this study. Instead of using three sessions the researcher used one session. This approach uses open-ended questions to build upon exploring the participants reconstruction of their experience. This approach has three interviewing sessions that last between sixty and ninety minutes. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used a modified in-depth interviewing approach. The levels of questioning were conducted in one session. The primary questions asked were:

1. Describe your background
 - a. What happened in school for you to be placed in special education?
 - b. How did you feel being in special education?
 - c. How did you get along with other people?
2. Explain a typical day for you (Start from the time awake to time asleep).
 - a. What are your experiences in special education?
 - b. What was it like when you were first placed in special education?
 - c. Were you ever given an opportunity to get out of special education?
 - d. How did you get along with other students?
3. What do you see yourself doing in the future?
 - a. Do you think special education was beneficial?
 - b. Have your experiences in special education affected you?
 - c. What would you recommend to students being placed in special education programs?

- d. What would you recommend to regular education teachers and special education teachers?

Obtaining Consent for Student Interviews

Informed consent agreement forms were sent to all of the parents of African American male students in special education Emotional Disturbance programs in the school district. The students returned the consent forms, signed by parents approving them to participate, to an Administrator or special education designees. With the consent of the parents all interviews were tape-recorded. Participants were reminded that they could ask me to turn off the tape recorder at any time. I used a small, hand-held tape recorder.

Participation Protection

All names were replaced with pseudonyms. I did not name the community or state. With participant knowledge, other small details were changed to protect participant confidentiality.

Participant confidentiality was also protected in the way data was managed. Interview tapes were labeled by participants' number. A professional medical/legal transcriptionist who is used to dealing with confidential content transcribed the tapes. As soon as I received a transcribed interview on computer disk, I changed the person and place names into a working file. In the unlikely event that a disk or print copy was lost, there was no identifying information other than my own name and contact information. I labeled audiotapes, diskettes, and printed transcripts with participant numbers or pseudonyms.

Interview Sites

Interview sites were private, relatively free from disruptions, and comfortable and convenient for the participant. Public places, such as restaurants and libraries, were not suitable due to the potentially sensitive and personal nature of the discussion.

Participant's homes were not suitable for interviews.

Data Analysis

In the analysis process, according to Patton (1990), the researcher should search for meaning in data, reduce non-essential information, and identify significant patterns. Interviews with the participants were transcribed immediately after the face-to-face interview to capture the perspective of the participants. During the transcription process, interviews were read and compared with the audiotapes by the researcher. Rereading these transcriptions allowed the researcher to accurately record the voices as well as get a sense of the text (Darlington & Scott, 2002, p.40). This process ensured the researcher of his "conscious effort to stay in the words of the participants, without theorizing or analyzing based on the researcher's experiences and notions, and to focus on the phenomenon that appeared" (Ray, 2001, p.48).

Constant Comparative

The technique of constant comparative of data was a qualitative approach that involves the researcher simultaneously coding and analyzing the data in order to develop concepts. In a systematic and innovative manner, the researcher continuously compared specific incidents in the data, the investigator was able to refine concepts, identify their importance, explore their interconnectedness or relationship to one another, and integrate them into a coherent theory.

The first step the researcher used was to read the text and color code and bracket interesting passages. In this stage the researcher exercises judgment about what is significant in the transcript. In reducing the material, interviewers have begun to analyze, interpret and make meaning of it. During the process of reading and marking the transcripts the researcher begin to label the passages that were interesting. After having read and indicated interesting passages in two or three participants' the researcher began to label and put it into appropriate files called classifying or coding data. Open coding allows the researcher to closely examine the data. In this stage, data was closely analyzed for similarities and differences. This analysis stage allowed the researcher to develop questions, make new discoveries and form initial categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These coding doesn't have to follow a certain order, as a result, open codes included names and descriptors that I assigned to ideas and concepts. The term that is used in qualitative research is called in vivo. The categories were based to the actual words of the students.

The categories arose out of the passages that I have marked interested. When I reflected on the types of material that caught my interest it was clear that some patterns were present. I used broken down data or initial codes under more abstract, explanatory terms came next (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process involved comparing and contrasting the initial codes, and then conceptualizing and clustering the codes into larger categories based on common properties. This process allows the codes to be placed in central categories. Even though open and axial codes may be considered as two distinct procedures, the researcher used both forms of coding (Coleman, 2003).

Selective coding also enabled the researcher to integrate the categories, at the point of saturation, into a coherent story. This process stage allowed the researcher to explain the theory or phenomenon that has emerged (Creswell, 1998). These categories were developed based on their abstractness, depth, and ability to both explain variation, and pull the other categories together to form an explanatory whole (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.146).

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1995) suggested that credibility is a key concept in establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry. Trustworthiness refers to the validity of study (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). In this study prolonged engagement, peer debriefing and audit trail were used to facilitate the ability of investigators to establish the credibility.

According to Erandson (1993), prolonged engagement provides a foundation of credibility by enabling the researcher to learn the culture of the organizing over a period of time, test for inaccurate information by distortion by the re researcher or respondent while building trust. Through an extended time period the researcher was involved with district administrators and faculty.

Peer examination refers to the process of engaging in ongoing and periodic discussion with a colleague who has knowledge of the methodology, but who is not directly involved with the study (Manning, 1997). To ensure researcher biases were kept in check, ongoing peer debriefing took place between researcher and dissertation co-chair and between researcher and colleague not involved in the study, but who had a general knowledge of the topic.

Member checking was part of the collaborative process of negotiated outcomes to ensure that the themes emerging throughout the study arise from the respondents.

Participants became part of the interpretive process and validate the interpretations of the researcher. Feedback from students on emerging themes was part of this inquiry.

Lincoln and Guba (1995) wrote that transferability is the extent to which research findings can be utilized in other situations. It is the responsibility of the researcher to generate thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) to demonstrate the possibility of applicability of research results to other context with shared characteristics. The research provided substantial descriptions of experiences of African American males who were placed in special education from their voices and from the literature.

Dependability is the third criterion of trustworthiness and concerns the degree of consistency to be found if the study were to be repeated or replicated. Dependability is made evident from an audit trail. Lincoln and Guba (1995) wrote that the purpose of an audit trail is to leave an adequate amount of evidence so that interested parties can reconstruct the process by which the investigators reached their conclusion. The audit trail includes taped interviews, and transcriptions.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This dissertation was a qualitative study using a modified Seidman (2006) in-depth phenomenological interview technique. Through in-depth interviews, the researcher explored the stories of 10 African American males who were placed in special education emotional disorder programs. The purpose of this study was to find out what the experiences were like for African American males in special education emotional disorder programs and what type of education African American males believe they receive in special education ED programs.

One of the greatest attributes of qualitative research is its ability to focus and connect to the meanings of the participants (Mile & Huberman, 1994). During this ongoing process, the researcher is able to transfer data into meaningful stories (Mishler, 1986). The narrative in this study provides the readers with a glimpse of the experiences of ten African American males who were placed in special education emotional disorder (ED) programs. These stories, in return, are beneficial to researchers and readers because they help individuals gain an understanding of how special education is for African American males and validates some of the contributing factors for the overrepresentation of African American males in special education.

Ten participants were selected to share their stories regarding their experiences in a special education ED programs in an urban school setting. These participants were all

placed in special education ED for more than two years and they were either juniors or seniors.

Participants Profile

In order to become more familiar with the participants as well as gain a better understanding of how the researcher analyzed his data, the researcher has provided brief biographical information regarding the participants. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity and location of the participants.

Chris

Chris is a twelfth grade black male who came from a large family. His mother and father are currently living with him. During school he eats free lunch. He went to elementary and middle school in a predominantly black school setting. He attended eight elementary schools and five middle schools. He is active in several programs and plays football. The majority of his friends are football players and girls. He is great in arts; I viewed many of his drawings and they were great (fabulous). During the interview he spoke with a very mild demeanor. In addition, he appeared to be comfortable.

Murphy

Murphy is an eleventh grade black male that comes from a single parent home. While at school, he also eats free lunch. After high school, he would like to be a culinary chef or an architect. He was also an honor roll student prior to being placed in special education. During the interview, he was very articulate and very excited about during the interview. The majority of his friends attends his high school and belongs to various groups.

Marcus

Marcus is six feet and five inches tall and weighs 340 pounds. This young man comes from a single family home. He was an honor roll student before moving to a different region in the state. He believed that his early experiences in special education have caused him to become a failure. His plans after high school are to play college football and become a computer engineer or a software builder. He insists that he can take a computer apart and put it back together. During the interview he was very respectful and happy that someone wanted to know how the students felt. He was very expressive at times.

Barry

Barry is a black male who has lived in a group home since the age of 3 and eats free breakfast and lunch. He enjoys playing football and is currently on the football team and starting at wide receiver. He can't read. He stated that he was placed in special education because of his anger. He is currently in a self-contained classroom for his anger problems.

Cody

Cody is a black male who lived in a group home since the age of 2. He was very excited about being interviewed. He was placed in special education in the second grade. At that time he was an honor student struggling with not being challenged. He stated that his behavior reflected the teacher in his second grade class. After graduation, he plans to attend college and return to help kids just like him.

Andrew

Andrew is a black male who has lived in a group home since the age of 2. He stated that he was taken from his mother at the age of two months. During the interview, he didn't feel like talking very much. He didn't want to be recorded, but he wanted to do the interview. He wanted to help other African American males in special education. This young man was the star on his basketball team and stated he had several scholarships to Division I schools.

Author

Author is a 17-year-old black male from a single parent home. While at school he eats free lunch and breakfast. He was a C and D student before being placed in special education. During the interview, I could feel his pain through his responses to the questions. After high school, he plans to become a firefighter or police officer. This young man also played football and basketball at his school. He also stated that he was the captain on the football and basketball team.

Tyrone

Tyrone was placed in special education in seventh grade by a White teacher. He had A's, B's and C's prior to being placed in special education. Tyrone felt that he was placed in special education because he was black. After being placed in special education he began to get into fights every day. When talking about the past he was very upset with his teachers; he felt they caused him to be deprived rights.

Spencer

This young man was put in special education in the fifth grade. The teacher that referred him to special education was a White female. This student was a B and C student. He claims he didn't get into any trouble during his early school years. He said

being labeled as a bad student felt good. This student wants to join the Navy or Air Force. He is afraid that he may not pass the test to join the Navy since he was placed in special education.

Glenn

Participant 10 was placed in special education in fourth grade by a White female teacher. He enjoys playing sports, watching TV, and fighting every once in a while. He plans on going to art school. The pictures that the participant drew were phenomenal. This participant felt everything he did was not good enough. He really hated most of the teachers that taught him.

Participants	Guardian	Referred in grade:	Referred by	Years in Self-contained ED	I wanted to be:	Grade are you in:
Chris	Both parents	2 nd	White Female	10 years	Actor, singer, movie producer, book writer	12th
Murphy	Single parent	2 nd	White Female	9 years	Architect Chef	11th
Marcus	Single parent	2 nd	White Female	9 years	Professional Football player, Software builder. Computer engineer	11th
Barry	Group Home	3 rd	White Female	8 years	Teacher	11th
Cody	Group Home	2 nd	Black Male	10 years	Teacher	11th
Andrew	Group Home	2 nd	White Female	9 years	Contractor	11th
Author	Single parent	3 rd	White Female	10 years	Firefighter/Policeman	12th
Tyrone	Single parent	7 th	White Female	8 years	Engineer	11th
Spencer	Single parent	4 th	White Female	7 years	Navy or Air Force Pilot	11th
Glenn	Single parent	5 th	White Female	8 years	Computer Artist	12th

Figure 5 Participants Profile

Introduction to the Themes

This section gives a brief description of the themes in this study. The first theme “I wanted to be somebody” was introduced by the participants when asked what they planned on doing in the future. The participants all indicated that they wanted to be somebody. However, the way they were prepared in their schools and special education programs they are afraid that they are not ready for the real world.

The second theme that emerged in this study “we’ve been tricked, we’ve been had, and we’ve been bamboozled!” [The participants indicated that they were tricked, their parent(s) or guardian didn’t understand special education the impact that it would have on them. Teachers and administrators used terminology they didn’t understand.] This theme also refers to students being persuaded into wanting to stay in special education with their teachers providing them with snacks, video games and movies to watch almost everyday, which made many of them want to stay in special education.

The third theme that emerged in this study was “they don’t care.” This theme was provided when students talked about their experience in special education classes. The participants also pointed out that teachers and administrators didn’t care about them. Many of the participants stated that their teachers didn’t care what they were doing and didn’t want to help them complete assignments when the students asked for help.

The fourth theme that emerged was “low expectations and self-fulfilling prophecy.” The participants discussed that the work that they were doing was kindergarten work and much too easy for them. They also stated that because the work was so easy and they were bored they began to act out.

The fifth theme “they don’t understand me” refers to the teachers not understanding the cultural differences between whites and blacks. This theme emerged when the students explained how the teachers expected students to complete assignments and task based on the white culture.

Theme 1 – I wanted to be somebody

I wanted to be somebody emerged as a theme due to the fact that many of the participants wanted to be somebody. All of the participants wanted to go to college or professional school and be somebody. However, being in special education has limited their chances to be successful in high school and has made it almost impossible to attend college. According to Kunjufu (2005), African American males at a young age have demonstrated a tremendous amount of intelligence, only to place last on high school cultural tests. Morgan (1980) adds that, when African American males enter first grade, the stories they create express positive feelings about themselves in school situations, but by the second grade student stories express “negative imagery” of the teacher and the environment and by fifth grade the overall feeling expressed by students is that of cynicism. Most of the participants stated that they had good grades prior to being placed in special education. The majority of the participants indicated that they have big dreams, but they are not sure these goals can be accomplished because of being in special education. In regards to the participant wanting to be somebody, *Chris* stated the following:

I would like to take over Hollywood. I want to be an actor, start my own business, write books and sing. First, I need to go to college to learn about how to start my own business. I can draw many things; take a look at my work. After college, I

would like to begin my career drawing and writing books for young kids. I also think I can start my singing career.

Murphy stated the following regarding wanting to be somebody:

I would like to go to college and become an architect. I can design things and build things now. Also, my biggest dream is to become a culinary chef.

Marcus stated the following regarding wanting to be somebody:

I want to be a professional football player. I really, really want to be a computer engineer or a software builder. Every time a computer technician comes to school I ask him questions about computers and he allows me to work on the computers. I can take a computer apart and put it back together. No one taught me how to do this I learned it on my own.

Barry provided the following statement regarding being somebody:

I would like to play football for a college. After college, I would like to become a teacher. I am an all state football player with many scholarships.

Cody stated the following regarding wanting to be somebody:

I would like become a professional football player or go to college and then return to my school and help kids like me. I think I have the skills to reach students. I am the captain of the football team. I really think I could be a great teacher.

Andrew stated the following regarding being somebody:

I want to play college football or basketball in college. I know all the plays for our team. I call plays based on the different defenses. After college, I would like to be a contractor, build houses and apartments.

Author stated the following regarding wanting to be somebody:

I would like to become a policeman or a firefighter. They have a lot of courage to do what they do. I think, I will be a great police officer or firefighter. I exercise regular and often run with firefighters when they come to my school. I ask them questions trying to learn more about the firefighting career.

Tyrone stated the following regarding being somebody:

I would like to go to college and become an engineer. I always wanted to be an engineer ever since I found out what it was about. I think, I will have to go to another school after finishing high school. Hopefully this will prepare me go to college.

Spencer stated the following regarding wanting to be somebody:

I would like to go to the Navy or Air Force Academy. I really want to become a pilot. If that doesn't workout, I would like to go to college and become an artist.

Glenn stated the following regarding wanting to be somebody:

After high school, I would like to go to college and learn how to draw on the computer. I would like to use the computer to draw and work for Disney World.

Summary

Overall the majority of these young men who were placed in special education aspired to be somebody. Most of them had dreams of going to college and beginning a career after college. They wanted to be somebody, but because of not having adequate education their dreams are extremely difficult to achieve. The students felt like they were cheated and that their teachers didn't adequately prepare them to do anything after high school. As a result most of these young men believe that being in special education has

limited their chances of being successful in the future and that special education has taught them how to be lazy.

Theme 2 - “We’ve been had. We’ve been tricked. We’ve been bamboozled!”

Although the following statement comes from the famous Malcolm X speech scolding the African American population for letting White people oppress them, it also has significance in describing the participants in this study. Most of the participants in this study felt that they and their parent or guardian were tricked into special education. The theme “*We’ve been had, We’ve been tricked, We’ve been bamboozled!*” refer to participants and their parents being tricked into special education. The parent(s)/guardian were misinformed about special education and the students were being persuaded into staying in special education by getting snacks and being allowed to watch videos every day. Most of the participants thought they were just being put in special education to get caught up. However, it was totally opposite. This section shows the African American males in this study were crying out for help, for equal opportunity, and for justice.

Chris stated the following regarding being tricked into being placed in special education:

I was put in special education because they told my parents that I needed help in reading and needed a little more one-on-one teaching. The teacher stated that special education would be the best place for me because if I stayed in her class I wouldn’t pass. She told my mother and father that I could pass second grade and return with the regular class the next year. I never returned to the regular education classes. I was tricked. She tricked me and my parents; it was impossible to get out of special education. I’ve been getting depressed, and one thing led to another, and nine years later I’m still in special education.

Marcus added the following regarding being tricked:

My teacher in second grade said that I needed to be in special education. She said the special education teacher would help me get back on track. Once my mom signed the papers and I went to the special education class, the teacher did nothing to help me. If I could talk to the teacher now I would say “why did you trick me? Why did you lie?” My mother would say “why in the hell did you lie to me about my son getting out of special education after one year?” My mother didn’t know what special education was. The teacher told her it was the same as regular classes except the classes were smaller and they had another adult in the room to help the student in the class. My mother fell for that story, placing me in special education, and my life was changed forever. She was tricked. Teachers should be put in jail for lying to people. My life is all messed up because of a teacher and nothing ever happened to her.

Andrew states the following regarding being tricked:

I wanted to go to special education. The teacher told me it was much easier than the regular classes and I would learn the same thing. At the time, I really didn’t want to do all the work that they were doing in the regular class. So, I got the teacher to tell my guardian what she told me. My guardian agreed to put me in special education thinking I would learn something. Looking back on this, I was tricked. The teacher didn’t want to deal with me so she said how easy it was and, as a youngster, I thought it was a good deal. I was fooled; that was biggest mistake of my life.

Author added the following regarding being tricked:

This teacher made up stories about me and my attitude. She wrote different things about me that never happened. When I told my mother what was going on, she said that the teacher was trying to teach me how to read and write. She said the teacher would not make up stories. I felt like it was me against the world. One day she called a meeting and told the principal and my mom all the things that I had done wrong. When I tried to tell my side the principal and my mom told me to be quiet and listen. This teacher had tricked the principal, other teachers, and my mom that I belonged in special education.

Tyrone added the following regarding being tricked:

My teacher tricked me. Everyday I would go to her class and she would take me to another class. She would leave me there. She said it was for reading help. I found out later that it was special education. I don't even know if anyone signed papers for me to be in special education. My mom didn't!

Spencer stated the following regarding being tricked:

My teacher tricked the principal into believing I started fights. I got into many fights, but it was because students picked on me and teased me about my clothes and being in special education. When I tried to explain that to the teacher she kept saying I started the fights. She tricked the principal and other teachers, that's why I'm in special education. My mom thought it was supposed to be like a detention or place where I was going to get some counseling. She was tricked. The teacher

and the principal used big words that my mother didn't know. They fooled a lot of people. This is why I'm so angry.

Summary

Many of the participants felt that they were tricked into going to special education. They felt that they and their parents or guardians were misled. In addition, they believed that the teacher bribed them into staying in special education by giving snacks and allowing them to watch movies every day. The participants are now feeling the repercussions of being in special education as juniors and seniors in high school. Most of these young men are mad, angry, and feel used. The participants feel this is unjust and teachers and administrators must be held accountable.

Theme 3 "They Don't Care"

They Don't Care refers to students' statements regarding teachers not caring for the students. According to Neito (2004), caring is the largest single condition that influences student learning. Gollnick and Chinn (2006) noted that one of the complaints of students is that their teachers don't care about them. Neito further states, whether and how teachers and schools care for students can make an immense difference in how students experience school. Students indicate that they are more willing to work and perform better when they feel the teachers care about them (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2006). Caring is not just referred to as affection but as a close and trusting relationship that creates a sense of belonging in the classroom or school community. The majority of the participants in this study stated that the teacher didn't care about them.

The participants didn't feel a sense of belonging when they were in these special education classes.

In regards to teachers caring, *Chris* shared incidents with the teacher. He stated the following:

The teacher didn't care about me. She just put me in special education because I was learning different from other students. She didn't take the time to help me understand things. When I asked for help the teacher pretended she didn't hear me. My second grade teacher didn't care about me too. She would send me to the office frequently. The main reason I fell behind was that she didn't care if I was doing my work or sleeping. Another teacher didn't care for me and I really could have sued the school board. He put his hands on me. I don't know why he did it. I was late for class one day and he told me get out. When I left he ran behind me and threw me against the wall.

Murphy provided the following statement about his teachers:

One day I was talking to this teacher, this White lady, and she, I think took something I said the wrong way, and when I tried to explain, she just keep getting louder while I tried to talk to her. I didn't just go crazy so I walked out of the class. She made sure I got expelled and told me I wouldn't be able to find another school. And I couldn't get into another school for a while. She used me as an example or something. I knew then that she didn't care about me or any of the students. The laziest class I remember was Mrs. M. I was the oldest kid in the class and she would use me as a teacher. I would teach other students while she

worked on the computer, IEP, business and personal stuff, or she would leave out of the class.

Marcus provides an example of how his teacher just didn't take the time to get to know or care for him.

Things just fell apart at the halfway point in second grade because my teacher just didn't care about me. The teacher put me in special education because she said she didn't want to deal with anybody like me. I was a smart student. She didn't take time to learn about us or anything like that. That is why I fell behind. The teacher that put me in special education didn't stay in class much. She was more worried about going out and having fun. She would often talk to her friend and talk about going out partying and stuff like that. The teachers in special education didn't care; some students would walk in class smoking a cigarette and acting a fool. Most of the time the teacher spent on the computer on paperwork that didn't even concern school and all the students would sleep while the teacher worked on the computer. One day the teacher said read this in the Bible. When you say I need help the teacher would say quit interrupting. Man, your teacher is supposed to help you but my teachers didn't care about us. So I told them do your damn job or get somebody else to do it.

Barry had this to say about teachers not caring:

Yesterday, I mean Friday, I was sitting behind this guy and someone in the class made a noise. She thought it was me because I was in special education, she told me to get the hell out of her class and don't come back and she didn't care where I went, just don't come back in here.

Cody had this to say about teachers not caring:

You're dumb, you're never going to make it to middle school, and you're never going to make it to high school. Many of my teachers didn't care. They would sit at their desk and tell you to do some work, if you didn't know how to do it, they would tell you, use a dictionary to find out how to do this. They really didn't help us at all.

Andrew stated,

I didn't want to do any work and the teachers didn't care. My teachers just want me to listen to them. So for nine years, I did what I wanted too.

Author had this to say regarding teachers not caring:

This teacher yelled at me my first day in her class. She told me sit my ass down. I was mad. I didn't want to stay in her class. She didn't care. All she wanted was for us to sit quietly while she worked on the computer or talked on her cellular phone. My teachers in special education made me feel like, he ain't going to learn, he is stupid. That made me feel like...man, like I'm dumb, like I couldn't keep up. All my teachers said they would help me get out of special education but none of them did. Most of my teachers didn't care. They just wanted to get their paycheck. Once this teacher told me this is the paper to get out of special education. She told me and my mother to sign it. We signed them. I thought I was going to get out of special education and I never got out. So I took her word for it and she disappointed me. My teacher in middle school talked about us to other teachers and people like we weren't even there. She always talked about students

to other students, too, calling us dumb, stupid, and stuff. She don't care about us or anyone else, just herself and her baby.

Tyrone had this to say about teachers not caring.

The teacher didn't care about me so I tried to make her day hell. The teachers acted like they wanted us to fall behind. The teacher figured since you're talking and stuff, you must not want to learn, so they ain't going to do nothing, they just sit down at the desk, they just talk and walk around the class or whatever they wanted to do. As I was talking to her about being in special education, she said I will go see what we can do to get you out. She never did anything. She didn't care. She wanted me to think she was trying to help me so I could be good in class. She lied to me daily about getting out of special education.

Spencer stated the following regarding teachers caring:

She would put the assignments on the board. She never talked to us until five or ten minutes before the bell. She didn't care what we were doing as long as it looked like we were doing something. She had us do work from the book; as soon as we finish one page she would give us something else until the bell sounded. I stopped going fast and would take hours for one page with about six definitions. If your work was wrong, she didn't care. You would get full credit because you were quiet. If she noticed something was wrong she would make you do it the next day. I remember a teacher giving us so much work and we tried hard to complete it and after we walked out she threw it in the trash can. Other special education teachers treated me like I was in jail. They walked me to lunch, to the restroom, to other teachers' classes. I felt like I was in prison on a school campus.

No teacher ever explained why they did this; they treated me like criminals are treated. They didn't care. Most of them told me I would be dead by the time I was 18 or 19.

Summary

These narrations indicated that the African American males' experiences in special education were negative. Many times these students wanted to learn and were interested in school. However, it appeared to them that the teachers didn't care and didn't try to do anything to help them learn. Most of them felt betrayed because the people that were there to help them didn't care about their well being. In fact, they felt the teacher wanted them to be failures and end up in prison. The participants felt they need more direct instruction and are not receiving the help they need in special education classes. According to Neito (2004), the teachers of these students should understand that caring is not just giving students hugs or pats on the back, caring means loving the students by having high expectations, giving support when needed, and rigorous demands.

Theme 4 - Low Expectation and Self-fulfilling prophecy

Low expectation and self-fulfilling prophecy refers to student performance based on both overt and covert messages from teachers about students' worth, intelligence, and capability. The majority of the teachers have low expectations for these African American male students. Participants in this study started acting bad as a result of being placed in special education emotional disorder programs. A self-fulfilling prophecy is a prediction that, in being made, actually causes itself to become true. The sociologist R. K. Merton (1948) first analyzed self-fulfilling prophecies as a societal phenomenon. Psychology looks at self-fulfilling prophecies in terms of interaction effects or

interpersonal expectancy effects. After Rosenthal, discovered the experimenter effect in a research project, he joined Jacobson in studying self-fulfilling prophecies in the classroom (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). They discovered that teachers' expectations of their students could influence the students' performance.

According to Clarken (1995), teachers' expectations about a student affect how they interact with that student, which in turn affects the student's achievement. Sadker and Sadker (2004) add that some children do poorly because their teachers do not expect much of the kids from certain racial and ethnic groups. As a result, they teach these students differently, the students' academic performance suffers, and the entire cycle becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The self-fulfilling prophecy, also referred to as the Golem effect, proposes that low expectations will have a negative effect upon performance (Babad, Inbar, & Rosenthal, 1983). Thus, people will not succeed if the expectation is that they will not succeed. Losen and Orfield (2003) suggest that undeniable intentional racial discrimination has been replaced by the soft bigotry of low expectations.

Chris stated the following in regards to *low expectation and self-fulfilling prophecy*:

My teacher didn't try to do anything to get me caught up. I was bored out of my mind each day. I was never challenged. The teacher would just give us paperwork. She never explained. If we didn't know how to do it (work), it was our fault. So, I decided to act crazy, doing stupid stuff making noise, picking on other students, and not participating in anything. I was in class with boys that were crazy so I had to act crazy too. I didn't want to feel like the only smart person in the classroom (acting White). That year, I started acting bad. And

because I got so much attention, I just keep doing it. My special education teachers have not prepared me to do anything after high school. Not pushing me, allowing me to watch TV and giving me snacks basically made me forget why I was supposed to go to school.

Murphy said the following about low expectations and self-fulfilling prophecy;

The work in special education was too easy. In elementary and middle school the teachers didn't challenge us at all. I would have preferred being in the regular classes where they challenge students. They (special education teachers) had lesser students than the regular class so they treated us like we were all on the same level. Teachers shouldn't be lazy. They should at least try to keep kids on pace with other kids. The laziest teacher I remember being in was Mrs. M. I was the oldest kid in the class and she would use me as another teacher. I taught students while she worked on things at her desk or leave out of class a lot. Most kids I know in special education act worse because they are in special education and because the teacher was lazy. The teachers allowed us to play Nintendo, play or free play every day. This was the main reason I fell behind. It hit me because you aren't learning anything. It will hit you. Honestly, I really didn't learn math until the 8th grade – multiplication, division, and fractions. I feel I could have learned more if my teachers would have challenged me.

Marcus added the following regarding low expectations and self-fulfilling prophecy:

I was just getting tired of seeing the same face everyday. The teacher irritates me and I would say will you please be quiet! Please! We did elementary work. Stuff

like read this, define words. See, I know how to do all that, I know how to use a dictionary, I know how to use a phone book. I don't need to learn that, I need to learn something else like reading, dividing, multiplying, and fractions. I don't need to be doing this easy stuff I know. One teacher wanted us to write in cursive, I know how to do that. Most people thought I wrote like a girl. I was bored out of my mind. That's why I keep getting into trouble doing stupid stuff like talking back, walking out of class, because I would get tired of the easy work. In middle school they gave me easy stuff. In middle school, I would just go to sleep because in most of my classes everybody was acting like a fool. Most of the time the teacher was on the computer and everyone in the class was sleeping. The work that she was doing didn't even concern school. The teacher talked about running races, I go to church and stuff like that, you going to go to church with me? Read this in the Bible. When I walk in a special education classroom, this is what they do, they give me three shots. Black and a male. I was bigger than everybody in the school. They already wrote me down as a criminal. All my teachers treated me as a criminal. Most teachers had the attitude that if you don't bother me than I won't bother you. My teachers in special education didn't teach me anything but how to sleep sitting straight up, put a book in your face, act like you are reading. The teachers didn't push me at all; they just tried to teach me stuff I all ready knew. I had D's and F's because I didn't even try. I stopped trying when I noticed the kind of work they were giving us. We played video games three days out of the week. Fridays you didn't do nothing. They rewarded you for being quiet, no outbursts and not walking out of class.

Barry stated the following regarding low self esteem and self-fulfilling prophecy:

To me my teacher knew I couldn't read and spell and the teacher had us draw and playing the PlayStation, watching videos, or sleeping. Everyday the students in regular classes were learning, I was playing a video game or watching a movie. When I realized what was going on I got mad. I started getting into fights. I would pick on other kids trying to get them to fight me. When they put me in special education, I was aggravated because I didn't like being in special education. When I thought being in special education what am I going to do? I start fighting teachers, beat them up. Just hurt somebody. Send someone to the hospital. They would always say if you be quiet I am going to give you a candy bar and you won't have to do any work. I will put a movie in. Most of the movies we watch were rated R because it kept our attention while the teacher did other things.

Cody stated the following regarding low expectation and self-fulfilling prophecy:

The work was too easy. I didn't like to do the work because it was too boring. I was so bored that I would just mark anything down just to do it. I'm much smarter than I was doing in special education. I was doing foolish things just to fit in with the crowd. In special education the teachers gave me choices between what you can do and what you don't want to do. If you didn't want to do it you could just put your head down or ask for other work. In most of my special education classes the work was too easy.

Author stated the following regarding low expectation and self-fulfilling prophecy:

My teachers gave us puzzles, crosswords, and other easy work. The teacher did try to help me learn so I could get back in the other class. She gave us work that was very easy. The teacher made us feel stupid by giving such easy work. I just got so angry that I started taking my frustrations out on teachers. I was so mad because the teacher gave us kindergarten work. We all worked on the same work. We had many students much smarter than kindergarten work. I was so mad because I was falling behind and I just bottled that up until I exploded. Until I got so mad, I would do things to hurt someone. When I calmed down I didn't remember what I had done. The teacher allowed us to play video games every day. That made many kids want to stay in special education. This was to keep me in special education. I got fed up with all that stuff and just would walk out. I wanted to do what they were doing in the regular class learning, learning about something.

Tyrone stated the following regarding low expectation and self-fulfilling prophecy:

The teacher just let you come in class and sit around. Most of the time, the students just walked around, put their head down and slept, or played the PlayStation. None of my teachers tried to get me caught up with other kids. It was like they just came to school to get their checks. Not one of my teachers gave me work that was challenging. Since I was bored out of my mind I started getting into trouble and one thing led to another. I acted bad because that is what I was supposed to do. You know if you are put in a bad environment you have to become bad just to survive. That's what I did.

Spencer stated the following regarding low expectation and self-fulfilling prophecy:

It was like they had work for you on the board. If you did it wrong they wouldn't correct you. My teachers just wanted to watch the latest movies and things like that. One thing that bothered me was that we could play PlayStation everyday.

Glenn stated the following regarding low expectation and self-fulfilling prophecy:

The teachers gave us snacks every day. I felt like they did this to make us want to stay in special education. Because I was in one class all day it was like the walls were closing on me. I couldn't focus; I started feeling like I was stupid. After they labeled me ED (Emotional Disorder) I really start to act out, doing all types of stuff because ED students are crazy.

Summary

The participants in this study stated that the work they did was below their level. It was too easy. The teacher didn't expect them to learn and they felt they were supposed to act badly. The students were housed in a class where everyone on the campus knew this was a class for "crazy people." After being labeled as special education Emotional Disorder ED, combined with being bored in class, the students started displaying the type of behavior they were expected to. This type of behavior is often referred to as expectation theory or self-fulfilling prophecy.

Theme 5 – They Don't Understand Me

They Don't Understand Me emerged in reference to the teachers understanding the students based on their cultural differences and racism as a factor in the referral process. Most of the students indicated that they were placed in special education by a White teacher. Previous research revealed that race cultural differences can increase the likelihood of referral (Artiles, 1998; Patton, 1998; Smith 2001). According to

Zimmerman (2005), differences include having different views of which students were worthy or anticipated to attend college and which would not. Zimmerman further states that teachers noted institutional racism was present as the students move through the school system. For example, poor transfer students with past documentation of school problems; paired with behavior issues, create a profile that enhances the likelihood of a referral to special education.

The interaction between teachers and students determines the quality of education a student receives (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006). Gollnick and Chinn further state that teachers make a difference in student's learning and can make a student feel either very special or incompetent and worthless. Gay (2000) concluded:

African American students, especially those who are poor and live in urban areas, get less total instructional attention; are called on less frequently; are encouraged to continue to develop intellectual less; receive few direct responses to their questions and comments; and are reprimanded more often and disciplined more severely. (p.63)

When teachers respond in this way they limit the possibility for high achievement.

Unfortunately, some teachers respond to students differently because of the students' cultural identity.

Chris provides an example of how the teacher didn't understand the students.

The teacher that put me in special education was White. I was put in special education in the second grade. She didn't understand me. She didn't realize that I learn different from White students. You can tell she really didn't know how to deal with black kids. She thought that since my parents were poor that I didn't really care about school. She didn't understand the things poor people faced. She

didn't try to understand me. It was like she felt sorry for me and decided to give me easy work. That hurt me I think.

Murphy stated the following regarding teachers not understanding him:

I was put in special education by a White teacher in second grade. She wanted us to always sit down and be quiet. I could sit and be quiet for so long because I was used to listening to my radio or watching TV while doing my work. She don't understand that if you from the 'hood, it's never going to be quiet. You're always busy. Something is always going on. She just thought he is hyper and he can't focus. He needed to go to special education. I don't want to deal with him. This other teacher can deal with him. She could have tried to understand me. Just try.

Marcus stated the following regarding teachers not understanding him:

My teacher that put me in special education was White. I was in the second grade. She didn't take to time to understand me or anything like that. She thought that since I was bigger than everyone and I had ADD then I must be crazy and I couldn't think right in other classes. But they don't know when I learn things I remember it for a long time. My teachers would just keep me in the same class all day. Man, that's irritating. I come from the projects and we have two rooms in our house. Do you know how hard it is to sit in the same room all day even if you are watching TV? If the teachers would have understood the place where I was coming from maybe they could have tried something different. Not just keeping me in the same class all day. Making me eat separate from other kids. They made

me feel like I was in jail at a young age. Man, White teachers just don't know what it like in the projects and kids from the projects.

Author stated the following regarding teachers don't understand me

I was placed in special education in third grade by a White teacher. The teacher was yelling at us every day. She didn't understand when she yelled that made us act crazier. She didn't understand that after she yelled the students weren't going to let her teach. Students were bad because they say it aggravated the teacher. I was already aggravated so to make the teacher aggravated was a fun thing to do everyday.

Tyrone stated the following regarding teachers don't understand me

She didn't understand that I couldn't learn at the speed she was teaching at. I could concentrate because she only taught one way. She didn't try to see if I understood what she was teaching or if I needed a little more information.

I was placed in special education in the seventh grade by a White teacher. My teacher couldn't understand me. She didn't want to understand the fact that other kids were picking on me. So when I fought the kids she just thought I was being bad. Just think every day you have someone talking about your clothes, being in special education or something like that. How would you feel? After being put in special education the kids really started teasing me. I was mad; I got into more fights. The teacher didn't understand what was going on and didn't even try to find out anymore details. None of my teachers ever took the time to understand where I came from or anything like that. It was more about them.

Spencer stated the following regarding teachers not understanding them.

I was placed in special education by a White teacher in the fifth grade. Students would pick on me because I was unpopular. So, I had to develop a reputation for myself. I started fighting the students. It felt good to go to a special education class and everybody knew you were in there because you were crazy. The teacher didn't understand that I had to act bad so all the kids would respect me. After I developed a rep of being bad the teachers were scared of me. They didn't take time to learn anything about me or my family. They didn't understand that I only was safe at school and I wanted to learn. The teacher she didn't understand I just want to be accepted.

Glenn stated the following regarding teachers not understanding them.

This White lady placed me in special education when I was in the fourth grade. I couldn't understand the teacher and she didn't understand me. It was like we spoke two different languages. The things I thought I was doing good she thought it was terrible. We just couldn't get on the same page. I tried to listen to her when she talked about the lesson but she sounded like a red neck. I wish she would have been able to understand me and I would have been able to understand her.

Summary

The narratives indicated that the teacher didn't understand the students and their culture. The fact that nine out of ten African American males were placed in special education by a White teacher is terrible. According to the review of literature, racism is one of the contributing factors for the overrepresentation of African American males. Another contributing factor is cultural differences. The participants indicated that the

teachers didn't understand the differences between Whites and blacks, girls and boys. Most participants felt that if the teacher had taken time to understand them, they would have noticed that they are smart kids who just needed extra help and a little more attention.

Summary of Themes

The five major themes that emerged from this study were *I wanted to be somebody*, *"We've been had, We've been tricked, We've been bamboozled," they don't care, low expectations and self-fulfilling prophecy and they don't understand me*. These themes emerged from the narration of the African American male students that were placed in special education emotional disorder programs.

The African American male students in this study indicated that they wanted to be somebody. Most of the African American male participants discussed that they had dreams of going to college or getting a job that requires a certain amount of skills. The majority of the students noted that they were honor roll or C students before being placed in special education. Many of the students felt that being in special education has diminished their dreams of going to college or professional school to obtain their dream.

The second theme that emerged from this study was *We've been had, We've been tricked, We've been bamboozled*. This theme refers to the parents or guardian of the students being misinformed about special education emotional disorder programs. It also refers to the students being con into wanting to be in special education because they were allowed to play video games, watch movies and eat snacks. The students noted that when they finally realized what was going on it was too late for them to change.

The third theme that emerged from this study was *low expectations and self-fulfilling prophecy*. African American males in this study talked about how the teachers gave them easy work, busy work just too past time. They also stated that the teachers and administration expected them to act a certain way and because class was so boring they began to act the way the principal and teachers thought they should act.

The fourth theme that emerged from this study was they don't care. The African American male students stated that their teachers didn't care about them. The students mentioned that the teachers didn't care what they were doing as long as they were quiet. The African American males in this study also stated that the teachers refused to help them or explain information. The students felt that they wanted them to fall behind in school work because they could never get assistance from them on anything.

The fifth theme that emerged from this study was they don't understand us. The African American male students felt that the teacher didn't understand the cultural differences between whites and blacks and therefore they couldn't understand the students. They also indicated that the teachers used traditional methods of teaching that was not beneficial to African American students. The students stated that many teachers felt sorry for them because of their lifestyle. The reason teachers have a hard time teaching African American male students are because they refuse to learn about their culture and their community. In order to successfully teach African American males in special education emotional disorder programs the teacher must learn their culture and understand the cultural differences between blacks and whites.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to find out about the experiences of African American males in special education emotional disorder programs (ED), and the type of education African American males in special education (ED) programs are receiving. Since I wanted to find out what the experiences were like for African American males in special education emotional disorder programs in an urban setting phenomenon, a phenomenological study was used. This study was framed within the qualitative research paradigm, using the comparative method as the main qualitative data analysis strategy to analyze transcripts obtained from in-depth interviews. This chapter includes a discussion of the findings, implications for the study, recommendations, policy implications, and conclusion.

Discussion of Findings

African American males are one and a half times more likely to be labeled as emotionally disturbed (ED) than other non-African American students and are placed in special needs programs more frequently than their peers (Coutinho & Oswald, 1998; Harry, 1992). The overrepresentation and inappropriate placement of African American males is a concern at this time. The public concern remains that although America's student body is becoming more and more diverse, children who are non-white, non-native-English-speaking, or poor continue to be identified more frequently as having

disabilities and to be served in more segregated placement than their peers (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Coutinho & Oswald, 1998).

The racial imbalance in special education has long been an issue of professional educators (Dunn, 1968). Dunn shocked the academic community when he criticized the discriminatory tendency to overrepresentation and placement of minority students in special education classrooms. Larson (1975) found that the race of a student was a significant determinant of teacher referrals for students to educable mentally retarded (ED) programs. In addition, he found that African American males were referred to ED significantly more often than Caucasian males. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that many African American male youth today fail to receive a quality and life-enhancing education in precisely those special education programs in which they are often inappropriately placed (Heller, 1992; Hilliard, 1992). The special education label worn by these students often serves as a stigma, producing negative effects on the bearer of the label and others interacting with the stigmatized individual (Goffman, 1963).

The students classified as emotional disorder, in this school district, are required to spend 80% of their school time in a self-contained setting. In this study, this district had 70 students in special education emotional disorder programs. Of the 70 students that were placed in ED five were African American females, two were White males and sixty three were African American males. There was also a trend in the data. In the eighth grade there were 55 students in special education emotional disorder. In the ninth grade there were 32, in the tenth grade there were 18, in the eleventh grade there were 9, and only 5 seniors that were all African American males. This data suggest that students in special education are dropping out of school or being kicked out. According to Tyack

(1974), African American males who were commonly perceived as having low mental ability or were disruptive, were often classified as Emotional Disturbance and assigned to special classes for "defective children." Tyack adds, "These children were therefore positioned at the bottom of the educational system, and were often segregated or excluded from public education" (p. 230). In addition, Tyack states, "Such discriminatory practices were premised upon White Americans' assumption of African American intellectual inferiority, which some psychologists sought to validate through the use of IQ tests" (p. 231).

Concerns about racial discrimination and violations of civil rights are raised when African American youth are consistently misidentified and disproportionately placed in special education programs (Reschly, 1996). Reschly further states that African American males have traditionally been denied opportunities to excel in our society disproportionately selecting them for special education placement appears to be a continuation of the practice of treating them as innately inferior, which is wrong by any standard and does not meet their need for a free and appropriate public education. Federal and state statistics demonstrate that African American male students have been consistently overrepresented in special education programs. Previous research documented that race had an effect on special education placement as African American students were more often recommended for special education (Bahr, Fuchs, Stecker, & Fuchs, 1991; Tobias, Zibrin & Menell, 1983).

The influence teachers can have on the referral process is very strong (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, Richey, & Graden, 1982). Ysseldyke et al., elaborate that, in personal discussions with other professionals and based upon their first hand experiences, teachers

may refer a specific student to begin the process so they can have the child removed from their classroom, even if it may be for two hours out of the school day. This is especially true if the teacher is having problems managing the student's classroom behavior. The reality of this issue is 68% of students referred end up actually being placed in a special education program (Ysseldyke et al., 1997). It also needs to be emphasized that a referring teacher's attitude towards the student and the information that is reported by the teacher can have a considerable impact on the perspective referral team members (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, Ritchey, & Graden, 1982).

When the participants spoke about being referred to special education the majority of them were placed in special education by a White teacher. Chris stated:

The teacher told my parents that I needed help reading and one-on-one attention and special education was the best placement for me. If I stayed in her class I would fail. She told my parents that I could pass second grade and return to my regular class. All the people in the meeting said I could get out of special education next year.

Marcus noted,

In the second grade I remember having a meeting with my teacher, principals, and two other people. I really didn't know why we were meeting. I was a straight honor roll student at a school up north. When I got to this school I struggled a little bit but I was still able to complete my work. This lady told my mother special education was the same as regular classes except the classes were smaller and she could get paid for having me in special education. She told my mother she would receive a check every month if I was in ED instead of Learning

Disorder (LD). My mom fell for that and now my life is all messed up because of this teacher.

Andrew indicated,

I wanted to go to special education. I had a friend in there and it was very easy. He never had homework or projects to do. My teacher also told me it was much easier in special education and we would basically learn the same thing. I was excited because if I could help the teachers persuade my guardian to put me in special education. I would never have to do homework again. My guardian agreed to put me in special education, thinking I would learn something. The teacher didn't want to deal with me and used special education as a way of getting me out of her class.

Author stated

She would send me sit in the office are another teachers class everyday. This teacher wrote down everything she thought I did wrong. That was a problem because I was never in her class on the dates she had on the paper. The other teacher agreed to everything she said and the principal and my mom just followed along. When I tried to talk the principal told me to be quiet and listen. I felt and still feel it's me against the world.

Tyrone added,

I don't ever remember being in a meeting. The teachers would come by my house or send papers home for my mom to sign in a seal envelop. She never did, I don't know who signed the papers for me to be in special education. I would like to

know that. Someone needs to be arrested, that should be a crime to put students in special education. All we can do now is sell drugs or work at McDonalds.

Spencer stated,

The day I was referred to special education three teachers, two principals, and a counselor and a psychologist were present. They had already decided before my mother got to the meeting that I was going to be in a self contain classroom. The principal wanted me in one room next to his office and the teacher wanted me out of her class. The told my mother it would be like a detention and I would receive counseling twice a week. My mom wanted me to get counseling for my anger problems. They made me seem like a criminal in school. They followed me around, escorted me to the restroom, lunch room and assemblies. This made me feel like I had murder someone or something.

In researching students with ED and the referrals for special education services, Ysseldyke (2001; 1983) has been concerned with African American male students who were at risk of school failure for the past 25 years. He claimed that teacher expectations were the driving force behind the assessment process and that far too often; these expectations are much to low.

Racisms

Racism has been defined as prejudice plus power (Nieto, 2006). There are at two forms of racism that scholars discuss. Thos two forms of racism include individual racism and Institutional racism. Nieto notes, individual Racism is the prejudicial attitudes and behaviors of individuals based on the idea that non Whites are culturally or genetically inferior. Institutional racism is the practice and polices of larger institutions

that perpetuate inequality and White privilege. Structural racism is grossly unequal outcome between racial groups with “Whiteness” defined at the social top and Blackness usual confined to the bottom of the social hierarchy. These unequal racial outcomes often appear to be no one’s fault, or “no harm, no foul” (Manning, 2000).

Racism is defined as a system of advantage based on race, is a pervasive aspect of U.S socialization (Wellman, 1977). It is virtually impossible to live in the U.S. society and not be exposed to some aspect of the personal, cultural, and or institutional manifestations of racism in our society. Racism is typically understood in popular culture and in academia in terms of individual acts of overt prejudice that are racially based (Ogbu, 1978; Rizvi, 1993; Tatum, 1992) For example if a teacher makes a racial slur during class time, this is seen as overt racism. Overt racism is a public conscious and intended act by a person or persons from one race with the intent of doing damage to a person of another race chiefly because of the race of that person.

The second kind of individual racism is covert racism. The difference between overt and covert racism is that covert is not done in public. An example would be, a teacher may consciously place an African American student in special education, in a majority white geographical area even though the African American student may be an average student. While the teacher may be consciously acting in a racist manner, she or he will publicly provide a socially acceptable reason for her or his decision do not explicitly broadcast their intentions; instead they veil them or provide reasons that society will find more palatable.

Institutional Racism

Institutional racism exists when institutions or organizations, including educational ones, have standard operating procedures (intended or unintended) that hurt members of one or more races in relation to members of the dominant race (Scheurish & Young, 1997). Institutional racism also exists when institutional or organizational cultures, rules, habits, or symbols have the same bias effect (Scheurish and Young, 1997). If a school's standard pedagogical method is culturally congruent with the culture of White students but not with the culture of other students of color this is institutional racism (Hillard, 1992; Ladson-Billing, 1995).

Critical Race Theory

Describe as "interdisciplinary and eclectic" by Tate (1997), the roots of Critical Race Theory (CRT) lie in the development of African American thought in the post-civil rights era: the 1970s to the present" (p206). Legal discourse is viewed as the foundation of CRT, and much of the scholarship has attempted to analyze legal ideology and discourse as a mechanism that functions to re-create and legitimate social structures in "the United States (206). Vital to CRT is "the importance of examining the social construction of race through the law" (p.218). In contrast to the formal, sanctified and officially legitimate hegemony of legal discourses, a central tenet of CRT is the foregrounding of narratives, stories, and perspective from people of color. Tate (1997) explains, People of color in our society speak from experience framed by racism. This framework gives their stories a common structure warranting the term voice social reality is constructed by the creation and exchange of stories about individuals' situations.

Delgado (1989) posits four reasons for legal analysis and scholarship that incorporate chronicling the experiences through showcasing the voices of people color. Reality is socially constructed. Delgado (1989) claims that a feature of human experience that separate people of color from White friends and colleagues is that few Whites see acts of subtle or blatant racism while non-Whites experience them all the time. hooks (1994) has called attention to the problems inherent in contemplating the names and the named. The privileged act of naming often affords those in power to access modes of communication and enable them to project an interpretation, a definition, a description of their work and actions, that may not be accurate, that may obscure what's is really taking place (p.62). b) *Stories are a powerful means for destroying and changing mind set.* Mohanty (1994) believe that uncovering and reclaiming of subjugated knowledges is one why to lay claim to alternative histories. The use of stories empowered those who participate in this story telling.

Gordon (1990) has stated that even when quoted African American knowledge has had little impact on dominant paradigms (p.90). From the academy to the classroom, epistemological privileging of dominate White paradigms of thought continues to operate. The teaching of students of color by Anglo teachers is the norm within American schools, yet the savage inequalities reported by Kozol (1991, 1995) exist as a logical and predictable result of radicalized society in which discussions of race and racism continue to be muted and marginalized” Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995, p. 47). As Delgado (1990) notes, however, oppressed people have certain types of insight that others may lack (p12).

Race and Culture

White teachers, conditioned by their upbringing and negative stereotypes still reinforce in the media, continue to make negative assumptions about the students (Graybill, 1997). Teachers' academic expectations can influence their students' achievement, and teachers' cultural background can also influence their perception of what is appropriate behavior. Graybill stated as a white teacher in the 1990's what she considered to be appropriate behavior influences my perception of language and behavior of my black students. Irvine (1990) noted that African American students are often in conflict with their schools due to cultural discontinuity; the students' language, behavior and learning style are Afrocentric while the teachers, administrators, and school structure is Eurocentric. If a white teacher is culturally out of sync with our African American students, we may view their behavior negatively (Graybill, 1997). Teachers bias for African American males often lead to lower expectations for academic achievement, which resulted in resegregation. African American students are placed in special education and remedial classes due to teacher biases and low expectations. Cultural discontinuity occurs when the white middle class teacher, frequently female, view African American males behavior as disruptive "talking back" or acting out. Irvine (1990) reported that teachers tend to overreact to the behavior of black students, particularly black males students" (18). According to Graybill, black males find themselves in a clash with a white female teacher may be misunderstood because the teacher does not understand African American mores.

White teachers, conditioned by their upbringing and the negative stereotypes still reinforced by the media, continue to make negative assumptions about the behavior of

non white students (Irvine, 1990). When black students misbehave in class, white teachers take no chances, thinking the worse, and throw the troublemakers out often in special education (Graybill, 1997). School leaders must stop operating on the assumption that all the reasons for black children's problems with school rest on the child and accept the fact that much of the responsibility rests with the school system(136). African American are not inferior, but teachers have been too willing to mislabel the thus the disproportionate share of African Americans in special education emotional disorder programs. Norton (1983, 191)

Revisiting Research Questions

In this section, I address the overarching research questions. What are the experiences of African American males in special education emotional disorder programs? The participant narrative talked what a typical day was like in special education ED programs. The participants in this study talked about being bored, watching movies, playing video games and doing whatever they wanted in special education classes. This is what a typical day looked like for the participants.

1. *What are the experiences of African American males in special education emotional disorder programs?* The participants described a typical day as:

Chris described a typical day as:

The bell sound students come in when ever they wanted. Some students played video games other students worked on handouts. After the first hour if the students worked hard they were given a snack. We would take walks around the campus. Sit in the stadium and just talk and clown around. Some students would

want to fight each other because they would bring things from the street in to our class.

Murphy stated,

My teacher often told me how smart I was. The teacher would leave the classroom and have me teach other students. The teacher often underestimated the students. Many times the teachers felt the students couldn't handle a certain thing and just sit back and let kids clown around. The teachers were so lazy they acted as if they wanted the kids to fall behind. They would be on the computer all day if they were not on the computer they were not in class.

Marcus added,

Walk in the class everybody acting like a fool. The teacher gave a little work it would be ABCs stuff like that or on the computer. Most of the time on the computer just about everyone in there sleeping while the teacher is working on paper work. Paper work that didn't even concern school. They talked about running races, going to church, reading the bible. When you asked the teacher for help they would say quit interrupting. I was in the same class for five or six hours. The teacher often irritated me, I got tired of seeing him, hearing his voice. The work we did was elementary work in high school. In class students were cussing and throwing stuff around. Other students would hide under the desk and others would come in class smoking a cigarette.

Barry mentioned,

If the students came in class and were quiet for the first twenty minutes we didn't have to do any work it was a free day. I enjoy playing John Madden football. We

would have tournaments and the teacher would join us. We always had two TV's and one group watch movies while others play video games or board games.

Cody noted,

We worked on reading, math and spelling. It was almost like regular classes except we could play the playstation, get snacks or watch videos once we finished the assigned task.

Author

The teacher brought bagels, and other snacks everyday. She would give us snacks if we stayed in the classroom. We played video games everyday. I got fed up with doing that everyday until I just exploded.

Tyrone

My teachers didn't want to teach us. One teacher would just talk on her phone all day and look at purses/cloths. I told her to do her dame job. The teachers that I had just wanted us to be quiet. The teachers gave you all these assignments and never check to see if it was right or wrong. They allow us to play games, watch movies. This happened in every special education class I had from middle school to high school. Allowing us to play on a video game and watch movies just put us further and further behind.

Spencer stated,

I would stay in the hall until the bell rings. The teacher had the assignments on the board. The page numbers and whatever pages you needed to do in the book. They made you do all kinds of work, if it was wrong they would give you another day to do it over. On Fridays we watched movies and played the playstation.

Glenn said,

A typical day was boring. The teacher gave us puzzles and other worksheets everyday. When we finished with one she would give us another. You could stay on one worksheet the entire class period if you wanted. As long as you were quiet it didn't matter.

The participants were quick to point out that most of them were honor roll students prior to getting in special education. The work that the students did while in special education classes was too easy, frequently repetitive and unstimulating. Several complained that they were neither challenged or pushed toward higher forms of learning. While resenting the term slow many of the participants stated they stop doing the work or just put anything on paper because the teacher didn't take the class serious. Most of the participants were unsatisfied with the level of help they received while in special education.

2. What do African American males think about the type of education they receive in special education? Most of the participants in study felt that being in special education caused them to fall further and further behind. Some of the participants felt that being in special education impacted their life in and out of school. Many of the participants were labeled at a young age and spent most of their time in a self contained setting. Labeling and segregation also impacted the students self perception to what is deemed normal, often inducing them to cultivate a sense of inferiority and self fulfilling prophecy. Feelings of failure in relationship to the experiences of being in special education impacted the self confidences of some students when thinking about future careers. Participants are concern with the type of

career they will be able to obtain given the fact they didn't learn anything in special education. For most of the participants they were very upset with the fact that they don't have any skills for job opportunity because they were in self contained classes and were not given the chance to socialize and interact with other students.

When ask what type of education you think you received in special education? The participants stated the following:

Murphy stated

I received a poor education because the teachers underestimated me. I was not challenged at all. The teachers were lazy and didn't try to keep kids on pace with their peers in regular classes.

Marcus mentioned

I received a negative and positive education in special education. Mostly negative all the teachers are doing is holding students back. Making the work easy for them. We don't need easier work we need to be pushed like other students. Special education has taught me how to sleep sitting straight up, put a book in your face and act like you are reading.

Barry noted,

I received a good education in special education. Special education helped me out a lot. I couldn't spell or read very good. The teacher never asked me to do the things I wasn't good at. I don't think I am ready for life after high school because I can't read.

Cody mentioned,

It was fun. I liked being in special education because I had choices. If I didn't want to do something I didn't have to. Most of the time my teachers would let us do what we wanted too. I think they really spoil kids by giving them snacks everyday, which is not good. Some of my teachers told me I'm not going to be anything, you want amount to anything.

Author noted,

Being in special education was bad. The teachers always gave you easy work. All students were doing work on the same level. After bottling that up, one day I just exploded. If I had been in regular classes I wouldn't have started acting out.

Tyrone articulated

I hate being in special education classes. The work the whole time I been in high school has been easy. I ain't going waste my time doing that kind of work. The main reason I am behind is because of being in special education. I want to go to college, but I know I can't go straight out of high school because I have to learn things that I didn't learn in high school.

Spencer

Being in special education hasn't prepared me to do anything.

Glenn

I received a good and bad education in special education. It was good behavioral was. I learn to manage my behavior. Work wise it was bad because I didn't learn anything in my special education classes.

After careful examination and in-depth analysis of the transcripts, I identified five major themes. These themes represent the 10 African American males that were placed in special education ED programs. The findings in this study align with the review of literature. These themes are believed to be accurate reflections of the participants' voices. Furthermore, these themes are interrelated and interconnected. I will now compare the themes found in the in-depth interviews and demonstrate how they relate to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

One of the primary experiences of African American males in special education emotional disorder programs is low expectation on the part of the teacher. Expectations are connected to biases we have learned to internalize (Neito, 2004).

Themes Reviewed

1. I Want to Be Somebody

This topic emerged when asked "What you see yourself doing in the future?" Most of the participants in this study had high goals for themselves. Chris wanted to be an actor, start his own business, write books and sing. Murphy would like to become an architect and culinary chef. Marcus stated that he would like to become a computer engineer or software builder. Barry noted that he would like to become a teacher. Cody plans to attend college and return to help kids just like him (become a teacher). Andrew would like to be a contractor building houses or apartments. Author wanted to be a police officer or firefighter. Tyrone stated that he would like to be an engineer. Spencer wanted to go to the Air Force Academy and become a pilot. Glenn discussed going to college to become an artist.

The students in this study expected to succeed in life. They planned to graduate from high school, go to college, and have satisfying careers. Moreover, they trusted that their teachers and schools would have prepared them to accomplish their goals. Sadly to say, most of these students will not achieve the dreams or goals. According to Wilson and Corbett (2001), statistics show they will not achieve their goals because there are gaps in their education that sets the stage for failure. Most of the students claimed that being in special education has contributed to them falling behind. Kunjufu (2005) states every human has a purpose, and if humans are unable to achieve their purpose, they will cause havoc for all the other people around them. What can school districts expect when the majority of their African American male students in special education are dropping out of school? The interviews with the students illustrate that the students wanted to get an education and have a successful career. However after being in special education for several years the students feel that being in special education limited their chances to be successful.

2. “We’ve been tricked!” “We’ve been had!” “We’ve been bamboozled”

The findings reveal that most of the participants felt that they and their parent/guardian were tricked into special education ED placement. Furthermore, the participants stated that the teachers allowed them to watch videos, play on the PlayStation games, and were given snacks every day. The benefits that these students were given in special education helped to perpetuate the problem. The students fell further and further behind. Chris said that he was put in special education thinking he would be given the opportunity to receive one-on-one help. They indicated to the student that he could return to regular classes the following year. Marcus stated that his mother was lied to about

special education. The teachers used terms that his mother just didn't understand. Andrew discussed he wanted to go to special education because it was easier and students are allowed to play video games and watch movies. Author stated that his teacher made up stories about him, tricking the principal and his parents. Tyrone recalled his teacher taking him to another class that she claimed was for reading help. This participant thought he was going to a class to get reading help when in fact he was attending a special education class. Spencer indicated that the teacher tricked the principal into believing he was a trouble maker. As a result, he was placed in a special education emotional disorder program.

3. They Don't Care

According to the participants of this study, the teachers didn't care about them. Most of the participants in this study felt that the teachers didn't care if they learned or not. Chris, Murphy, and Marcus communicated that the teacher never assisted them when they asked for help. They added that the teacher didn't care if they slept in class or smoked in class. Barry and Cody noted that the teacher often told them "you are dumb, you will never make it to middle school, and you're never going to make it to high school." They also expressed that most of their teachers weren't willing to help them when they asked for help. Author, Tyrone, and Glenn stated that the teacher acted as if he or she wanted them to fall behind. Most of the teachers the participants encountered wanted them to sit quietly. If they could do that then they would not have any work to do.

According to Gollnick and Chinn (2006), one of the complaints of students is that their teachers don't care about them. Students indicated that they are more willing to work and perform better when they feel the teachers care about them (Cushner,

McClelland, & Safford, 2006). The participants in this study also stated that their teachers didn't care about them. A caring teacher has high expectations for students and pushes students to meet those high expectations. Caring teachers are defined as people who ask their students questions, who gives them encouragement and moral support, and those who offer to help them with school work even when they do not need help, and help with activities outside the classroom (Bosworth, 2003). Noddings (1992) noted, care implies a "continuous search for competence" and includes fostering in students the knowledge and skills necessary to make a positive contribution in whatever field of study or work they might choose. As human beings we care about what happens to us. We wonder if there is life after death, whether there is a deity who cares about us, whether we are loved by those we love, whether we belong anywhere; we wonder what we will become, who we are, how much control we have over our own fate (Oakes & Lipton, 2006). Teachers are the brokers of caring in schools. They provide the bridge between the school and the individual. Understanding what students see as caring behavior can facilitate communication between teachers and students and can help teachers model caring behavior. Hearing student voices can provide educators with a clearer understanding of approaches to enhance caring.

4. Low Expectations and Self-fulfilling Prophecy

This topic emerged from the participants' response to explain what a typical day was like in ED programs. Chris spoke about the teacher not doing anything challenging and refusing to help when needed. Murphy expressed that he often taught the class because he was the oldest in the class and the teacher needed to run errands. He also stated the students in special education were allowed to play on the PlayStation and

watch movies almost every day. Marcus noted that they did elementary work; things like define words using a dictionary, look up companies or names in a phone book, and write in cursive. The main thing this guy learned from being in special education was how to sleep sitting straight up. Barry indicated that the teacher allowed us to draw and play on the PlayStation or sleep every day. Cody talked about how easy the work was and if you didn't want to complete the assignments the teacher would let you choose what work you wanted to do. Author added that the teacher gave puzzles, crosswords, and other easy work every day. In addition, he stated that the easy work the teacher gave made them feel stupid. Tyrone, Spencer, and Glenn spoke about playing the PlayStation and sleeping just about every day. They also mentioned how the teacher never helped them when they needed help. Chris, Murphy, Marcus Barry, Cody, Author, Tyrone, Spencer and Glenn said that their behavior changed after being in special education.

According to Neito (2004) student performance is based on both overt and covert messages from teachers about student worth, intelligence, and capability. Neito further states, that teachers' beliefs that their students are "dumb" can become a rationale for providing low-level work in the form of elementary facts, simple drills, and rote memorization. Pollard (2001) found that the academic performance of African American students is enhanced when they perceive their teachers and other school staff to be supportive and helpful. Most of the participants also stated that they began to act bad once they were placed in a special education emotional disorder program. This type of behavior is called self-fulfilling prophecy. According to Cushner, McClland, and Safford (2006), a teacher may, for whatever reason, believe a certain child will be a bad student when in fact that student is average. This belief translates into particular actions

on the part of the teacher who demonstrates care and concern and expectations of success to the student. Teacher expectation refers to the attributions that teachers make about the future behavior or academic achievement of their students, based on what they presently know about them.

In this study participants stated that most of their teachers had low expectations for them. When these expectations are upheld, the teacher's beliefs are reinforced, thus perpetuating the self-fulfilling prophecy. Oakes and Lipton (2006) state that labeling translates into lowered self-confidence and lowered expectations for students labeled special education emotional disorder. Oakes and Lipton further state that placement in low, middle, or almost but not quite top class often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy cycle of lower expectations, fewer opportunities, and academic performance that at best can match but not exceed the expected performance. When students are labeled emotional disorder or behavior disorder, these labels teach students that if the school does not identify them as capable in earlier grades, they should not be expected to do well later (Oakes & Lipton, 2006). The African American males in this study mentioned that most of them were A, B, and C students before being placed in special education. As a result, being placed in special education ED programs they really began to fall behind. One of the problems with special education is that instruction is tailored to students' ability. Therefore teachers don't expect the students to perform at certain levels. Classifying students as low achievers creates a separate pull-out structure and provides a low level remedial course.

5. They Don't Understand Me

The fifth theme that emerged was *They Don't Understand Me*. Most of the participants felt that their teachers didn't understand them. Most of the participants in this study were referred to special education by a White teacher. The participants also noted that the teacher didn't understand them. Chris stated that the teacher didn't understand that he learned differently from White students. Murphy reflected on the teacher wanting him to sit quietly. The teacher didn't understand that it is constant noise in the ghetto. Marcus noted that the teacher didn't understand how it felt to be in the same class all day and not be allowed to eat with your friends. He stated that the teachers made him feel like he was in jail through school. Author and Tyrone expressed that the teacher often yelled at them and this made them act crazier. Kids also picked on me and the teacher always yelled at me or sent me to the office when it wasn't my fault. Spencer and Glenn stated that they had to act bad. That was the only way they would get respect. The work that Glenn did in class or homework, he thought he did it well but the teacher indicated that it was terrible work every time.

The participants in this study pointed out their teachers didn't understand their culture. African American males whose cultures differ from the dominant group often struggle to form and sustain a clear image of themselves (Neito, 2004). Knowledge about students' cultures is important in teaching subject matter in a way that students can learn it (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006). According to the participants in the study the teachers were not concerned about their culture. Without an understanding of students' cultures, teachers are unable to develop instructional strategies that can be related to students' life expectation (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006). Teachers and schools fail to understand the

struggle of African American males. Therefore when they see differences they are viewed as deficiencies (Neito, 2004). According to Cushner, McClelland, and Safford (2006), individuals typically try to understand another person's behavior according to their own cultural knowledge base. In addition, most teachers don't have extensive experiences with people who think and act differently from themselves. Teachers tend to interpret others' behavior in their own cultural frames of references.

The theme I wanted to be somebody emerged when the students expressed their future plans. This adds to the literature on the overrepresentation of African American males. It is significant because it indicates that they wanted to be somebody. All of them had goals of going to college or professional school to start a career.

The theme *We've been tricked, We've been had, We've been bamboozled* correlates with the review of literature, that parents did not understand terminology and significance of placing their kid in special education. In addition, the students suggested that their parents were either not consulted or tricked into placing them in special education. The literature states that there is a balance of power between special education professionals and African-American parents. Further, the role of this group of parents is particularly important because their children continue to be designated as students with disabilities in disproportionately high numbers (U.S. Department of Education, 1989). Educators have found parental involvement in their children's education is a predictor of academic success (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). According to Harry (1992), the literature on parent participation in special education shows that African American parent exhibit a pattern of relatively low participation and teachers often interpret this pattern to mean that such parents are uninterested in their children's

educational careers (Lynch & Stein, 1987; Marion, 1981; Sullivan, 1980). However, despite the potentially undermining influence of poverty and detrimental urban environments on traditional values, the belief that many parents do not care what happens to their children in school runs contrary to what is known about African-American family life and the values placed on education (Harry, Allen, & McLaughlin, 1992; Marion, 1981). This indicates that African American parents are interested in their children's education. The break in communication between schools and parents prevents the two stakeholders for understanding the requirements and expectations of the home and school environment where students must function (Trotman, 2001). Many special education teachers and administrations believe that parents don't care about their child's education, therefore they speak in a language that parents don't understand, or in some cases hold meetings without parents attending and get the parents to sign documents. Parents are very important and voice a desire to have their children succeed in school.

The theme *low expectations and self-fulfilling prophecy* addressed the expectations of teachers and self-fulfilling prophecy. This theme has been discussed by various authors, however, in special education this topic has never been explored in-depth. The interviews allowed the researcher to see how low expectations and the labeling of students can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Low expectation is a form of racism, if the teachers have these expectations based on race.

Nearly all schools claim to hold high expectations for all students. In reality, what is professed is not always practiced. Although some schools and teachers maintain uniformly high expectations for all students, others have "great expectations" for

particular segments of the student population but minimal expectations for others. In many urban and inner city schools, low expectations is the norm.

The students also indicated that the label ED brought a lasting stigma of bad behavior that resulted in all types of negative behavior. Since the students were labeled ED they felt they had to act the part of an ED students. This self-fulfilling prophecy indicated that teachers and administrators had a certain perception of how those young men were supposed to act and the students fulfilled their prophecy.

The theme *they don't care* is not new to education. The literature review didn't reveal caring as an important component of special education. This finding is relatively new because it indicates how important caring is to special education students. Students explained that they are more willing to work and perform better when they feel the teachers care about them (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2006). Caring is not just referred to as affection but as a close and trusting relationship that creates a sense of belonging in the classroom or school community. This is a very important component of teaching emotional disorder students. Building relationships and trust are important elements in getting African American male students with emotional disorder to achieve.

The theme *they don't understand us* is consistent with the literature review. In this section the students noted that the teachers didn't understand the cultural differences between blacks and whites. . Previous research revealed that race cultural differences can increase the likelihood of referral (Artiles, 1998; Patton, 1998; Smith 2001). According to Zimmerman (2005), differences include having different views of which students were worthy or anticipated to attend college and which would not. Zimmerman further states

that teachers noted institutional racism was present as the students move through the school system.

Implications of the Finding

This research can contribute to the national, state, district and school-wide knowledge of how low expectations, racism, not caring, and cultural differences can contribute to the overrepresentation of African American males in special education ED programs. There is evidence that the school district in this study operates in the old model, a dual education system where education and special education operate as separate entities. The students in this study miss regular education instruction and develop a gap in knowledge with serious consequences.

Educators and policy makers must ensure that the overrepresentation of African American males does not occur and that academic success is prevalent. In order to meet the needs of African American males, educators need to hire administrators and teachers who represent the demographics of their school district and/or school proportionately as well as include diversity training in their staff developments. School boards and administrators must implement policy and procedures to make sure that prereferral processes are effective in identifying the needs of students prior to being referred to special education.

District and state leaders must recognize the need for campus administrators to take an active role in reducing the overrepresentation of African American males. The participants in this study spoke about their parents or guardian being misinformed by school administrators and teachers. Therefore, this district and similar districts should require an outside specialist be involved in the referral process. Districts should also

mandate that all personnel within the school district be trained and adhere to policies or rules. Further, the allocation of resources should be written into policy to be better utilized at the district, state and national level. The district and state should certain criteria's and intervention strategies before a student is placed in special education emotional disorder programs.

The results of this study highlight the need for educators to be aware of cultural differences, caring, biases and stereotypes they may have regarding behavior in the classroom. Educators should also be conscious of preconceived notions they may have of students' behavior based upon students' race. It is important to understand that what may be normal in one cultural may be different in another. It is important for teachers to help students in the primary grades assimilate to the school culture.

Recommendations for Parents

This section provides recommendations for parents of African American male students that were misinformed. Parents should: 1) become actively involved in the IEP process, 2) get a representative that understands special education laws and language, and 3) get involved in their child's education.

Parents should develop a strong understand of the IEP process and make sure interventions were tried before placing there kid in special education emotional disorder programs. This would ensure that schools have tried a variety of interventions before signing papers to place their kid in special education.

Parents should get involved with their children's education. Many students indicated that their teachers would give them easy work and would allow them to watch videos/play video games. The parents should have stopped this very early on. Since

parents are not involved with their children's education it results in students being placed in special education. Schools are suppose to be the outlet for helping change the life style of students. However for most African American males their dreams of being someone have been destroyed. Parents must become more actively involved in their children's education if were going to address the overrepresentation of African American males in special education ED programs.

Recommendations for School Districts

The purpose of the research study was to find out what the experiences were like for African American males placed in special education emotional disorder programs. From the narratives, the researcher was able to develop recommendations. The following recommendations are for school districts planning to address the overrepresentation of African American male students in special education emotional disorder programs.

School districts should:

1. Develop a policy addressing the overrepresentation of African American male students in special education ED programs.
2. Require training workshops and other in-services to assist teachers in understanding students from diverse backgrounds.
3. Educate employees on the effects of labeling students.

A policy should be developed by school districts outlining rules to reduce the overrepresentation of African American males in special education. The rules should include different teaching strategies and interventions for teachers to use. The rules should also include a committee to review every child that is being referred to special education. The committee should include the special education placement committee,

parents or guardian, and one person that specializes in the overrepresentation of minority students. The school district should outline the timeline for interventions to take place after a student is referred to special education.

Recommendations for Administrators

This section provides recommendations for school administrators planning to reduce the overrepresentation of African American males in special education ED programs. School administrators should:

1. Establish a school policy addressing the overrepresentation of African American male students in special education ED programs.
2. Stress to teachers the first priority of our school is academic achievement for all students and provide training, workshops, and staff developments.
3. Establish rules and reprimand any teacher who consistently has low expectations for special education students.
4. Require that parents be educated on special education prior to their child being tested for special education.
5. Provide support to struggling teachers or students and intervention strategies. This would allow teachers an outlet when they are not sure how to handle a situation.
6. Require coaches to report strategies they use for special education students to be successful in sports. This would allow teachers to use coaching techniques in the classroom.
7. Establish a mission statement that embraces differences and find ways to make a difference for diversity that exists within their school.

Recommendations for Teachers

This section provides recommendations for teachers when addressing the overrepresentation of African American males in special education ED programs.

1. Hold African American males to the same academic standards as White students in their classes. Low expectations only lead to self-fulfilling prophecy which damages a kid for life.
2. Acknowledge differences in school and reduce labeling or ability grouping. This will create a culturally responsive environment and promote high expectations for all students.
3. Be aware of the connection between culture, identity, and learning. Learning in no way should devalue background or lower your expectations of them.
4. Understand how cultural influences can be found in communication style. If teachers are unaware of these differences and the impact they can have on learning the result may be cultural conflict that leads to failure.
5. Have high expectations for your students. See them for who they can become, focusing on their potential – not their past failures.
6. Create a classroom where the students feel empowered and capable of achieving whatever they put their minds to. Use your words to motivate students.

Recommendation for Teacher Education Programs

This section lists some of the recommendation for colleges and universities teacher education programs and pre-service teachers.

1. As early as possible, be more informed of the different levels of racism and cultural differences.
2. Require pre-service teachers and prospective administrators to take classes on the overrepresentation of African American or minority students.
3. Create courses that help students understand the importance of caring for students without lowering expectations.

Recommendations for Future Research

This section provides recommendations for future research about the experiences of African American males in special education ED programs and the overrepresentation of African American in special education ED programs. The following recommendations are suggested for future research.

Future research should seek to find out about the experiences of African American males in special education ED programs in suburban and rural school districts. This study would give an idea about students and do they experience similar experiences. This study could employ a qualitative and quantitative research method.

It is also suggested that a future study should seek to find out the impact of single parent homes on the overrepresentation of African American males in special education ED programs. The suggested methodology would be qualitative study. This study would add value in studying the experiences of African American males.

Schools must work to improve personal's attitude toward parents. Professional development can assist with this. Parents should be view as equal members of their

child's educational team and should be consider a part of the solution. The parents in this study were misinformed or mislead. Given may low income and minority parents adopt a deferential stance toward school (Lareau, 2000)

Finally, it is suggested that a future study look at how parents of different ethnic groups perceive special education. This would allow researchers to compare the type of experiences that students have with how parents perceive special education. This study can be either qualitative or quantitative.

Conclusion

The researcher interviewed African American males who were placed in special education ED programs. A modified Seidman (2005) interview technique provided the research with the data needed to complete this study. This research project has taken two and a half years to complete. This project began as a research paper in Dr. Lewis' and Dr. Lehmann's class and evolved into a phenomenological study. After teaching in a predominantly White setting and a predominantly African American setting, the researcher was interested in the overrepresentation of African American male students. When the researcher began to work on the review of literature, the researcher was surprised at the amount of relevant information that was available.

During the interviewing process the researcher had the opportunity to gain valuable information from the participants. The researcher was able to observe how emotional these kids were during the different phases of the interview. As the participants began to tell their stories the researcher could see the hurt and pain that these students had from being in special education. All the students expressed their happiness to be a part of this research project and hope that their stories would impact other students. To see how

much this research meant to students added more meaning and supported the researcher's future agenda on the overrepresentation of African American males in special education ED programs.

The narrative from the participants in this study indicated that nine out of ten students were placed in special education by a White female teacher. The issue of discrimination by White teachers with African American students is a significant problem. For example, Irvine (1990) found that White teachers have more negative expectations for African American students than for white students. Rigid, unexamined and unchallenged assumptions about African American male children on the part of White educators are one of the important factors contributing to the overrepresentation of African American males in segregated special education classrooms in our nations' schools (Boyd & Correa, 2005; Fierros & Conroy, 2001; Green et al., 2005; Hebbeler et al., 2001).

Teaching is an art; it is not made up of many isolated skills. According to Pang (2005), teaching is a complex combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that work in sync to create an environment that encourages maximum growth in the student and the teacher. Caring, community and culture in classrooms produce higher levels of achievement that lead to greater social efficacy (Pang, 2005). The participants in this study indicated that their teachers *didn't care about them*. The teachers didn't take time to help them complete different task, gave them easy work that they never graded, left students in charge of students and worked on the computer frequently. In K-12 schools caring is very important. When a teacher cares they act. The policies and methods for achieving social justice flow directly from what the teachers care about and are

committed to in the classroom. Bell Hooks (2000) states: “The civil rights movement was such a wonderful movement for social justice because the heart of it was love”.

Caring is more fundamental than justice, fairness, and equity. According to Pang (2005), “when we care about another person, we find ways to treat that person justly, fairly, and equitably.” The participants in this study didn’t have this feeling; therefore, they acted out and disrespected many of their teachers.

Special educators can instill into their work and promote an ethic of caring by holding the integrity and goodness of each human relationship. The persistent existence and perpetuation of the overrepresentation of African Americans males in special education programs serves as counterforce against an ethic of caring (Patton, 1998). Patton further state, in loving relationships care is taken not to cause harm to the "other" in thoughts or actions. Many African Americans continue to be harmed by the unjust arrangements created by the theories, research, behaviors, and processes that dominate the field of special education. The ethics of domination, control, oppression, and unjust treatment of African Americans that result in their disproportionate placement in special education programs serve to intrude on and block their human completion (Patton, 1998). An ethic of caring requires that all persons involved in the education enterprise, whether they are researchers, administrators, special education teachers, college professors, or school psychologists, treat African Americans and their culture with caring and respect and hold them in absolute regard (Patton, 1998).

Educators (Serwatka, Deering, & Grant, 1995) have proposed different causes for the pattern of overrepresentation of African American males in special education. Most frequently cited are cultural differences that may lead to biased diagnoses, lack of reliable

identification procedures, the attendant problems of poverty, and racial discrimination. *They don't understand me*, referred to the teacher not understanding the differences between White students and Black students, middle class/rich students and poor students. The vast majority of White educators grew up in predominately White suburban communities and assumes that the culture and practice of schooling, as presently constituted, work well for all students (Howard, 1999). Most Whites conclude that their professional judgments are correct and that those who don't achieve or don't perform in the way that comfortable and familiar to us are either not sufficiently intelligent or inadequately supported by their home environment (Pang, 2005).

Other studies have explored the issue of teacher bias with ethnic minority students. Kelly, Bullock, and Dykes (1977) offered additional empirical evidence suggesting teacher bias with their study that determined that twice as many African American students were identified as behaviorally disordered than White students, with more African American students identified by White teachers as opposed to African American teachers. Shinn, Tindal, and Spira, (1987) also explored possible teacher bias in race and gender. The researchers found that teachers were able to accurately identify pupils with reading difficulties regardless of the pupil's race and gender. However, the teachers referred a higher percentage of African American and male students compared with White and female students for special services. The investigators concluded that gender and race must be considered as factors affecting teacher decision making.

We been tricked, We've been had, We've been bamboozled! The participants in this study felt like their parents were misinformed about special education and didn't understand what special education was about. The Individual Educational Plan (IEP)

meeting to determine the need for special education placement also causes problems for parents (Kunjufu, 2002). Kunjufu notes, the meeting is more intimidating if the four professionals are White. In addition, many middle class educators often use a vernacular that is not understood by parents. “Some educators talk down to parents; become arrogant, condescending and use 16 letter words with a marginally educated parent” (Kunjufu, 2002, 121). Some parents have had poor experiences with in schools themselves. According to (Comer, 2005), parents would like to see their children have better experiences, but they don’t expect this to happen. Comer further state, the education and social status of people who work in the school intimidate undereducated and poor parents. Differences in race, religion, income and ethnicity might cause tension. Because of these and many other factors low-income urban parents need compelling reasons to get involved in their children’s schooling (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Many parents avoid school settings except when they become angry or when they believe they need to protect their children from unfair treatment (Comer, 2005).

The role that the teachers play in the school performance of Black children is critical. Teachers’ personal and cultural attributes as well as their attitudes and behaviors are important. In schools throughout our nation performance is seldom monitored, standards but rarely enforced. According to Kunjufu (2002), the most important factor impacting the academic achievement of African American children is not the race or gender of the teacher but the teacher’s expectations. *Low expectations and self-fulfilling prophecy* was one of the themes that arouse from the narrative of African American males students. According to the participants, most of their teachers had low expectations for them. The teachers frequently gave them easy work, free time and

allowed them to watch movies or play video games. The attitudes of teachers lie at the core of their ability, to assist in the academic ability to assist in the academic achievement and success of urban students (Grant & Sleeter, Wiest, 1998). When teachers believe that marginalized students have the ability to succeed and hold them to high levels of academic achievement, then these students have the ability to succeed at high levels.

If teachers do not hold that fundamental belief about urban students, then urban students will continue to fail in the academic area (Kopetz, Lease & Warren-Kring, 2006). According to Pajarer (1992), “beliefs are stronger predictors of behavior” than knowledge (p. 311). Many teachers currently teaching in urban schools, as well as those preparing to teach have little experience with cultures other than their own. Brophy and Goods (1970) research on teacher expectation reveals the need to address the underlying attitude and beliefs that teachers hold concerning African American children. In their, research they verify that when teachers hold high expectations for students, those students produce. Brophy and Good note, that when teachers hold low expectations for students those students produce at a low level.

Many of the participants, felt that with a little support in elementary and middle school, they would have been able to be successful in general education classes. The option of keeping up in special education meant more pressure and energy trying to keep up. Teachers not addressing their learning style and understanding them is the fear that most students had, however all of them wanted to be in general education as much as possible. Being in special education confirm their awareness that they were not as smart as their non-disabled peers. All of the participants wanted to be somebody and believed they could learn if they are taught flexibly. Since they were perceive by others as bad

and slow students many of them began to act bad to gain a reputation. The longer they had been in special education the more their confidence had been eroded. Consequently, students labeled ED yield to such thinking, inscribing themselves into the discourse as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The label of Ed impacted the students' life in and out of school. Being place in segregated classrooms also impacted the students' self-perception. Many of the participants indicated they were bored in their special education classes, therefore they did stupid things. Out of school the students felt like they had to impress their friends and maintain their image. The numbers of African American male students gradually decrease as they went further into high school. Suggest that many of them dropped out of school or quit school. The struggle of African American male students labeled ED caused many to drop out. All the participants indicated that they were view as inferior and often teased by others. Most of them had issues with being label ED or LD because it inferred that they couldn't learn and they had a behavior problem (crazy).

Finally, the overrepresentation of African American males is a growing phenomenon. The researcher feels that the overrepresentation can be fixed. If school board members, administrators, and teachers are for social justice they have the power to fix the terrible phenomenon. Research findings have continued to debate the contributing factors. The narratives that the participants provided support the large number of students in special education programs in this school district are African American males. These students are also likely to service in self-contain settings, a form of resegregation. There are no simple solutions to the overrepresentation of African-American male students in special education ED programs. To alleviate this problem involve restructuring teacher

education programs, preparing teachers to become culturally responsive, recruiting teachers of color, recognizing and valuing individuals first, getting parents involved in school activities, deciding on best practices for improved student learning, and developing school-home-community partnership.

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APPENDIX



Academic Accountability
12000 Goodwood Blvd.
Baton Rouge, LA 70815
Phone: 225-226-7625 Fax: 225-226-7605
ebrschools.org

June 5, 2006

Esrom Pitre
1650 Robertson St., Unit A
Fort Collins, Colorado 80525

Dear Mr. Pitre,

The East Baton Rouge Parish School System has approved your request to conduct research in our school district entitled "An Examination of the Experiences of African American Males in Special Education Emotional Disturbance Programs." I have reviewed the materials that you sent me and am familiar with the scope of your project. Based on the documentation, we are satisfied that the individuals involved are adequately protected as human research subjects. It is very important to our district that confidentiality of subjects be protected and that all data collected is used only for the purpose permitted. We require that all subject participation is voluntary and subjects who choose to participate may decline at any time. The school system will allow you to meet with school principals to seek their participation and to determine how they can assist you with interviews on site.

I have only one concern. I have asked for your interview protocol and any other instruments that you have. You have sent me a list of questions; however, the scope of data collection and analysis does not seem to be complete or comprehensive enough for a doctoral dissertation. If your proposal has been approved by the university as it has been sent to me, then this approval process is complete. However, if any additional interview protocols or instruments are added, I must have a copy before you begin your data collection.

Thank you for your interest in students in our school system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Baird". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Jennifer Baird, Assistant Superintendent

this happens, we will arrange to have them meet with the school counselor. If further counseling is needed you will need to pay for those sessions.

WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no known benefit for participating in this study. We hope your child will provide information on African American males experiences in special education emotional disorder classes that can help inform teacher education programs as to the kinds of classroom and training perspective teachers need to meet the needs of African American male students more effectively. In addition, the information provided may lead to further research studies on the overrepresentation of African American males in special education.

WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE? It will not cost anything to participate in this study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

The researchers will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. Your child's information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information gathered. Your child will not be identified in these written materials. When publishing papers or talking about the results, we will use fake names for people and places.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that your child gave us information, or what that information is. We have not named the community or state. With your knowledge, other small details will be changed to protect your child's confidentiality. Your child's confidentiality will also be protected in the way data will be managed. Interview tapes will be labeled by pseudonyms. We will keep all of the information with participants' names in a locked file in Dr. Lehmann's office. These will be held for three years then destroyed. A professional transcriptionist who will keep the data confidential will transcribe the data.

CAN MY TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY? Yes, if your child fails to show up to interview sessions, shuts down (refusing to answer questions) or can't recall experiences, your child may be removed from the study.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

No one will receive compensation for taking part in this study.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH? The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury. I will report any injuries to HRC by writing a narrative about the situation.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Page_2 of 2 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Colorado State University**

TITLE OF STUDY: An Examination of the Experiences of African American Males in Special Education Emotional Disorder Programs

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: JEAN LEHMANN 970-491-6317

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: ESROM PITRE 970-491-7624 W 225-205-0923C

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? Your child is being invited to participate in this study because he is an African American male who is in special education emotional disorder program. In this study, we are interested in the experiences of African American males in special education emotional disorder programs in an urban school district.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? I am Esrom Pitre, and I will conduct the interviews. My advisor, Dr. Lehmann, will serve as a support system to ensure proper protocol is being followed.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? The purpose of this study is to find out what your child's experiences in special education emotional disorder programs are like. The information that your child provides may help inform teacher education programs as to the kinds of classroom training perspective teachers need in order to meet the needs of African American male students more effectively. In addition, the findings may lead to further research studies on the experiences of African American males in special education emotional disorder programs.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? The interviews for this study will take place at a date, time and place that are mutually convenient for the two of us and your child this summer. The interview will last 60 to 90 minutes. An additional interview of 30 minutes or less may be needed to clarify your child's information from the first interview.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

Your child will be interviewed one time in a face-to-face format that will range from 60 minutes to 90 minutes. An additional interview of 30 minutes or less may be needed to clarify your child's information from the first interview.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no known reasons why your child should not take part in this study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. It is very unlikely that the interviews will present a risk to your child. However, your child may have to recall information that causes them to get upset or shutdown. If

Page_1 of 1 Participant's initials _____ Date _____



School of Education
Fort Collins, CO 80523
970-491-5292

Counselors
East Baton Rouge Parish Schools
P.O. Box 2950
Baton Rouge, LA 70821

Dear Counselors:

My name is Esrom Pitre and I am a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University. My dissertation topic is entitled, "*An Examination of the Experiences of African American Males in Special Education Emotional Disorder Programs*". Being a former middle school and high school teacher in East Baton Rouge Parish, I believe this research will be most helpful in explaining the experiences of African American males in special education. No study in the United States, has every examined what it is like for African American males in special education (ED) programs. As a result, I have designed my doctoral dissertation, for Colorado State University, to understand the experiences of being an African American male in special education in an urban school system.

At this time, I respectfully request your permission to be on call during the interviewing process for African American male students at your school. If a student becomes emotionally distressed or upset, I am requesting you see the student immediately. I know that you are very busy this time of year. However, I strongly believe that with your assistance we can assure all students have the support they need.

Please let me know if you require any additional information regarding my request. If there are any questions, please call me at 225-205-0923 or feel free to e-mail me at esrom@cahs.colostate.edu. If you could send your response on appropriate school letterhead, I would be most appreciative. Thank you in advance.

Professionally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jean Lehmann".

Dr. Jean Lehmann
Principal Investigator
Colorado State University

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Esrom Pitre".

Esrom Pitre
Doctoral Candidate



School of Education
Fort Collins, CO 80523
970-491-5292

Principals
East Baton Rouge Parish Schools
P.O. Box 2950
Baton Rouge, LA 70821

Dear Principals:

My name is Esrom Pitre and I am a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University. My dissertation topic is entitled, "*An Examination of the Experiences of African American Males in Special Education Emotional Disorder Programs*". Being a former middle school and high school teacher in East Baton Rouge Parish, I believe this research will be most helpful in explaining the experiences of African American males in Special Education (ED) programs. No study in the United States has ever examined what it is like for African American males in special education ED programs. As a result, I have designed my doctoral dissertation, for Colorado State University, to understand the experiences of being an African American male in special education in an urban school system.

At this time, I respectfully request your permission to include African American male students at your school in my study. I am requesting the special education teacher give consent forms to individuals that meet the criteria. Please note that participation is completely voluntary. The participants may leave or stop participating at any time. It is very unlikely that the interviews will present a risk to the students. However, participants may have to recall information that may cause them to get upset. If this happens, I am requesting a counselor or parent be available. Copies of the interview questions will be distributed to each participant two weeks prior to the interview.

I strongly believe that East Baton Rouge could benefit greatly through participation in this particular research study. After completion of this study, I would gladly share the results with you and members of your staff.

Please let me know if you require any additional information regarding my request. If there are any questions, please call me at 970-493-0658, 225-205-0923 or feel free to e-mail me at esrom@cahs.colostate.edu. Please address the risks to the students and whether or not they feel the school counselor in the building is enough or if the counselor should be present at the interview, or perhaps, have one of the parents present in the letters of cooperation. Send your response on appropriate school letterhead. Thank you in advance.

PROFESSIONALLY,

Dr. Jean Lehmann
Dr. Jean Lehmann
Principal Investigator
Colorado State University

Esrom Pitre
Doctoral Candidate



School of Education
Fort Collins, CO 80523
970-491-5292

Myra Johnson,
Coordinator Student Advocacy
East Baton Rouge Parish Schools
P.O. Box 2950
Baton Rouge, LA 70821

Dear Myra Johnson:

My name is Esrom Pitre and I am a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University. My dissertation topic is entitled, "*An Examination of the Experiences of African American Males in Special Education Emotional Disorder Programs*". Being a former middle school and high school teacher in East Baton Rouge Parish, I believe this research will be most helpful in explaining the experiences of African American males in special education. No study in the United States, has every examined what it is like for African American males in special education (ED) programs. As a result, I have designed my doctoral dissertation, for Colorado State University, to understand the experiences of being an African American male in special education in an urban school system.

At this time, I respectfully request a list of schools that have Emotional Disorder programs (Behavior Disorder) along with a contact list of Principals and special education teachers. Thanks for your assistance in this matter. East Baton Rouge could benefit greatly through participation in this particular research study. After completion of this study, I would gladly share the results with you.

Please let me know if you require any additional information regarding my request. If there are any questions, please call me at 970-493-0658, 225-205-0923 or feel free to e-mail me at esrom@cahs.colostate.edu. If you could send your response on appropriate school letterhead, I would be most appreciative. Thank you in advance.

Professionally,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jean Lehmann".

Dr. Jean Lehmann
Principal Investigator
Colorado State University

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Esrom Pitre".

Esrom Pitre
Doctoral Candidate



School of Education
Fort Collins, CO 80523
970-491-5292

Dear Parents,

My name is Esrom Pitre and I am a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University. I am currently researching African Americans in Special Education Emotional Disorder (ED) Programs. I am a former special education ED teacher at Scotlandville Magnet High School and Istrouma Middle Magnet. My dissertation topic is "*An Examination of the Experiences of African American Males in Special Education Emotional Disorder Programs*". No study in the United States has ever examined African American male student's experiences in Special Education ED programs. As a result, I have designed my doctoral dissertation, for Colorado State University, to find out what it is like being an African American male in special education ED programs in an urban school system.

At this time, I respectfully request your permission to include your child in my study. If you agree, informed consent forms will be sent to you in the near future allowing your child to participate in this study. **Please note that participation is completely voluntary. Your child may leave or stop participating at any time. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but I have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential unknown risks. It is very unlikely that the interviews will present a risk to your child. However, your child may have to recall information that may cause him to get upset. If your child becomes upset we will arrange to have him meet with the school counselor. If further counseling is needed you will need to pay for those sessions.** Copies of the interview questions will be distributed to each participant prior to the interview.

Although there is no known benefit in participating in this study, we hope your child will provide information on African American males experiences in special education emotional disorder classes that may help inform teacher education programs as to the kinds of classroom training perspective teachers need in order to meet the needs of African American male students more effectively. The information provided may lead to further research studies on "The Overrepresentation of African American males in Special Education". After completion of this study, I would gladly share the results with you.

Please let me know if you require any additional information regarding my request. If there are any questions, please call me at 225-205-0923 or 970-493-0658 or email me at esrom@cahs.colostate.edu. Thanks in advance for your time and consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jean P. Lehmann".

Dr. Jean Lehmann
Principal Investigator
Colorado State University

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Esrom Pitre".

Esrom Pitre,
Doctoral Candidate