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The Relationship Between Teacher Perception and African American

Male Students' IEP Referral Rates

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Abstract

African American male students are overrepresented in special education services. This study was conducted under the framework of Bandura's social cognitive theory, and it used surveys and teacher case studies to evaluate the relationship between teacher perception and African American male students' IEP referral rates. A demographic survey, Ronsanna Bakari's Teaching African American Students Survey (TAASS), and an open ended questionnaire were completed by 24 Ohio teachers. The study's hypothesis was that teachers' negative perceptions of African American students were related to and a predictor of African American male students' high IEP referral rates. The study did not have enough data to support the hypothesis, but it did find data that supported previous research on African American students IEP disproportionality. It also provides a comprehensive review of the factors contributing to African American students' IEP referral rates, and offers solutions to the problem.

Keywords: African American male students, teacher perception, IEP referral rates, Overrepresentation in special education, IEP disproportionality

Introduction

African American males have been overrepresented in special education services for more than 40 years, and they are 1.5 times more likely than any other ethnicity to have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). This disproportionality is disturbing because according to Cartledge and Dukes, teachers tend to lower their expectations of students with IEPs which results in unchallenging coursework and a stagnation in intellectual achievement (Cartledge and Dukes). Mislabeling students with IEPs can also be emotionally damaging for the student. Low self-esteem and the stigma of being separated from their general education peers are also issues that students with IEPs may face (Cartledge & Dukes).

Despite the persistent disproportionality of African American male IEP rates, few studies have been done on this topic. My study will determine if there is a relationship between teachers' perception and the IEP referral rates of African American male students. It will also determine if teachers' perception predicts the IEP referral rates of African American male students. I will use online survey questions to collect data from Midwestern teachers, and I will use that data to determine if there is a correlation between teacher perception and African American male student IEP referral rates. The goal of my research is to explain one reason why African American male students have such a high IEP referral rate and how teachers can improve their perception of these students in order to lower their representation in special education services. This study will also help bring awareness to this issue and will encourage future studies on the topic.

I will conduct my study through Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, and I will focus on his view of self-efficacy and triarchal reciprocal causality. Social cognitive theory states that students learn through their observation of others and choose to repeat what they have

observed based on the consequences of the model's actions (Bandura). His theory also states that students learn through the interaction of personal, environmental, and behavioral factors known as triarchal reciprocal causality. These factors can raise or lower students' sense of self-efficacy, which is the students' belief about their abilities. Bandura's theory relates to my study because teachers' culturally biased perceptions of African American males can negatively influence students' academic performance, which can lead to those students being labeled with an IEP.

African Americans are the most highly represented group in the areas of intellectual disabilities and emotional disturbances (Jordan, 2005). Both of these areas are highly influenced by a student's previous level of instruction and the teacher's perception of what counts as unusual behavior (Jordan). Teacher perception is so powerful that it can change a student's cognitive and emotional state. According to Jordan, students misdiagnosed for a disability begin to show symptoms of that disability after consistently dealing with the expectations of their surrounding teachers (Jordan). My study will use Bandura's theory to examine if there is a relationship between African American male students' IEP rates and teacher perception. It will also measure the strength of teacher perception as a predictor of African American male students' IEP referral rates.

Literature Review

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura)

The key components of Bandura's social cognitive theory are modeling and observational learning, triarchal reciprocal causality, and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Bandura believed that students learned by imitating the actions of models and that the students were more likely to repeat the modeled behavior if the consequences of the actions were positive (Bandura). Students also are more likely to imitate models that they identify with through age, race, or gender

(Bandura). This need to identify with the model and the willingness to copy the model's behavior shows that students' behaviors are highly influenced by the people around them.

The social influence that the models exert is considered part of the student's environment. Environment is the third factor in Bandura's triarchal reciprocal causality theory; and it includes the people surrounding the student, the student's socio-economic status, and the demographic area in which the student lives (Bandura). The other components included in Bandura's triarchal reciprocal causality theory are personal and behavioral factors (Bandura). Personal factors include student beliefs and attitudes, while behavioral factors consist of student actions (Bandura). Some factors may exhibit more influence over the student's behavior than the other factors, but all of the factors are interrelated (Bandura,1986).

These interrelated factors have a strong role in influencing students' self-efficacy which is the student's level of confidence in his or her ability to successfully complete a task (Bandura). Students with low self-efficacy may avoid difficult problems for fear that they will fail and that their level of self-efficacy will further decrease (Bandura). African American students who come from poor backgrounds and who have families that do not support their learning process may begin to devalue education and to develop low self-efficacy rates (Bandura,1986; Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier & Maczuga, 2009).

Before African American students are able to show their academic performance, teachers may lower their expectations of them because they perceive these students as being stupid (Irvine, 1985, Jordan, 2005; Wilson, 1993) These low teacher expectations and negative perceptions are constant factors that keep students in a vicious cycle of low self-efficacy and poor academic performance (Bandura, 1986 , Jordan, 2005).This theory of triarchal reciprocal causality can be seen in the relationship between teacher perception, African American male

students, and African American male's academic performance/self-efficacy. A student might experience poverty (environmental factor) that leads to the student not being able to afford to live in a good school district (Bandura, 1986). Since the student does not live in a good school district, the student may receive subpar instruction that leads to low test scores (behavioral factor) and a low sense of self-efficacy (personal factor) (Bandura). If that student is able to move to a better school district, the student's years of low test scores and low sense of self-efficacy may cause the new teacher to lower her expectations for the student (environmental factor) and eventually label that student with an IEP (Bandura). Bandura's social cognitive theory helps explain the relationship between the influential factors that contribute to the disproportionality of African American male students with IEPs, and it shows how teacher perception can positively or negatively influence students' behavior (Bandura).

Background of the IEP Rates for African American Males

Historical Factors

The overrepresentation of African American males in special education services stems from the racial segregation of the 1950's (Wilson, 1993). During this time, African Americans attended segregated public schools and were seen as intellectually inferior by the Caucasian community (Wilson). Those African American students who were considered "slow" were quickly diagnosed as mentally disabled and were sent to special classes that further separated them from their white peers (Jordan, 2005). Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests were regularly used to assess African American students' intelligence levels, but these tests were later determined to be culturally biased and were a poor predictor of black students' intelligence (Jordan).

More than sixty years later, African American students are still segregated to poor school districts, are still tested and taught with culturally unresponsive methods, and are still seen as

intellectually inferior by their teachers and American society (Codrington & Fairchild, 2012; Jordan, 2005; Wilson, 1993). The idea that African American male students are intellectually inferior can be seen through the way these students are placed in lower performing classes and are encouraged to participate in vocational training programs rather than pursue college careers (Scott, Allen, & Lewis, 2014). This overly simplified curriculum and push to enter vocational jobs increases when African American students are placed in special educational services (Cartledge and Dukes, 2009). African American students can also be academically disadvantaged because teachers are not adequately prepared to teach diverse students, and the diversity training that they do receive does little to change teachers' perceptions of their students (Blanchett, 2006). These perceptions and biases then influence the teacher's teaching method and the student's academic performance (Blanchett).

Racial and Community Influences on African American Male Students' Self-efficacy

Researchers have linked racial identity to African American male students' self-efficacy rates (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ward, 1990). Fordham and Ogbu found that peer support was more influential in student self-efficacy than parent or teacher encouragement (Fordham & Ogbu). This peer support is significant because students who were accused of "acting white" for trying to achieve academic success had a lower level of self-efficacy (Fordham & Ogbu). These students felt like they had to choose between fitting in with the black community or assimilating into white American culture (Fordham & Ogbu). Ward had a differing view of the role of racial identity in student self-efficacy because he believed that students could embrace their black identity while still achieving good grades (Ward). He believed that students could achieve this balance by rejecting society's negative view of blackness and gaining pride by forming a positive view of black identity (Ward).

Current research has shown that racial identity does not strongly correlate to students' self-efficacy rates and that supportive role models are the best indicator of student self-efficacy (Witherspoon, Speight, & Thomas, 1997). Researchers have also theorized that self-esteem, belief about future awards, and environmental factors are also predictors of student self-efficacy, but these factors have been shown to have little or no influence on student self-efficacy (Johnson-Reid, Davis, Saunders, Williams, & Williams, 2005). Research on African American male students' self-efficacy levels is often contradictory and scarce. In order to accurately, understand African American male students' level of self-efficacy, more research needs to be done on this topic.

Environmental Factors

The overrepresentation of African American males in special education services should be examined through both the historical and the environmental context (Codrington & Fairchild, 2012). Due to racial housing segregation, lack of education, and a history of institutionalized racism, many African Americans are living in poverty today (Khalifa, 2010; Wilson, 1993). This poverty is partly maintained through inadequate schooling (Scott et al., 2014). These schools do not prepare students for college which makes it difficult for them to find a high paying job that will get them out of poverty (Scott et al., 2014). Parents in poverty also may find it difficult to provide for their kids' educational needs because they are busy working to pay the rent (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000). It is not uncommon for African American children to be a raised by a single mother or grandparent, and these families face more extreme levels of poverty due to living off of one income (Gutman & McLoyd). Single parents also may find it difficult to be involved in their children's school, help their children with their homework, and take their children to

extracurricular activities which are all things that have been linked to students' academic success (Clark, 1983; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000).

Various researchers have linked poverty as an indicator of high IEP referral rates (Scarborough & McCrae, 2010; Ward, 2010). Students living in poverty are more likely to have low nutrition, alcohol or drug dependent mothers, and live in violent neighborhoods (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier & Maczuga, 2009). Parents of children in poverty also tend to have a limited education and have a negative perception of school that is passed down to their children (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier & Maczuga). These parents might focus on their kids' problems and bad behaviors rather than their successes (Gutman & McLoyd., 2000) This idea of focusing on children's failures is encouraged when teachers meet with parents and only discusses the negative aspect of students' behavior (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Scott et al., 2014).

Despite the research linking poverty to IEP referral rates, poverty does not completely explain disproportionality because African American males are overrepresented in special education services at all economic levels (Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Simmons, Feggins-Azziz, & Chung, 2005). Poverty also does not explain the differing levels of IEP referrals for various minority groups living in poverty (Jordan, 2005). In order to truly understand African American males' IEP disproportionality rates, one must begin with understanding how teachers' perception of their students influences the referral process.

Teachers' Attitudes toward African American Males' Performance in School

Teacher's Cultural Bias towards Black Male Students

According to Jordan, more than 80 percent of students who receive special education services were referred to these services by their teachers (Jordan). Studies have found that teachers have cultural biases and stereotypes that influence their decisions to refer students to

special education services (Cartledge & Dukes, 2009; Fletcher, 2014). These teacher referrals are

crucial because most of the students referred for an IEP end up in special education services

regardless of whether or not they have a disability (Cartledge & Dukes, 2009). According to

Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, & Jennings, teachers often stereotype African American male

students as being unmotivated and defiant regardless of whether or not the teacher shares the

student's ethnic background (Lynn et al.). This is partly due to the fact that black stereotypes are

so ingrained into American culture that no one is completely immune to their influences (Lynn et

al.).

Even though teachers have been shown to have cultural biases and stereotypes toward

their students, many teachers refuse to talk about race and prefer to adopt a view of

colorblindness (Castro-Atwater, 2008; Skiba et al., 2005). This colorblindness is actually more

harmful to teachers' ethnically diverse students because it does not take into account their

students' cultural differences, and it ignores any implicit cultural biases that the teacher might

have (Castro-Atwater). In Irvine's study, she discovered that teachers made more negative

comments about African American male students' behavior than any other student minority

group (Irvine). Negative behavior comments were defined as statements chastising the student

for breaking a rule like not sitting in his seat or interrupting the teacher (Irvine). This negative

view of African American male students' behavior adversely influenced the teachers' perception

of these students' academic performance (Irvine). Irvine also found that regardless of the African

American male students' level of academic performance, teachers still saw these students as

lazy, unmotivated, and argumentative (Irvine). This perception of African American male

students is a contributing factor to the high emotional disturbance and intellectual disability rates

for these students (Jordan, 2005).

Cultural Misunderstandings in the Referral Process

In addition to teacher bias, cultural misunderstandings have also been identified as a predictor of African American male students' IEP disproportionality rates (Henderson, 2008; Ford, 2002). Wilson believed that teachers mislabeled students with IEPs because they were unable to distinguish between African American cultural differences from disabilities defined by European cultural standards (Wilson). These cultural differences were seen as deficiencies that needed to be fixed in order to align with white norms (Hilliard, 1980). An example of difference that is often seen as a deficiency is Ebonics (Fairchild& Edwards-Evans, 1990). Ebonics is an African American dialect that teachers often mistake for poor English (Fairchild & Edwards-Evans). Even though African American students usually know how to speak Ebonics and standard American English, teachers often try to correct these students when they speak Ebonics (Fairchild & Edwards-Evans). These teachers then might perceive the student as unintelligent and in need of an IEP referral (Fairchild & Edwards-Evans). More efficient culturally diverse teacher training programs are needed in order to help teachers better understand these cultural differences (Bleicher, 2011).

Self-fulfilling Prophecy

African American male students' sense of self-efficacy is largely determined by their teachers' perceptions of their ability (Polite, 1994). If a teacher perceives a student as lazy and dumb, then that student will fulfill his teachers' expectations (Polite). This process of internalizing and validating the expectations of others is called a *self-fulfilling prophecy* (Merton, 1948). Self-fulfilling prophecies have a significant impact on students' academic performance and motivation levels (Polite, 1994). Polite found that if a teacher believes that a student cannot do challenging coursework, then that student will fail or will avoid completing difficult

coursework (Polite). If a student believes that a teacher does not care about his well-being, then that student will be less motivated to perform well in school (Polite).

Rosenthal described four factors of teacher expectancy that include climate, input, output, and feedback (Rosenthal). Climate involves the teacher having a higher degree of warmth or affection towards students who are academically successful, while Input refers to teachers teaching more difficult material at a faster pace to their higher performing students (Rosenthal). Output refers to how teachers encourage good students to give more responses in class, and feedback refers to teachers giving more feedback to their higher performing students (Rosenthal). Taylor studied how race would fit into Rosenthal's study, and she found that teachers are less likely to be warm towards African American students, are less likely to encourage African American students to give responses, and are less likely to offer African American students positive feedback (Taylor). The students who have undergone this treatment may in turn be less likely to respond in class and are less likely to continue to enjoy or perform well in school (Taylor, 1978; Polite, 1994).

Method

Research Design and Procedure

My research design is a case study of teachers' beliefs about African American male students' overrepresentation in special education. I used qualitative research by analyzing an open ended questionnaire. Questionnaires are used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from large amounts of people in a standardized way. This data then can be grouped by theme and analyzed. I chose to use three surveys in my study in order to discover the relationships between teacher perception and African American male students' academic performance.

Ohio school principals and superintendents were emailed fliers asking them for permission to recruit their teachers as survey participants. This flier includes information about the study and the survey link. The first page of the survey is the letter of consent which contains more detailed information about the purpose of the study, potential risks, and the confidentiality level of the teachers' responses. Teachers indicated their desire to participate in the study by continuing to take the survey. No tangible reward was given for this participation, but teachers were thanked for contributing to a study that will help improve diversity teacher training programs. Permission was obtained from the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) through the Office of Research Compliance before sending out the survey.

Measurement

Participants took three surveys that approximately took 15 to 30 minutes of their time. The survey was delivered through Qualtrics which is a survey making site that enabled me to quickly analyze my data. These surveys used a mixture of multiple choice, open ended questions, and a Likert scale. The demographic survey uses multiple choice, and it gathered information about the teacher (age, sex, teaching experience, etc.) and the teacher's classroom (students cultural background). I used Rosenna Bakari's Teaching African American Students Survey (TAAS), as a measure of teachers' cultural attitudes towards African American students (Bakari), but the sample size was not large enough to get any reliable data.

The TAAS scale is made up of two subscales called the Willingness to Teach African American Students (WTAAS) and the Cultural Sensitivity Toward Teaching African American Students (CSTAAS) subscale. The survey has 14 items that includes statements such as "I would feel excited about teaching in a predominantly African American school" and "African American students are no longer African" (Bakari). I changed the scale to a 7-point Likert scale in order to provide my participants with more accurate options for their level of agreement. The Likert scale

ranges from 1-7 with 1= strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=somewhat agree, 4=neutral, 5= somewhat

disagree, 6 disagree, 7= strongly disagree. The WTAAS subscale has a reliability of .87, while

the CSTAAS subscale has a reliability of .58 (Bakari). The last survey is a mix of multiple

choice questions and an open ended questionnaire (Fletcher, 2014; Henderson, 2008; Jordan,

2006; Palmer, 2010;). This survey gathers information on teachers' attitude toward black

students and their reasoning as to why black male students are referred to special education

services. Examples of the survey questions include "Have you ever referred an African American

student to special education services?" and "In your opinion, what type of student behaviors or

characteristics exhibited by African American male students influence teachers to make IEP

referrals?".

Participants

Special education and general education teachers were selected for this survey because of

their involvement in the IEP referral process. Twenty- four Northwest Ohio teachers participated

in the study. Ten elementary education teachers, eleven high school teachers, two special

education teachers, and a teacher in charge of student service participated. The age range was

between 23 and 63, and the average age was 38.96 (SD=12.002). Only six out of 24 teachers

were male. Their teaching experience range was between one and 40 years, and the average was

14.35 years (SD=10.734). Most teachers were Caucasians except one African American and

three mixed race teachers. Five teachers were teaching in rural areas, nine were teaching in

suburban, and 10 other teachers were teaching in urban areas. Fifteen of the teachers reported

that their students were predominantly Caucasian, and four teachers reported that their students

were predominantly African American.

Results and Discussion

Due to a small sample size of 24 participants, no statistically significant results were found between teacher perception and African American male students' IEP referral rates. Teachers' perception of African American students could not be supported as an indicator for African American students IEP referral rates. There was a relationship between the TAASS survey and the teachers' reasoning for why African American students are referred for IEPs; however, the ANOVA test and the regression did not show the correlation.

TAASS Survey

The mean TAASS survey was 4.41 out of 7 which means that most people were neutral or somewhat agreed with the survey statements. The teachers' responses showed that most of them felt like they could challenge African American students academically, would enjoy motivating African American students, and would treat African American students with respect. When asked "What do you think is the main cause of the high IEP referral rate for African American male students?", nine people chose environmental factors such as poverty and lack of strong parenting, two people chose African American male students' attitude and lack of motivation, and two people believed that schools fail to relate to and teach black urban students. Only one person believed that teacher bias was a contributing factor. It makes sense that these teachers' perception of themselves as being nonbiased and helpful towards their African American students would lead them to choose environmental factors as being the main cause of African American students' high IEP referrals. Believing that environmental factors like poverty are the main cause of this issue allows teachers to place the blame on factors that are outside of their control, and it helps teachers avoid evaluating their own biases and teaching effectiveness. Poverty is not a valid excuse for black students' high referral rate because as mentioned

previously, African American students are overrepresented in special education at all economic

levels (Skiba et. al, 2005).

Reasons for high referral rate of African American Male Students

Teachers tend to view African American students' low academics and behavior problems

as the reasons for their high IEP referral rate. According to my survey, ten teachers referred

African American students to special education services. Seven of the teachers referred these

students because they were behind grade level and had learning difficulties, and one person

referred a student because of the students' lack of motivation and disengagement with education.

When asked, "What type of student behaviors or characteristics exhibited by African American

male students most influences teachers' decisions to make IEP referrals?", thirteen people chose

students' long term poor academic performance and four people chose student behavior

problems. Multiple participants mentioned African American students' poor academics

throughout the open ended survey which is not surprising because low academic performance is

a strong indicator of a disability (Palmer, 2010).

Schools should evaluate students who have consistently low grades for a disability, but

intervention such as tutoring or small group instruction is needed before the student is labeled

with an IEP (Cartledge and Dukes, 2009; Lynn et al, 2010). Two participants believed that the

IEP referral process would be less biased if teachers analyzed their students' academic

performance data after targeted interventions. Twelve teachers discussed collecting data or using

Response to Intervention (RTI) before referring a child to special education. If the students were

still performing poorly after these interventions, teachers could evaluate those students for an

IEP. It is important to note that there are multiple factors mentioned in the literature review

section that affect African American students' academic ability. These factors should be considered when evaluating African American students' academic performance.

African American students' behavior was also mentioned throughout the open ended survey. When asked, "How do teacher perceptions and expectations have a role in the overrepresentation of African American male students in special education services?', seven people chose that students may be referred for IEPs if they show behavioral problems in the classroom. Teachers define whether or not a behavior problem signifies a disability, and they may be more likely to notice behavior problems from black students if they expect them to behave badly. One of the teachers mentioned that some of the African American students in her class behaved badly because they were so behind in school that they loosed motivation and they stopped caring about academics. This situation shows that there is a reason behind students' behavior and this reason should first be addressed before labeling a child with an IEP. Other teachers believed that their students got their bad behavior and attitudes from their parents and the surrounding neighborhood.

Researchers such as Lynn et al. and Codrington and Fairchild also found that their participants frequently mentioned their students' parents and neighborhoods as the source of their students' bad behavior (Codrington & Fairchild; Lynn et al.). Teachers do not have control over what may influence a students' behavior outside of the classroom, but they do have control over how they address the students' behavior in the classroom. Teachers should use positive behavior supports and implement classroom management techniques before placing a child in special education (Lynn et al., 2010)

Some of the participants were hesitant to discuss African American students' ethnicity as a factor in their IEP referrals. Two participants did not believe that ethnicity had anything to do

with IEP referrals, and one person did not believe that African American students were overrepresented in special education. These participants' responses support Castro-Atwater's research about how some teachers prefer to support the idea of colorblindness in an attempt to promote fairness and equality among their students (Castro-Atwater). It is important to note that twenty out of the twenty-four participants identified as Caucasian. According to Castro-Atwater, Caucasian teachers are more likely to support a view of colorblindness (Castro-Atwater). Even though the U.S. Department of Education acknowledges that African American male students are overrepresented in special education services, some teachers will deny that fact because it requires them to think about race (Castro-Atwater; U.S. Department of Education). Race is a difficult topic to discuss but it is a discussion that teachers must have nonetheless. Three participants felt like they did not know about the topic of disproportionality enough to answer some of the questions. Teachers should be taught about IEP disproportionality and should be able to have an open conversation about what factors influence that disproportionality.

Conclusions and Implications

Many researchers propose that quality diversity teacher training programs are needed in order to improve teachers' perceptions of African American male students (Bakari, 2003; Bleicher, 2011; Henderson, 2008; Ford, 1992). Researchers claim that increased teaching experiences of African American students, training in diverse teaching methods, and an understanding of cultural differences and misconceptions can help lower the overrepresentation of African American male students in special education services (Bleicher, 2011; Ford, 1992; Jordan, 2005). Recruiting ethnically diverse teacher candidates may also expose pre-service teachers to diversity and will make teachers more representative of the population (Bleicher, 2011).

My research was not able to prove my thesis, but it did bring awareness to an important issue that has often been ignored in the field of education. My quantitative research was also able to support the data of previous researchers on this topic. More research needs to be done on the relationship between poverty and African American students' IEP referrals. More research should also be done on the relationship between teacher perception and African American students' self-efficacy. In order to lower the IEP rates for African American male students, the cycle of negative teacher perception and the internalization of this perception needs to end.

Limitations and Future Study

Limitations of the study include the number and the lack of diversity in the participants. There also was a lack of African American male students in the participant's classes. This study cannot be generalized to other parts of the United States or be generalized to all parts of Ohio. Administrators, school psychologists, and other professionals that may have a role in the IEP process were not included in this study. Participants may not give truthful answers on the survey if their answers are not seen as socially acceptable.

This study should be repeated in the future with more participants. More participants will allow for researchers to obtain better data and will encourage more quantitative research. If possible, teachers should receive some compensation or gift to increase interest in participation. Areas with high populations of African American students should be targeted in order to get more relevant results. These areas tended to have a higher response rate then predominantly Caucasian rural and suburban areas. Other factors such as teacher training programs, teachers' self-efficacy, and African American students' self-efficacy should also be explored in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between teachers and African American students' IEP referral rates. More studies comparing the reasons for IEP referrals of

African American suburban, rural, and urban students should also be completed in order to better

understand what roles location and socio-economic status play in this issue.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Surveys

Appendix1a. Demographic Survey

1. What is your Gender?

   a. Female

   b. Male

   c. Other

2. What is your Age? _____

3. What is your level of education?

   a. BA _____

   b. Master's _____

   c. Ph.D. _____

   d. Other _____

4. What is your ethnicity?

   a. Native Indian

   b. Hispanic/Latino

   c. Asian/Pacific islander

   d. African American

   e. Caucasian

   f. Mixed race

   g. Other_____

5. How long have you been teaching? _____

6. What age group are your Teaching?

   a. Early education (grades k-3)

   b. Middle school (grades 4-8)

   c. High school (grades 9-12)

7. What is your teaching specialty?

    a. Special education

    b. Elementary education

    c. Language arts

    d. Science

    e. Social Studies

    f. Math

    g. Other _____

9. What type of environment do you teach in?

    a. Urban

    b. Suburban

    c. Rural

    d. other_____

10. What is the predominant cultural background of the students in your classroom/school?

    a. Caucasian

    b. African America

    c. Asian/Pacific Islander

    d. Native American

    e. Hispanic/Latino

    f. Other_____

Appendix 1b. TAAS Survey

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements. 1= strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=somewhat agree, 4=neutral, 5= somewhat disagree, 6 disagree, 7= strongly disagree.

I would make teaching African American students a community experience.

I would encourage African American students to give back to their communities.

I feel personally invested in helping African American students achieve.

I would try to be a role model for African American students.

As a teacher, I would take time after school to tutor African American students

I would feel excited about teaching in a predominantly African American school.

I would feel comfortable challenging African American students.

Standardized assessments are a good measure of African American students' abilities.

Traditional education is best for African American students.

African American curricula takes away from the rigor of education.

African American students should be taught without consideration of their culture.

African Americans are no longer African.

I respect African American culture.

I would enjoy the opportunity to motivate African American students.

Appendix 1c. Open Ended Questionnaire

1. Describe your school's IEP referral process?

2. What is your role in the IEP referral process?

3. Who makes up your IEP referral team, and what are their responsibilities?

4. Have you ever referred an African American student to special education services? If so, why?

5. In your opinion, what type of student behaviors or characteristics exhibited by African American male students influence teachers to make IEP referrals?

   a.   The student is not performing well academically and has been doing so for the last few

        years.

   b.   The student is exhibiting behavioral problems that are disrupting to the classroom

        environment.

   c.   The student defies teacher authority by refusing to do assignments or participate in class

        activities.

   d.   Other_____

6. What do you think are the main reasons that cause the IEP disproportionality rate for African

   American male students?

   a. Teacher perception/bias

   b. Environmental factors such as poverty and lack of strong parenting

   c. African American male students' attitude and lack of motivation

   d. Other_____

7. How do teachers' perceptions and expectations have a role in the overrepresentation of

   African American male students in special education services? Choose all that apply.

   a.   If a teacher believes that a student is lazy and unmotivated, then that student will

        internalize those beliefs and will become lazy and unmotivated. The student then develops

        a low academic performance and is labeled with an IEP.

   b.   Some students may receive IEPs because they exhibit behavior problems in the classroom.

        Teachers decide what constitutes as a behavior problem and determine if the behavior

        problem is unusual and might signify a disability. Teachers have differing views of what is

considered unusual behavior based off of their perception. They also might notice the

problem behaviors of Black male students if they expect Black males to behave badly.

c. Teachers might mistake cultural differences like slang as an indicator for a disability.

d. Other_____

Appendix B: Letter of Informed Consent

School of Educational Foundation, Leadership, and Policy School of Intervention Services

**The Relationship between Teacher Perception and IEP Referral Rates for African American Male
Students**

Informed Consent for Ohio Teachers

Introduction: You are invited to participate in an online survey about the effects of teacher attitudes on the IEP referral rates for Black male students. My name is Christina Steward, and I am a junior Intervention Specialist major at Bowling Green State University. I will be leading this research project along with my advisors Dr. Hyeyoung Bang of the School of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Policy and Dr. Starr Keyes of the School of Intervention Services.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to explain one reason why Black male students have a high IEP referral rate and how teachers can improve their perceptions of these students.

Benefits: You will not receive tangible benefits for completing the survey, but your participation will help researchers improve culturally sensitive teacher training programs.

Procedure: You will complete three surveys regarding background information, cultural attitudes, and teacher beliefs. The surveys will take approximately 15-30 minutes of your time.

Risks: This study poses minimal risks, but the survey questions may cause participants to feel strong emotions. The surveys are anonymous.

Voluntary Nature: Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip questions or to discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Permission to conduct this study at your school has been granted by your school principal. Participating or not will not affect your job nor your relationship with Bowling Green State University. Your principal will not know if you have participated or not in this survey

Confidentiality/Anonymity Protection: The survey data will be stored in a password protected computer which can only be accessed by my advisors and me. You will not physically sign the consent forms in order to protect your anonymity. Some employers may use tracking software so please complete your survey on a personal computer. In order to protect your anonymity, do not leave the survey open if you are using a public computer or a computer that others may have access to. Clear your browser cache and page history after completing the survey.

Contact information: If you have any questions about this study, you can contact me at 614-441- 1971 or cmstewa@bgsu.edu. Dr. Bang can be reached 419-372-4251 or hbang@bgsu.edu, and Dr. Keyes can be reached at skeyes@bgsu.edu or 419-372-7296. Contact the Chair of HSRB at 419-372- 7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu if you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research not with questions about the research. Thank you for your time.

Agreement: I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. I also have been informed that all information I provide is strictly anonymous and will be used for this study's purpose only. I am free to discontinue participation during the survey at any time. Clicking on the survey link implies consent to participate in the study.

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