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Does Teacher Bias Increase Referral of Blacks to Special Education for a Reading Disability?

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Abstract

Research shows that Black students are over-represented in special education for a reading disability based on the inaccuracy of teacher referrals. Teachers' accuracy in referring Black students to special education for a reading disability is not an extensively researched area. This study aims to determine if teachers' biases and attitudes toward Black students impacted their ability to accurately make a special education referral for a reading disability for this population of students. For this study, teachers completed a questionnaire, cultural competence self-assessment checklist, four vignettes, and a post-vignette question to determine if their personal biases and attitudes impacted their willingness to refer Black students to special education for a reading disability. A cross-tab, chi-squared test, and binary logistic regression were the methods used to examine the data. All data collected in the study were from school districts across the country and teacher pages via social media groups on LinkedIn and Facebook. The researcher hypothesized that whether Black students were struggling or not within the vignettes, teachers would refer them for special education services at a higher rate.

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CHAPTER I

According to Farkas et al. (1990) teachers associated Black students who were of low economic status as having lower levels of academic achievement and tended to give lower grades to this demographic of students even when their performances were consistent with those students who were classified as White and middle class. Teachers are an intricate part of their students' education and having low expectations for Black students contributed to them having decreased responsibility for their academic achievement, which led to students committing the self-fulfilling prophecy of underperforming (Diamond et al., 2004). In addition, Black students who underperformed had additional negative school-related variables. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2019) Black school-age students were more likely to be identified under IDEA part b than any other racial/ethnic group combined for a specific learning disability at 2.5 times more. Teachers were in a unique role in which their assessment and rating of their students' academic performance determined the students' placement, classification, and identification for special education services (Sideridis et al., 2008). Thus, when examining the elevated placement of Black students in special education for a reading disability, teachers perception of reading ability should be examined.

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socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, social interactions, and how teachers perceived Black students were all factors that could increase the likelihood of special education classification due to teachers' biases (Knotek, 2003).

Special education services benefit students with a deficit in their academic ability. Still, too often, for misidentified Black students, this service operated as a remedial dumping ground for those students that the mainstream classes cannot or refused to serve (Raj, 2016). This is particularly problematic because a large proportion of those placed in special education are Black students, which placed this demographic of students at an academic disadvantage.

Background of the Problem

The overrepresentation of Black students in special education for a disability was a decades-old issue (Raj, 2016). Initially, special education was a program to assist students in need following the Brown vs. Board Decision; however, since its inception, Black students had been disproportionately referred, and their representation in the program exceeded their proportional enrollment in the school they attended (Blanchett, 2006). The high referral rates of Black students indicated that there may be significant inaccuracy in the identification process, which suggested that those identified as having a specific learning disability may not have had a disability; thus, these students were at risk of educational harm (Raj, 2016). The instruction that students received in a special education classroom was not the same as the instruction they received in general education classrooms. Thus, many adverse outcomes ensued, including continuous

academic underachievement, high dropout rates, limited access to mainstream instruction, and low graduation rates (Artiles et al., 2005).

Much of the existing literature on evaluating the high rates of Black children referred to special education focuses on the outcome rather than the process (Dever et al., 2016). Though the outcome was problematic, understanding why Black students had a higher special education identification rate was essential in addressing the problem. Research into teacher bias suggested that teachers of middle to high socioeconomic status showed a pattern of relating poorly to Black students of a lower socioeconomic status, which correlated with the low aptitude scores and grades for these students (Farkas et al., 1990). Thus, it was essential that the teacher's reasoning for special education referral and the content within the referral be thoroughly examined. In addition, it was important to consider that once a student was referred to special education, it was difficult to stop the process, and students placed in special education were not likely to return to the mainstream classroom (Leinhardt & Pallay,1982).

Statement of the Problem

Although the literature indicated that Black students were disadvantaged in various circumstances, there was considerable concern with teacher evaluation of student achievement and student outcomes once placed in special education. According to Kearns et al. (2005) there was a significant concern with the effectiveness of special education programs in meeting students' needs, particularly with Black students, given their high placement and the programs' remedial approach to instruction. Thus, there was a concern

about the educational outcome of Black students within the special education program (Kearns et al., 2005). To further understand the high referral rate of Black students to special education for a reading disability, this study served as a relevant addition to the research.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the accuracy of teachers' referrals for Black students to special education for a reading disability. Frequently, teachers tended to view White students as more capable of high academic achievement than low-income and Black students, which was particularly problematic due to teachers expectations significantly influencing Black students' academic experiences (Diamond et al., 2004). Research into implicit racial associations in the classroom has shown that White instructors were predicted to have a higher bias toward Black students in which this population of students was predicted to have a lower performance on a test than their White counterparts (Warikoo et al., 2016). The objective of this research was to determine if there was a racial bias in teacher referrals.

Research Question

The following research questions guided this quantitative study: Are teachers more accurately identifying White students with a reading disability than Black students? What factors contribute to teachers identifying Black students at an elevated rate instead of White students?

Significance of the Study

The primary significance of this quantitative exploratory study was that it provided insight into Black overrepresentation in special education classrooms for a reading disability. Secondly, this examination provided insight into factors that influence the high referral rate for this demographic of students. Third, this study gave practitioners insight into teachers' perspectives on referring Black students. Lastly, this research helped teachers/administrators/practitioners understand the significance of evaluating the referral process and the implications of inaccurate identification of a specific learning disability.

This study potentially increased the understanding of the dynamics and factors that led to high rates of Black special education referrals for a reading disability. By evaluating the special education referral, this study potentially led to a decrease in referral rates and an examination of the referral. Educators (teachers, administrators, superintendents) potentially used the information obtained in this study to address and reduce the elevated rates of referral of Black students and provide these students with appropriate academic resources to meet their needs. This was important to increase the academic achievement of Black students in the school system. In addition, this study offered a perspective into the components that influence teacher bias.

Theoretical Perspective

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) theoretical perspective referred to a set of variables formed into hypotheses that identified the relationship among variables.

In addition, the theoretical perspective examined how variables predict an interrelated relationship and specified how and why variables were related (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To better assist teachers in understanding underlining bias and perceptions of Black students, culturally responsive teaching (CRT) was utilized. The CRT framework was a framework that analyzed cultures, experiences, and multicultural perspectives to understand disparity and equality when teaching diverse students (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). This theoretical perspective aimed to increase teachers' awareness of bias by encouraging them to examine their perception of their students' culture and critiquing their beliefs and knowledge to improve their overall effectiveness in teaching (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

Most educators were White middle-class women who did not have significant or consistent interaction with students of color (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). The racial differences between educators and the students they teach could create a cultural mismatch. Race and socioeconomic factors continued to be associated with the disproportionate placement of Black students in special education (Hibel et al., 2010). Cultural critical conscientiousness was a component of CRT. It was a method that addressed elements of cultural mismatch by encouraging teachers to reflect on their perceptions and analyze their personal beliefs and instructional techniques to improve the academic success of students of color (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

CRT recognized that teachers who have positive perceptions of the culture of their diverse students and who engaged in understanding the significance of diversity within

cultures created positive academic outcomes for their students (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Due to the nature of teachers referrals, there was a correlation between the high referral rate and equality and racial undertones of Blacks in the school system. Teachers who were culturally aware of their biases, competent in their students' culture, and who routinely critiqued their knowledge and assumptions could improve their instructional efficiency with diverse populations of students (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

According to Gay and Kirkland (2003) CRT was composed of the following four core premises: (a) multicultural education and educational equity and excellence are intertwined; (b) teachers accountability involved self-reflection, and awareness of one's teaching beliefs and behavior, and (c) teachers should be conscientious of their knowledge and what is in their curricula. The premises identified were essential in teachers addressing elements of racial disparities in the classroom and becoming aware of their biases.

Multicultural education and educational equity and excellence are intertwined. Teachers needed to be conscientious of their own beliefs and expectations concerning different cultures because their beliefs and expectations could translate into the classroom, leading to discriminatory behavior if their beliefs or expectations do not correlate with the students' (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). A concerning factor with teachers' biases was the disconnection between the culture of the teachers and the students they teach. Black students' skills are similar to White students; however, the mismatch of teachers' expectations, racial stereotypes of academic achievement, and academic

performance by Black students resulted in a cultural clash (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). Thus, teachers generally evaluated Black students differently due to cultural differences and racial status (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). An essential element of multicultural education was understanding the ethnic learning styles of students, responding in a culturally-aware manner, and appreciating the cultural values and beliefs of the students being taught (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

Teacher accountability involved self-reflection and awareness of one's teaching beliefs and behavior. Currently, there was a cultural mismatch between White teachers and Black students in that they both have had different lived experiences and cultural backgrounds; the expectation from teachers did not correlate with student production, which had resulted in an over-referral of Black students, thus giving cause for examination of special education referrals (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). By teachers thoroughly investigating, analyzing, and monitoring their perception of cultural diversity and methods of delivering instruction, they could maximize positive achievement outcomes (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

Teachers needed to be conscientious of their knowledge and what is in their curricula. Diverse students were not deliberately against attending classes with racially and culturally diverse problems, but they needed assistance and support from teachers in addressing those thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors related to the problems (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). A proactive adjustment to address racially and culturally diverse problems are for teachers to create a comfortable learning environment and demonstrate

expectations that reflect diversity in the curricula (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Including those components in instruction and lesson planning would assist with addressing racial obstacles in instruction.

Limitation of the Study

This study posed several delimitations. First, this study did not include other ethnic groups of students, such as Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. Second, this study did not examine teachers' perspectives based on gender. Lastly, this study did not examine teachers perspective based on race or ethnicity.

Assumptions

The following assumptions has guided the research:

1. Each participant has provided truthful responses when participating in the research questionnaire.
2. Participants' responses have developed themes and patterns that has answer the research questions.
3. Participation in the research study was completely voluntary.

Definition of Terms

To provide a better understanding of specific terms in the research, the researcher has provided clarity on the following key terms.

Whites: Whites are American citizens who are descendants of Europeans and share common experiences and cultural beliefs (Jackson & Cothran, 2003)

Blacks: Blacks are American citizens who are descendants of Africans and share common experiences and cultural beliefs (Jackson & Cothran, 2003).

Teacher Bias: Referred to teachers' assumption of a demographic of students' academic ability and overidentification and placement of said demographic in the special education classroom (Jordan, 2005).

Overrepresentation or Disproportionate: Referred to a group of students of a specific cultural background whose representation in special education is significantly beyond their representation in the school population (Blanchett, 2006).

Summary

In summary, chapter one accomplished many tasks, including investigating the presence of teachers' biases in Black students' over-referral to special education, explaining why this was a prevalent problem and the repercussions. Also, within this chapter, the purpose of this study was outlined, key terms were defined, and the delimitations and limitations were established.

CHAPTER II

History of Blacks in the School System

Following the historic *1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision* in favor of ending segregation, there was a tolerated form of segregation in the education system, with Blacks being disproportionately placed in special education classrooms (Jordan, 2005). Despite the intention to address the disparity in the school system, the decision to desegregate did not equally educate students of color or address the complaints of racial discrimination against those of color (Yosso et al., 2004). In the immediate response to desegregation, problems arose that were not immediately prevalent for many educators of previously segregated schools (Madyun, 2011). Despite the court's decision, change was not implemented until the legislative and executive branches were empowered by the federal government by passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Rivkin, 2016). Across the country, desegregation was at a standstill due to the ambiguity and disagreement about what de jure segregated school districts needed to comply with the court's decision (Armor, 2006). Thus, it was up to the school districts across the nation to interpret the court's decision. It would not be until the 1970s that the Supreme Court approved a comprehensive means of school desegregation, which led to widespread desegregation across the country (Armor, 2006).

During segregation, the educational opportunities of Black students and their White counterparts were not equivocal. Due to the lack of available resources, Black parents were extremely limited and restricted in alternative measures to assist their children's academic needs, which led to many families sending their children to underfunded and under-resourced schools (Martin & Varner, 2017). In the transitional period of desegregation, teachers and administrators were forced to reexamine the nature of how students of Black culture were to be nurtured in the education system and change their views of contextual development and cultural values, which was not a proactive and efficient transition (Madyun, 2011). Thus, Black students who transitioned into desegrated schools faced a culture clash with teachers who lacked experience teaching diverse students, which resulted in these students perceiving their teachers' actions as disparaging (Causey, 2001). The cultural mismatch presented additional problems in the transitional period. For example, a White teacher in the Columbus school district in Washington D.C. accounted her experience teaching during segregation as difficult, advocating that going to an unfamiliar place, living with people she never worked with, and understanding their culture or where they were coming from was overwhelming (Causey, 2001).

During the first years of desegregation, teachers indicated that the curriculum was the same as before desegregation; however, Black students were unable meet the criteria, which led to significantly poor academic performances (Causey, 2001). The high occurrence of poor academic performance contributed to additional challenges for Black

students. For example, in the second year of desegregation, a school in the Muscogee County School District decided to track the English and math scores for seventh through twelve grades and noted that White students overwhelmingly achieved over Black students (Causey, 2001). School districts in the segregated south tended to reorganize students based on ability, contributing to the overrepresentation of Black students in special education (Causey, 2001).

During the transition phase of desegregation, several hurdles emerged. One such hurdle was that courts around the country were inconsistent in enforcing the mandate to desegregate schools. For years, opinions shifted between honoring the idealism of civil rights and preventing the backlash from the community in which the schools were to be desegregated (Rivkin, 2016). Since the ruling in favor of Brown, there were many issues surrounding race in which smaller courts sought to go against the ruling in favor of segregation, and the case of *Bradley v. Milliken* affirmed that steps needed to be established to address public school segregation (Lindquist, 1975). In the case of Bradley, officials attempted to use a loophole to implement segregation. In this case, the state of Michigan and the Detroit School Board were actively confining Black students to the state-imposed school for Blacks (Lindquist, 1975). Despite the clear and intentional violation of the law, the court system attempted to justify the violation. Judge Roth, who presided over the case, attempted to remedy the violation by indicating that the racial demographic of Detroit made it impossible to desegregate the schools and suggested that a metropolitan-wide plan was necessary to address the state-imposed desegregation of

Detroit's schools, which was affirmed by the U.S. Court of Appeals (Lindquist, 1975). Despite the support from the U.S. Court of Appeals, Judge Roth's decision was overturned. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Judge Roth's decision was erroneous and not supported by law. In their ruling of the case of *Bradley v. Milliken*, the Supreme Court ruled that the school district of Detroit did enact de facto segregation, which referred to individuals within the school system's decision to segregate, were subject to the mandate if racial intent for the segregation was proven (Rivkin, 2016). To be considered racial intent, three elements needed to be present, which included the current condition of segregation must be identified; the state, through its officials or agency, must had actively taken steps to maintain segregation with discriminatory intent, and the state's action or lack thereof must have attributed to segregation (Lindquist, 1975). If all three elements were present, the state must actively work to address the problem. In the case of the Detroit school system, testimony and evidence supported that school officials were cognizant of the pattern of racial separation between suburban schools and specific schools within the district (Lindquist, 1975). In addition, there was significant pushback from White families. Several White families relocated to different communities and towns when desegregation was implemented in their school district and resided within suburban areas where Blacks were not present (Rivkin, 2016).

In the years following desegregation, there were some improvements in the educational achievement of Black students due to the availability of educational resources and materials (Hucks, 2011). These improvements led to a significant reduction

in the academic gap between White and Black students in the 1970s; from the early 1980s until today, the performance gap exists with some progress in core subjects except for reading (Slavin & Madden, 2006). An area of concern with the reform was that not all Black students were universally provided equal education opportunities, especially for students from low socioeconomic and working households within urban cities or rural areas (Hucks, 2011). Identifying how race, social class, and exposure to academic resources from one generation to the next was important in understanding Black students' academic gap and disadvantages (Diamond et al., 2004).

In the 1970s, various programs were implemented to reduce the academic gap between Black and White students, such as Title I, desegregation, and additional resources (Slavin & Madden, 2006). In some areas, these programs were able to provide some assistance in reducing the overall academic gap between races and provided better education opportunities for Black students; however, in execution elsewhere, the discrepancy between these two groups of students continued to be a prevalent problem in the education system with education shifting from abysmal to merely bad for Black students (Slavin & Madden, 2006). The difference between both races' education achievement are potential future outcomes. For example, closing the academic gaps for Black students could manifest in increasing high school graduation rates, college enrollment, attendance, completion, job qualifications, home income, and socioeconomic status (Slavin & Madden, 2006).

Two decades after the *Brown Decision*, San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) struggled to realize the deconstruction of segregated schools fully. This inability to provide adequate education for Black students left federal district courts the task of filing lawsuits against local schools within the district that were actively segregating the student population (Der, 2004). In one such suit, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) demanded that the SFUSD provide academic resources and educational opportunities for Black students in the district (Der, 2004). The purpose of the NAACP decision to become involved with the San Francisco education system was to implement equal opportunities the *Brown v. Board of Education* sought to uphold. To assist Black families within the nearby community, NAACP sought to provide additional funding to the schools within the area and reconstructed faculty and staff (Der, 2004). Despite the well intentions, there were several problems with the initiative to desegregate schools. The results to address the achievement goals of Black students were not conclusive, and there were no records from the California Department of Education (CDE) to account for the funds provided to schools that actively sought to desegregate the student population or records of said schools who achieved the goals of desegregation (Der, 2004). In the '90s the issue of resegregation emerged within the San Francisco school district. A contributing factor in this issue was parents' involvement, which led to frequent changes in their child's demographics and avoidance of low-performing schools, thus leaving minority students segregated in those underperforming schools (Der, 2004). In addition, there were areas where SFUSD should have improved

upon. For example, SFUSD was not proactive in working to create an empowering community for Black families that were disadvantaged by the challenges of the school they attended, and SFUSD did not actively engage with teachers and staff to work on educational strategies to make these students effective learners (Der, 2004).

In 1965, Wake County, a county in North Carolina, put significant efforts into racial desegregation after the Elementary Education Act made school districts within the county choose between receiving federal funds or remaining segregated, thus leading to the county utilizing a race-based assignment plan to make sure racial composition in school represent the county (Wang et al., 2020). This was later overturned by the Supreme court, deeming the plan inappropriate. Between 1968 and 1980, the amount of segregation by district steadily increased, which supported the notion of White flight from desegregated schools, and a long-term trend of suburbanization (Rivkin, 2016). Thus, the number of Black and minority students grew, resulting in these school districts suffering from a lack of financial support, high teacher turnover rates, and high educational needs for students with early literacy problems (Clayton, 2011). An examination of districts that were integrated and segregated revealed that there was a discrepancy. Black students performed better in integrated schools than in segregated due to better teachers, instructional quality, and academic expectations (Clayton, 2011). Examination of the effects of racial segregation indicated that the achievement gaps between races grew as students moved from elementary to secondary and higher-level grades (Wang et al., 2020).

Marginalization of Black Students in Special Education

The civil rights movement was essential in forming special education, yet racial disparities for the services indicate the educational system's inequality (Skiba et al., 2008). Despite *Brown v. Board of Education's decision* to end segregation and provide equal opportunities for Black students in academics, many students in desegregated schools continued to be explicitly and implicitly marginalized in special education classrooms (Smith & Kozleski, 2005). After the supreme court's decision to desegregate schools, there was resistance from schools and attempts to maintain marginalization. Special education was the preferred method of marginalizing Black students. For example, following the rise in un-enrollment of White students following the decision to desegregate, officials in a Washington, DC school district placed 24 percent of their newly acquired Black students in special education classrooms between 1955 and 1956, which was significantly more than the 3 percent White representation (Connor & Ferri, 2005). In theory, the intention of special education was not to be a permanent placement but an educational support system for children with disabilities to receive additional aid and later return to the mainstream classroom (Blanchett, 2006). In execution, Blacks made up a large portion of the special education demographic and remain within the classroom while their White counterparts are released back into general education classrooms.

Special education was a service intended to provide students of a homogeneous group with an appropriate academic setting that would aid them in achieving academic

success; however, the motivation with a particular ethnic homogenous group was concerning (Leinhardt & Pallay,1982). Those homogeneous groups within special education were generally assigned a learning disability, identified as mentally impaired, or frequently struggled in a general education classroom. Historically, isolating students of a homogenous group created a painful and harmful school experience leading to failure in general education course work, a permanent placement in special education, and the group of students fell further behind and became stigmatized, which lowered overall academic expectations from parents, teachers, and administration (Leinhardt & Pallay, 1982). In theory, special education was designed to be a temporary service that provided academic assistance for those students identified with a disability and struggling in general education classroom; however, Black placement was permanent, which has led to this group of students not receiving equivocal educational opportunities and support, thus leading to a legalized form academic segregation within the special education classroom (Blanchett, 2006). When compared to their White counterparts, there was sufficient evidence that displayed the discrepancy in academic growth. According to Blanchett (2006) White students who were perceived as being academically impaired or with a disability were likely to be included in general education classes due to educational supports such as speech and language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and additional educational support. The discrepancy between the academic achievement of both races and overall success was influenced by funds allotted to the school. Generally, schools with a high Black or minority population were underfunded;

thus, the caliber of general education teachers were not equivocal to those schools with high White enrollment and for those Black students identified as having a learning disability within the schools with high White enrollment, spent the majority of their time in special education than in their general education classroom (Blanchett, 2006). In addition, these factors and the lack of resources contributed to a difference in school experience and high school completion.

There were several elements within a special education referral. Historically, there had been a racial motivation in the institution of special education, and within this service, White students had received privileges not allotted to Blacks, which had led to a difference in experience and overall academic achievement between the two races (Blanchett, 2006). In addition, there were concerns about Black students' referral to special education. Master Scripting was the practice of the majority culture, Whites, determining essential elements of curricula. In practice quieted the voices and experiences of Black students and led to an inconsistent and culturally inappropriate rigorous curriculum. Thus, the practice of using master scripting negatively impacted Black students. Culturally appropriate and consistent access to rigorous curricula with high expectations went hand-in-hand with academic success (Blanchett, 2006).

Before the *Larry P. V. Riles case* in 1979, schools utilized culturally biased assessments to examine students' intelligence and used that information to justify placing Black students in special education (Gardner III & Mayes, 2013). Following the decision of *Larry P. V. Riles*, IDEA changed its policy to include the development of Part b, which

stated that intelligence tests could not be the only test used for special education qualification and that nondiscriminatory testing needs to be included (Gardner III & Mayes, 2013). The provision intended to elevate the high referral and placement rates, but the referral of minority students continues to rise. In the 1970s, minority students such as Blacks, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans continued to be overrepresented and disproportionately placed in special education due to discriminatory assessment practices (Gardner III & Mayes, 2013). Black students made up the majority of the special education population in mental retardation (intellectual disability), behavior disorders, and specific learning disabilities, which were judgment-based categories (Gardner III & Mayes, 2013). However, Black placement in special education for a medical disability such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, orthopedic disabilities, and severe mental retardation (intellectual disability) were representative of their proportion in the school population, but identification of a specific learning disability was significantly above Black representation in schools (Reschly, 1996).

Black Disproportionate Classification for Specific Learning Disability

Specific learning disability was a category of IDEA that was prone to many issues, such as disagreement on diagnostic criteria, concerns with assessments used to evaluate deficits, the efficiency of treatment methods, the influence of poverty and judgment, and the precise definition of deficits identified (Lyon, 1996). 6% of the school-age population have a specific learning disability, and a specific learning disability

contributed to more than half of students' placement in special education (Reschly, 2002). Additionally, overall specific learning disabilities increased by 250% since 1976 and expanded rapidly at 5.73% a year, over twice the projected amount (Reschly, 2002). The prevalence of students identified as having a specific learning disability increased significantly, and a contributing factor is a vague definition (Lyon, 1996). According to Aron and Loprest (2012) there were two criteria for identification: a child must have had a specific academic impairment and needed special education to address the academic impairment.

The excessive identification of Black students in special education programs indicated that they were represented in such programs in a more significant percentage than their percentage in the total school population (Harry & Anderson, 1994). The amount of Black students identified as having a learning disability as opposed to other ethnic students has shown consideration of the identification process. For example, in a district in California, the population of Blacks was 29%, but their representation in special education was 66% (Harry & Anderson, 1994). Accepting the disproportionate number of Black students identified as having a disability and placed in special education indicated that their placement was accurate, objective, and a true reflection of their academic ability (Jordan, 2005). In addition, the overrepresentation of Black students in special education for a specific learning disability indicated that the process was ineffective or even harmful (Reschly, 2002).

Research supported the concern with educational inequality between Black and White students due to the disproportionate amount of black students represented within the various disability categories and their segregation to restrictive environments (Jordan, 2005). Specific learning disability was a common and broad category that examined achievement levels lower than the student's expected average intelligence, including math, writing, and reading disability (Shifrer, 2018). A critique of the identification process was the broadness and necessity for judgment. Black students had unique cultural identities and learning styles; however, the marginalization of this demographic of students was due to the constructs of appropriate norms of the majority, which were White, middle-and upper-middle-class students (Jordan, 2005). The disproportionality in the racial demographic of specific learning disability classification reflected inconsistent or subjective referrals from educators' perception of normative achievement and learning styles, with educators' expectations functioning as average expectancy of student performance (Shifner, 2018). The elevated identification of Black students indicated they have a higher risk of obtaining a disability than other racial groups. Thus, there needed to be an examination of the procedure in which Black students and other students were referred to and identified as having a disability. Black students faced disadvantages that influenced teachers' decision-making.

Elements of Black Achievement Gap

Black communities' have pushed to receive adequate instruction and value academic achievement has historically been met with strife (Chambers, 2009). Black

students had experienced a range of disparities across several domains of their life that made the opportunity for academic success difficult (Teasley & Homer, 2021). Considering the historical background of the disparity of segregation and the obstacles of implementing desegregation within the nation, the Black community continued to face opposition to obtaining access to the academic resources that rightly belong to them (Chambers, 2009). A few elements of the disparities included prejudice, poverty, poor educational leadership, low expectations of academic achievement by their teachers, the cultural context of education, lack of educational resources, and use of culturally biased assessments (Fore et al., 2006). Each element affected these students in their home environment and their academics. For example, students from middle to high-income families had access to more resources; their parents spent nearly seven times the amount of low socioeconomic-status families on their children's education, and they linked their children to educational resources (Fore et al., 2006). In addition, middle-high economic-status families generally had two parents with college degrees as opposed to a low economic-status family with a single mother with a high school diploma or low level of education (Reardon, 2013). Financial stability and the presence of both parents in a child's life drastically affected said child's school readiness and acted as protective factors that supported the child's emotional maturity, cognitive skills, comprehension, language development, vocabulary, and general knowledge (Teasley & Homer, 2021). In addition, Black students who lived within a low socioeconomic status environment were impacted in several areas of their personal development. For example, these students' perception of

self-esteem, opportunity to access academic resources, overall achievement opportunity, and job opportunities after graduation were impacted (Madyun, 2011). Thus, when considering the historical context of Black students in America's school system, the struggle to obtain equal educational opportunities, and paired with the characterization of negative stereotypes all make a strong case for the skepticism over the concern of the achievement gap (Chambers, 2009).

The achievement gap between Black and White students is generally considered the most influential educational problem in the U.S. (Slavin & Madden, 2006). There was sufficient evidence that indicated an achievement gap between Black and White students in that the former tended to underperform in grade point averages and had lower aptitude tests than the latter (Whaley & Noël, 2012). Black students faced many lifelong challenges with the continuously expanding academic achievement gap within the education system, such as higher high school drop rates, lower graduation rates, and persistent racial inequality in adult life (Whaley & Noël, 2012). In addition, college enrollment, attendance and completion, career choices, and overall gross income and socioeconomic status were a few of the essential social inequities Black students encountered when their academic achievement was not addressed in school (Slavin & Madden, 2006). Despite the historical hardships that members of the Black community faced receiving equivocal education opportunities, the perception of the majority population blamed this community for their struggles. The public view of the academic gap between Black and White students has shifted from the plight of inadequate

resources and blocked education opportunities of the former toward a perception that this community lacked motivation and does not value education (Whaley & Noël, 2012).

Researchers associated social disorganization theory, which linked the closeness of neighborhood and community to resolve delinquency rates, with Black students in low socioeconomic households (Madyun, 2011). The link with this theory was that many Black students' households were single-mother households. A single-mother household was linked with several potentially unseen dangers that have impacted students' educational achievement, such as a lack of parental engagement or investment in their children's academic achievement and overall school readiness (Madyun, 2011). In addition, problems have arisen at a community level. Suppose there was a division amongst a low socioeconomic community of Blacks about the school district's policies of special education referral and academic resources for students. In that case, there would have been a distrustful environment for the children, which would have contributed to the perception to the children that the school had low expectations of them (Madyun, 2011).

Despite the academic strife and obstacles faced by Black students, there have been periods of progress. During the 1970's Black students, through the examination of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) for reading, indicated that there had been significant progress (Slavin & Madden, 2006). This demonstrated that the gap could be closed through integration. However, since the early 1980's, the progress has been stagnant and continues today, but the progress in the 1970s displayed that on a national scale, the gap can be lower if not closed (Slavin & Madden, 2006). One of the

essential contributors to the academic gap is resources. If schools utilized resources to provide culturally relevant instruction, improve instruction quality, and provided these students with qualified teachers, Black students would have a much better chance of achieving academic success (Slavin & Madden, 2006).

Cultural Bias in Assessment

Since the start of the 20th century, assessment of students' cognitive and academic ability had been essential in schooling across the nation and how society had conceptualized students' potential, ability, and mental capacity for success (Boykin, 2014). Through cognitive and academic assessments, students were evaluated to determine if their needs could be maintained through the general education curricula or special education services. The assessments used in school services served multiple functions in that they screen for potential academic deficits, cognitive deficits, diagnostic functions, and overall placement in schools (Boykin, 2014). Using academic and cognitive assessments in school had benefits and problems. On the one hand, the assessment provided insight into students' academic ability and mental capacity; however, a low performance significantly impacted students' educational experiences. Psychological testing had gotten significant attention in assessing a students' ability, and the results of assessments were used in a way that controlled what was being taught, how it was taught, and placement parameters for students who were identified as having an academic deficit, such as a specific learning disability for reading (Boykin, 2014).

High-stakes testing, which referred to assessing a student's academic and cognitive ability, played a substantial role in students learning and quality of education (Boykin, 2014). Special education placement and eligibility were significantly influenced by the results of intelligence and norm-referenced achievement tests (Fore et al., 2006). Students' ethnicity, race, gender, and culture were all potential elements of referral biases for special education, which was best demonstrated by the over-referral of students of the Black community (Harry & Anderson, 1994). Historically, significant documentation supported that Blacks and other minority students generally perform relatively poorly on several subscales on virtually all educational assessments compared to their White peers (Boykin, 2014). Despite the consistent underperformance, there had been little investigation into the discrepancy between the ethnic minorities and majority students. At best, researchers had only acknowledged the need to examine the consistent discrepancy pattern thoughtfully but had yet to offer any concrete explanation or solution (Boykin. 2014).

A concern with this identification method was the accuracy of the assessment and the potential for cultural bias. The diagnostic assessment process for evaluating Black students was disadvantageous to this group in that the material and questions used did not account for the culturally diverse backgrounds of students, which led to questions of equity in the assessments (Boykin, 2014). The assessments used to assess students' cognitive knowledge were based upon the knowledge of its creators, who were Euro-American; thus, the cognitive orientation of the assessments was designed to thoroughly

investigate students' knowledge through the lens of a Euro-American, which had put Black students at a disadvantage (Harry & Anderson, 1994). When considering the bias involved, it could be concluded that using testing instruments that did not account for culturally and socially different experiences of Black students puts them in a disadvantaged position (Harry & Anderson, 1994). It is argued that Euro-American students, particularly those from wealthy households or of high social status, were correlated to successful assessment outcomes (Boykin, 2014). The use of assessment to screen and sort students based on ability was not initially ill-willed; however, there have been racial bias concerns in execution. In practice, the assessment was utilized to assist educators in understanding students' strengths and weaknesses to support academic achievement and address deficits; however, racial disadvantages due to the norming group had significantly impacted fidelity (Boykin, 2014). Thus, the argument was that Blacks had a higher chance of placement in special education following the administration of Euro-American-based assessments.

The determination of special education placement was significantly impacted by intelligence testing and normed-referenced achievement test, which catered to the Euro-American majority (Fore et al., 2006). Overall, research supported a combination of factors that question special education placement, such as varying criteria, placement rates of Black students, and assessment procedures of Black students. When considering norm-referenced achievement, three significant areas of concern were noted. The mentioned areas of concern included that Black students tended to be identified as having

a disability when none were present, tended to be mislabeled, or unidentified even when a disability was present (Fore et al., 2006).

There were several issues surrounding bias in psychological assessments, which had caused polarization in its use in that Black students and other minorities were over-diagnosed, overrepresented, and placed in special education classrooms due to the use of the assessments (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2012). Much of the concern for bias arose due to societal pressures and expectations. Educational professionals and parents believed that intelligence was a stable trait in those students with high standardized scores on intelligence assessment would do well academically, while those who scored lower would not succeed (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2012). It is because of this prediction that Black parents were skeptical of the psychological assessment process. Assessments such as aptitude, achievement, and intelligence have been historically associated with labeling Black students as uneducable, increasing levels of specific learning disability identification, placement in special education classrooms, and lowering expectations of academic success, which led to a negative impact on their academic growth and self-esteem (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2012).

In the United States, there were three primary biases which include construct bias, inappropriate understanding of relevant behaviors displayed between cultures, methods bias, the sample does not represent relevant minority population, and item biases, items were Euro-American centric and not appropriate for the diverse cultures (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2012). Minority representation in norming sample was not sufficient to allow

influence over test development, labeling from low performance had long-lasting social consequences, and differential predictive validity was designed to predict academic achievement for the middle class and White students and not low-income Black students (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2012). As mentioned earlier, Black students generally underperform when compared to their White counterparts in that there were several disadvantages, such as the content of tests being Euro-American centric, socioeconomic status limiting academic resources, Black cultural relevance and experience having little influence over the structure and content of items on the test (Ford & Helms, 2012). Despite the disadvantages and benefits associated between races, assessments were taken at face value. The presumption was that the assessments administered to both races have external validity, which was not supported empirically; thus, the notion that cognitive and achievement assessments were colorblind, neutral, unbiased, and offered fair measures was disingenuous (Ford & Helms, 2012). Historically, there was evidence supporting a need to thoroughly investigate and reexamine the use of cognitive and achievement tests administered to students. To accept the assessments at face value without considering the disadvantages and benefits provided between races was an improper use of the assessment and potentially jeopardized the education opportunities of specific races, such as Blacks (Ford & Helms, 2012).

Test bias referred to examinees whose test scores were much lower or higher than what accurately represents the students' skills, abilities, or traits (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2012). Culture fairness, cultural loading, and culture bias were all concepts essential in

evaluating whether there were biases in psychological assessments. Cultural loading referred to the degree to which items on an assessment were culturally specific, cultural fairness was the degree to which items were reasonably understandable across cultures, and bias was advantageous to a specific group (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2012). All three concepts were pivotal in the administration and reception of assessments. For example, a culturally loaded item may be "when was the Emancipation Proclamation?" which was a question specific to a particular culture and cannot be answered by an examinee unless they were familiar with the particular culture (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2021). A concern with culturally loaded questions was the cultural experiences of the examinee. As stated previously, Black students and White students had different cultural experiences. Thus, cultural loading does not create a biased test but rather established the potential of a biased test. In short, cultural content embedded in the intelligence test administered to the student was based on the student's knowledge of the cultural experience of the majority culture, which yields biased results for Black students; thus, the results were not a true reflection of the student's intelligence but their knowledge of cultural specific test items ("Testing and Assessment with Persons & Communities of Color," 2016). Therefore, the argument was that Euro-American students would perform better, given that the assessment measured Euro-American cultural experiences. Thus, the issue with culturally loaded items was that the test was essentially an extension of the test developers' cultural worldviews, such as with the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test, Woodcock-Johnson test of

Cognitive abilities, and Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children ("Testing and Assessment with Persons & Communities of Color," 2016).

Cognitive testing of mental ability and achievement were intertwined due to the high overlap that included similar, if not identical verbal and quantitative items ("Testing and Assessment with Persons & Communities of Color," 2016). The connection between the two tests had its benefits but also disadvantages. For Black students, these tests represented a sort of double jeopardy in that low performance on cognitive assessments such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children would be used to explain their low performance on tests of achievement such as the Woodcock-Johnson Test of Academic Achievement ("Testing and Assessment with Persons & Communities of Color," 2016). Students' performance on both assessments was examined through the norming distribution of standard deviation, in which the mean scores were 100 and the standard deviation of 15 (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2021). Historically, there was evidence to support that there was inequality in the educational experiences of Black students and Whites in that the latter had access to more resources and highly qualified educators ("Testing and Assessment with Persons & Communities of Color," 2016). Generally, the performance on both cognitive and academic testing was that Black students were one standard deviation from White students, in which Blacks received scores within the below or low-average range while White students' scores fell within the average range (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2021). Many factors contributed to the difference in scores, such as demographics, knowledge of culture-specific concepts, and academic experiences. Black

students' knowledge of vocabulary words, math calculation skills, and sentence composition should not be a definitive reflection of their overall cognitive abilities and should be taken into context with the student's instruction, academic opportunities, and social constructs (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2021). Many factors contributed to the difference in cognitive and academic scores between Black students and Whites. Taking the scores at face value had to the perception that there was a difference in cognitive capabilities and academic achievement between the races and which contributed to the over-referral and placement of Black students in special education classrooms and Whites in general education or gifted classrooms (Reynolds & Suzuki, 2021). There have been attempts to rectify this discrepancy. The Cognitive Assessment System and the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children Second Edition were two assessments that evaluated students' cognitive abilities, and the developers had recognized the racial bias and had moved towards a relatively more culturally appropriate approach to analyze students' cognitive abilities. The issue was that tests such as the Cognitive Assessment System and the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children Second Edition were used less, and tests such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scales, Stanford-Binet, and Woodcock-Johnson that had a cultural bias were heavily utilized assessments for cognitive and academic evaluations. Thus, with the well-documented history of biases in popularly used cognitive and academic assessment and the discrepancy in educational outcomes for Black and White students, there needed to be further investigation into why school districts do not utilize

tests such as Cognitive Assessment System and the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children Second Edition to assess students' cognitive abilities.

Bias in tests occurs when test factors result in the systematic difference in scores across subgroups, such as Blacks and Whites, in which members of either particular subgroup perform higher or lower than the other (Edwards & Oakland, 2006). Recognizing the discrepancy between subgroups, there has been an attempt to address the concern. For example, developers of the Woodcock-Johnson had expert reviewers examine items within their assessment for potential bias for racial or ethnic minorities, and items that were flagged as biased were removed in most cases from the test items (Schrank et al., 2014). Despite test developers' attempts to ensure that their tests were culturally appropriate and psychometrically sound, there was still significant evidence that supports that biases were present and future research on tests needed to be conducted to thoroughly resolve the issue (Edwards & Oakland, 2006). The Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive abilities areas of assessment was aligned with Cattell-Horn-Carroll (CHC) theory. The CHC theory characterized a hierarchical model to assess cognitive abilities through three strata which included broad and narrow abilities, seven areas of cognitive abilities that included fluid reasoning (Gf), crystallized knowledge (Gc), visual processing (Gv), short-term memory (Gsm), long-term storage and retrieval (Glr), processing speed (Gs), and auditory processing (Ga), which all factor to providing a full-scale intelligence score or generalized intelligence ability (Edwards & Oakland, 2006). Despite the though investigation of students' cognitive abilities, there were some areas of

concern with this assessment. There is no evidence from the test manual that provided empirical evidence that the subtest within the Woodcock-Johnson supported the notion that the subtest measured the same constructs for Black and White Americans definitively, which left a discrepancy in scores between the two races (Edwards & Oakland, 2006).

Predictors of Teacher Bias

Teachers were unaware of their power in that their perception of students could drastically impact their students' performance and motivation in class in a positive and negative way (Obiakor, 1999). Teachers were responsible for educating the students they instructed, assessing their knowledge of the material, and determining if a disability was present. When teachers referred a student they suspected had a specific learning disability, the student would likely be served in special education rather than in the general education classroom (Kearns et al., 2005). The concern with this process was the potential for a biased teacher perspective based on the student's demographics. For example, poverty, ableism, access to resources, academic opportunity, and racial stereotypes were areas of concern that contributed to the perception that Blacks needed specialized instruction (Jordan, 2005). Thus, teachers' perception and evaluation of their student's academic performance were significant in the special education placement.

According to Sideridis et al. (2008) teachers' gender was an influential predictor of perception; women were more likely to identify students with a specific learning disability than men. In addition, the experience teachers had also been a predictor, with

teachers with high levels of education and training producing less inflated estimation and error ratings (Sideridis et al., 2008). In addition, teachers' expectations and self-fulfilling prophecy were two components of teachers' bias. When teachers expected low levels of academic achievement from low socioeconomic status Bla students, they tended to give lower grades to these students even when their performance was no different than the more favored students (Farkas et al., 1990). The self-fulfilling prophecy was students fulfilling their teacher's low expectations, which led to the student underperforming and having a reduced drive, resulting in the teacher making a referral for a deficiency (Farkas et al., (1990).

When assessing a student's academic performance and capabilities, the goal of the school program was to ensure accuracy in interpreting the student's performance rather than being influenced by low, high, negative, or positive perceptions of the student (Obiakor, 1990). If the accuracy of students' performance does not govern teacher perception, then there was a chance for a biased interpretation from the teacher. For example, suppose a teacher likes a student; in that case, there was a higher chance that the student would be assumed to have high or positive self-concepts, and the opposite for a student not liked in that this student was likely to have low or negative self-concept by the teacher (Obiakor, 1990). A concerning issue with teacher perception was inconsistency and inaccuracy in predicting a student's capabilities. Teachers' perceptions of a student's capabilities could be accurate or inaccurate but would be subject to change as the interaction between the two continued in that circumstances could change where a

teacher could have had a high or favorable perception of a student at the beginning of the year and changed negatively by the end, which would have the potential to negatively impact the student (Obiakor, 1999).

Three components made up self-concept. The first was self-knowledge, which examined students' understanding of their characteristics; the second was self-esteem, which explained the students' assessment of their characteristics; and lastly was self-ideal, which was the students' willingness to achieve their academic goals (Obiakor, 1999). As mentioned earlier, teachers' perception of students and their accuracy in evaluating students' capabilities was essential for success. Accuracy was necessary for understanding students' capabilities. If a teacher had a negative perception of a students' self-concept, it made it difficult to identify academic problems, which led to illusions and inaccuracies in special needs identification, assessment, and instruction.

Concerns with Misclassification of Black Students

The discrepancy in the number of Black students in special education had impacted students' education long term. According to Jordan (2005) federal laws mandated students who teachers identified as having a specific learning disability receive instruction in the least restrictive environment; with this law in effect and a large segment of the special education population being Black, this group of students had limited education opportunities. The overidentification was particularly problematic because of the implications that students in special education have been misidentified. A major concern with the overrepresentation of Black students in special education was their

differing cultural values and traits from the majority in that this group of students look, speak, and learn differently, which put them at a higher risk of being misclassified and misplaced (Obiakor, 1999). Some c students had academic difficulty in some subject areas; however, they did not meet the criteria for a specific learning disability. There were obvious disadvantages in overgeneralizing the behaviors of Black students and wrongfully interpreting their academic capabilities due to teachers and other mental health professionals neglecting to acknowledge this population of students may have learned differently than their peers (Obiakor, 1999). For example, parents who perceived their children's chances of academic success as unlikely and teachers who attempted to get rid of said children would have caused those children to feel unsupported, which would have led to the self-fulfilling prophecy of academic decline (Obiakor, 1999). Unfortunately, the combination of negative perception and lack of support has contributed to several Black students facing academic difficulty in the school setting. Ideally, the programmatic goal for Black students should be to provided education in the least restrictive environment and not readily excluded from the mainstream classroom or given a disability label (Obiakor, 1999).

Students in special education received information in bits and pieces in a linear format instead of a versatile format, which utilized critical engagement in the learning process, such as cultural aspects, social meaning, and personal connections (Jordan, 2005). Given that the placement of Black students in special education was high and adding in the remedial structure of special education, there were concerns regarding the

educational opportunities or lack thereof for misidentified students. When examining the components of the referral procedure, research has indicated that external factors such as students' race and test scores could be interpreted improperly, which has led to errors in the decision for placement (Kearns et al., 2005).

Prevalence of Reading Disability Identification

Research suggested that specific learning disabilities had continued to rise, with reading being the leading disability due to increased efforts of professionals to identify and refer students (Lewit & Baker, 1996). There was a plethora of reading disability definitions, but there were no universally accepted criteria for identifying children with a reading disability or identification procedures to assess the disability amongst researchers (Pereira-Laird et al., 1999). Under the IDEA, to qualify for a reading disability, there had to be a significant difference between children's academic ability and capacity and opportunity to learn (Lyon, 1996). The unspecified criteria contributed to a discrepancy in interpretation; for example, children could qualify for a reading disability in one school district but not in a neighboring district (Lyon, 1996). In addition, the interpretation of students' discrepancies was judgment-based, which presented additional problems. For example, there was growing concern regarding students who met the intelligence discrepancy for reading disability and those children who were poor readers, but whose reading skills were consistent with their intelligence scores (Stuebing et al., 2002). Thus, if the difference between the two sets of students is not significant, then there were further questions regarding the justification of the referral.

CHAPTER III

This study aimed to determine teachers' attitudes and willingness to refer Black students to special education for a reading disability. The research questions were as follows:

1. Are teachers more accurate in identifying White students with a reading disability than Black students?
2. How does teacher perception impact the referral rate between White and Black students for a reading disability?

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of teachers recruited through social media posts in teacher groups, including Facebook and LinkedIn. The researcher joined groups in several states and posted a standard message with a link to the survey inviting teachers to participate. Additionally, the researcher emailed several teachers from school districts across the country. Before starting the questionnaire, participants signed an electronic consent form, and upon agreeing to the terms of the study, they began the study. Results of the study were included (see Appendix A). Participants in this study were from social media groups and school districts across the country (see Appendix B); each participant was provided a teacher questionnaire (see Appendix C) and a cultural competence self-assessment checklist (see Appendix D). Each teacher read all four vignettes, answered the post-question following each vignette (see Appendix E), and signed an informed consent

form (see Appendix F). The estimated completion time of the questionnaires and vignette was 30 minutes.

Instrumentation

All participants signed a consent form, which elaborated on the nature of the study. Participants completed a teacher questionnaire, which focused on the participant's race, ethnicity, education, and years of experience teaching. All participants also completed the cultural competence self-assessment checklist to examine their cultural awareness, read four vignettes and answered the post-vignette question.

Teacher Questionnaire. This questionnaire included questions about participants' age, gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching. This questionnaire was a replica of the special education teacher questionnaire prepared for the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics to thoroughly examine the relationship between students' academic achievement in the classroom and teacher background, such as their history of working with children with disabilities ("Early Childhood Longitudinal Study," 2014). There were 19 items on this questionnaire that consisted of questions regarding age, race, educational experience, and experience working with students with individual intervention plans (IEPs). There were yes or no questions on some items and a selection of options that best described the participant.

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist. This assessment examined an individual's cultural competence by focusing on race, ethnicity, an individual's past relationship, and cultural awareness ("Central Vancouver Island multicultural society,"

n.d.). This assessment utilized a Likert scale. The primary goal of this assessment was to allow individuals to see their present level of cultural awareness and work on areas that needed additional development to create a more culturally cognizant environment and improve an individual's cultural competence ("Central Vancouver Island multicultural society," n.d.). A 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("never"), 2 ("sometimes/occasionally"), 3 ("fairly often/pretty"), and 4 ("almost/very well) measured cultural competence.

The cultural competence self-assessment checklist examined participants' level of explicit bias and cultural awareness. For this checklist, the term 'culture' referred to people with different experiences, such as ancestry, ways of living, intellectual disabilities, specific learning disabilities, and economic class. This assessment was a simple tool that helped individuals identify areas of weakness for further development ("Central Vancouver Island multicultural society," n.d.).

Vignettes. There were four sets of vignettes. The first vignette described a Black student with a reading disability, and the second vignette described a Black student without a reading disability. The third and fourth vignettes described a White student with and without a disability. Each vignette provided had similar components.

Each of the vignettes in the study aligned with the identification criteria listed from the federal regulations of IDEA and the Texas Commissioner's and State Board of Education (SBOE) rules. Under the federal regulation's guidelines, when determining the presence of a reading disability, the special education team (i.e., teacher, special

education teacher, and administration) identified a deficit in the student's ability to adequately meet Texas approved grade-level standards in one or more areas. The areas that must be at the Texas-approved grade-level standard included oral expression, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency skills, and reading comprehension (Special Education Rules & Regulations, 2017). These deficits cannot be attributed to a lack of curriculum or teacher instruction exposure. When making a referral, there must be data presented that demonstrated that the student was provided appropriate instruction in a regular education classroom, such as work samples or benchmarks, and the data presented must demonstrate a lack of sufficient progress (Special Education Rules & Regulations, 2017). In addition to the factors listed above, there were additional considerations. For example, a deficit in the reading-related area could not be due to visual, hearing, intellectual disability, emotional disturbances, and cultural factors such as English proficiency (Special Education Rules & Regulations, 2017).

The Texas Commissioner and State Board of Education (SBOE) criteria for specific learning disabilities were similar to the criteria listed under the IDEA. For example, if the special education team suspected that a student with academic deficits in reading needed to be referred to special education, the team provided data that supported the underachievement is not attributed to a lack of appropriate instruction in reading (Special Education Rules & Regulations, 2017). To rule out a lack of appropriate instruction, there were some criteria that must be disproven. The teacher must be able to provide appropriate data to document the student's present levels via repeated

assessments that indicate present level, grade-level curriculum tests, intervention administered to the student, and data to mark the student's progress monitoring (Special Education Rules & Regulations, 2017). Data and documentation from the teacher were essential in examining students' academic abilities in the classroom. The Texas Commissioner and State Board of Education (SBOE) define a student with a learning disability as one who had been provided appropriate instruction by the teacher and evaluated through a variety of assessments, academic strategies, and intervention but was not able to meet grade-level expectations or state-approved standards in reading-related areas such as written expression, basic reading skills, and reading comprehension (Special Education Rules & Regulations, 2017).

***The Post Vignette Questionnaire*.** This research study used a post-vignette questionnaire. Participants stated whether the student identified in the vignette possessed a reading disability or not and elaborated on why they chose their response. They are attached to the vignettes.

Research Design

Quantitative research was a method of research that examined and explained human problems and investigated a theory that predicts a relationship between variables (Yilmaz, 2013). This quantitative research aimed to identify the need to evaluate the accuracy of teachers' referrals and display the premise that teachers' accountability, self-awareness, and criticism of their perception would promote excellence across the diverse students they serve (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Specifically, this research focused on how

teachers perceived deficits between Black students with and without a reading disability and White students with or without a reading disability. The use of the questionnaires was to evaluate the quantitative research questions.

The primary purpose of questionnaires was to provide insight into potential bias and perceptions of others. Regarding this example, a questionnaire would offer insight into teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and willingness to address prevalent classroom issues and show potential factors that could have influenced teachers' responses. For this reason, the use of questionnaires was essential in evaluating the purpose of this study and answering the two research questions.

The first research question states, were teachers more accurate in identifying White students with a reading disability than Black students? The researcher had utilized descriptive statistics to evaluate this question. Additionally, the researcher used the crosstab feature in SPSS to show the relationship between categorical variables through contingency tables, which in this study were the vignettes featuring a Black student with a disability, a Black student without a disability, a White student with a disability, and a White student without a disability. For this study, the researcher hypothesized that whether Black students were struggling or not, teachers will refer them more than White students.

The second research question was, how does teacher perception impact the referral rate between White and Black students for a reading disability? The method to answer this research question was for the researcher to evaluate participants' responses to

the post-vignette questions. After completing each vignette, participants elaborated on what factors contributed to their decision to refer. The researcher hypothesized that teacher perception negatively impacts Black students, which contributed to Black students having a higher referral rate than White students.

CHAPTER IV

Ninety-eight participants attempted to complete the study, and the researcher removed 42 participants due to incomplete questionnaires. Participants in this study came from a variety of states. Teachers who participated varied in age, teaching experiences, and experience working with special education; most participants were White women. Information regarding teacher demographics is in Table A1.

All participants were assigned all vignettes in Qualtrics. Each participant completed each vignette and answered the post-vignette questions. A cross-tab and chi-square test were run on all four vignettes to determine if there was significance. There was no significance when comparing the vignette describing a Black student with a disability. However, the vignette that described a Black student without a disability did display some significance. Table A2 through Table A9 show the relationship between the four categorical variables.

This study also utilized binary logistic regression to examine the relationship between the dependent variable, the decision to refer, and the independent variables, which included gender, race, years of teaching, and experience with special education. Tables A10 through Table A17 showed the relationship between the four categorical variables.

The first research question asked: Are teachers more accurate in identifying White students with a reading disability than Black students? The researcher in this study utilized a cross-tab, chi-squared test, and binary logistic regression to address this

question. Results from the first cross-tab Black student with a disability and White student with a disability (Table A2 and Table A3) rejected the null hypothesis. The Black student, in this case, was referred at 32.4%, while the White student was at 67.6%. Additionally, the asymptotic significance p-value was .757, which was not statistically significant.

Results from the second cross-tab Black student with a disability and White student without a disability (Table A4 and Table A5) also rejected the null hypothesis. The Black student was referred at 30.8%, while the White student was 69.2%. The p-value of the asymptotic significance was .642; thus, it was statistically significant. However, in the third cross tab, Black without a disability and White with a disability (Table A6 and A7), results indicated that the referral of the Black student was at a greater percentage, 67.6%, as opposed to 32.4% for the White student. The asymptotic significance was .013, which was significant. Thus, the null hypothesis was correct.

Lastly, in the final cross-tab, the Black student referral was 65.4%, while the White student was 34.6% (Table A8 and Table A9). The asymptotic significance was .025; thus, it was significant.

In conclusion, in the vignette where the Black student was without a disability, the referral rate was significant compared to the vignette where a White student had a disability and when a White student was without a disability. The asymptotic significance score was a score that examines if there was a significance found between groups. In each

case, comparing the vignette of the Black student without a disability to the two vignettes, the asymptotic significance score was significant.

When looking at the binary regression for White without disability (Table A10 and Table A11), there was no significance for gender, race, special education experience, or years of teaching. Results for White with a disability (Table A12 and Table A13) also did not indicate any significance for gender, race, special education experience, and years of teaching. Black without disability (Table A14 and Table A15) had no significant p-value for gender, race, special education experience, and years of teaching. Lastly, Black with a disability (Table A16 and Table A17) had no areas of significance with gender, race, special education experience, and years of teaching, with each having p-values over .05. Thus, the conclusion was that gender, race, special education experience, and years of teaching were all not significant in the referral.

The second research question asked: How does teacher perception impact the referral rate between White and Black students for a reading disability? Several participants in the study indicated their reasoning in their referral in their post-vignette responses. Several participants cited that they followed their district guidelines when making a reading disability referral. For example, several teachers indicated that four to six weeks of RTI data needed to be collected to show evidence of a deficit. Others indicated that parents' permission was a requirement to make a referral. Teachers also referred students for other deficits like speech or counseling based on the information provided in the vignette. Examining teacher responses to the cultural competency checklist, participants

rated themselves favorably. Participants' responses to the proposed questions are in Table A18.

Hypothesis 1

On the first research question, results displayed split results. When comparing the vignette that identified a Black student with a disability to the vignette that identified a White student with a disability and a White student without a disability, the null hypothesis was rejected. In the case of those categorical factors, White students with and without a disability were referred at an elevated rate when compared to the Black student with a disability. The results did not indicate any significance. However, when comparing the vignette that identified the Black student without a disability to the White student with a disability and without, the null hypothesis was confirmed. In this case, the Black student without a disability had a higher chance of referral than the two vignettes that identified a White student with a disability and a White student without a disability.

Hypothesis 2

On the second research question, results also indicated split results. The vignette that identified a Black student with a disability failed to reject the null hypothesis, while the vignette that identified a Black student without a disability did reject it. Participants' responses in the post-vignette questions indicated several factors that influenced their decision to refer, including district policy to collect RTI data, decision to wait for parent identification, or identifying an additional deficit such as medical or mental health than a reading disability. For example, in one vignette, there was a student who struggled with a

lisp and another with a traumatic brain injury. In the case of the former, participants did indicate the student needed to be in special education. However, they indicated that it would be for speech rather than reading; for the latter, they indicated that the student needed to see a medical professional. Additionally, participants' responses on the cultural competency checklist displayed a favorable sense of cultural awareness and acceptance. Thus, the results indicate that other factors influence a teacher's decision to refer and that there are cases where Whites have higher referral rates than Blacks.

Discussion

This study aimed to evaluate whether the number of Black students referred to special education for a reading disability contributes to teacher bias. The hypotheses of this study are as follows: (a) Whether Black students are struggling or not, teachers will refer them more than White students; (b) Teacher perception negatively impacts Black students, which contributes to Black students having a higher referral rate than White students. These variables and inquiries are important to the general education and special education classroom because the results examine the correlational relationship between the referral rate amongst Black and White students. For example, the perception prior to conducting the study is that teacher bias increases the referral rate of Black students to special education for a reading disability due to implicit bias, cultural stereotypes, or cultural mismatch.

Implications

According to the results of this study, there appears to be some elevation in the referral rate for Black students with a reading disability. However, it is not supported when comparing Black vignettes to White ones. It was the hypothesis of the researcher that whether Black students are struggling or not, teachers would refer them more than White students. It was also the hypothesis of the researcher that teacher perception can negatively impact Black students, which could contribute to Black students having a higher referral rate than White students.

The first hypothesis was partially rejected, with there being higher referrals for White students with and without a reading disability compared to the vignette that identified a Black student with a disability. Results from the study rejected the second hypothesis. Participants' response to the post-vignette question examined their decision to refer and their response to the cultural competence self-assessments, which examined their cultural awareness.

The information obtained from this study indicates that several factors outside of race influence a teacher's decision to refer, which varies from the referral process of the district, personal experience, parent involvement, the severity of the deficit, and if there was another cause for a deficit such as speech, mental health, or medical. For example, the area of concern in the vignette that describes a Black student without a disability was his lisp and self-confidence. Several participants recognize the cause of the deficit. However, their decision to refer him is not for a reading disability but for speech and

language for the lisp and guidance counseling to increase the student's self-confidence. Participants also express interest in speaking with a speech pathologist to get their input.

School Implications. The information supports the premise that Black students without a disability are at a disadvantage within the classroom. Black students' educational growth and success are in jeopardy with the high placement rate, which is discriminatory, given that there are White students who have a reading disability but remain in the classroom. The high referral rate indicates that Black students in the special education classroom may not have a disability. Results from this study indicate that the vignette describing a Black student without a disability has a higher referral rate than that of a White student with and without a disability. Results from this study also indicate that the vignette describing a Black student with a disability had a lower chance of referral than the vignettes describing a White student with and without a reading disability. What this means is that a Black student may have a reading disability and remain in the classroom at a higher rate than a White student with or without a disability, while a Black student without a disability is sent to special education. The misplacement of students in the special education classroom or lack of proper identification puts these groups in educational jeopardy due to their unmet needs. The long-term ramification of this misplacement is students who need special education services falling behind significantly and not being able to catch their peers, which negatively impacts the students' self-esteem and experience. In the researcher's experience working within the school system as an educator and as a school psychologist intern, many Black students could not afford a

second opinion from a private practice to evaluate the accuracy of the revaluation referral. Black students who were misplaced in special education or did not receive a referral remain in their current placement. Thus, there is a need to evaluate teacher referrals. Special education team members are the gatekeepers in that they should thoroughly examine all teacher referrals to meet each student's needs. Failure to properly examine referral may result in misclassification, which would jeopardize a student's growth both in the classroom and in the special education classroom.

Implications for School Psychology. Results from the study and literature examining the special education referral process indicate bias present for Blacks. Specifically, the vignette describing a Black student not having a disability was not only referred to special education but at a higher rate than the two vignettes describing a White student with and without a disability. The results are particularly impactful to school psychologists because their assessments are intertwined with teachers' perceptions and judgment. When a school psychologist is evaluating a student for a disability, they examine the referral reason, which is information the student's teacher provides about the speculated deficit. In addition, school psychologists provide the student's teacher with a questionnaire examining the student's social-emotional ability and adaptability. The questionnaires are judgment based. Thus, school psychologists must account for bias in the initial referral and from teacher responses to questionnaires, particularly when working with the student and examining parent responses to questionnaires and their insight. In addition, school psychologists must be cognizant of the assessment they utilize

when conducting an initial evaluation or reevaluation of Black students. During evaluations or reevaluations, school psychologists frequently utilize tests such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scales, Stanford-Binet, and Woodcock-Johnson, which studies have shown have a cultural bias against Blacks and other minorities with questions leaning more towards Euro-American culture and experience. Tests such as the Cognitive Assessment System and the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children Second Edition are two assessments that evaluate students' cognitive abilities. The developers recognize the racial bias and implement a more culturally appropriate approach to analyze students' cognitive abilities. An issue with these assessments is that school psychologists generally utilize Euro-American assessments rather than culturally appropriate ones. What this means is that the combination of use of culturally biased assessments, biased assessments from teachers, and failing to consider Black students' cultural differences while carefully examining the student in question and how these matters could contribute to a continuous rise in Black placement in special education, specifically those Black students without a disability.

Limitations

There are notable limitations to this study. One that is significant is that the vignettes used to determine if teachers would refer students to special education for a reading disability had no validity or reliability.

Another limitation of this study was that the researcher developed the vignettes by referring to the identification criteria listed in the Texas Commissioner's and State Board

of Education (SBOE) rules. Participants in this study came from across the nation, which may have impacted their perception of the proposed disability. The rules and criteria that govern their special education qualification for a reading disability could have been different from the criteria in this research study.

An additional limitation of this study is the gender used in the vignettes. All students identified in the vignettes were elementary males. Thus, there is a limitation on how a gender presentation could affect a teacher's decision to refer.

The next limitation of this study is the age of the students in the vignettes. The struggles identified in the vignettes may present differently compared to a middle or high-school-aged student with similar struggles.

Additionally, the administration of the study is another limitation, which is during summer vacation. Due to the timing of the administration, the number of participants is smaller than projected by the researcher.

Responses from participants were another limitation. The researcher had a short window to get responses from participants, which was a few months. There were a few participants who were unable to respond due to the window of the response being shorter.

The number of participants in this study was another limitation, and the timing of this test administration and the turnaround window limited the total number of potential participants. Thus, the study's effect size was smaller than the researcher projected.The eighth limitation of this study is the participants selected for the study. The researcher

joined teachers' Facebook and LinkedIn groups. The researcher made the assumption that the participants of this group were teachers.

Another limitation of the study is the participants' responses to the questionnaires, cultural competency checklist, and post-vignette questions. The researcher assumes that participants in this study gave truthful responses.

Lastly, the cultural competency checklist was a limitation. The checklist does not have a validity scale. However, the information within the checklist assists teachers in acknowledging their own cultural biases and awareness.

Future Research

Several studies target the over-identification and over-referral of Black students to special education. However, the researcher could not locate research that utilizes vignettes to conduct quantitative research on the high rates of Black students' referral to special education for a reading disability. Additionally, the information could assist in addressing school policy to support disadvantaged minorities such as Blacks and identify areas of weakness in the referral process.

In addition, experimental research may not be a practical means to investigate a concern. In the case of this research study, the researcher only examined elementary-aged males. It would be ideal for future researchers to compose vignettes that included students of all ages and genders so that results apply to a wider range.

Another limitation of the current study is its administration. For future research, conducting the study during an active semester and expanding the response windows

would be ideal. These adjustments would increase participation and overall effect size. It would also offer additional insight, such as more feedback from post-vignette questions, greater diversity in demographics, and potential significance in data. In addition, the recruitment of participants from school districts' websites or in person would assist future researchers in verifying whether the participants are teachers. Utilizing vignettes with validity and reliability that incorporate students of both genders and ranges in age would strengthen the findings. Additionally, the cultural competency checklist used in this study did not have established reliability and validity. Future researchers will need a high reliability and validity checklist to examine teachers' cultural awareness or implicit biases thoroughly.

Conclusion

The primary focus of this study is to examine the accuracy of teachers' referral of Black students to special education for a reading disability. During this study, the researcher discovered that teachers are more likely to refer a White student with and without a disability than a Black student with a disability. The data supports higher referral rates for a Black student without a disability over a White student with and without a disability. However, the result did not support the researcher's hypothesis that a Black student would have a higher rate regardless of whether a disability is present. Additionally, data from this study did not indicate any significance in the influences on referral, such as the participant's gender, race, experience with special education, or years of teaching.

This study could assist teachers in realizing their personal views, cultural awareness, and implications of referring students to special education, especially a minority. Information from this study could assist teachers in evaluating the purpose of their referral and examining the nature of the deficit rather than placing the student in a special education classroom. Several participants indicated that they would implement some form of RTI or reach out to staff specializing in a particular area, such as a speech pathologist for speech, a school psychologist for mental health issues, and a medical provider for medical issues. Teachers actively working to become culturally aware, evaluating an individual student's deficit, and utilizing support staff specializing in specific areas would increase their accuracy and lower the over-referral of Black students.

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Appendix A: Tables

Table A1

Participants Demographic Information

	Demographic	
Gender	n	%
Male	7	12.5
Female	49	87.5
Race		
White	45	80.35
Black	3	5.35
Hispanic	7	12.5
Other	1	1.8
Years of Teaching		
Over 10 Years	34	60.7
Under 10 Years	22	39.3
Years Working with Special Education		
Over 10 Years	34	60.7
Under 10 Years	22	39.3

Table A2

*Black With a Disability*White With a Disability*

Cross Tab				
Black with a disability	No Referral	%	Yes Referral	%
No Referral	8	36.4	11	32.4
Yes Referral	14	63.6	23	67.6

Table A3

*Black With a Disability*White With a Disability*

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	*p*
Pearson Chi-Square	.096	1	.757

Table A4

*Black With a Disability*White Without a Disability*

	Cross Tab			
Black with a disability	No Referral	%	Yes Referral	%
No Referral	11	36.7	8	30.8
Yes Referral	19	63.3	18	69.2

Table A5

*Black With a Disability*White Without a Disability*

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	*p*
Pearson Chi-Square	.216	1	.642

Table A6

*Black Without a Disability*White With a Disability*

Cross Tab				
Black without a disability	No Referral	%	Yes Referral	%
No Referral	21	95.5	23	67.6
Yes Referral	1	4.5	11	32.4

Table A7

*Black Without a Disability*White With a Disability*

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	*p*
Pearson Chi-Square	6.135	1	.013

Table A8

*Black Without a Disability*White Without a Disability*

	Cross Tab White Without a Disability			
Black Without Disability	No Referral	%	Yes Referral	%
No Referral	27	90.0	17	65.4
Yes Referral	3	10.0	9	34.6

Table A9

*Black With Disability*White With Disability*

Chi-Square Tests
Black With Disability*White With Disability

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.013	1	.025

Table A10

White Without a Disability Classification Table

Classification Table				
Observed		No Referral	Yes Referral	Correct %
White without a disability	No Referral	30	0	100.0
	Yes Referral	19	7	26.9

Table A11

White Without a Disability Variable in the Equation

	Variables in the Equation White Without a Disability					
	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	*p*	Exp (B)
Gender (1)	21.852	19851.152	.000	1	.999	3093234617
Race			.091	3	.993	
Race (1)	-.392	1.299	.091	1	.763	.676
Race (2)	-.256	44827.927	.000	1	1.000	.774
Race (3)	-.256	44827.927	.000	1	1.000	.774
Special Education	.029	.084	.117	1	.733	1.029
Experience						
Years of Teaching	-.036	.088	.168	1	.682	.965

Table A12

White With a Disability Classification Table

Classification Table				
Observed		No Referral	Yes Referral	Correct %
White with a disability	No Referral	4	18	18.2
	Yes Referral	1	33	97.1

Table A13

White With a Disability Variable in the Equation

	Variables in the Equation White With a Disability					
	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	*p*	Exp (B)
Gender (1)	1.100	1.361	.653	1	.419	3.003
Race			.280	3	.964	
Race (1)	-.587	1.110	.280	1	.597	.556
Race (2)	19.765	40192.969	.000	1	1.000	383560622.4
Race (3)	19.765	40192.969	.000	1	1.000	383560622.4
Special Education Experience	.042	.082	.260	1	.610	1.043
Years of Teaching	-.060	.082	.526	1	.468	.942

Table A14

Black With a Disability Classification Table

Classification Table				
Observed		No Referral	Yes Referral	Correct %
Black with a disability	No Referral	2	17	10.5
	Yes Referral	0	37	100.0

Table A15

Black with a Disability Variables in the Equation

	Variables in the Equation Black With a Disability					
	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	*p*	Exp (B)
Gender (1)	-.076	1.295	.003	1	.953	.927
Race			.000	3	1.000	
Race (1)	20.310	19779.846	.000	1	.999	661759529.2
Race (2)	20.720	40192.969	.000	1	1.000	996575462.1
Race (3)	-21.686	40192.970	.000	1	1.000	.000
Special Education	-.098	.098	.997	1	.318	.906
Experience						
Years of Teaching	.086	.101	.717	1	.397	1.090

Table A16

Black Without a Disability Classification Table

Classification Table				
Observed		No Referral	Yes Referral	Correct %
Black without a disability	No Referral	43	1	97.7
	Yes Referral	8	4	33.3

Table A17

Variables in the Equation Black Without a Disability.

	Variables in the Equation Black Without a Disability					
	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	*p*	Exp (B)
Gender (1)	1.483	1.368	1.175	1	.278	4.407
Race			5.017	3	.171	
Race (1)	3.137	1.401	5.017	1	.025	23.040
Race (2)	21.557	40192.969	.000	1	1.000	2302738281
Race (3)	-20.848	40192.970	.000	1	1.000	.000
Special Education	-.101	.131	.588	1	.443	.904
Experience						
Years of Teaching	.150	.135	1.237	1	.266	1.162

Table A18

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist Response

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist Response

Question	Never	Sometimes/Occasionally	Fairly Often/Pretty Well
I view human difference as positive and a cause for celebration.	1(1.82%)	6 (10.91%)	48 (87.27%)
I have a clear sense of my own ethnic, culture and racial identity	0 (0.00%)	3 (5.36%)	53 (94.64%)
I am aware that in order to learn more about others I need to understand and be prepared to share my own culture.	0 (0.00%)	12 (21.43%)	44 (78.57%)
I am aware of my discomfort when I encounter differences in race, color, religion, sexual orientation, Language, and ethnic.	10 (17.86%)	19 (33.93%)	27 (48.21%)

I am aware of the assumptions that I hold about people of cultures different from my own.	7 (12.50%)	18 (32.14%)	31 (55.36%)
I am aware of my stereotypes as they arise and have developed personal strategies for reducing the harm they cause.	6 (10.71%)	18 (32.14%)	32 (57.14%)

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist Response

Question	Never	Sometimes/Occasionally	Fairly Often/Pretty Well

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist Response

Question	Never	Sometimes/Occasionally	Fairly Often/Pretty Well
I accept that in cross cultural situations there can be uncertainty and that can make me anxious. It can also mean that I do not respond quickly and take the time needed to get more information.	6 (10.71%)	17 (30.36%)	33 (58.93%)

I take any opportunity to put myself in places where I can learn about difference and create relationships.	1 (1.79%)	18 (32.14%)	37 (66.07%)
If I am a White person working with an person of color, I understand that I will likely be perceived as a person with power and racial privilege, and that I may not be seen as 'unbiased' or as an ally.	11 (20.75%)	16 (30.19%)	26 (49.06%)

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist Response

Question	Never	Sometimes/Occasionally	Fairly Often/Pretty Well
I'm aware of the impact of the social context on the lives on culturally diverse population, and how power, privilege and	3 (5.36%)	15 (26.79%)	38 (67.86%)

social oppression influence their lives.			
I will make mistakes and will learn from them.	0 (0.00%)	9 (16.07%)	47 (83.93%)
I will recognize that my knowledge of certain cultural groups in limited and commit to creating opportunities to learn more.	0 (0.00%)	16 (29.09%)	39 (70.91%)
I will really listen to answers before asking another question.	1 (1.75%)	21 (36.84%)	35 (61.40%)
I know that differences in color, culture, ethnic est. are important parts of an individuals' identity which they value and so do I. I will not hide behind the claim of "color blindness".	1 (1.79%)	14 (25.00%)	41 (73.21%)

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist Response

Question	Never	Sometimes/Occasionally	Fairly Often/Pretty Well

I am knowledgeable about historical incidents in America's past that demonstrate racism and exclusion towards American of non-European heritage.	1 (1.75%)	18 (31.58%)	38 (66.67%)
I recognize that cultures change over time and can vary from person to person as does attachment to culture.	0 (0.00%)	9 (16.36)	46 (83.64%)
I recognize that achieving cultural competence involves a commitment to learning over a life-time.	0 (0.00%)	6 (10.91%)	49 (89.09%)
I recognize that stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory actions can dehumanize and even encourage violence against individuals because of their membership in groups different from mine.	2 (3.64%)	9 (16.36%)	44 (80.00%)

I know my family's story of Immigration and assimilation into America.	7 (13.46%	20 (38.46%)	25 (48.08%)

Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist Response

Question	Never	Sometimes/Occasionally	Fairly Often/Pretty Well
I continue to develop my capacity of assessing areas where there are gaps in my knowledge.	0 (0.00%)	16 (29.63%)	38 (70.37%)
I recognize that people have intersecting multiple identifies drawn from race, sex, religion, ethnicity, etc and the importance of each of these identifies vary from person to person.	1 (1.85%)	9 (16.67%)	44 (81. 48%)
I acknowledge both intercultural and intracultural difference.	0 (0.00%)	17 (30.91%)	38 (69.09%)
I am aware that everyone has a "culture" and my own "culture"	2 (23.64%)	8 (14.55%)	45 (81.82%)

should not be regarded as a point of reference to assess which behavior is appropriate or inappropriate.

Appendix B: Social Media Groups and School districts Where Teachers Were Recruited

1. HISD TEACHER GROUP
2. Texas teachers ACP official Community
3. Teachers- sharing ideas and resources for the classroom!
4. Middle School Art Teachers
5. Teacher Hunters DFW
6. Teachers Corner of North Texas
7. Houston teachers in need
8. Teachers helping Teachers
9. DFW teachers
10. Great Teachers
11. Georgia Teachers Helping Teachers
12. OKCPS Teachers
13. We Support Wyoming Teachers and Staff
14. Missouri Teachers Take A Stand
15. Private School Teacher
16. Teacher/Educator Resources and Jobs in Arizona
17. 4th Grade Texas Writing Teachers

18. We Are Teachers

19. Teachers Support Teachers

20. Teachers Sharing Resources | Lesson Planned

21. Maine Education Association

22. The Teachers' Lounge – Houston & Surrounding Areas

23. Preschool Teachers

24. Hawaii teachers

25. Houston Area Alliance of Black School Educators

26. Houston Area Alliance of Black School Educators (HAABSE)

27. The National Alliance of Black School Educators

28: Houston Black Educators

29. North Carolina Teachers United

30. Woodville ISD

31. Baldwin ISD

32. Hudson ISD

33. Lufkin ISD

34. Tomball ISD

35. West Jordan ISD

36. Hardin-Jefferson ISD

37. Central Heights ISD

38. Corrigan-Camden ISD

39. Colmesneil ISD

40. Garrison ISD

41. Channelview ISD

42. Nacogdoches ISD

43. Teacher Education and the Black Community: A Special Issue of JNE

44. Teachers Corner Of North Texas

Appendix C: Teacher Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female
2. In what year were you born?
3. Are you of Hispanics or Latino origin? Select one response only
    a. Yes
    b. No
4. Which best describes your race? MARK ONE OR MORE RESPONSES TO INDICATE WHAT YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BE.
    - American Indian or Alaska Native
    - Asian
    - Black or African American
    - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
    - White
5. What is the highest level of education you have completed? MARK ONE RESPONSE ONLY.
    - High school diploma or GED
    - Associate's degree
    - Bachelor's degree

- At least one year of course work beyond a Bachelor's but not a graduate degree
- Master's degree
- Education specialist or professional diploma based on at least one year of course work past Master's degree level
- Doctoral degree

6. Please list the state in which you received your initial licensure to teach.
7. Is this school year the first year you have taught in this school?

   MARK ONE RESPONSE.

   - Yes
   - No

8. Counting this school year, how many years in total (including part-time) have you worked in this school? WRITE IN THE NUMBER OF YEARS BELOW
9. Counting this school year, how many years (including part-time) have you been working with students receiving special education or related services? WRITE IN THE NUMBER OF YEARS BELOW.
10. Counting this school year, how many years (including part-time) have you been teaching? WRITE IN THE NUMBER OF YEARS BELOW.
11. Which of the following credentials, licenses, or certificates do you have for working with students with disabilities?

Mark one on Each Row	Yes	No
Emergency credential		
Provisional or temporary credential		
Disability-specific credential or endorsement		
Special education credential or endorsement (for more than one disability category)		
General education credential		
Speech/language state license or certification		
Physical therapy license or certification		
Occupational therapy license or certification		

Certificate of Clinical Competence		
Other professional license, credential, or endorsement		
Don’t have special education or other professional credential, endorsement or license		

12. Have you taken the following test?

Mark One Response Only	Not taken	Taken and passed	Taken and have not yet passed	Taken and waiting test results
An exam for national board for professional teaching standards certification				

13. How many college course have you completed in the following areas?

Mark one number on each row	1	2	3	4	5	6+
a. Early childhood education						
b. Early childhood special education						
c. Elementary education						
d. Secondary education						
e. English as a second language (ESL)						
f. Bilingual education						
g. General special education						
h. Learning disabilities						
i. Mental retardation						
j. Orthopedic impairments						
k. Serious emotional disturbance						

l. Deafness and hearing						
m. Blindness and vision						
n. Communication disorder						
o. Infants and toddlers with disabilities						
p. Physical therapy						
q. Occupational therapy						
r. Provision development in multicultural issues or a multicultural course						
s. Classroom management						

14 Have you received a special education endorsement?

- o Yes
- o No

15. Which of the following best describes your current position in this school? MARK ONE RESPONSE ONLY.

- o Special education teacher
- o Special education teacher consultant
- o General education teacher
- o Speech-language pathologist
- o Physical therapist assistant or aide
- o Occupational therapist
- o Occupational therapy assistant or aide
- o School psychologist
- o Special education classroom aide
- o Other PLEASE SPECIEFY_____

16. How do you classify your main assignment at this school, that is, the activity at which you spend most of your time during this school year? MARK ONE RESPONSE ONLY.

- o Regular full-time teacher/service provider
- o Regular part-time teacher/service provider

- o Itinerant teacher (i.e., your assignment requires you to provide instruction/related services at more than one school)
- o Long-term substitute (i.e., your assignment requires that you fill the role of a teacher on a long-term basis, but you are still considered a substitute)
- o Teacher aide
- o Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)_____

17. During this school year, where did you work with students with IEPs? MARK ONE RESPONSE ONLY.

Mark one on each row	Yes	No
a. In a general education classroom		
b. In a special education classroom		
c. In a non-classroom space (office, therapy room, small work space, mobile van, etc.)		
d. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY		
e. I do not work directly with students who have IEPs		

18. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements on teaching. MARK ONE ON EACH ROW

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. I really enjoy my present assignment					
b. I am certain I am making a difference in the lives of the students I work with					

c. If I could star over, I would choose teaching again as my career.					
d. I am satisfied with my class size					
e. I worry about the security of my job because of the performanc e the					

students in my class(es) on state or local test					

19. During this school year, how many students with IEPs did you work with, on average, each week? (Include students you work with directly, as well as students for whom you consult with the general education teacher and/or another special education teacher/service provider) MARK ONE RESPONSE ONLY.
    - o 1-10
    - o 11-20
    - o 21-40
    - o More than 4
    - o Don't know
    - o Don't know
20. Date questionnaire completed:

Appendix D: Cultural Competence Questionnaire

Awareness		Never	Sometimes/ Occasionally	Fairly Often/Pretty Well	Always/Very Well
Value Diversity	I view human differences as Positive and a cause for celebration				
Know myself	I have a clear sense of my own ethnic, cultural and racial identity				
Share my culture	I am aware that in order to learn more about others I need to understand and be prepared to share my own culture				
Be aware of areas of discomfort	I am aware of my discomfort when I encounter differences in				

	race, color, religion, sexual orientation, language, and ethnicity				
Check my assumptions	I am aware of the assumptions that I hold about people of cultures different from my own.				
Challenge my stereotypes	I am aware of my stereotypes as they arise and have developed personal strategies for reducing the harm they cause				
Reflect on how my culture informs my judgement	I am aware of how my cultural perspective influences my judgement about what are ‘appropriate;, ‘normal’, or ‘superior’ behaviors,				

	values and communication styles				
Accept ambiguity	I accept that in cross cultural situations there can be uncertainty and that u can make me anxious. It can also mean that I do not respond quickly and take the time needed to get more information				
Be curious	I take any opportunity to put myself in places where I can learn about difference and create relationships				
Aware of my privilege if I am White	If I am a White person working with an person of color, I understand that I will likely be perceived				

	as a person with power and racial privilege, and that I may not be seen as 'unbiased' or as an ally.				
Aware of social justice issues	I'm aware of the impact of the social context on the lives of culturally diverse population, and how power, privilege and social oppression influence their lives.				

Knowledge		Never	Sometimes/Occasionally	Fairly Often/ Pretty Well	Always/ Very Well
Gain from my mistakes	I will make mistakes and will learn form them				
Assess the limits of my knowledge	I will recognize that my knowledge of certain cultural groups is limited and commit to creating opportunities to learn more				
Ask Questions	I will really listen to answers before asking another question				
Acknowledge the importance of difference	I know that differences in color, culture, ethnicity etc. are important parts of an individual's identify which they value and so do I. I will not hide behind the claim of "color blindness".				
Know the historical experiences	I am knowledgeable about historical				

of non-European Americans	incidents in America's past that demonstrate racism and exclusion towards Americans of non-European heritage.				
Understand the influence culture can have	I recognize that cultures change over time and can vary from person to person, as does attachment to culture				
Commit to life-long learning	I recognize that achieving cultural competence involves a commitment to learning over a life-time				
Understand the impact of racism, sexism, homophobia	I recognize that stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory actions can dehumanize, even encourage violence against individuals because of their membership in groups which				

	are different from myself				
Know my own family history	I know my family's story of immigration and assimilation into America				
Know my limitations	I continue to develop my capacity of assessing areas where there are gaps in my knowledge				
Awareness of multiple social identities	I recognize that people have intersecting multiple identifies drawn from race, sex, religion, ethnicity, etc and the importance of each of these identities vary from person to person.				
Inter-culturla and intracultural differences	I acknowledge both intercultural and intracultural differences				
Point of reference to assess appropriate behavior	I am awar3e that everyone has a "culture" and my own "culture"				

	should not be regarded as a point of reference to assess which behavior is appropriate or inappropriate				

Appendix E: Vignettes

Vignette One: Jalen is a ten-year-old boy who lives with his mom and four-year-old brother. Rochelle, Jalen's mom, indicated that she is the primary caretaker. Recently, Rochelle expressed concern about her son's academic performance in language arts. She reports for the last three report cards that, he received a 73, 65, and 57. Rochelle states that when she asks Jalen to read a passage from his language arts homework assignment, he struggles to recall basic facts, such as the main character's name, sequence of events, or main theme in the story. Rochelle also states that Jalen has difficulty sounding out unknown words or sounding out word parts and blends. She went on to state that yesterday Jalen stated he hates reading and shuts down. Rochelle stated that she recently spoke with Jalen's language arts teacher, Mr. Reeves, who stated that Jalen struggles in his classroom. Mr. Reeves states that the school conducts an oral reading fluency curriculum-based measurement (CBM) three times a year for fall, winter, and spring. Mr. Reeves stated that Jeremy's score in each probe was within the twenty-five-percentile range, which is significantly lower for his grade level. Mr. Reeves also indicated that in class, he has observed Jalen having a difficult time comprehending concepts. Lastly, Mr. Reeves stated that he has been utilizing culturally responsive teaching (CRT). With this teaching approach, Mr. Reeves stated he attempted to increase Jalen's participation by creating a warm and caring environment and building a stronger connection to motivate him. Mr. Reeves also indicated that he has been examining his curriculum to identify

additional strategies to assist Jalen in understanding rigor and material in the curriculum but saw no significant academic progress from Jalen but notes he is becoming more engaged.

1. Would you refer this student? Please explain your choice.

Vignette Two: Titus is an eleven-year-old boy who lives with his mom, dad, and elder brother. Malcolm, Titus's dad, stated that he and his wife, Nia, were diagnosed with dyslexia at nine and ten. Malcolm stated that Titus has struggled with pronunciation citing his lack of confidence due to his lisp. Malcolm indicated that he intended to have Titus work with a local speech pathologist but could not commit due to work schedule conflicts. Malcolm stated that peers at Titus' school teased him frequently about his lisp and that he refuses to read aloud or participate in tasks where he is to read aloud, which has affected his grades. In the two progress reports and first report card, Malcolm noted that Titus received 89, 85, and 81. However, in the past two report cards, Titus's grades in language arts have plumped to 66 and 61. Speaking with Titus's teacher, Ms. Watts, Malcolm learned that getting Titus to read is an uphill battle. When he does read, it is at a slow rate and shuts down if he has difficulty saying a multi-syllable word or unfamiliar word. Ms. Watts also indicated to Malcolm that in the previous two-six weeks, she incorporated several read-aloud activities to assist the class with expanding their vocabulary. The read-aloud also serves to improve class overall reading levels. According to Ms. Watts, Titus refuses to participate and rushes through the activity. Ms. Watts stated that she conducted three oral reading fluency CBM between fall and winter

and that in each probe, Titus's score words correct per minute was within the 50 percentile, which is below his expected grade level performance. Ms. Watts stated that in the last three weeks, she has been utilizing CRT to create a warm and supportive environment in her classroom. With this approach, Ms. Watts states that she spoke with Titus to understand his interest in incorporating activities in the classroom, but the approach was unsuccessful.

2. Would you refer this student? Please explain your choice.

Vignette Three: Frank is a ten-year-old boy who lives with his dad, mom, and five-year-old brother. Heather, Frank's mom, expressed concern with her son's academic performance in language arts. She reports for the last three report cards that, he received a 71, 61, and 56. Heather states that since Frank was in first grade, he has had difficulty sounding out works. She reports that she has put him in tutoring but notes he has made no progress in the last two years, so she withdrew him. Heather states that she and her husband, Brent, have attempted to work with Frank once they get work, but Frank becomes infuriated that he cannot pronounce words that he frequently shuts down. She stated that last week Frank stated he hates reading and has refused to participate in any practice session with her and Brent. Unable to motivate her son, Heather spoke with his language arts teacher, Mr. Jones, who expressed similar difficulties. Mr. Jones states that the school conducts an oral reading fluency curriculum-based measurement (CBM) three times a year for fall, winter, and spring and that Frank has underperformed for each. Mr. Jones concurred that Frank has difficulty comprehending concepts and cites his inability

to pronounce words consistently. Lastly, Mr. Jones stated that he had used CRT for the last two report cards. Mr. Jones indicated that the purpose of the new approach was to motivate Frank to remain calm and focused when sounding out difficult words or reading a passage. Mr. Jones indicated there had been some progress made but not sufficient to meet grade-level standards.

3. Would you refer this student? Please explain your choice.

Vignette Four: John is an Eleven-Year-old boy who lives with his father and younger sister. Ryan, John's dad, stated that John suffered a severe concussion four months ago while at his youth soccer game. According to Ryan, John got hit in the face when an opposing player kicked the ball in his direction. The incident was the third concussion he received within the year. Ryan stated that the neuropsychologist who examined John informed him that there was damage to his prefrontal cortex. The neuropsychologist stated that a damaged prefrontal cortex might affect John's memory and impulse control. Ryan stated that John was an average student before the incident, with reading being an area of weakness. Ryan stated that his grades in reading were always in the mid 80's or high 70's. Since the incident, his grade in reading has declined to 65, 61, and 59 for the last two progress reports and the first report card. Recently, Ryan met with John's language arts teacher, Mr. Johnson, in a parent-teacher conference. In the meeting, Mr. Johnson informed Ryan that John has difficulty recalling or retaining information in class, struggles to pay attention, and has difficulty conceptualizing information. Mr. Johnson went on to state that he has been implementing the CRT

curricula to increase John's involvement in class but cites those results have been positive.

4. Would you refer this student? Please explain your choice.

Appendix F: Consent Form

Study Title: Does Teacher Bias Increase Referral of Blacks to Special Education for a Reading Disability?

Principal Investigator: Blade Wise Perry

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nina Ellis-Hervey

Purpose of the Research:

You are being asked to complete a questionnaire that ask generalized questions regarding your experiencing teaching such as years of teaching, knowledge of special education, knowledge of the special education referral process, and knowledge of multicultural issues. You will also be asked to read vignettes describing students with or without a reading disability and responding to the question proposed at the end. The question will serve as your opportunity to identify whether the student described in the vignette has a disability or not and to explain your position. This research aims to examine the accuracy of teacher referrals for students with a reading disability. Your perspective and evaluation of the proposed vignettes would provide great insight into the study. Your participation is voluntary.

Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to respond to four proposed vignettes via link to electronic questionnaire. In the link, participants will be informed about the purpose of the study and be provided an electronic copy of the informed consent. The data will be collected through an electronic questionnaire. Participants will be asked several structured questions referring to their teaching experience, gender, race, socioeconomic status, and referral history.

Risks:

We do not anticipate any risks from your participation in this research, but some questions on the questionnaire may cause discomfort. To minimize embarrassment, I will make sure that the participants' identities remain anonymous, and the participants' names will be excluded from the study.

Benefits:

We hope to learn more about the perspectives of teachers and the criteria to which Black students are referred. This study also hopes to discover if there is a bias present in teacher referral. It is critical to examine all aspects of the elevated referral rates for Blacks to special education for a reading disability. The knowledge gained from this research could reduce the number of referrals by examining the purpose of the teacher's referral and whether a reading deficit is present. The findings may also guide and design further research into the overrepresentation of Black students in special education.

Confidentiality:

All of the information collected through this student's course will be kept entirely confidential to the extent permitted by the law. Your response to the vignettes and questionnaire will be kept confidential. At no time will your actual identity be revealed. No employees will be listed by name. The data given will be used for a research study that I am currently conducting.

Participation/Withdrawal:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

Contact:

If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact me at (936) 635-4361 or wiseperrba@jacks.sfasu.edu

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have received answers to all of my questions. I am at least 18 years old and voluntarily consent to take part in this research study.

VITA

After completing high school in Lufkin, Texas, in 2011, Blade Wise Perry entered the University of Saint Mary in Leavenworth, Kansas. Blade graduated with his bachelor's degree in the spring of 2015 with a double major in Psychology and Criminology. Upon graduating, Blade worked as a correctional officer for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for a year before transferring to a new profession as a mental health clinician for three years. Blade also worked as an elementary teacher for a year. In the fall of 2018, Blade enrolled in the school psychology doctoral program at Stephen F. Austin State University to earn his doctorate in School Psychology.

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APA 7th Edition

This dissertation was typed by Blade Wise Perry