

IMPLICIT BIAS AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO DISPROPORTIONALITY OF
AFRICAN AMERICANS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION: THE PROMISE OF A BIAS
LITERACY INTERVENTION

by

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in the Educational Leadership Program
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DEDICATION

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

-Psalms 1:1-3

This body of work is dedicated to my mother, Ruby Smith Whatley. My supporter, my spiritual leader, my biggest cheerleader, and my soul mate in Christ. You have never once given up on me and my dreams. You have believed in my lofty notions to chase dreams down and take huge leaps of faith in this “thing we call life”. Through this body of work, I celebrate you and our unwavering love for one another. You are my mother, but you are my best friend. I love you!

To my daughter, Kanuri Elise. From the moment you were conceived, I knew God sent me a “life changer”. In your five years on earth, you have taught me how to love unconditionally, to embrace the small things in life, to “literally” stop and smell the roses, and to enjoy the child in myself. One day you told me, “Mommy, I chose you to be my mom. I wanted a brown and pretty mom like you!” Every time, I hear those words in my head, my spirit jumps with joy and my heart rate pounds because deep in my soul, I know that we were made for each other. Through this body of work, I want you to know that your mother stayed up late at night writing and putting this work together for you. I want you to always know that you come from “good stock”, and tenacity is in our blood. Despite life’s challenges and the swirls of life, God has His hand on you. As my

mother has walked hand in hand with me on my various journeys in life, I promise to walk with you. You are my heartbeat, and I love every inch of you!

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To my lovely daughter, Kanuri Elise—you are the reason and motivation for this dream coming true. Sometimes in life, you need someone to push you or even dare you to go on the edge of life and push you off the cliff of the unknown. Thank you, Kanuri, for coming into my life and inspiring me to be the best mommy to you. I promise to continue to being the example God wants me to be in your life. Nuri means light to the

world, and you will forever be the light to my world and my spirit. I am so glad that you came to be. I promise to support you emotionally and spiritually for the rest of my life. I love you, K!

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Lastly, to all of the marginalized children, who are the voiceless in our education system, I promise to continue this work and to challenge others to “go beyond”. You are worthy of the very best God has to offer. Amen!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
ABSTRACT	xiv
 CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Problem	5
History of Disproportionality	6
Explicit and Implicit Bias	11
Purpose of the Study	14
Research Questions	14
Procedures and Methodology	15
Theoretical Framework	17
Significance of the Study	20
Limitations and Delimitations	21
Definition of Terms	22
Summary	23
2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	25
The Establishment of Special Education	25
Education and the Civil Rights Movement	27
Definition of Disproportionality	33
History of Disproportionality of African Americans and Special Education	35
Current Trends of Disproportionality of African Americans in Special Education	37

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

CHAPTER	Page
Contributing Factors to Disproportionality.....	42
Psychometric Test Bias.....	42
Socioeconomic and Poverty Factors.....	43
Stereotype Threat.....	44
Implicit Bias as a Factor.....	45
Historical Effects of Disproportionality in Special Education.....	47
Federal Response to Disproportionality.....	49
Special Education Referral Process and Response to Intervention.....	50
Bias of Prereferral Teams.....	53
Implicit Bias.....	56
Bias Literacy Workshop as an Intervention.....	61
Summary.....	62
3. METHODOLOGY.....	63
Rationale for Research Design.....	63
Research Questions Reiterated.....	64
Research Design.....	65
Sample and Participants.....	67
Institutional Review Board.....	68
Instrumentation.....	69
Bias Literacy Workshop.....	69
Implicit Association Test-Race.....	69
Teacher Expectations Scale.....	72
Data Collection.....	72
Data Analysis.....	75
Reporting Results.....	78
Qualitative Validation.....	78
Subjectivity Statement.....	79
Summary.....	80
4. RESULTS.....	82
Research Questions Reviewed.....	84
Research Site Description.....	85
Variables.....	88
Independent Variables.....	88
Dependent Variables.....	89
Findings of Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis.....	89
Quantitative Data Analysis.....	91

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

CHAPTER	Page
Independent Samples <i>t</i> -Test.....	91
Findings of Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis	97
Academic Levels	99
Descriptions of Student Attributes and Behaviors	100
Summary	102
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	104
Rationale for Instrumentation.....	108
Summary of Study.....	109
Discussion of Findings.....	113
Implications.....	115
Recommendations for Future Research	116
Summary.....	118
REFERENCES	120
APPENDICES	140
A IRB APPROVAL.....	141
B INFORMED CONSENT	143
C UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY THROUGH BIAS LITERACY	148
D WORKSHOP EVALUATION	151
E PERMISSIONS TO REPRODUCE OR ADAPT COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL.....	153

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Tenets of Critical Race Theory.....	20
2 Sources of Implicit Bias.....	58
3 Strategies Presented at the Bias Literacy Workshop.....	74
4 Process of Data Analysis.....	76
5 Student Characteristics.....	86
6 School Staff and Participant Demographics.....	88
7 Cronbach’s Alpha for Pre- and Posttest Measures.....	90
8 Cronbach’s Alpha for Pre- and Posttest Measures for Current Study.....	90
9 Group Statistics Pre- vs. Posttest Results	93
10 Pretest and Posttest for Equality of Means.....	93
11 Tests for Normality of Pretest and Posttest Score Distributions.....	96
12 Mann-Whitney Test Results.....	96
13 Student Characteristics or Behaviors that Impact the MDT Members’ Decision Making when Referring African American Students for Special Education.....	98

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1 Classification of Children by Race and Disability (2010-2012).....	10
2 The Influence of Aversive Racism on Special Education Referrals.....	12
3 The Percentage of Student Suspensions by Disability Status (2011-2012).....	35
4 Percentage of Students with Disabilities in Each Racial Group (2004-2008).....	38
5 Percentage of Students with an LD Disability in Each Racial Group (2004-2008).....	39
6 Percentage of Students with an ID Disability in Each Racial Group (2004-2008).....	39
7 Percentage of Students with an ED Disability in Each Racial Group (2004-2008).....	40
8 An Interpretive Model of Devine’s (1989) Assumptions of the Level of Stereotype Processing and Resulting Attitudes.....	60
9 Example of the First Set of Tasks on the Implicit Association Test-Race.....	70
10 Example of the Second Set of Tasks on the Implicit Association Test-Race.....	70
11 Histogram of Pretest vs. Posttest Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale Scores.....	94
12 Distributions of Teacher Expectations Scale Scores in Pretest and Posttest Conditions.....	95

ABSTRACT

JILLIAN KATRI WHATLEY

RACIAL BIAS AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO DISPROPORTIONALITY OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Under the direction of EDWARD L. BOUIE, JR, Ed.D.

With the extensive research on disproportionality of African Americans in special education, the researcher explored implicit bias as a contributing factor. The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent Bias Literacy Intervention impacts pre- and posttest results of the Teacher Expectations Scale and Personal Objectivity Scale, thus increasing personal awareness of teacher implicit bias towards African American students and the awareness of the how implicit bias potentially influences teacher decisions to refer African American students to special education. The results indicated that the mean comparison of the pre- and posttest of the Teacher Expectations Scale and Personal Objectivity Scale suggest that teachers' expectations of the last student referred to special education increased and the objectivity mean increased. The results also suggest that the interactive effect of using the IAT-Race as a conscious-raising tool and the Bias Literacy Workshop as a habit-breaking intervention to address implicit bias promoted a sense of awareness among participants regarding their personal bias against African Americans, while providing the participants with strategies to reduce implicit bias. Therefore, the

evidence is suggestive and promising in that the IAT-Race and the Bias Literacy Workshop provide baseline data suggesting these methods can reduce implicit bias, thereby promoting awareness of teachers and administrators' bias and the impact of their personal bias on the referral of African Americans to special education, resulting in disproportionality. Based on the mixed results, the researcher assumes that changes occurred by exposing participants to the Bias Literacy Intervention and the Implicit Associations Test. However, the specifics or the degree to which exposure to the intervention had on participants is unknown.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The proportion of African American students enrolled in special education continues to outpace students of other races. During a five-year period between 2004 and 2008, an average of 14.79% White students were enrolled in special education compared to 15 to 45% of African American students (Zhang, Katsiyannis, Ju, & Roberts, 2014). Bird and Bassin (2015) further elucidated this concern with findings indicating the number of African American students receiving special education services for mental retardation and emotional disturbance were significantly disproportional to the number of White students in special education.

Losen and Orfield (2002) concluded that a plethora of factors contribute to disproportionate rates of African American children being placed in special education. Examples of the factors include, but are not limited to:

. . . unconscious racial bias on the part of the school personnel, large resource inequalities that run along lines of race and class, unjustifiable reliance on IQ and other evaluation tools, educators' inappropriate responses to the high pressures of high stakes testing, and power differentials between minority parents and school officials. (Losen & Orfield, 2002, p. xviii)

Redfield and Kraft (2012) asserted, "Color is a likely factor considered implicitly when finding and making those first critical referrals and subsequent educational decisions as to

minority children” (p. 133). They further contended “black boys” received the label in high incidence categories, such as mild intellectual disability; although in recent years, new eligibility categories are disproportionate, thus resulting in disproportionate placements. Blair, Steiner, and Havranek (2011) contended that implicit bias can be activated quickly and unknowingly or unintentionally. For example, an African American male student may receive a referral for special education due to cultural differences between the student and the teacher. Because of the cultural mismatch, the teacher’s perceives the student’s loud demonstrative behavior as aggressive, thus interpreting it as a behavior disability. Consequently, biased confirmation may lead to biased labeling (Knotek, 2003). Therefore, when a teacher is explicitly biased, he or she exhibits conscious awareness and perception and believes that perception to be correct in some manner (Blair et al., 2011). On the other hand, implicit bias is usually subtle or unintentional (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Rudman, 2004).

Prior to 1965, control of schools in the United States was at the local level. Consequently, the decision-making process for placing students in special education programs differed among states and school districts. In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESEA) of 1965 outlined federal expectations for schools, as well as mandates and limited funding to help disadvantaged and special needs students. This led to future federal legislation, such as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) in 1975, which was instrumental in educational reform for children with special needs. The purpose of the law was (a) to ensure students with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate education, (b) to protect the rights of children with

disabilities and their parents, (c) to assist local and state agencies in the education of students with disabilities, and (d) to ensure students with disabilities are educated. The Education of All Handicapped Children's Act (EHA) and its reissuance as the IDEA Improvement Act Amendments of 2004 (Public Law 108-446) provided the states with the opportunity to utilize federal funds to educate children with mental and physical disabilities. EHA ensured the following for students with disabilities: (a) equal access to education, (b) education evaluations, (c) individualized education programs, and (d) educational interventions to support the need for specialized instruction (Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004 (IDEIA, 2004) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) changed the accountability measures for educators through mandated monitoring of academic outcomes for students at risk for academic failure and inappropriate behavior (Meyers, Meyers, Grayball, Proctor, & Huddleston, 2012). In order to assist students struggling academically or behaviorally, IDEIA delineated a Response to Intervention (RtI) process as a support structure to remediate the deficits prior to referral to special education. RtI is a problem-solving process in which teachers implement researched-based interventions to address students struggling academically and behaviorally and then monitor students' progress towards the intervention goals (Gresham, 2005, 2009; Lane, Pierson, Robertson, & Little, 2004). The RtI model utilizes data based decision making to implement, modify, and monitor the progress of interventions. Furthermore, the central concept of the RtI approach is to determine whether "adequate" or "inadequate" (Gresham, 2005, p. 332) progress occurs

via the RtI process. The RtI models consist of multitiered instructional delivery in which educators provide interventions and assess the response to the interventions frequently. The frequency of the interventions relies on the individual student's instructional response. In essence, RtI can serve as an alternative to standardized assessments for students with suspected disabilities (Hartlep & Ellis, 2010).

The promise of RtI encourages teachers to provide intervention strategies that improve the learning outcomes for all students (O'Shaughnessy, Lane, Gresham, & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2003). In order to support the teacher's implementation of intervention, the process of developing effective interventions rests on the expertise of the school-based, problem-solving team. Educators develop interventions to address students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. Several models of prereferral intervention methods and teams have developed, including Child Study Teams (Moore, Fifield, Spera, & Scalato, 1989), Prereferral Intervention Teams (Graden, Casey, & Christensen, 1985), Mainstream Assistance Teams (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bahr, 1990), Instructional Consultation Teams (Rosenfield & Gravois, 1996), and Instructional Support Teams (Graden et al., 1985). In the state of Georgia, Student Support Teams (SSTs) refers to prereferral teams (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). This research study utilizes the term of Student Support Team.

Zhang et al. (2014) suggested that minority overrepresentation in special education continues to remain a challenge. African Americans were the most represented, with representation rates ranging from 14.79 to 15.45% in the 5 years (2004 and 2008) under study. The special education representation rates of American

Indians/Alaskan Natives ranged from 14.10 to 15.21 percent. Whites fell in the middle of these groups, with special education representation rates consistently below 13 percent. Asians/Pacific Islanders were the least represented in special education (ranging from 5.73 to 6.11%). Hispanics were the second least represented group, with representation rates ranging from 10.39 to 10.76 percent (Zhang et al., 2014). Ferri and Connor (2005) cited bias at the prereferral state of the special education eligibility process as one possible cause for disproportionality.

Eidle, Boyd, Truscott, and Meyers (1998) studied prereferral teams and found the referral process may not be as objective as intended, especially in the case of the students referred to, and placed in, special education. A recent study on multidisciplinary teams (MDT) and implicit bias found that MDT members consistently applied White middle-class norms, both explicitly and implicitly, when discussing African American students and their families (Fletcher, 2014). When these students failed to conform to established norms, cultural stereotypes and misunderstandings emerged. Furthermore, emerging themes in participants' comments contained implicit biases and deficit language. This research suggests implicit bias may exist in the multidisciplinary team (MDT) members' decision to refer an African American student for special education (Fletcher, 2014).

Statement of Problem

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 established the objective prereferral process to manage referrals, assessments, and placements of students in special education by implementing policies and procedures to guide decision making in a nondiscriminatory way (Gritzmacher & Gritzmacher, 2010). The primary

responsibility of the multidisciplinary teams (MDT) is to reduce inappropriate placements and referrals that may be discriminatory (Friend & Bursuck, 2006).

The rationale behind the problem-solving team is to maintain objectivity in decisions regarding interventions to assist with academic and behavioral challenges and to refer students objectively for eligibility for special education. However, occasionally, the decisions are subjective and may rely on biased information presented by the classroom teacher (Knotek, 2003; Peters, Kranzler, Algina, Smith, & Daunic, 2014). This warrants an investigation of this phenomenon.

History of Disproportionality

In the context of this study, disproportionality refers to “the overrepresentation of specific groups in special education programs in relation to their representation in the overall enrollment, and/or the under-representation of specific groups in accessing interventions, resources, programs, rigorous curriculum and instruction” (NYU Steinhardt, 2009, p. 9). Furthermore, disproportionality describes a situation of classifying and students of an identified race and ethnic group as students with disabilities and placing them in special education programs.

Although disproportionality is a current concern in special education, it is not a new phenomenon. For nearly four decades, racial and ethnic minorities in special education programs proposed a challenge in the education system (Gamm, 2007; Hosp & Reschly, 2004). Dunn (1968) was the first to draw attention to disproportionality of the large percentage of African Americans and students from impoverished backgrounds in classes for the mentally handicapped when he found and reported the placement of

African American children in Educable Mentally Retarded classes at a disturbing rate. Dunn (1968) estimated that 60 to 80% of the students enrolled in these classes came from minority or low socioeconomic status backgrounds. Harry and Anderson (1994) indicated the primary recipients of special education initially were students of color and those of low socioeconomic status. Utilizing growth models from 2004 to 2008 (five-year period), Zhang et al. (2014) found a noteworthy decrease in the number of African American students referred for special education and a moderate decrease in the number of Hispanic students referred for special education. However, during the same timeframe, the number of Hispanic students in the learning disability category increased, thus reflecting a similar trend from a decade before (Zhang et al., 2014).

The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) monitors and enforces U.S. statutes, barring discrimination against minority students in education. Despite the accountability efforts and policy development, research contends these strategies have been insufficient (Losen & Orfield, 2002). For example, Oswald, Coutinho, Best, and Nguyen (2001) found that policy responses to overrepresentation of minority students in a particular disability category (e.g., intellectual disability) can potentially lead to reduced disproportionality in that category, and the adverse impact results in an increased disproportional representation in another category. For example, the U.S. Department of Education (1994) indicated overrepresentation of African Americans among students with mild mental retardation disappeared in California between 1980 and 1994. However, African American students identified with specific learning disabilities experienced significant disproportionality. From 2002 to 2003,

African American students were three times more likely to receive the label of intellectually disabled and 2.3 times more likely to receive the label of emotionally disturbed than all other racial ethnic groups combined (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2009).

Raines, Dever, Kamphaus, and Roach (2012) coordinated early intervention services, and positive behavioral supports (Collins & Ryan, 2015) have been implemented to reduce disproportionality in special education. Despite the aforementioned efforts, disproportionality remains a concern. In March 2016, the U.S. Department of Education proposed a new rule to improve equity in special education and the practices in each state. The proposed equity in IDEA rule set forth by Secretary John B. King, Jr. is as follows:

The Secretary proposes to amend regulations under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) governing the Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities program and the Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities program. With the goal of promoting equity in IDEA, the regulations would establish a standard methodology States must use to determine whether significant disproportionality based on race and ethnicity is occurring in the State and in its local educational agencies (LEAs); clarify that States must address significant disproportionality in the incidence, duration, and type of disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions, using the same statutory remedies required to address significant disproportionality in the identification and placement of children with disabilities; clarify requirements for

the review and revision of policies, practices, and procedures when significant disproportionality is found; and require that LEAs identify and address the factors contributing to significant disproportionality as part of comprehensive coordinated early intervening services (comprehensive CEIS) and allow such services for children from age 3 through grade 12, with and without disabilities. (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 10968)

Zhang et al. (2014) investigated cultural minority group status and the representation in special education from 2004 to 2008. The researchers were particularly interested during the aforementioned timeframe due to recent federal mandates to reduce disproportionality. The source of data included the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program and the Data Accountability Center funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The results indicated that African American students received the highest rates of special education referrals between 2004 and 2008, with representation rates ranging from 14.8 to 15.5 percent (Zhang et al., 2014). Data from the U. S. Department of Education verify a higher percentage of Black and American Indian students under the classification of emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, and specific learning disabilities during from 2011 to 2012. *Figure 1* displays this data.

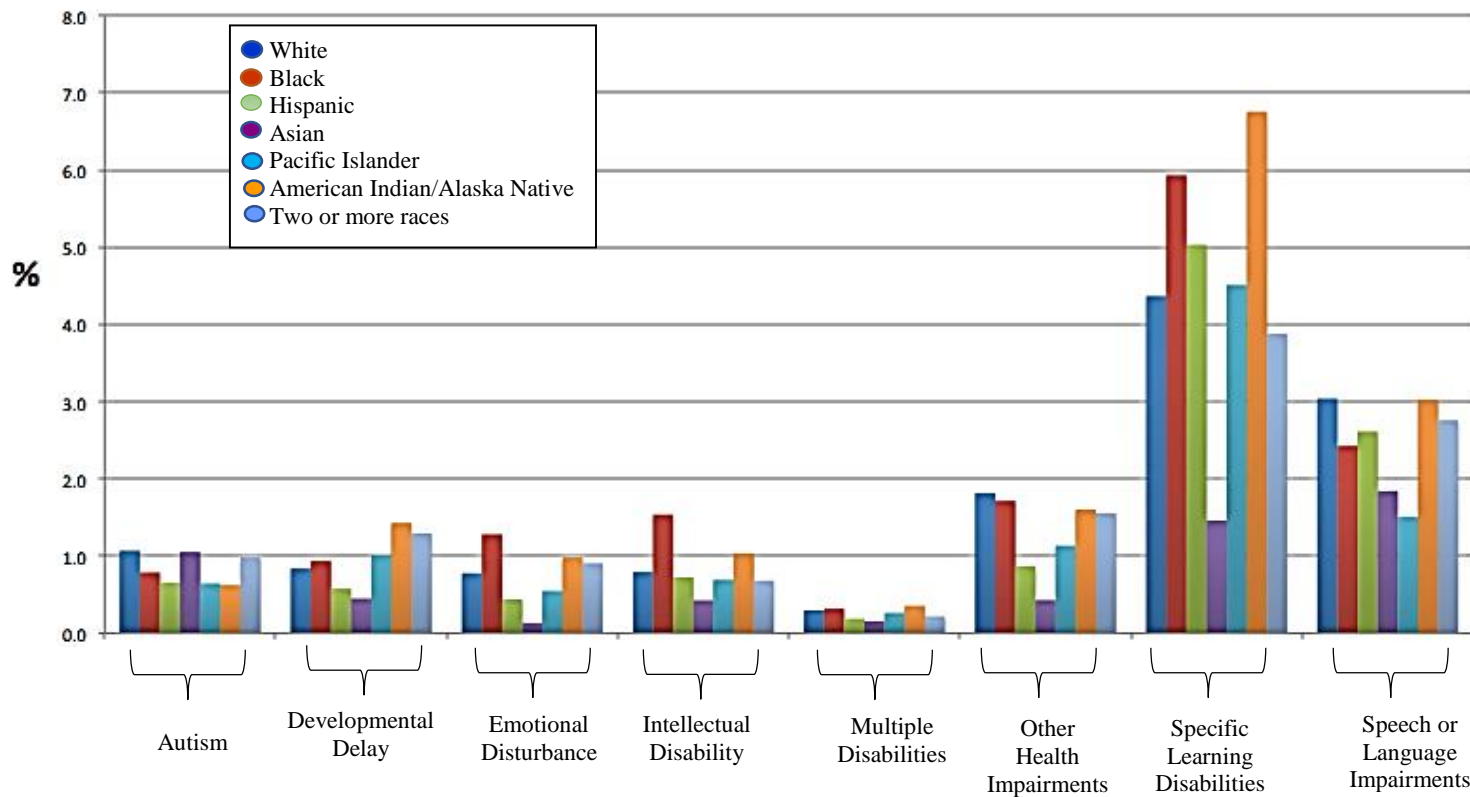


Figure 1. Classification of children by race and disability (2010-2012). Adapted with permission from “Table 204.50: Children 3 to 21 Years Old Served under Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, by Race/Ethnicity and Type of Disability: 2010-11 and 2011-2012,” by U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics: Digest of Education Statistics, 2013. Copyright 2013 by NCES.

Explicit and Implicit Bias

Ferri and Connor (2005) cited bias at the prereferral stage of the special education eligibility process as one possible cause for disproportionality. Historically, people displayed acts of racism in overt ways, such as forcing Blacks to sit at the back of the bus or drink from water fountains labeled *colored*. Furthermore, expressions of racism were blatant, observable, and obvious during the Civil Rights era. After the Civil Rights Movement, overt expressions of racism became socially unacceptable (Pettigrew, 1989). As a result, the legal and social consequences of overt forms racism encouraged people to cover racist thoughts, beliefs, and feelings (Coates, 2008).

Martin (2014) contended,

Covert racism is indirect, subtle, and can have different forms of expression.

Embedded in our institutions and public systems, it may appear as either a conscious, but masked, expression or a nonconscious cognitive process. The conscious expression of covert racism is considered explicit racism or racial bias, and the non-conscious expression is defined as implicit racism or racial bias. (p. 7).

Figure 2 displays the influence of aversive racism on special education referrals.

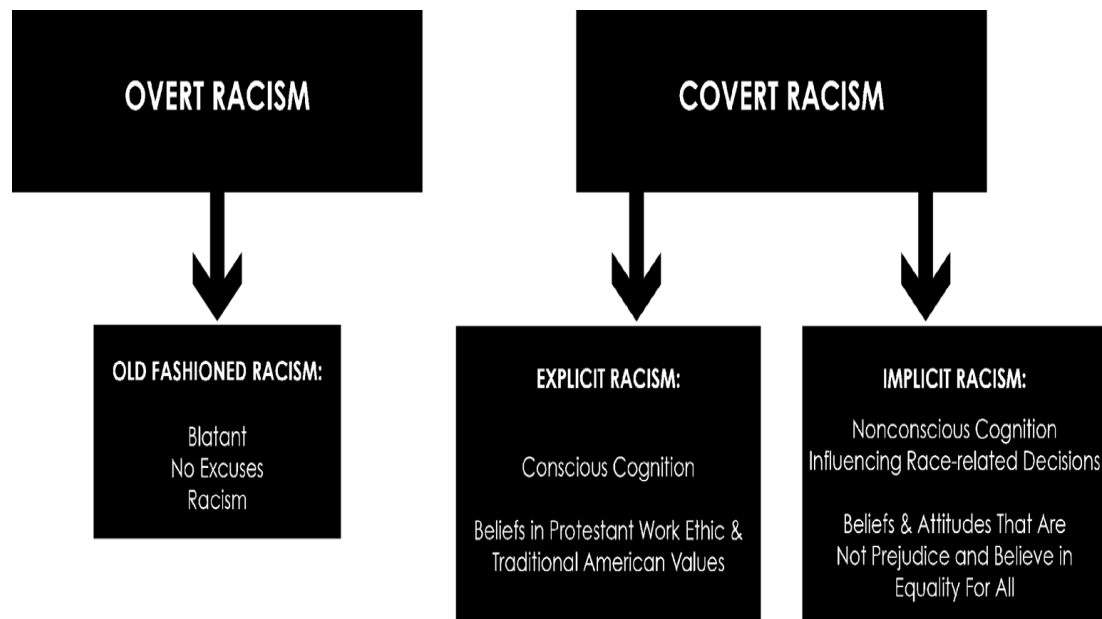


Figure 2. The influence of aversive racism on special education referrals. Reprinted with permission from “Disproportionality of African American Students in Special Education,” by C. E. Martin, 2014, p. 129. Copyright 2014 by Chris Elizabeth Martin.

Conversely, the other demonstration of covert racism is implicit racial bias, defined as the nonconscious cognitions, embedded through the lifecycle into a person’s nonconscious mind, that influence an individual’s decisions (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

While explicit bias reflects the attitudes or beliefs that one sanctions consciously, “implicit bias is the bias in judgment . . . that results from subtle cognitive processes (e.g., implicit attitudes and implicit stereotypes) that often operate at a level below conscious awareness and without intentional control” (National Center for State Courts, 2012, p. 1). The fundamental implicit attitudes and stereotyping underpinning implicit bias are those beliefs or simple associations that an individual makes between an object and its evaluation that “are automatically activated by the mere presence (actual or symbolic) of the attitude object” (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002, p. 94).

The psychological development of implicit bias may develop from a history of affective experiences, cultural experiences, and the self. The affective experience purports that implicit bias may derive “from a history of individual experiences that connect certain racial groups with fear or other negative affect” (National Center for State Courts, 2012, p. 2). There is a link “between implicit (but not explicit) racial bias and neural activity in the amygdala, the region in the brain that scientists have associated with emotional learning and fear conditioning” (National Center for State Courts, 2012, p. 2). For example, “White persons who score highly on measures of implicit racial bias also react to images of unfamiliar Black faces with stronger amygdala activation” (National Center for State Courts, 2012, pp. 2-3).

The culture experiences explanation proffers that “people share a common social understanding” (National Center for State Courts, 2012, p. 3) of the stereotypes that pervasively exist in our culture. This information “can foster implicit bias” (National Center for State Courts, 2012, p. 3) even though the individual may not “endorse the cultural stereotype” (National Center for State Courts, 2012, p. 3). The postulation of self contends people possess consistent positive attitudes about the self and can thus transfer those attitudes on other things and/or people “that share attributes with the self” (National Center for State Courts, 2012, p. 4).

Even though their behaviors are contrary to their professed beliefs, implicit expressions of covert racism exist in people who believe in egalitarian ideals (Hodson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2004). Implicit cognitions of racial bias form from prior experiences that guide an individual’s conclusions about people without the individual

realizing this happened (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Further illustrating this concept are the findings of Dovidio and Gaertner (2000) when they investigated the influence of implicit racial bias in hiring practices. For example, when an African American candidate was highly qualified or highly unqualified for a job, the decision to hire or not hire the African American candidate was clear: hire the qualified candidate and do not hire the unqualified candidate. Conversely, when the African American candidate was equally qualified with a White candidate, the employer chose the White candidate more often, even though the only difference was the race of the candidate (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). Dovidio and Gaertner (2000) concluded the employer made this decision using unconscious negative feelings about African Americans, rather than because of the explicit beliefs of the employer.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent Bias Literacy Intervention impacts pre- and posttest results of the Teacher Expectations Scale and Personal Objectivity Scale, thus increasing personal awareness of teacher implicit bias towards African American students and the awareness of the how implicit bias potentially influences teacher decisions to refer African American students to special education.

Research Questions

1. Does an educational intervention change MDT members' perceived self-objectivity and perceived expectations?

H_{01A}: There is no statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest self objectivity as measured by the Personal Objectivity Scale.

H_{1A}: There is a statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest self objectivity as measured by the Personal Objectivity Scale.

H_{01B}: There is no statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest expectations as measured by the Teacher Expectations Scale.

H_{1B}: There is a statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest expectations as measured by the Teacher Expectations Scale.

2. How do MDT members describe student characteristics that influence a referral to special education?
3. What student characteristics or behaviors influence the MDT members' decision making, when referring African American students for special education services?

Procedures and Methodology

This study utilized a mixed-methods study of implicit bias, for, as Johnson and Christensen (2008) contended, mixed-method studies are necessary to reveal the depth and breadth of a phenomenon. A mixed-methods study allows the researcher to answer exploratory questions as well as “verify and generate theory in the same study”

(Tashakorri & Teddlie, 2003, p. 15). Many definitions of mixed methods exist; however, this study defined mixed methods research as a research approach or methodology that focuses “on research questions and elicits real-life contextual understandings, multilevel perspectives, and cultural influences” (Meissner, Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark, & Smith, 2011, p. 4). Furthermore, the mixed method approach employs “rigorous quantitative research assessing magnitude and frequency of constructs and rigorous qualitative research exploring the meaning and understanding of constructs” (Meissner et al., 2011, p. 4). In essence, “Utilizing multiple methods (e.g., intervention trials and in-depth interviews) [and] intentionally integrating or combining these methods to draw on the strengths of each . . . while framing the investigation within philosophical and theoretical positions” (Meissner et al., 2011, p. 4).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher utilized a mixed-methods approach to reach a greater understanding of the role of implicit bias in the decision-making process of multidisciplinary teams to refer African American students to special education. In addition, this investigation utilized mixed methods (Creswell, 2007) to evaluate the participants’ open-ended responses and written evaluations of the workshop. The applicability of quantitative and qualitative research methodology for this study was appropriate.

The interventional portion of the research study encompassed the use of the Bias Literacy workshop (Carnes et al., 2015) and the Implicit Association Test-Race (IAT-Race) (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004), a procedure for measuring implicit associations, particularly those feelings and thoughts that exist external to conscious awareness or

control. The IAT-Race measures the strength of associations that accumulate through daily experiences and interactions, despite the individual's awareness of holding these associations and despite the validity and truthfulness of the perceptions. The IAT-Race is a flexible tool that can be used to measure positive or negative associations about any types of concepts (Lane, Banaji, Nosek, & Greenwald, 2007). The researcher administered two pre- and posttest scales (Objectivity and Teacher Expectations Scales) via an emailed link to various members of the multidisciplinary team at one school. Analyses of the quantitative results were in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics.

The qualitative portion of this study was a case study analysis of participants through open-ended questions in the initial quantitative phase of the study. The researcher was going to select participants based on the following criterion: IAT-Race scores and high disproportionality rates (per school). Based on the aforementioned criterion, the researcher planned to interview 10-15 selected participants, but none of the participants volunteered. Instead, the researcher analyzed the open-ended responses of the participants regarding their last student referral to special education.

Theoretical Framework

Originating in the mid 1970s during the Civil Rights Movement (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995), the Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement originated as “a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relation among, race, racism, and power” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 2). Historians recognize the following as the founders of Critical Race Theory: Derrick Bell, Kimberle

Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Alan Freeman, Lani Guinier, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams (Taylor, 1998). Critical Race Theory serves as a framework to aid in theorizing, examining, and challenging the way in which race and racism obviously affects practices, discourses, and social structures (Yosso, 2005). Since its inception, over the past two decades, educators have become increasingly interested in exploring race and racism in schools, primarily under the support of multicultural education and more recently through the lens of Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate were preeminent for introducing CRT to the field of education as a theoretical and analytical framework (Decuir & Dixson, 2004).

In the field of education, critical race theorists investigate the social construction of race and the role it plays in the education policies that impact minorities; thus, it can provide an additional perspective to the literature on the education of African Americans in special education. This study utilized CRT as a methodological framework to examine implicit bias as a contributing factor impacting African Americans enrollment in special education. This study can be viewed through the theoretical framework CRT, which acknowledges social inequities through the lens of race and ethnicity. As explained by Delgado and Stefancic (2001), the framework of CRT is guided by basic beliefs that reject the traditional tenets of liberalism and meritocracy because they promote self-interest, power, and privilege, which favor the dominant culture and do not take into account the inequalities that people of color experience every day. Critical Race Theory recognizes the fact that racism is engrained in the fabric and system of American society.

Critical Race Theory served as a framework for exploring the implicit bias of MDT members and challenging their decisions to refer African Americans for special education. For the purpose of this research, analysis utilized the tenet of social construction (Allen, 2010). Social constructionists seek to explore the underlying reasoning for racism, despite the notion that mainstream society is a direct result of biological and/or genetic differences. Rather it is “historically and socially constructed, created (and re-created) by how people are perceived and treated in the normal actions of everyday life ‘race’ is never fixed, it is a dynamic, constantly changing relationship” (Marable, 2003, p. 22). “As with any intellectual movement, CRT builds its foundation upon certain theoretical pillars” (Allen, p. vii). CRT specifically recognizes (a) ordinariness (b) interest convergence, (c) social construction, (d) differential racialization, and (e) legal story telling (Allen, 2010). For the purpose of this research, analysis utilized the tenets of interest convergence and social construction (see Table 1) (Allen, 2010).

Table 1

Tenets of Critical Race Theory

CRT Tenet	Definition	Source
Ordinariness	Recognizes that race is common and ordinary. Racism is difficult to cure, curve, and address.	Delgado & Stefancic (2001)
Interest Convergence	Culture will change only in the interest of the dominant group.	Lopez (2003)
Social Construction	Race is historically and social constructed by how people are perceived and treated in everyday life.	Marable (2003)
Differential Racialization	Society assigns various roles to different minority groups and forces competition among the groups.	Winant (2004)
Legal Story Telling	Minority groups communicate their stories through life experiences.	Delgado & Stefancic (2001)

Note. Reprinted with permission from “A Critical Race Theory Analysis of Disproportionate Representation of Blacks and Males Participating in Florida’s Special Education Programs,” by A. G. Allen, 2010, p. 35. Copyright 2010 by Anthony G. Allen.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for a number of reasons. First, this study examined implicit bias as a contributing factor of disproportionality by examining the decision process made by members of the multidisciplinary team. The results of this study may stimulate change among educators by encouraging them to identify and examine their own hidden biases, perceptions, stereotypes, and beliefs that may negatively affect African American students. Furthermore, the research contributes an examination of the

imperative phase in special education placement—the prereferral intervention process—to the extensive body of literature documenting disproportionality.

Limitations and Delimitations

While applicable to the sample selected, the findings of this study are nevertheless subject to several unavoidable limitations, one of which is the limited generalizability of results to other races. A second limitation relates to the subjectivity of the findings, as they derive from participant perceptions about experiences, rather than actual occurrences. A third limitation relates to the role of the researcher, who serves as the primary investigator and the facilitator of all group processes, which may influence group interactions and responses. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative researchers often “position themselves” (p. 8) within the research. The researcher is a key instrument for data collection, and researcher bias could have an effect on the validity of the data collected if the researcher is not aware of her own values and objectives (Creswell, 2013). The first step in guarding against both kinds of researcher bias was inclusion of self, as the first person interviewed (in the bracketing interview). Through the methodology of bracketing the researcher’s personal experiences, the researcher does not influence the participants understanding of the phenomenon. “Bracketing is a methodological device of phenomenological inquiry that requires deliberate putting aside one’s own belief about the phenomenon under investigation or what one already knows about the subject prior to and throughout the phenomenological investigation” (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013, p. 1). A fourth limitation relates to the one group pretest-posttest research design, which poses

several threats to internal validity, such as history threat, maturation threat, or testing threat (Duckart, 1998).

Definition of Terms

The following definitions serve as a guide for the terms used in this study:

Bias is the negative evaluation of perception of one group and its members relative to another. Bias occurs whether the act is intentional or unintentional (Blair et al., 2011).

Disproportionality or overrepresentation is a representation of certain groups of students at proportions significantly greater than their proportion in the general population (Gravoise & Rosenfield, 2006). Oswald, Coutinho, Best, and Singh (1999) defined disproportionality as “the extent to which membership in a given ethnic group affects the probability of being place in a special education disability category” (p. 198).

Explicit bias refers to the beliefs, attitudes, actions, or perceptions (negative or positive) that individuals are aware they possess against members of another group merely due to their membership of that group (Blair et al., 2011).

Implicit bias refers to unconscious negative thoughts, attitudes, stereotypes, perceptions, or behaviors of which the person is neither aware nor believes that he or she possesses against members of another ethnic or racial group essentially because of their membership in that group (Dovidio, Kawakami, Smoak, & Gaertner, 2009).

Multidisciplinary team (MDT) is a team of individuals who assist the general education teacher in developing prereferral interventions for students who are experiencing academic, social, and/or behavioral difficulties at school and are identified

in needing additional support (Chen & Gregory, 2010). The following are members of the MDT: general education teacher, parent(s), school administrator, and other professionals such as school counselor, speech/ language pathologist, or school psychologist. The primary responsibility of the MDT is to determine whether a special education evaluation is necessary for a student who continues to struggle academically despite the implementation of multiple educational interventions. Terms synonymous with MDT include Child Study Team, Student Intervention Team, Student Assistance Team, Prereferral Intervention Team, or Student Support Team (Eidle et al., 1998).

Special education is, according to IDEIA (2004), specifically designed instruction for students who meet placement qualifications. These continuum services may include one or a combination of services provided within the general education setting, home setting, hospital, or institution. The student receives services at no cost to the parent (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).

Summary

Despite the establishment of a prereferral process for placement of students in special education classes, identification of a disproportionate percentage of nonWhite students continues. Indications of bias on the part of multidisciplinary team members warrant an investigation of this phenomenon. This mixed-methods study utilized two quantitative instruments, Teacher Expectation Scale and Personal Objectivity Scales, and open-ended questions in an attempt to gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon, perceived through the framework and lens of Critical Race Theory.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature pertaining to this study. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the conclusions, implication, and recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides a historical review of the relevant background literature that established a context for this study. This chapter begins with the history of special education and litigation to support establishment of special education in the United States. Next, the chapter provides a discussion of the education and the Civil Rights Movement and the documented history of disproportionality in special education. Following this, an explanation of the special education process precedes the discussion of implicit bias and exploration of the Bias Literacy Workshop to reduce bias in participants.

The Establishment of Special Education

In the 1950s, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, and the perception of threat initiated Congress to pass the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (NDEA), which provided resources to improve math and science in early grades (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996). Subsequently, President Dwight Eisenhower signed Public Law 85-926, which provided financial support for post secondary training for personnel teaching children with mental retardation. Congress expanded Public Law 85-926 to provide grants to train researchers and teachers in a myriad of disabilities (Martin et al. 1996).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was a federal response from President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty legislation. It served as a

a primary vehicle to support public schools and highlighted the national poverty rate as 19 percent (Kelly, 2014). The bill assisted funding education of low-income children, established accountability and high standards, and aimed to close the achievement gap for all students (Kelly, 2014). In the primary stage of ESEA, federal funding did not include children with disabilities; however, in the sophomore year of ESEA, Public-Law 89-313 provided that state-funded or state-operated schools for students with handicapping conditions would benefit from Title I funding (Martin et al., 1996).

During the 1960s, special education advocates wanted the following to support students with disabilities: “(1) coordinate federal efforts for students with disabilities, (2) increased categorical funding, which means funding specifically for students with disabilities, and (3) enforceable entitlements (Martin et al., 1996, p. 27). In response to the aforementioned, Congress established the Bureau for Education for the Handicapped (BEH) under Title VI of ESEA, which provided funding to improve the programming for students with disabilities (Martin et al., 1996).

In 1975, Public Law 94-142 was instrumental in mandating the entitlement of students with disabilities to a free and appropriate education (FAPE). Public Law 94-142 guaranteed “a free and public education, due process, nondiscriminatory assessment, and an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for every student, and educational services be provided in the least restrictive environment” (Keogh, 2007, p. 67). However, despite the efforts of federal legislation, federal funding, and federally mandated processes and procedures for students with disabilities, advocates voiced growing concerns regarding insufficient funding, mandated state enforcement of federal processes and procedures,

and discrepancies in who received or did not receive funding. Therefore, advocates turned to the courts to advocate on behalf of students with disabilities (Martin et al., 1996).

Education and the Civil Rights Movement

The landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) served as the catalyst for change. Historically, the development of special education programs were from general education and categorized as a “special class” (MacMillan & Hendrick, 1993). The “special class” received a continuum of services that ranged and provided for the following: low teacher-pupil ratios, specially trained teachers, greater individualization of instruction in a homogenous classroom, and curricular focus on social and vocational goals (Shattuck, 1946). Historically, access to the public school system was denied for students with physical, intellectual, or psychological disabilities, which subsequently violated their constitutional rights (Shealey, Lue, Brooks, & McRay, 2005). Furthermore, Losen and Orfield (2002) contended that students with disabilities experienced overt debarment from the inclusiveness of the public school system, leading to discriminatory practices imposed by the public school teams.

Since before 1954, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s Legal Defense and Education Fund handled such groundbreaking cases as *Brown v. Board of Education*, the name given collectively to five separate cases heard by the U.S. Supreme Court concerning the issue of segregation in public schools. These cases were *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, *Briggs v. Elliot*, *Davis v. Board of Education of Prince Edward County (VA.)*, *Boiling v. Sharpe*, and *Gebhart v. Ethel*

(Knappman, Christenson, & Paddock, 2001). The circumstances surrounding *Brown v. Board of Education* forced the Supreme Court to recognize the importance of providing all children with an appropriate education. *Brown's* case highlighted significant concerns with the physical conditions and the lack of resources provided to Black schools (Knappman et al., 2001).

Brown vs. Board of Education contended that segregation of Black children prepared those children for segregation that would permeate their adult life. Furthermore, the defendants of Board of Education argued that segregation was not harmful because notable Black children, such as Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington, overcame segregation, and race and class obstacles to achieve their goals (Knappman et al., 2001). Black parents opposing the aforementioned argument refuted the “inferior Black school” notion purported by Black parents. To extend this point, Black parents considered school staff highly capable of teaching students of any race; however, they protested the inequitable distribution of resources between Black and White schools (Blanchett, 2010).

The Supreme Court relied upon the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, which was the basis for *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), to render their decision and help dismantle racial segregation, establishing the basis for many other decisions rejecting discrimination against people belonging to various groups. Therefore, *Brown* is the cornerstone of protecting the rights of the disenfranchised, particularly those with disabilities (Russo & Talbert-Johnson, 1997). Additionally, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided an important lever for racial justice in education that was especially effective when the federal government made enforcement a high priority.

Furthermore, critically imperative to Title VI regulations, plaintiffs could use statistical evidence to prove that a race neutral policy has an unjustifiably disparate impact on children of color in violation of the law (Losen & Orfield, 2002).

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court collectively overturned the “separate but equal” ruling in the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case and further ruled that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal, with Chief Justice Earl Warren writing the majority opinion. The following decision read as follows:

We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of the children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does. . . . We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. (Supreme Court, as cited in Blanchett, 2010, p. 71)

President Barak Obama asserted that the Civil Rights Act is “an essential piece of the American Character” (Obama, 2014, para. 30). As a response to the Civil Rights Movement, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided access to voting, public accommodations, and employment in addition to improving the overall status of individuals experiencing discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex and national

origins (Hersch & Shinnall, 2015). While several titles exist under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IV's intent to desegregate public schools quickly was an important juncture considering the lack of progress since *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), enacted as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, ensured that children received a free and appropriate public education, rights and procedural safeguards that have produced measurable outcomes for students with disabilities, and improved graduation rates of students with disabilities (Losen & Orfield, 2002). Despite the aforementioned improvements, unequal distribution of special education benefits still exists (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). As a result, general and special education programs serve to marginalize African American children by “overrepresentation, misclassification, and hardships for minority students” (Child-Autism-Parent-Café.Com, para. 1). According to Toldson (2011),

Students with disabilities students are more than likely to (1) repeat a grade, (2) be suspended or expelled from school, (3) have the school contact the parent about problem behavior, and (4) have the school contact the parent about poor performance. (p. 4)

Albrecht, Skiba, Losen, Chung, and Middelberg (2011) analyzed four years of data from the annual performance reports (2006-07 to 2008-09 school years), while comparing the aforementioned findings to state risk ratios for disproportionality. Based on the risk ratios drawn from Annual Reports to Congress, African American students remain 2.83 times more likely than other students are to receive services in the category

of intellectual disabilities and 2.24 times as likely to be served in the category of emotionally disturbed. Sullivan and Bal (2013) found that Black students identified for special education were 2.8 times more likely to be identified as cognitively impaired. Sullivan and Bal also found that among Black males, one in three were identified for special education services, and Black females were nearly twice as likely to be identified as females of other races (2013).

Historically, *Brown vs. Board of Education* provided the groundwork for policy development for minority children in education. The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) monitors and enforces U.S. statutes barring discrimination against minority students in education. Despite the accountability efforts and policy development, research contends that these strategies have been insufficient (Losen & Orfield, 2002; Reschly, 2009). For example, Oswald, Coutinho, Best, and Nguyen (2001) found that while policy responses to overrepresentation of minority students in a particular disability category (e.g., intellectual disability) can potentially lead to reduced disproportionality in that category, the adverse impact results in increased disproportionate representation in another category.

Federal Legislation such as Public Law 94-142 was instrumental in education reform for children with special needs. The law emphasized the following: (a) ensure that students with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate education, (b) protect the rights of children with disabilities and their parents, (c) assist local and state agencies in the education of students with disabilities, and (d) ensure that students with disabilities are educated (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979). The Education

of All Handicapped Children's Act of 1975 (EHA) provided states the opportunity to utilize federal funds to educate children with mental and physical disabilities.

Furthermore, EHA provided the following for students with disabilities: (a) equal access to education, (b) education evaluations, (c) individualized education programs, and (d) educational interventions to support the need for specialized instruction (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979).

Traditionally, federal efforts were implemented to safeguarded African American males from disproportionate treatment; however, disproportionality continues to gain attention. In 2004, the amendment of IDEA highlighted disproportionality and included consideration of racial disparities among students with disabilities exposed to long-term suspension (Williams, 2007). Sections 612, 616, 618 of the act include the provisions to govern disproportionality. Specifically, Section 618 (d)(1) stated,

1. Each state that receives assistance under this subchapter, and the Secretary of the Interior, shall provide for the collection and the examination of data to determine if significant disproportionality based on race and ethnicity is occurring in the State and the local educational agencies of the State with respect to-
 - (A) the identification of children as children with disabilities, including the identification of children as children with disabilities in accordance with a particular impairment described in section 1403 (3) of this title;
 - (B) the placement in particular educational settings of such children; and

(C) the incidence, duration, and type of disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions (20. U.S.C. 1418(d).

2. Enforcement provisions were added to the definition of significant disproportionality, requiring that LEAs found significant disproportionate in any area to spend 15% of their Part B funds on coordinated early intervening services pursuant to section 613(f) (618(d)(2)).

3. In Section 616, congress was emphatically clear regarding monitoring priorities:

(C) Disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services, to the extent the representation is the result of inappropriate identification. (20 U.S.C. 1416 (a) (3)(C) (IDEA, 2004)

On March 6, 2012, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the release of the USDOE Office for Civil Rights Data Collection by stating, “The undeniable truth is that the everyday educational experience for many students of color violates the principle of equity at the heart of the American promise. It is our collective duty to change that” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, para. 4). In recent years, with the support of Arne Duncan, amendments of IDEA include provisions to change the monitoring and enforcement policy for the disproportionality requirements in order to align with special education law (Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders, 2013).

Definition of Disproportionality

In 1998, Yates (as cited in Salend, Duhaney, & Montgomery, 2002) defined disproportionate representation as “the presence of students from a specific group in an

education program being higher or lower than one would expect based on their representation in the general population of students” (p. 289). Oswald et al. (1999) defined disproportionality as “the extent to which membership in a given ethnic group affects the probability of being placed in a specific special education disability category” (p. 198). To calculate the disproportionality odds ratio, Salend et al. (2002, p. 289) recommended the following formula:

$$\begin{array}{lcl} \text{Odds} & & \frac{\text{\# of students of X ethnicity in Y disability category}}{\text{\# of students in X ethnicity in the student population}} \\ = & & \hline \text{Ratio} & & \frac{\text{\# of students of all other ethnicities in Y disability category}}{\text{\# of students of X ethnicity in the student population}} \end{array}$$

This formula highlights that the calculation of risk ratios derive from dividing the risk of specific racial or ethnic group being identified in a disability category by the risk of students in the comparison group for that specific disability category (Bollmer, Bethel, Garrison-Mogren, & Brauen, 2007).

The pervasive nature of disproportionality of African American males mirrors the disproportionality of discipline within the public schools system. According to Shah (2013), African American students, particularly males, receive frequent discipline and disproportionate rates of out-of-school suspension and expulsion when compared to White students. In a brief issued by the Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio (2012) regarding the disparity between out-of-school suspension rates of Black students and white students in Ohio’s largest urban school district, research indicated a disparity factor of 4.0, which is marginally higher than the national average. In other words, the average Black student

enrolled in the respective district is four times more likely to receive school suspension than the average White student is. In regards to students with disabilities, students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspension as students without disabilities are, as illustrated in *Figure 3* (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

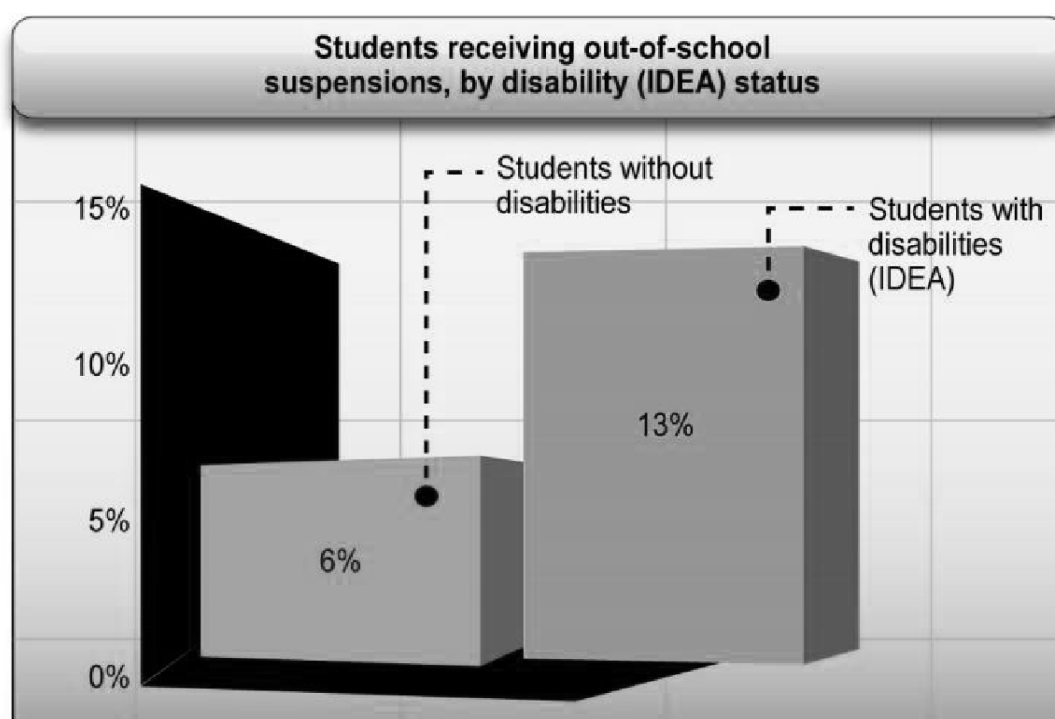


Figure 3. The percentage of student suspensions by disability status (2011-2012). Reprinted with permission from “Civil Rights Data Collection, Data Snapshot School Discipline,” by the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014. Copyright 2014 by CRDC.

History of Disproportionality of African Americans and Special Education

Artiles and Zamora-Duran (1997) further asserted that disproportionate representation includes both overrepresentation and underrepresentation of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in terms of educational placement and

classification and access to programs, resources, services, curriculum and instruction, and classroom management techniques. For example, the proportion of special education students from any ethnic group should be equivalent to the proportion of the individual school's population from the respective ethnic group (Artiles & Zamora-Duran, 1997). Consequently, African American students should comprise approximately 15% of the special education enrollment (National Association for Bilingual Education & Implementation by Local Administrators Project, 2002). On the other hand, when considering underrepresentation using a 15% African American enrollment in a school, if African American students comprise only 10% of the special education enrollment, teachers may not be referring students who have a disability. Thus, if students are not receiving referrals, students may not be receiving services, which further constitutes under representation. Conversely, if African American students receive referrals to special education at a ratio of 20%, yet comprise 15% of the entire student enrollment, overrepresentation has occurred. For example, the U.S. Department of Education (1994) indicated that overrepresentation of African Americans among students with mild mental retardation disappeared in California between 1980 and 1994, but African American students identified with specific learning disabilities experienced significant disproportionality.

In 2002-2003, African American students were three times more likely to be labeled mentally retarded (intellectually disabled) and 2.3 times more likely to be labeled emotionally disturbed than all other racial ethnic groups combined (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2009). According to Losen and Orfield (2002), African American students

are overrepresented in nine of thirteen categories and more likely than their White peers to be placed in highly restrictive educational settings. The U.S. Department of Education (2009) revealed that the identification and placement of African American students in special education programs occurs at a significantly higher rate than their White peers. Hosp and Reschly (2004) conducted a meta-analysis and discovered that African American students were significantly more likely to be both referred and found eligible for special education services than their White and Latino peers. In the case of students with disabilities, a comparison of African American students and their peers with the same disability revealed overrepresentation, particularly in general education settings, with regards to disabilities and judgmental categories, such as specific learning disabilities and speech or language impairments (Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Gallini, Simmons, & Feggins-Azziz, 2006). Donovan and Cross (2002) published research showing that disproportionality is higher in the judgmental, or *soft*, disability categories, such as intellectual disability (ID) and emotional disturbance (ED) due to the lack of empirical assessment data. On the other hand, disproportionality is not an issue in the nonjudgmental, or *hard*, disability categories such as visual impairment and hearing impairment (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

Current Trends of Disproportionality of African Americans in Special Education

Utilizing growth models for 2004 to 2008, Zhang, Katsiyannis, Ju, and Roberts (2014) found a noteworthy decrease in the number of African American students referred for special education, and a moderate decrease in the number of Hispanic students referred for special education. However, during the same timeframe, the number of

Hispanic students in the learning disability category increased; thus reflecting a similar trend from a decade before. *Figures 4-7* illustrate the percentages of students within each racial and disability group.

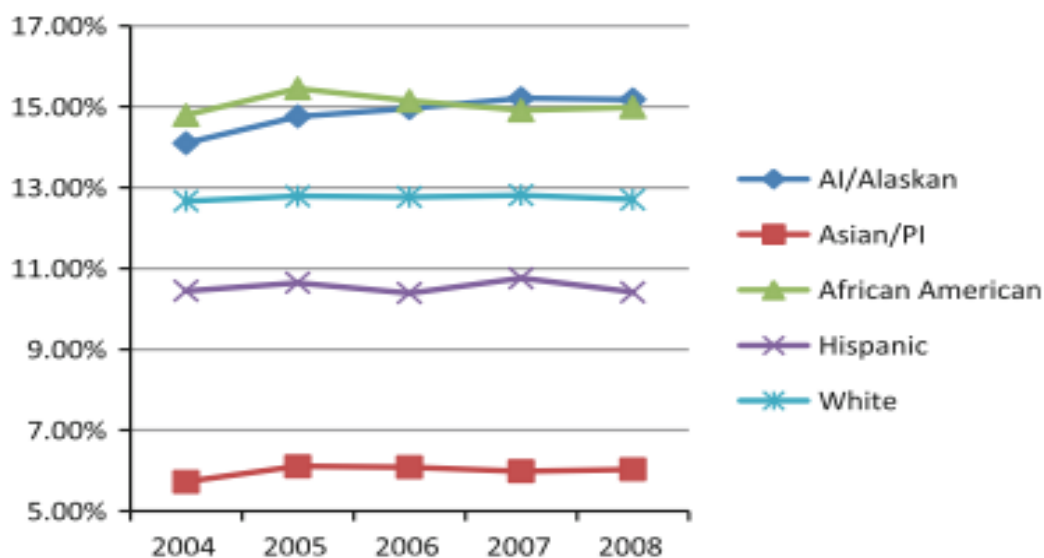


Figure 4. Percentage of students with disabilities in each racial group (2004-2008). Reprinted with permission from “Minority Representation in Special Education: Five Year Trends,” by D. Zhang, A. Katsiyannis, S. Ju, & E. L. Roberts, 2014, *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 23(1), p. 121 . Copyright 2014 by Springer.

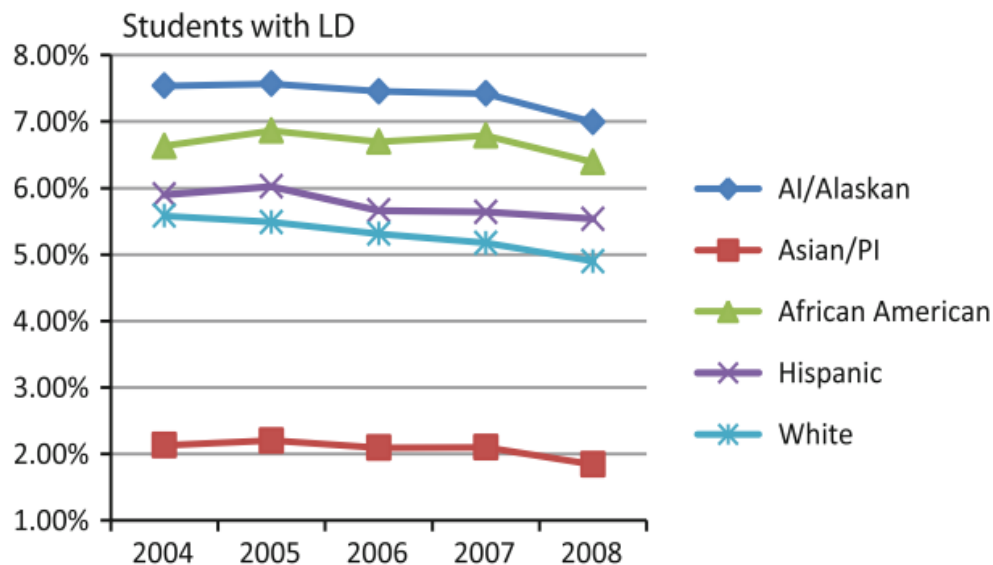


Figure 5. Percentage of students with an LD disability in each racial group (2004-2008). Reprinted with permission from “Minority Representation in Special Education: Five Year Trends,” by D. Zhang, A. Katsiyannis, S. Ju, & E. L. Roberts, 2014, *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 23(1), p. 121. Copyright 2014 by Springer.

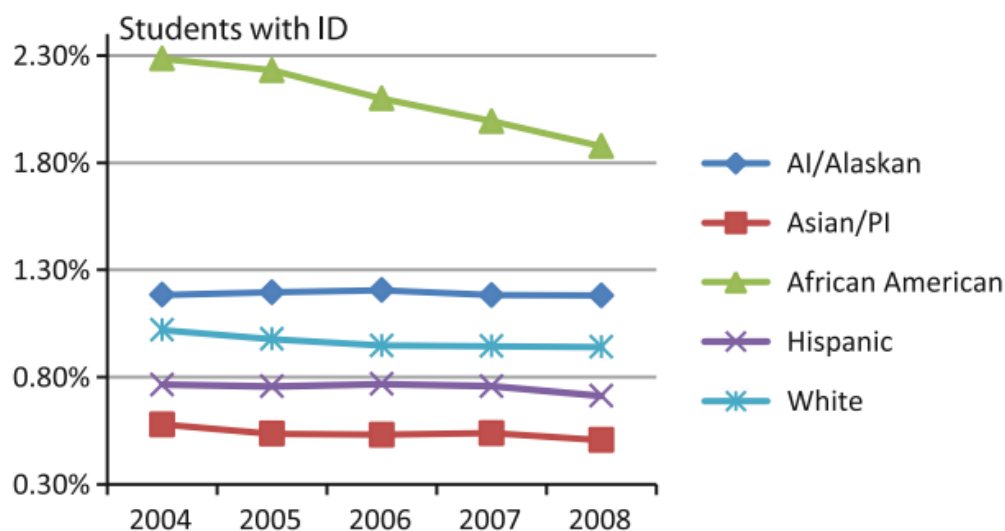


Figure 6. Percentage of students with an ID disability in each racial group (2004-2008). Reprinted with permission from “Minority Representation in Special Education: Five Year Trends,” by D. Zhang, A. Katsiyannis, S. Ju, & E. L. Roberts, 2014, *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 23(1), p. 121. Copyright 2014 by Springer

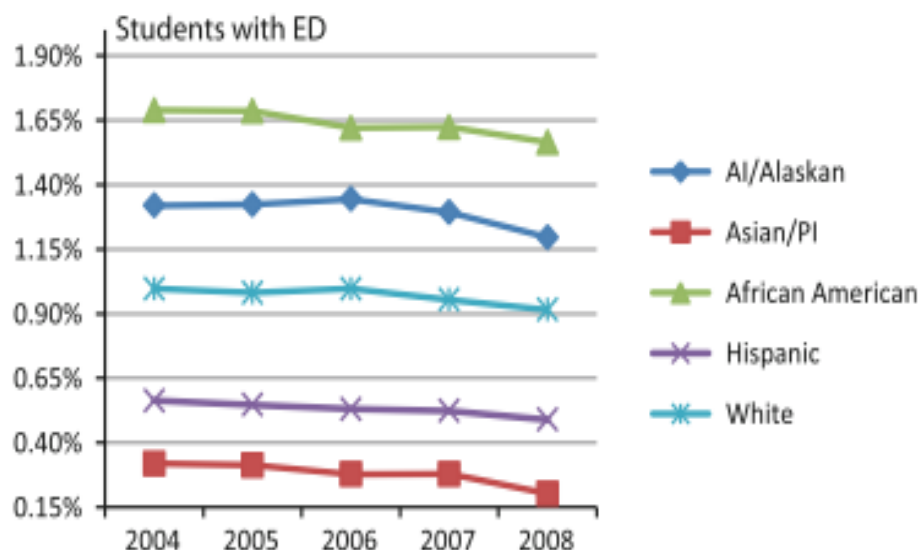


Figure 7. Percentage of students with an ED disability in each racial group (2004-2008). Reprinted with permission from “Minority Representation in Special Education: Five Year Trends,” by D. Zhang, A. Katsiyannis, S. Ju, & E. L. Roberts, 2014, *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 23(1), p. 121 . Copyright 2014 by Springer.

As evidenced in *Figure 1*, Data from the U. S. Department of Education verify a higher percentage of Black and American Indian students were classified with emotional disturbance, intellectual disability and specific learning disabilities from 2011 to 2012 (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). High-incidence disability categories include the following: emotional disturbance (ED), learning disability (LD), mental retardation or intellectual disabilities (MR or ID), other health impairments (OHI), and speech/language impairments (SLI). Based on the aforementioned high incidence categories, Black students are 24% to 26% more likely to be identified for special education (D’Agord, Munk, & O’Hara, 2012).

To some degree, responses from educators drive the placement of African American students into a judgmental category such as ED. Donovan and Cross (2002)

and Harry (2008) maintained that educators often misinterpret African American students' communication styles, affective needs, culture, and behaviors. Zhang et al. (2014) investigated cultural minority group status and the representation in special education from 2004 to 2008. Due to recent federal mandates to reduce disproportionality, the researchers were particularly interested during the aforementioned timeframe. The source of data included the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program and the Data Accountability Center funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The results indicated that African American students received the highest rates of special education between 2004 and 2008, with representation rates ranging from 14.8 to 15.5 percent.

Despite court cases, research efforts, and policy initiatives, racial and ethnic disproportionality problems persist as a critical and unresolved problem in the field of education (Skiba, 2013). According to the Cortiella and Horowitz (2014), Black and Hispanic students continue to be overrepresented in many states, while White and Asian students are underrepresented. To extend this point, 16% of students identified with learning disabilities in Nevada are Black, yet Black students comprise only 9.9% of the state's total enrollment. On the other hand, California reports 3% of students with learning disabilities are Asian, while 11.2% of the total school enrollment is Asian. Furthermore, Blacks and Hispanics with disabilities have higher disciplinary actions, higher rates of drop out, and lower rates of graduation (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014).

Contributing Factors to Disproportionality

A plethora of factors contributes to the disproportionate rate of African Americans placed in special education, thus reiterating there is not a sole factor. Skiba et al. (2006) found that possible contributing factors are psychometric test bias, aspects related to socioeconomic status and poverty, and stereotyping and implicit bias in the special education referral and eligibility process. This section addresses those factors.

Psychometric Test Bias

“Historically, there have been charges that standardized intelligence tests have penalized minority children because the content (cultural and linguistic) favored exclusively White standardizations samples” (Valencia, Villarreal, & Salinas, 2002, pp. 301-302). Though cultural bias was evident during the 1920s and 1930s, it was difficult to argue the point due to the untenable influences of scholars (Reyes & Valencia, 1993). However, several decades later, the cultural bias of intelligence tests reappeared during the Civil Rights era. The Civil Rights movement highlighted the inequality of the rights of minorities (Valencia & Suzuki, 2001). The litigation set forth in *Hobson v. Hansen* in 1967 was “the first case that focused on legally using group administered intelligence tests in the curricular assignment of minority (i.e. African American) students” (p. 112).

Notable postHobson cases are (a) *Diana vs. State Board of Education* (1970), (b) *Covarrabias v. San Diego Unified School District* (1971), (c) *Guadalupe v. Timpe Elementary School District* (1972), and (d) *Larry P. v. Riles* (1979). The overarching tenet of each case is that assessment methods are culturally biased (Valencia & Suzuki, 2001). According to Henderson and Valencia (1985), the postHobson cases brought forth

by African American, Mexican American, and American Indian plaintiffs, highlighted the concern of minority student overrepresentation in educable mentally retarded classes.

Critics of standardized assessment question the validity of the objectivity and emphasize the bias nature of these assessments (Reschly, 1996). Flanagan and Ortiz (2001) purported that testing bias is not the primary contributor to disproportionality; rather cultural loading is the primary concern. Culture loading occurs when testing items are developed and normed on one cultural or ethnic group and administered to another culture (Flanagan & Ortiz, 2001). Skiba et al. (2006) identified psychometric test bias, poverty related factors, and bias and nature of the assessments towards students who are not Caucasian and middle class (Reschly, 1996).

Socioeconomic and Poverty Factors

According to Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Simmons, Feggins-Azziz, and Chung (2005), poverty contributes to minority placement in special education. Skiba et al. (2005) organized the poverty assumptions into the following sequence:

1. Disproportionality of minorities who are poor are more likely to be exposed to a variety of socio-demographic stressors;
2. Factors associated with poverty leave children less developmentally ready for schooling and yield negative behavioral and academic outcomes;
3. Students who are low achieving or at risk for negative behavioral outcomes are more likely to be referred and ultimately found eligible for special education services;

4. Therefore, poverty is an important contributing factor that increases the risk, presumably in a linear fashion, of special education placement for minority students. (p. 131)

Stereotype Threat

Another plausible cause for disproportionality of African American males in special education is stereotype threat. Steele and Aronson (1995), who noted that Black college freshman and sophomores performed more poorly on standardized tests than their white counterparts when emphasis on their race occurred, were the first to mention stereotype threat. Steele (1997) used the term *stereotype threat* to explain the social-psychological threat that one feels when he or she is performing a task that may elicit negative stereotype about the individual's group membership. According to Steele (1997), stereotype threat is a situational threat that can affect the member of any group about whom a negative stereotype exists (i.e. gang members or White groups). The argument indicated that once "rumors of inferiority" (Steele, 1997, p. 618) about the abilities of Black students permeate the social environment, these stereotype pressures could intimidate Black students. Thus, this intimidation could become internalized and develop into a pervasive sense of low self-efficacy, demotivation, and under performance in schools.

Stereotype threat has a detrimental impact on academic achievement by inducing anxiety, presenting a test measure of ability, and misidentification by disengaging from academic domains to maintain a positive sense of self (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002). Furthermore, Steele (1997) suggested the possibility of the creation of psychological

discomfort that can interfere with individual performance when the experience of the threat occurs simultaneously with a presented task.

Other inequities in education are the direct result of “lower expectations, stereotypes, and a hostile invalidating climate for people of color, women, and LGBTs” (Sue, 2010, p. 235). Sue (2010) described these microaggressions as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and/ or environmental indignities, intentional and unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward a racially different individual and group” (p. 5). According to Sue (2010), there are three classifications of microaggressions:

- Microassault is explicit racial derogation, which can be expressed either verbally or nonverbally (i.e. name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions).
- Microinsults are communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity (i.e. subtle snubs unknown to the perpetrator or hidden insulting message to the recipient of color)
- Microinvalidations are communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person belonging to a particular group (i.e. a teacher asking a non-white student where they are from, suggesting that the non-white student is a foreigner). (p. 29)

Implicit Bias as a Factor

Another contributing factor to disproportionality is implicit bias. Implicit bias includes unconscious negative thoughts, attitudes, stereotypes, perceptions, or behaviors

for which the person lacks awareness of the presence of the bias, neither believes that they possesses regarding a person in another ethnic or racial group (Dovidio, Kawakami, Smoak, & Gaertner, 2009; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). Greenwald and Banaji (1995) maintained that implicit bias towards African Americans has a detrimental impact on the way members of society treat African Americans.

Research demonstrates the effects of implicit bias in other societal structures. For example, Green et al. (2007) found that nonBlack physicians exhibit implicit bias by favoring Caucasian patients over African American patients. Another study explored implicit bias and the negative impact on African Americans using video game simulation. The results of the study indicated that White participants shot African American perpetrators more frequently and faster than the Caucasian perpetrators (Correll, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2002). Research of the judicial system also reveals the presence of implicit bias. One study found that trial judges and jurors lack impartiality when deciding if an African American defendant is innocent or guilty (Rachlinski, Johnson, Wistrich, & Guthrie, 2009). Furthermore, judges levied harsher sentences in cases regarding African Americans, though the infractions or crimes were similar to those committed by their White counterparts (Rachlinski et al., 2009).

Fletcher (2014) utilized the critical race theory of “whiteness as property” to examine racial inequities within the school setting. More specifically, the researcher explored implicit bias on multidisciplinary team (MTD) members’ decisions to refer African American students for special education services. The results of the study revealed that when students and families failed to conform to the MDT norms, emerging

cultural stereotypes and misunderstandings came to the forefront. Furthermore, MDT members' comments were indicative of implicit bias and deficit language.

Historical Effects of Disproportionality in Special Education

Blanchett (2010) asserted that the disproportionate representation of African American students in special education resulted in limited access to general education curriculum, failure to provide services that met their academic needs, and misclassification that led to mistrust of the school system by both the families and the community. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2009), African American students make up 15% of the total United States student population ages 6-21. However, the same ethnic group represented 28% of students in special education programs with emotional disturbance, 32% of students identified with mental retardation, and 18% of students labeled with a specific learning disability. The *29th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Volume 2* revealed that African American students ages 6-21 were 2.86 times more likely to receive special education services for mental retardation, 2.28 times more likely to receive services for emotional disturbance, and 1.5 times more likely to receive special education services than the same-age students in all other racial/ethnic groups combined (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). "Instead of changing the systemic segregation of marginalized students into special education, the special education referral process is used to justify and perpetuate such inequity" (Whitfield-Scott, 2014, p. 4). The problem is that a disproportionate representation exists to the extent that includes students with specific characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, language background, socioeconomic status,

gender, age, etc.) qualify for placement in special education programs (Salend et al., 2002).

Meier, Stewart, and England (1989) found African Americans and Hispanic students, particularly Mexican Americans, received disproportionately assignment to lower academic groups and over placement in special education classes. In addition, these students experienced omission from higher academic groups (i.e. gifted and advance placement classes), and greater occurrences of punishment and suspension than their White peers. Weiner (2000) contended that White teachers were “ill prepared” to teach children from ethnic and cultural backgrounds different from their own. According to Viadero (2001),

- (a) Black and white children score higher on mathematics and reading tests when their teachers are the same race as they are;
- (b) Students who had a teacher of their own race for at least one of the four years of the study tended on average to score 3 to 4 percentile points higher on standardized tests of reading and math than peers who had teachers of different races;
- (c) The race effects were particularly strong for poor children, children with inexperienced teachers, and children attending segregated schools-especially for African American children; and
- (d) [The race effect] seems to be cumulative, building for every year a student has a same race teacher, [but] race-linked score difference disappeared . . . when students were assigned to smaller classes. (pp. 1-2)

Thirdly, Orfield and Lee (2004) found that segregation of African American and Latino students by race and poverty and schools intensely segregated by race tend to create concentrations of poverty. Consequently, African American students are vulnerable to underachievement, school dropout, and higher levels of disciplinary action (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo & Pollock, 2011). Mayes and Moore (2016) declared, “Generally speaking, African American students in special education tend to face strenuous personal and social issues in schools related to their race. Having a disability sometimes compounds the challenges that they already endure in their schooling” (p. 99).

Federal Response to Disproportionality

To identify disproportionality based on race and ethnicity, the U.S. Department of Education (2016) recently proposed regulations to ensure the appropriate alignment of equitable special education services. Specifically, these regulations address the placement of students in particular education settings, the incidence duration, and the type of disciplinary actions (including suspensions and expulsions). Local education agencies will continue to be required to address the factors contributing to disproportionality and identify at-risk students in behavior and/or academics through the Coordinated Early Interventions Services (CEIS), prior to consideration for special education. CEIS (300.226) includes services provided to assist students in grades K-12 not identified as special education students but in need of academic and/or behavioral assistance. In 2004, Congress authorized the reallocations of federal Individualized Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) used to provide CEIS to reduce academic and/or behavioral challenges in the general education setting, thereby reducing inappropriate

referrals to special education (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Specifically, once a school district is deemed disproportionate, the school district must allocate 15% of IDEA Part B funds (special education funding) to provide early intervention services (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Special Education Referral Process and Response to Intervention

Buck, Polloway, Smith-Thomas, and Cook (2003) explained that within the context of the referral process, the prereferral team is responsible for determining the appropriateness of the referral to special education. The prereferral team is a multidisciplinary team consisting of the general education teacher, school psychologist, social worker, and other professionals necessary to determine the appropriateness of the referral (Buck et al., 2003). Furthermore, the responsibility of the prereferral team is to design appropriate interventions and provide academic and behavior support for students and teachers, prior to referral of the student for special education. The goal of the prereferral team is to provide sufficient behavioral and/or academic support within the general education setting without special education services (Buck et al., 2003). Therefore, if the interventions implemented during the prereferral process do not facilitate adequate progress of the student in acquisition of grade level standards, the teacher will refer the student for a special education evaluation. The goal of the prereferral team is to implement the Response to Intervention (RtI) process, which “has evolved into a systematic tool for implementing identification, evidence-based instruction, close monitoring of student progress, and decision making for all levels within the system, including administration, teachers, and parents” (Björn, Aro, Koponen,

Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2016, p. 59). The RtI process is integral in the decision to refer or not refer a student to special education.

Truscott, Cohen, Sama, Sanborn, and Frank (2005) sampled 200 schools and found that 92% of prereferral teams included the referring teacher as a part of the team. Additional team members included administrators, general education teachers, school counselors, special education teachers, and school psychologists, while only 28% of teams included parents as members of the team. Using a sample of students from the Educational Longitudinal Study 2002, Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, and Moore-Thomas (2012) examined specific behaviors that prompt a general education teacher to refer ninth- and tenth-grade students to the school counselor. The results indicated that teacher expectations of students' academic success and history of disruptive behavior were predictors of teachers' referral to school psychologists. Specifically, in the English course, African American students were 71% more likely to receive referrals to the school psychologists than their White counterparts were. Similarly, in the instance of gender, African American females received referrals 2.24 times that of their White female peers.

The aforementioned findings also mirror referral to gifted programs. The research of Elhoweris, Mutua, Alsheikh, and Holloway (2005) involved providing 207 elementary teachers vignettes of children potentially eligible for gifted education, with 1/3 of the students identified as White, 1/3 Black, and 1/3 with unidentified race. The results revealed that referrals of African American males to the gifted program were at a significantly lower rate. Disproportionality also mirrors similar impact with dual

exceptionality. U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014) disclosed that African Americans represent 17.13% of the K-12 student population, yet there is great disproportionality in their representation in both special education and gifted education programs.

Gravois and Rosenfield (2006) examined the prereferral process of 13 Instructional Consultation (IC) Team schools and 9 comparison schools. The IC implementation required teachers to attend ongoing training that emphasized reflective communication, curriculum based assessment, problem solving, and data collection procedures and analysis. The results indicated that teachers who received the training made fewer referrals of minority students for special education services than teachers who did not receive the training (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006). Furthermore, prereferral interventions have proven to reduce referral rates in special education by increasing student achievement and prosocial behaviors (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006). Central to the function of the prereferral interventions in the social process involved is the collaboration between teachers, school psychologists, interventionists, and education specialists to design and implement interventions for students at-risk for academic or behavioral difficulties (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1989; Graden, Casey, & Christensen, 1985; Truscott et al., 2005).

The prereferral team is implemented frequently to monitor the students' progress towards established academic and behavioral goals (Burns & Symington, 2002). The prereferral team is "supposed to function as a body that rigorously and objectively conceptualizes the student's functioning and problem solves to formulate classroom

based interventions” (Knotek, 2003, p. 2). Prereferral teams may also be referred to as teacher assistance teams (Chalfant, Pysh, & Moultrie, 1979), interventions assistance teams (Graden, 1989), instructional consultation teams (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006), teacher support teams, student assistant team, and mainstream assistance teams (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bahr, 1990). Several reasons exist for barriers to inappropriate functioning of prereferral teams: “inappropriate knowledge of the implementation of the process; lack of funding; time constraints, needed training, and even bias” (Henderson, 2008, p. 9).

Bias of Prereferral Teams

In studying prereferral teams, Eidle, Boyd, Truscott, and Meyers (1998); Fuchs (1991); and Ysseldyke (1983) found that the “referral process may not be as objective as was intended, especially in the case of who gets referred to and ultimately placed in special education” (Knotek, 2003, p. 3). Knotek’s (2003) study of participant observation, transcripts of SST meetings, collections of documents, and interviews unveiled four themes: “teacher’s focus of concern and locus of the problem; socioeconomic status and problem identification; social status and conceptualization of problems; and interventions based upon socially constructed definitions of the problems” (p. 7). Fletcher (2014) found that when students and families fail to conform to the MDT norms, emerging cultural stereotypes and misunderstandings come to the forefront. Furthermore, MDT members’ comments were indicative of implicit bias and deficit language.

As stated previously, teachers are the initiator of the referral process for special education services. Foster (1990) suggested in earlier research that special education

classification was made by subjective judgments of the classroom teacher. Variables such as teacher perceptions, gender, race, and socioeconomic status influence the referral process (Lomotey, 1990). Research conducted by Ready and Wright (2011) revealed that White students were 1.5 times more likely to be rated as exhibiting strong academic skills, while Black students were twice times as likely to be rated as having weak academic skills; thus indicating that teachers impose their preconceived bias on students' abilities.

Research documents the racial differences and teacher expectations. A classic study conducted by Rist (1970) provided a context to analyze the interaction between teacher and student and shed light on teacher expectation of academic performance based on socioeconomic status. For example, a kindergarten teacher in the study associated students from mixed White and Black middle class families with "fast learner". On the other hand, students from low socioeconomic status were referred to as "slow learners".

Brophy's (1983) research reviewed the self-fulfilling prophecy in the Pygmalion Study published by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), which contended that teacher expectations about a student can lead to the student can lead to the student behavior in a manner confirming the teacher's expectation. Brophy (1983) found, "Teachers sometimes differentially interact with individual students, groups, or classes in ways that seem likely to maximize the achievement progress of high expectation students but limit the progress of low expectation students" (pp. 643-644).

McKown and Weinstein (2008) conducted research utilizing cross sectional data archives. The findings indicated that teacher's expectations for Black and White students

differed, resulting in teachers having lower expectations for Black students. Furthermore, the effects of these flawed perceptions impact students' self images, which potentially affects them throughout their career in school (Gniewozs, Eccles, & Noack, 2012).

Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) found consistently that White students received favorable responses from their teachers when compared to Black students. Minor (2014) found that teachers' ratings of Black students fell at the 0.44 of a standard deviation lower than White students on literacy and language and in mathematical thinking, students fell at the .52 of a standard deviation lower than their White counterparts. However, during the spring, the gap for Black and White students for literacy and language, and mathematical thinking were narrowly discrepant with respective standard deviations of .35 and .44. In summary, the research indicated that teachers perceived Black students to have lower ability in both subject areas during the fall and spring (Minor, 2014).

As mentioned earlier, the teacher is initiator of a student's referral to the Student Support Team (SST); thus, a teacher's biased attitude toward a student could potentially result in an inappropriate referral to special education (Harry, 2008). According to Knotek (2003), the social context of the SST process by which the teacher brings concerns about a student to the team consists of the school psychologist, the counselor, the administrators, and other relevant specialists, thereby acknowledging that not only is the student having a problem, but the teacher is having a problem as well.

Fletcher (2014), who explored the impact bias has on the Student Support Team's decision-making process, discovered that using *Whiteness as a property* was central to the perspective of Caucasian and African American participants regarding African

American students and their families. Furthermore, Fletcher noted that SST members continue to applied White middle class implicit and explicit norms to African American students and families. As a result, if African American students and families failed to conform to the established White standard of norms, “cultural stereotypes and misunderstandings surfaced” (Fletcher, 2014, p. 79). In addition, Fletcher (2014) found that “participants were laced with implicit bias and deficit language” (p. 79). The results of the study suggested that it is possible that implicit bias exists within the social context of the SST and influences the team’s decision to refer African American students for special education.

Implicit Bias

Disproportionality of African American males is an extensively documented phenomenon in the educational history of the United States. Particularly, within the context of referral to special education, this process continues to marginalize and disenfranchise African American youth. Devine (1989) contended that stereotypes can influence a person’s judgment about a person. This judgment can be unconscious; therefore, in the case of the teacher, the teacher can lack awareness of the possessed stereotype. This section discusses implicit bias and the psychological constructs therein.

According to Stevenson and Lindberg (2012), bias is a preference towards a specific group, wherein one group is favored over another. Although bias can manifest in many forms, for the purpose of this study, explicit and implicit bias will be the topic of discussion. Explicit bias is conscious bias, thus meaning that a person is aware of the

behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and action. Explicit bias is deliberate and is openly expressed (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

Conversely, implicit bias includes “actions or judgments that are under control of automatically activated evaluation, without the performer’s awareness of that causation” (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998, p. 1464). Greenwald and Krieger (2006) posited that people possess attitude and stereotypes for which they may have no conscious or intentional control. “Implicit bias has been shown to affect the decision making processes of both Caucasian and African American individuals including physicians, police officers, trial judges, and potential jurors” (Fletcher, 2014, p. 16). According to Rudman (2004), implicit bias derives from three sources: past experiences, affective experiences, and cultural biases. Table 2 displays these sources and an explanation of each.

Table 2

Sources of Implicit Bias

Past Experiences	Early developmental experiences may inform implicit attitudes. Early developmental experiences are preverbal and indirectly taught, thereby becoming unconscious (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).
Affective Experiences	The neurological implications of amygdala are responsible for the affective/emotional response to stimuli, thus implying that implicit attitudes may derive from automatic reaction (Phelps et al., 2000).
Cultural Bias	Cultural milieu influenced implicit attitudes (Devine, 1989).
Cognitive Consistency Principles	People prefer consistent, rather than inconsistency, in their cognition regarding, for example, beliefs and perception (Rudman, 2004).

Over the years, the racial bias experienced by society during the Civil Rights Era has transformed significantly over time. After the Civil Rights Era, two new racisms emerged known as *symbolic racism* and *modern racism* (Sears & Henry, 2003). According to Sears and Henry (2003), symbolic racism embodies four broad tenets: “(a) Blacks do not face much prejudice and discrimination, (b) Black’s failure to progress results from their unwillingness to work hard enough, (c) Blacks demand too much too fast, and (d) Blacks have gotten more than they deserve” (p. 260). Furthermore, *symbolic racism* is rooted in abstract perceptions of Blacks as a whole group, rather than personal experiences with Blacks on an individual basis.

On the other hand, *modern racism* has replaced the “old-fashioned” racism, which was blatant and characterized Blacks as inferior. After the Civil Rights Era, society deemed the aforementioned expressions of racism as socially unacceptable. The definition of modern racism, developed during the 1950s and 1960s, is racial prejudice towards African Americans. Modern racism holds the beliefs that racism is not a pervasive problem; thus, African Americans can overcome societal ills independently, African Americans are inferior, and segregation is appropriate (McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981). McConahay (1986) purported modern racism is a result of socialization (i.e., parents, peers, and media), occurring as early as adolescence. Historically, both modern racism and symbolic racism, conceptually closely aligned, overlapped in their underlying tenets. However, in recent years research contends that they function separately. Although modern racism and symbolic racism highlighted unfair advantages for African Americans, they did not fully encompass the nonconscious implicit racial bias.

Devine (1989) explained nonconscious and conscious implicit racial bias with a theory involving two forms of stereotype activation within the brain: *automatic activation* and *controlled activation*. According to Devine, *automatic activation* is the process of nonconscious, stereotypical thoughts occurring in the presence of a person of a targeted racial group. The automatic activation involves “the unintentional or spontaneous activation of some well learned set of associations or responses that have been developed through repeated activation in memory” (Devine, 1989, p. 6). Conscious effort, initiated by the presence of stimulus, is not required. *Controlled activation* is a process in which

an individual realizes the stereotype exists and recognizes its activation. Controlled activations are “intentional and require the active attention of the individual” (Devine, 1989, p. 6).

Devine’s study (1989) examined implicit racial bias with college students who identified as high or low prejudiced regarding their understanding of cultural stereotypes. Devine generated a list of features associated with stereotypes of African American males (e.g., poor, aggressive, criminal, athletic). Following the administration of the Modern Racism Scale (MRS) to the participants to determine their level of prejudice, Devine discovered that, despite the level of prejudice towards African Americans, the participants possessed a significant understanding of the cultural stereotypes. *Figure 8* presents a model that differentiates between people’s attitudes on the foundation of the alignment between implicit knowledge and their explicit beliefs about social groups.

Nature of Knowledge and Attitudes		
Automatic Processing	Stereotypic Knowledge	Stereotypic Knowledge
Controlled Processing	Prejudiced	Nonprejudiced
Predicted Attitudes	Prejudiced	Nonprejudiced

Figure 8. An interpretive model of Devine’s (1989) assumptions of the level of stereotype processing and resulting attitudes.

Devine (1989) also tested the hypothesis of low-prejudiced people controlling their automatically activated stereotypes and expressing nonprejudiced beliefs in words. When prompted to list stereotypical labels, either positive or negative, associated with African Americans, the participating students activated a link between African

Americans and hostility when primed with the features of the stereotype. Devine (1989) concluded that the participants' ability to control automatic activation of the stereotype was activated when stereotypical thoughts creating negative feelings.

Bias Literacy Workshop as an Intervention

Devine (1989) maintained that prejudiced actions may occur through unconscious (implicit) process, which contradicts the conscious explicit belief system. Devine (1989) further purported that in order to change the habitual nature of implicit bias, two prerequisite motivators are imperative to initiate the change process: (a) internal motivation to respond to the belief system and (b) an external motivator to appeal to desires to not be prejudiced. This contention supports Bandura's (1977) assertion that in order to change behavior, a person must possess the belief and the self-efficacy to change their behaviors and increase desirable behaviors. Therefore, once an individual decides to change, the agreement is far-reaching across disciplines requiring deliberate actions to effect a new habitual behavioral change (Plant & Devine, 2008).

To this effect, Carnes et al. (2012) conducted a study providing an intervention in the form of a workshop that was successful in lowering participants' scores on the Implicit Associations Test. The Bias Literacy Workshop, which furnishes opportunities for participants to engage in self-reflection and problem solving, as well as receive immediate feedback, "adheres to the tenets of an effective group process" (Carnes et al., 2012, p. 66) was implemented to raise awareness of bias. As motivation to retain and implement the tenets and stratagems of the workshop, participants constructed a written Commitment to Change. While the effects of the intervention resulted in no change of

participant-reported racial attitudes or their internal/external motivation to respond without prejudice, participants expressed concern regarding discrimination and their awareness of their personal bias and offered their intentions to change (Carnes et al., 2012).

Summary

This chapter reviewed literature addressing research and theory related to special education and disproportionality of African American males in special education. This chapter provided a historical overview of special education, special education litigation, the federal response to disproportionality in special education, and the special education referral process. Furthermore, the chapter explored implicit bias as a contributing factor to disproportionality within the social context of the multidisciplinary team. In summary, Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive review of the literature related to special education and disproportionality and related a possible solution through implementing the Bias Literacy Workshop as an intervention.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The disproportionate percentage of African Americans in special education, when compared to the regular education curriculum, is well documented in the literature of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP, 2001). The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of the multidisciplinary team (MDT) members after a bias literacy intervention. This chapter details the research, design, rationale, sampling plan, data collection, and data analysis for a mixed-methods case study examining the role of implicit bias in team members, a potential contributing factor in the disproportionate rates of African American males in special education. A discussion of the rationale and design for the mixed-methods approach follows a more extensive discussion of the predominant qualitative research methodology and research tradition.

Rationale for Research Design

A mixed-methods study of implicit bias is necessary to reveal the depth and breadth of a phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Because the researcher sought “to elaborate on or expand the findings of one method with another method” (Creswell, 2003, p. 16), a parallel explanatory mixed-methods approach was most appropriate for this study. For example, the researcher planned face-to-face interviews with the participants and examined the written descriptions of the students that the participants last referred for special education services in order to gain insight into the responses to test

and survey questions, thus utilizing qualitative data to expound upon the quantitative upon the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2003).

Research Questions Reiterated

1. Does an educational intervention change MDT members' perceived self-objectivity and perceived expectations?

H_{01A}: There is no statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest self objectivity as measured by the Personal Objectivity Scale.

H_{1A}: There is a statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest self objectivity as measured by the Personal Objectivity Scale.

H_{01B}: There is no statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest expectations as measured by the Teacher Expectations Scale.

H_{1B}: There is a statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest expectations as measured by the Teacher Expectations Scale.

2. How do MDT members describe student characteristics that influence a referral to special education?

3. What student characteristics or behaviors influence the MDT members' decision making, when referring African American students for special education services?

Research Design

Epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods are four important elements to consider when developing a research process (Crotty, 1998). According to Crotty, epistemology is the “theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology; it is a way of understanding and explaining how, we know what we know” (1998, p. 3). The theoretical perspective is a “philosophical stance” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3) that the researcher uses to guide the methodology and provides “a context for the process and grounding logic” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Methodology refers to “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Methods are “procedures used to gather and analyze data related to some research question or hypothesis” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3).

This study utilized pragmatism through a transformative lens to develop a full picture of the research study (Currall & Towler, 2003) Pragmatism also allowed the researcher to use pluralistic approaches to research the problem and then apply varied approaches to develop knowledge about the problem (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Creswell (2003) stated, “For the mixed methods researcher, pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as to different forms of data collection and analysis in the mixed methods study” (p. 12). In

summary, a pragmatic approach blends well with the methodology of mixed methods and provides a comprehensive view to explore a phenomenon, rather than utilizing a single method (Creswell, 2009). Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2003) contended that the pragmatic approach is a better process to answering “what”, “why”, and “how” research questions.

It is possible to view this study through the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which takes into account social inequities through the lens of race and ethnicity. UCLA School of Public Affairs (2009) defined CRT as recognizing the fact that racism is engrained in the fabric and system of American society. While Critical Race Theory upholds several tenets, for the purpose of this study it served to view the multidisciplinary team through the lens of social construction to investigate the social construction of race and the role it plays in the education policies that impact minorities. Therefore, it provided an additional perspective to the literature on the education of Black males and the overrepresentation of Black males in special education.

This study utilized a quantitative pretest-posttest design (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2003). The researcher administered the pre- and posttest to the intervention group. After the intervention, the researcher planned to conduct interviews, which Kvale (2007) described as structured conversations “with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 8), for the qualitative portion of the study, but the participants declined the invitation. Instead, the researcher examined the participants’ written descriptions of their last student referral to special education.

Sample and Participants

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the researcher omitted the names of the institution, state in which the institution was located, and names of participants. The purposeful criteria for the selected school was that it was within a district that exhibits disproportionality and was identified by the key informant as a facility willing to participate in an interventional study. Instead, assigned pseudonyms identified all institutions and participants that participated in the study. The research plan for this study included identifying participants involved with multidisciplinary teams (e.g., general education teachers, response to intervention specialist, special education teacher members, principal, and assistant principal) that make decisions to refer African-American males to special education, a type of purposeful sampling. The sample for the intervention was 37 participants, with 21 participants completing the posttest for a final sample of 21. The researcher gained access through a key informant and data collection via the demographic information, pre- and posttests, and an open-ended question.

To increase transferability, the researcher used purposeful sampling, a well-known basic mixed-methods sampling strategy (Teddlie & Yu, 2007) to identify multidisciplinary team members as participants. The researcher established three qualifiers. First, the district had a disproportionate percentage of African-American male students in special education or subject to disciplinary action. Second, the school district would provide access and cooperation with the plan of study. Third, each participant was involved in multidisciplinary teams for the district. Although overrepresentation of African-American male students in special education programs is a prevalent

phenomenon in many school districts, gaining access can be difficult; therefore, the researcher sought a key informant to assist in the process.

The sample for this study included a selection of one school with a multidisciplinary team, including administrators, special education teachers, school counselors, and general education teachers that taught predominately African American male students. Multidisciplinary team members for this research study worked in an urban public school system located in the southeast region of the United States of America. This school district served almost 51, 120 students in nearly 94 schools. The schools in this urban district composed nine clusters. More than half the students in this district were African American (38,287), with the next largest group being White (7,723), followed by Hispanics (3,510). This study focused on multidisciplinary teams that primarily serve African-American male students

Institutional Review Board

The researcher received approval from Mercer University's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A) prior to any data collection. The researcher obtained permission to conduct the research study from the school district. Following this, each participant signed an informed consent form (see Appendix B). The researcher protected the anonymity and maintained confidentiality of the institutions and participants by assigning a pseudonym to the city, school name, and individual respondent names for the research sites in this study. The researcher maintained collected data in a password-protected server that will be destroyed in three years.

Instrumentation

This section delineates the proposed instrumentation for the study. Initially, participants engaged in a Bias Literacy Workshop. Following this, participants completed the online Implicit Association Test-Race (IAT-Race). Lastly, the research administered the Teacher Expectations Scale to participants conjointly with the question “Describe briefly the last student that you referred to special education” of the Bias Literacy Workshop pre- and posttest (see Appendix C).

Bias Literacy Workshop

The Bias Literacy Workshop provided participants with experimentally tested strategies from social psychology to promote self-regulation of implicit bias through awareness, focusing on facilitating changes in habitual self-biased behaviors (Carnes et al., 2015). The workshop topics included research regarding discrimination, implicit bias characteristics, and bias malleability. Participants engaged in a pre- and posttest to determine whether this 55-minute workshop created reported behavioral changes in participants and awareness of the role of bias within participants’ experiences in their organization.

Implicit Association Test-Race

One of the primary tools to raise bias awareness included participants’ completion of the Implicit Association Test-Race (IAT-Race). The IAT-Race is an online, computer-based assessment requiring participants to categorize words and images quickly. The IAT-Race involves four tasks. In the first set of tasks, the participants receive a prompt to identify the image based on race after viewing two labels: African American (Black)

and European American (White). In the second phase of the first task, the participants must classify based on “good” or “bad”. *Figure 9* illustrates an example of how this phase appeared on the screen to the participants.



Figure 9. Example of the first set of tasks on the Implicit Association Test-Race. Reprinted with permission from Implicit Association Test-Race by Online Psychology Laboratory, n.d. Copyright by OPL.

The second task consists of prompting on the screen as a combined set of terms, including race and the evaluative word (i.e., good or bad). *Figure 10* displays how this task appeared on the test screen.



Figure 10. Example of the second set of tasks on the Implicit Association Test-Race. Reprinted with permission from Implicit Association Test-Race by Online Psychology Laboratory, n.d. Copyright by OPL.

The objectivity scale developed by Armor (1999) measures bias when there is a perception of freedom from bias or people maintain “illusions of objectivity” (p. xi). Armor’s (1999) original study included 12 items that also measured how biased participants thought “others” were, but this research focused on the “own true” (p. 31) or how objective the participants thought they were. Utilizing a scale from 0-10 (0 = very strongly disagree; 10 = very strongly agree), the four self-perceived objectivity questionnaire items include:

- “In most situations, I try to do what seems reasonable and logical.”
- “When forming an opinion, I try to objectively consider all of the facts I have access to.”
- “My judgments are based on a logical analysis of the facts.”
- “My decision making is rational and objective.” (Armor, 1999)

Research suggests that self-perceptions of objectivity increase people’s faith in the validity of their beliefs, and even in their intuitions (Pronin & Kugler, 2007). Therefore, this sense of objectivity might increase the likelihood of people acting on their stereotypic beliefs, thoughts, and intuitions. Finally, this confidence may promote the overestimation of their invulnerability to bias, which they might otherwise attempt to monitor (Pronin, Gilovich, & Ross, 2004). Armor (1999) found that the “own true” items demonstrated a good internal consistency (Cronbach’s α of .83). In other research, the self-perceived objectivity items have indicated a reliable index (Cronbach’s α = .87) (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2007).

Teacher Expectations Scale

Dusek and Joseph (1983) developed the Teacher Expectations Scale. This six-item scale measures teacher expectation regarding individual students. The researcher will use this scale in conjunction with the question “Describe briefly the last student that you referred to special education”. Items have a basis in the definition of academic expectations “as teacher perceptions of an individual student’s performance, ability, and level of educational attainment (van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten & Holland, 2010, p. 507). Sample items include “He or she will probably have a successful school career” and “He or she is an intelligent student” (p. 507). Participants responded to the six items using a scale that ranges from 1 (not applicable) to 5 (totally applicable). The internal consistency of the expectancy scale has been found to be good in similar research (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .97$) (van den Bergh et al., 2010).

Data Collection

Following Internal Review Board (IRB) approval from Mercer University and participant consent, the researcher collected data in five phases. The first phase of data of the data collection process involved selection of the sample for the study. The sample for this study was a multidisciplinary team in one middle school located within a public school district. The members that constitute the multidisciplinary team include the following: administrators, general education teachers, and special education teachers. The selected school was a single-gender middle and high school for males. This school was appropriate for this study because it provided a larger sample size and a focused sample to test the effects of the intervention in a school district where disproportionality

is an area of concern. The participating school staff comprised the following numbers: 29 general education teachers, 5 special education teachers, and 3 administrators.

The second phase of data collection garnered demographic information and data generated from a pretest (See Appendix C). The researcher invited participants to a workshop from a school district where disproportionality was an area of concern. The researcher administered the pretest using the Objectivity Scale (Armor, 1999) and the Teacher Expectations Scale (Dusek & Joseph, 1983) to the targeted sample. The intent of the Objectivity Scale was to prime the participants for self-perceived objectivity. The researcher asked participants to describe the last student that they referred to special education before taking the Teach Expectation Scale. The advantage of a survey is that it allows the researcher to collect data from participants while allowing for anonymity among participant responses (Mertens, 2005).

In the third phase and as a part of the workshop to increase awareness of implicit bias, participants completed the Implicit Association Test-Race (IAT-Race) (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004). Participants could report their results optionally. Following this, Dr. Carol Isaac, a researcher in implicit bias, delivered portions of the Bias Literacy Workshop (Carnes et al., 2015; Isaac et al., 2016), which exposed participants to an educational intervention that prompted self-reflection and problem solving and provided opportunities for practice with immediate feedback. Table 3 delineates the strategies and their description utilized with participants during the Bias Literacy Workshop.

Table 3

Strategies Presented at the Bias Literacy Workshop

Strategy	Strategy Description
Stereotype Replacement	Encourages the participant to recognize when they have stereotypic thoughts and to recognize stereotypic portrayals of society
Counter Stereotype Imaging	Assist participants in regulating their response by imagining a countering stereotype African American
Individuating	Encourage participants to avoid making snap decisions based on stereotype and obtain more information on specific qualifications (e.g., past experiences) before making decisions.
Increased Exposure	Increase opportunities for contact with African Americans counter the stereotype.

The workshop also adhered to the tenets of effective group process (Jaques, 1991) and elicited a written Commitment to Change (Lockyer et al., 2001) from each participant as a way to encourage retention of information and application of strategies. This document, completed at the end of the workshop, asks participants to complete two sentences: “I commit to overcoming bias in my department or division in the following way . . .”, and “I commit to overcoming bias in my personal life in the following way . . .” Research has shown that written Commitment to Change statements from participants promote the retention of information and the application of strategies (Lockyer et al., 2001).

After the participants completed the workshop, the participants completed an evaluation of the workshop (see Appendix D). Questions included scaled responses on the content quality, speaker effectiveness, topic relevance, and topic usefulness. In

addition, the evaluation prompted participants to indicate whether the workshop increased the participants' knowledge about bias. However, due to extraneous factors in their work environment, most of the participants did not complete workshop evaluations, and all participants declined the researcher's invitation to participate in interviews.

The fourth phase of data collection included the posttest using the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale (Armor, 1999) and the Teacher Expectations Scale (Dusek & Joseph, 1983). During the fifth phase of data collection, the researcher attempted to recruit participants for interviews Literacy Workshop. However, no participants volunteered.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with a process of organizing the information into computer files. The researcher used a process of data analysis that included both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the quantitative results using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), researchers follow a series of steps in the analysis of quantitative and qualitative analysis. This process includes "preparing the data for analysis, exploring the data, analyzing the data, representing the analysis, interpreting the analysis, and validating the data and interpretations" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 204). Table 4 displays the process the researcher followed to answer the research questions and address the problem statement.

Table 4

Process of Data Analysis

Research Questions	Data Collection Method	Data Analysis
1. Does an educational intervention change MDT members' perceived self-objectivity and perceived expectations?	Bias Literacy Workshop; pre- and posttests using Objectivity Scale and Teacher Expectations Scale	descriptive and inferential statistics
2. How do MDT members describe student characteristics that influence a referral to special education?	Participants' description of their last student referral for special education services	line-by-line coding; analysis of themes cross thematic analysis (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006)
3. What student characteristics or behaviors influence the MDT members' decision making, when referring African American students for special education services?	Participants' description of their last student referral for special education services	line-by-line coding; analysis of themes; cross thematic analysis (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011); Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006)

The researcher analyzed the participants' written descriptions of their last student referral for special education services by employing a thematic content analysis to code and extract themes. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) explained, "Thematic analysis is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon and involves the process of identification of themes through careful reading and re-reading of the data" (p. 82). Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) asserted, "The coding process involves recognizing (seeing) an important moment and encoding it (seeing it as something) prior to a process of interpretation" (p. 83). Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) stated, "A good code is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon" (p. 83).

Creswell (2013) described the process of interpretation as "abstracting out beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data" (p. 187). The researcher ascertained meaning from the interpretation of the data to further explore and address the research problem to provide the reader with a substantive context and a rich analysis of the data. Specifically the researcher should search for meaning in data, reduce nonessential information, and identify significant patterns (Patton, 1990).

Data analysis in qualitative research moves from description to interpretation through an identified process (Grbich, 2013). The researcher then utilized enumerative and thematic content analysis to review the open-ended questions. According to Grbich (2013), thematic content analysis identifies "existing textual information in order to ascertain the trends and patterns of words used, their frequency, their relationship and the structures, contexts and discourses of communication" (Grbich, 2013, p. 190).

Reporting Results

Data analysis for this study utilized the QUAN +qual design to provide results using a parallel explanatory design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Reporting of quantitative data was in the form of tables and figures. In order to report the qualitative data, the researcher provided a description of quotes from participants' responses to open-ended questions regarding their description of the last student referred to special education, and a table of identified themes. The data integration occurred through merging the data for comparisons during the analysis phase (Creswell, 2013). Tables enhance the findings of this study to demonstrate how the qualitative findings enrich the quantitative result (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Qualitative Validation

Joppe (2000) stated that validity is a way to determine if the research instruments actually measured what was intended to be measured. For qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified four criteria for trustworthiness of data as the following: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. According to Glesne (1999), trustworthiness "should be thought about during research design as well as in midst of data collection" (p. 32). Patton (2002) contended, "Triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods" (p. 247). Glesne (1999) and Creswell (2014) delineated several other procedures for data trustworthiness including rich, thick description; external review; peer review; audit trail; and member checking.

Subjectivity Statement

In the current study, the researcher's background as a former special education teacher, school psychologist, and member of multidisciplinary teams in Title I schools will assist in filtering the process. Existing research, as well as the researcher's professional and personal background, influenced the research questions, methodology, and assumptions. The focus of this study stemmed from the researcher's experiences as a special education teacher and school psychologist. After years of participating on the MDT, it became apparent that initial referral and subsequent eligibility for special education services of students was due to factors that had little to do with the students' behavioral, emotional, or academic difficulties. As a school psychologist, the researcher's role was imperative to the multidisciplinary team, thus participation extended not only to MDT meetings, but also to Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and reevaluation meetings. As a member of the MDT, the researcher was privy to prior discussions or reasons for referring a student to special education. Despite the lack of Response to Intervention (RtI) data or progress monitoring data, which are necessary components for deeming a student eligible, the team created subjective reasons for referring certain students to special education. For example, teachers would refer students because the student "looked different" or because the teacher lacked the training to manage certain behaviors typical of emerging adolescence, thus placing the blame on the student. What was even more unsettling was the fact that the MDT confirmed the teachers' initial concerns, which resulted in diagnosis of students with a disability and deemed eligibility for special education services.

The researcher's background with participation on a MDT also provided context to understanding the decision-making processes of the team. At the time of this study, the researcher supervised school psychologists and engagement specialists in a metro area school district where disproportionality was a concern. As the primary research instrument, the researcher maintained flexibility and subjectivity throughout the study through rigorous self-monitoring and self-evaluation by using a reflective journal and keeping a detailed audit trail throughout the research. The researcher's position as an administrator placed her in a vital role to carry out the current research and make use of the findings and the results. Bracketing and using validation procedures, such as a peer review, throughout the study also mitigated bias. For example, the researcher reviewed the qualitative and quantitative results with another researcher to ensure accuracy in reporting and analyzing the data.

Summary

This chapter presented the specific research design, epistemology and theoretical perspective, and methodology the researcher utilized to determine the effect of a Bias Literacy Workshop on MDT members in a school district that exhibited disproportionality in special education. The researcher used a pragmatic epistemology as a way to identify concrete solutions. The framework of Critical Race Theory and three research questions guided this parallel explanatory mixed-methods design that used qualitative methods to explain the quantitative results. The quantitative portion consisted of pre- and posttests that included demographic information, the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale, and Teacher Expectations Scale. The qualitative portion consisted of

open-ended responses of the participants on the pretest. Data analysis included enumerative and thematic content analysis of the open-ended questions. Chapter 4 reports the results, and Chapter 5 presents the conclusions and implications.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Disproportionate representation of African Americans has been a longstanding problem in the history of American education (Bird & Bassin, 2015; Dunn, 1968; Zhang, Katsiyannis, Ju, & Roberts, 2014). While the research contends that a plethora of factors impact disproportionality of African Americans in special education, the researcher elected to explore implicit bias as a contributing factor. Particularly, the researcher primarily focused on the *prereferral intervention team*, which is responsible for implementing Response to Intervention (RTI), which encourages teachers to provide intervention strategies that improve the learning outcomes for all students (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2003). In order to support teacher implementation of intervention, the process of developing effective interventions rests on the expertise of the school-based, problem-solving team. Educators develop interventions to address students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs.

The researcher elected to study potential implicit bias of the prereferral team as it relates to their decisions to refer African American students for special education. Implicit bias includes “actions or judgments that are under control of automatically activated evaluation, without the performer’s awareness of that causation” (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998, p. 1464). According to Fletcher (2014), “Implicit bias has been shown to affect the decision making processes of both Caucasian and African

American individuals including physicians, police officers, trial judges, and potential jurors” (p. 16).

In this mixed-methods study, the researcher utilized a quantitative pretest-posttest design (Gall, et al., 2003). The researcher used the application of the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale and the Teacher Expectations Scale for pre- and posttest assessments of staff. As an intervention, the Implicit Association Test-Race (Dasgupta & Asgarai, 2004) and the Bias Literacy Workshop were implemented with teachers and administrators.

Following IRB approval, the Mercer Office of Research and Compliance used SurveyMonkey to create the Teacher Expectancy Scale and Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale as the pre- and posttest. The survey also included a link for the informed consent document. The researcher emailed a request for participation to 71 staff and faculty at the selected school, of which 37 potential participants agreed to take the pretest, resulting in a 52.11% response rate. The anticipated response rate for the study was between 60% and 90%, with 90% being the goal.

The researcher asked the participants to complete the pretest of the Teacher Expectations Scale and Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale, which the researcher sent via SurveyMonkey four days prior to the intervention. Participants entered demographic information through SurveyMonkey. Once participants entered the conference room, the researcher and Dr. Isaac prompted the participants to take the Implicit Association Test-Race (IAT-Race). Upon completion, Dr. Isaac, an experienced researcher in the area of implicit bias, and the researcher delivered portions of the Bias Literacy Workshop (Carnes et al., 2015; Isaac et al., 2016).

Once the participants completed the IAT-Race individually, they joined the 1½-hour Bias Literacy Workshop, which culminated with participants individually constructing written evaluations and a Commitment to Change. After the researcher completed the intervention, participants completed posttests of the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale and Teacher Expectations Scale via SurveyMonkey for participants. Following this, all participants declined the researcher's invitation to participate in individual interviews due to extraneous factors and events occurring in the district, such as pending school closure and the potential for staff losing their jobs. In an effort to avoid the aforementioned, the staff and faculty met with the Board of Education and advocated in several town hall meetings after school to keep the school open for students and staff.

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The chapter begins with a review of the research questions. Following this is a description of the research site, which includes participants, school staff, and school student population. Next is an explanation of the independent and dependent variables. Utilizing narrative, tables, and figures, the researcher then relates the findings of the quantitative portion of the study.

Research Questions Reviewed

The quantitative research question and hypotheses that guided this study were as follows:

1. Does an educational intervention change MDT members' perceived self-objectivity and perceived expectations?

H_{01A}: There is no statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest self objectivity as measured by the Personal Objectivity Scale.

H_{1A}: There is a statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest self objectivity as measured by the Personal Objectivity Scale.

H_{01B}: There is no statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest expectations as measured by the Teacher Expectations Scale.

H_{1B}: There is a statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest expectations as measured by the Teacher Expectations Scale.

The qualitative research questions that guided this study were as follows:

2. How do MDT members describe student characteristics that influence a referral to special education?
3. What student characteristics or behaviors influence the MDT members' decision making, when referring African American students for special education services?

Research Site Description

The site chosen for this study was an urban public school district in the southeastern region of the United States. At the time of the study, this school district served almost 51, 927 students in nearly 94 schools. The schools in this urban district

comprised nine clusters. The ethnic demographic of this urban school district was as follows: Hispanic (3,660), American Indian (61), Asian (561), Black (38,644), Pacific Islander (34), White (7,904), and two or more races (1,063). Table 5 displays the student characteristics for the different student groups in the study school site.

Table 5

Student Characteristics

Characteristic	School Total	Number of Students in Special Education	Percentage of Students in Special Education
Race			
African American	430	72	16.74%
Asian	0	0	0.00%
Caucasian	0	0	0.00%
Latino	0	0	0.00%
Grade			
6th	68	9	12.50%
7th	59	16	22.22%
8th	72	13	18.06%
9th	86	9	12.50%
10th	58	16	22.22%
11th	48	7	9.20%
12th	39	2	2.78%

The student characteristics in Table 5 reflect a total African American male student body. There were no other racial groups within the school. Table 5 lists the special education population for the entire school and individual grade bands. As illustrated in Table 5, seventh grade (22.22%), eighth grade (18.06%), and tenth grade (22.22%) constituted the highest percentages of students receiving special education services. Due to a vacancy in

the Response to Intervention specialist position until February 2017, there were only three initial referrals generated for this middle and high school for 2016-2017.

The school staff participants in this study consisted of 29 general education teachers, 5 special education teachers, and 3 administrators. The posttest did not request demographic information from participants; therefore, demographic information cannot be specific for posttest results.

The participants who took the pretest included 3 administrators, 29 general education teachers, and 5 special education teachers. The selected school was a single-gender middle and high school for males. This school was an appropriate site for this study due to the nature of the design, which provides a transformational environment for single-gendered school that focuses on providing small learning communities and preparing African American male students for postsecondary success; thus it was made available for this sensitive topic. Of the 37 participants, 31 indicated their professional status: postgraduate ($n = 16$), graduate ($n = 10$), and undergraduate ($n = 5$) degrees. The school participated in the Coordinate Early Intervention Services (CEIS), which provided the school with resources to reduce disproportionate suspensions of African American males. Although the school district was disproportionate for suspending African American students and students with disabilities, the selected school for this study was one of the targeted schools receiving resources through CEIS federal funding. Table 6 depicts the demographics of the school staff and the participants who took the pretest. Identifiers were not included in the posttest where there were 21 respondents.

Table 6

School Staff and Participant Demographics

Characteristic	School Total		Study Participants ^a	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Administrators	3	1	3	0
Teacher Classification				
General Education	22	43	8	14
Special Education	3	3	3	2

Note: ^a 30 general education, administrators, and special education teachers indicated gender on their survey.

Variables

This section describes the variables of this study. The independent variables were the Implicit Association Test-Race and the Bias Literacy Workshop described in Chapter 3. The dependent variables of this study were the Teacher Expectancy Scale and Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale, also described in Chapter 3.

Independent Variables

According to Salkind (2014), an independent variable is a predictor or a controlled variable for research analysis. This study used the Implicit Association Test-Race to raise conscious awareness of participant bias. In addition, the Bias Literacy Workshop provided participants with an opportunity to learn about bias and strategies to reduce bias in their decisions to refer African Americans to special education.

Dependent Variables

A dependent variable is the predicted outcome in research analysis (Salkind, 2014). In this study, the Teacher Expectancy Scale and Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale served as the dependent variables. The researcher used the Teacher Expectations Scale in conjunction with the question: “Describe briefly the last student that you referred to special education”. For the purpose of this study, the researcher utilized the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale developed by Armor (1999) to focus on the participants’ perceptions of their objectivity when making decisions to refer African American students for special education services.

Findings of Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher used descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the group statistics of participant pre- and posttest results. The intervention group consisted of 37 participants for the pretest; 14 were male, and 16 were female, and seven did not indicate gender. Twenty-one of the thirty-seven pretest respondents participated in the posttest. Hence, 16 participants dropped out before completing the posttest. The intervention groups consisted of the following sample for the pretest: Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale ($N = 37$) and Teacher Expectations Scale ($N = 37$). The posttest sample results were as follows: Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale ($N = 21$) and Teacher Expectations Scale ($N = 21$).

Cronbach’s alpha was computed by using SPSS to estimate the internal consistency reliability of the posttest measures and compare to the established pretest Cronbach’s alpha value. Table 7 displays the previously established Cronbach’s alpha

coefficients for pre- and posttest measures of the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale and the Teacher Expectations Scale. Table 8 displays Cronbach's alpha coefficients for pre- and posttest measures of the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale and the Teacher Expectations Scale for this study.

Table 7

Cronbach's Alpha for Pre- and Posttest Measures

Scales	Pretest	Posttest	Number of Items
Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale	.83 ^a	.82	4
	.87 ^b		
Teacher Expectations Scale	.97	.98	6

Note. ^a Armor, 1999 ^b van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten and Holland, 2010

Table 8

Cronbach's Alpha for Pre- and Posttest Measures for Current Study

Scales	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized	Number of Items
Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale	.82	.82	4
Teacher Expectations Scale	.98	.98	6

Quantitative Data Analysis

The following research question directed the quantitative portion of the study:
Does an educational intervention change MDT members' perceived self-objectivity and perceived expectations? This question generated the following hypotheses:

H_{01A}: There is no statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest self objectivity as measured by the Personal Objectivity Scale.

H_{1A}: There is a statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest self objectivity as measured by the Personal Objectivity Scale.

H_{01B}: There is no statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest expectations as measured by the Teacher Expectations Scale.

H_{1B}: There is a statistically significant difference between MDT members' pretest and posttest expectations as measured by the Teacher Expectations Scale.

The researcher established the following criteria for accepting the null: the researcher will not reject accept the null hypothesis if the p value for the test is $p \leq .05$

Independent samples t -test. After entering data into SPSS, the researcher used an independent samples t -test to examine the difference between the pretest and posttest group responses. The data did not meet the assumptions for the dependent samples t -test because of the inability to match the individual pretest scores to the posttest scores, due to

a clerical error. Therefore, a less powerful independent group t -test was used. In this situation, it gives a pessimistic estimate of whether the means before and after differ in the population. Furthermore, 37 participants completed the pretest, while only 21 out of 37 participants completed the posttest.

Levene's Tests for Equality of variances were calculated to examine whether variances within pre- and posttest groups were different. The results indicated significance on the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale $F(8.020)$, $p = .006$, and significance on the Teacher Expectations Scale $F(11.913)$, $p = .001$. These results support the conclusion that the pretest and posttest variances for the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale and the Teacher Expectations Scale differed.

There was a significant difference in the mean scores for the Teacher Expectancy Scale (pretest $M = 2.27$, posttest $M = 3.00$) and Personal Objectivity Scale (pretest $M = 7.44$, posttest $M = 8.33$). These results suggest that priming of participants with the Implicit Association Test-Race and the intervention of the Bias Literacy Workshop does have an effect on their personal objectivity and expectations for students as assessed by the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale and Teacher Expectations Scale. The researcher cautions the reader that the independent samples t -test underestimated the significance. Furthermore, the comparison is further obscured by the "experimental fatality" effect.

Table 9

Group Statistics Pre- vs. Posttest Results

Survey	Pre- v. Posttest	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Self-Perceived	Pretest	35	7.44	2.44
Objectivity	Posttest	21	8.33	.57
Teacher	Pretest	30	2.27	1.07
Expectations	Posttest	21	3.00	1.61

Table 10

Pretest and Posttest for Equality of Means

Survey		<i>df</i>	Significance (2-tailed)	<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means Mean Difference
Self-Perceived Objectivity	Equal variance not assumed	39.94	.05	-.89
Teacher Expectations	Equal variance not assumed	32.27	.08	-.73

The degrees of freedom displayed in Tables 9 and 10 result from treating the pre- and posttest results as if they were from two different independent groups. In the *t*-test for equality of means, equal variances could not be assumed for either scale. The results of the two-tailed test indicated that on the Personal Objectivity Scale, participants perceived

themselves to be more objective, while the posttest results of the Teacher Expectations Scale approached significance.

Exploration of the sample data suggested that the pretest and posttest scale distributions were not normally distributed. *Figures 11 and 12* show details of how the pretest and posttest score were distributed.

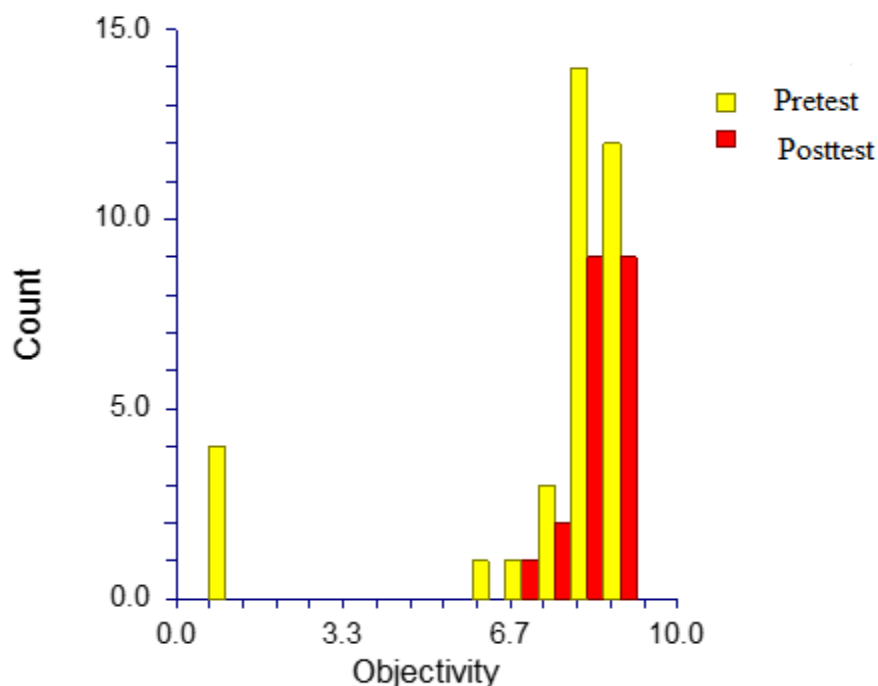


Figure 11. Histogram of pretest vs. posttest Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale scores

Figure 11 shows that the sample pretest objectivity score distribution was bimodal and more variable than the posttest scores. The objectivity pretest mean was lower than the posttest mean in association with the pretest bimodality.

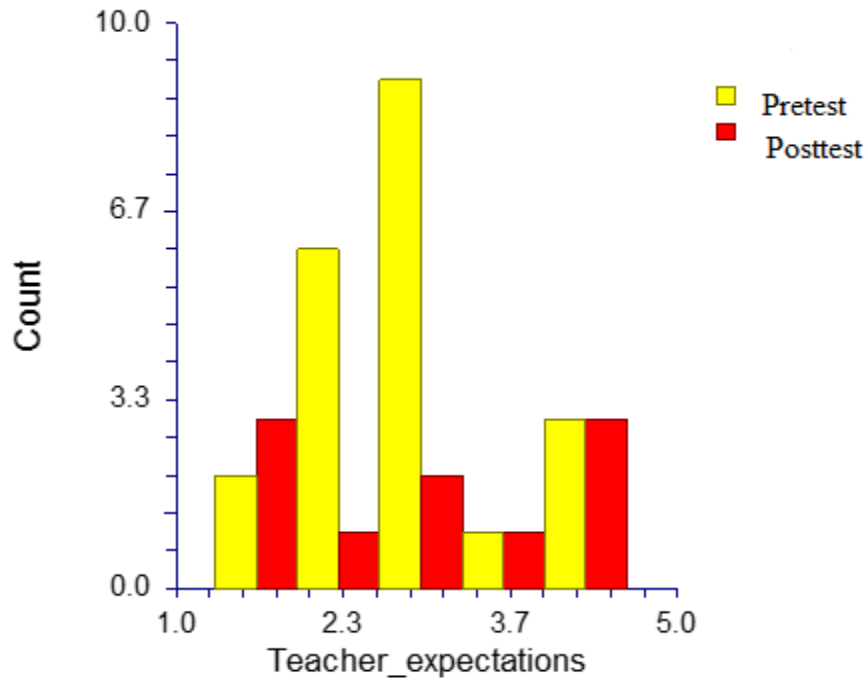


Figure 12. Distributions of Teacher Expectations Scale scores in pretest and posttest conditions

Figure 12 shows that the sample posttest teacher expectation scores were more variable than the pretest scores. There is some hint of bimodality in the posttest scores. Because of these unexpected sample distribution results, formal tests for normality were conducted. Levene's test of homogeneity of variance was employed and confirmed that the variances in the pretest and posttest for the Personal Objectivity Scale ($p=.006$) and for the Teacher Expectations Scale ($p=.001$) differed. Table 11 shows the results of tests for departures of the population distributions from normality.

Table 11

Tests for Normality of Pretest and Posttest Score Distributions

Scale		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig ^b	Statistic	df	Sig ^b
Objectivity	Pretest	.33	35	.00	.60	35	.00
	Posttest	.20	21	.04	.90	21	.04
Teacher Expectations	Pretest	.18	30	.01	.91	30	.02
	Posttest	.18	21	.09	.85	21	.00

Note. ^a Lilliefors Significance Correction; ^b Significance

The significance tests for departures from normality support the inference that the pretest and posttest population distributions are not normal. Therefore, a Mann Whitney U test was computed for differences in the pretest and posttest medians on both scales. An examination of the findings reveals that the results of the Mann Whitney U test, comparing pre- and posttest of the Personal Objectivity Scale and Teacher Expectations Scale did not show significance. Table 12 shows the results of the Mann Whitney Test.

Table 12

Mann-Whitney Test Results

Scale	Pretest v. Posttest	N	Median	p
Self-Perceived Objectivity	Pretest	35	8.25	.48
	Posttest	21	8.23	
Teacher Expectations	Pretest	30	2.33	.12
	Posttest	21	3.00	

The results of the independent samples *t*-test supported significance mean differences between the pretest and posttest results. However, the pervasive departures from normality suggested a need to check the central tendency results by another procedure. The U test does not support a difference in the pretest and posttest population medians of either scale. The Moses test for spread differences also supports the conclusion that the pretest and posttest population variability are significantly different.

Besides the departures from normality, another unexpected finding should be noted. Levene's test for equality of pretest and posttest variances was significant for self-perceived objectivity, and for teacher expectations with $p=.006$ and $p=.001$ respectively. The Moses test for span equality similarly was significant with $p=.009$ and $p=.000$ respectively. These results further support the inference that the pretest and posttest variances or spreads are not equal for both self-perceived objectivity and for teacher expectations.

Findings of Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

In addition to the pre- and posttest measures, there was one open-ended question for analysis: "Describe briefly the last student that you referred to special education". Of the 37 participants who took the pretest, seven left this question blank, and nine stated that they had never referred a student to special education or wrote "not applicable". Twenty participants described characteristics and behaviors of students they referred to special education that addressed the second and third research questions:

2. How do MDT members describe student characteristics that influence a referral to special education?

3. What student characteristics or behaviors influence the MDT members' decision making, when referring African American students for special education services?

The researcher performed an enumerative and thematic content analysis on the responses of the 20 participants by examining word frequencies (see Table 13).

Clustering and analysis of related words became themes prominent in the participants' responses, yielding the following themes: student learning levels and descriptions of student attributes and behaviors. To clarify, student attributes refer to personal student qualities or descriptors, whereas behaviors refer to the actions of the specific students.

Table 13

Student Characteristics or Behaviors that Impact the MDT Members' Decision Making when Referring African American Students for Special Education

Examples of Relevant Words with the Highest Frequencies	Number of Occurrences
Level	18
Referred	7
Grade	6
Reading	5
Focusing	3
Quiet	3
Standards	2
Assessments	2
Mastering	2
Behavior	2
Struggling	2
Understanding	1
Disruptive	1
Autistic	1
Deaf	1
Deficits	1
Distracted	1
Focus	1

Academic Levels

The most frequent words in this theme included “level” and “grade”, and five participants specifically indicated “reading.” Used in conjunction with the previous most frequent words were the terms “standards,” “assessments,” and “mastering.”

One female postgraduate wrote, “The last student I referred to special education had a history (3 or more years) of not mastering grade level standards on end of year standardized assessments.”

Another female graduate reported, “The young man read three grades below grade level. He performed poorly on both formative and summative assessments, including a beginning level on the GMAS.” GMAS stands for Georgia Milestones Assessment System.

A male postgraduate wrote,

The last student I referred to special education struggled with written language and logical reasoning. After teaching him for a year and monitoring him through the RTI [Response to Intervention] process with an additional reading class, I noticed the student was not progressing well. So I recommended him to be tested to determine whether he had any learning differences.

Some participants described students’ insufficient mastery on state or district assessments, or mastery of grade level standards. For example, a participant wrote,

The last student I referred to special education had a history (three or more years) of not mastering grade level standards on end of year standardized assessments.

The student also showed evidence of not mastering standards in class and having difficulties focusing due to lack of prior knowledge and motivation.

In summary, during the prereferral process, interventions are implemented to support the students academically. This section addressed inadequate progress of the students in acquisition of grade level standards, thus resulting in the teacher referring the student for a special education evaluation (Buck, Polloway, Smith-Thomas, & Cook, 2003).

Descriptions of Student Attributes and Behaviors

Participants used specific descriptors to describe the last student they referred for special education services. Specific words extracted from qualitative data to describe these students included “quiet,” “unable to focus,” “understanding,” and “disruptive.”

The “academic levels” were directly linked with “student attributes” as participants described academic and behavioral concerns. One participant shared the following: “The young man that I referred to special education is a somewhat quiet student. He does not read, write, or speak very well.” This “quiet” student’s attribute ran parallel with the “academic” level, the first theme.

The researcher noted that participants used descriptors in narratives. For example, “He was very low functioning in math, and he refused to try.” One female participant graduate reported, “The student I referred was a struggling reader, experienced difficulty with memory, and had slow cognitive processes.” Another female graduate even went as far as diagnosing her student’s inability to learn: “The student may be autistic and has difficulty understanding material and retaining it.”

A male graduate again gave a reason for a student's lack of achievement: "A student that was deaf in one ear. This student performed below grade level in mathematics from the beginning of the year." Again, participants wanted to reason "why" their students were not achieving academically.

Participants further elaborated on significant behavioral difficulties exhibited by students: "The student referred was easily distracted, disregarded rules and regulations, and was frequently off-task." Another participant said, "The student was a male ninth grader. He had difficulty focusing and attending since kindergarten, and his academic achievement was below the norm."

Other participants clearly stated that the behavior mirrored that of special education eligibility categories, such as the participant reporting that one student may be "autistic." Another example was a participant's response that "the student displayed the behaviors that could possibly be emotional and behavior disorder."

Secondly, the researcher found that participants used similar descriptive language to describe student behaviors and student attributes. Analysis of the data revealed additional attributes such as "quiet", "unable to focus", "understanding", and "disruptive" to describe African American male students referred to special education. Overall, behavioral challenges and academic difficulties, especially with reading, were student characteristics that impacted these students' grade levels and teachers' decisions to refer African American students to special education.

Summary

In order to attain the objectives of this study, the researcher conducted a mixed-methods study that involved the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. The Teacher Expectations Scale and Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale were used for the pre- and posttest. The survey also included a link for the informed consent document. The researcher sent an email request to 71 participants, of which 37 participants agreed to take the pretest, resulting in a 52.11% response rate. Of those 37 participants, 21 participated in the posttest, resulting in a 29.58% response rate.

The researcher and faculty advisor prompted the participants to take the Race Implicit Association Test-Race (IAT-Race). Upon completion, the researcher and faculty advisor delivered portions of the Bias Literacy Workshop (Carnes et al., 2015; Isaac et al., 2016).

Once the participants completed the Race IAT individually, they joined the 1½-hour Bias Literacy Workshop. After the researcher completed the intervention, participants completed posttests of the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale and Teacher Expectations Scale via SurveyMonkey for participants. Following this, all participants declined the researcher's invitation to participate in individual interviews due to extraneous factors and events occurring in the district.

The findings for the first research question indicated mixed statistical results. While these t-test results suggest that priming of participants with the Implicit Association Test-Race and the Bias Literacy Workshop increased participants' perceptions of their personal objectivity, their expectations assessed by the Teacher

Expectations Scale approached significance, the Mann Whitney U did not reveal significance. It is important to note that the bimodal results fell within an abnormal distribution pattern; therefore, the Mann Whitney was analyzed.

The findings for the second and third research questions resulted in a set of clustered data identifying themes that were prominent in the participants' responses yielding the following descriptors in the narrative: (a) student learning levels and (b) descriptions of student attributes and behaviors. The results indicated behavioral challenges and academic difficulties, especially with reading, were student characteristics that impacted these students' grade levels and teachers' decisions to refer African American students to special education.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For the purpose of this study, the researcher utilized a sequential explanatory design to reach a greater understanding of the role of implicit bias in the decision-making process of multidisciplinary teams to refer African American students to special education. This study utilized Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a methodological and theoretical framework to examine implicit bias as a contributing factor impacting African American enrollment in special education. The overarching goal of CRT is to engage in critical analysis of the racism and practices that silence the voices of marginalized groups (Bell, 1995; Castagno, 2008). Bell (1995) developed CRT as a race-based critique to address covert and subtle forms of racism within the legal system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). During the 1990s, CRT was the critical lens utilized to view inequities in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). For the purpose of this study, Critical Race Theory is the theoretical framework used to study the social construction of the Student Support Team and the decision to refer African American students disproportionately to special education.

Although bias can manifest in many forms, for the purpose of this study, explicit and implicit bias were the topic of discussion. Explicit bias is conscious bias, meaning that a person is aware of the behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and action. Explicit bias is deliberate and openly expressed (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995), whereas implicit

bias—the unconscious bias that influences people’s perceptions, behaviors, and decision making—is an explanation for the societal inequities experienced by African Americans (Staats, 2014). For the purpose of this research, the researcher explored the influence of the Bias Literacy Workshop and exposure to the Implicit Associations Test-Race on teachers’ expectations and teachers’ personal objectivity as it relates to referring African American students to special education.

Historically, disproportionality extends deep within America’s history. Dunn (1968) first drew attention to a startling disproportionate rate of African American students from impoverished backgrounds in classes for the mentally handicapped. Dunn found and reported placement of African American children in Educable Mentally Retarded classes at a disturbing rate, with 60 to 80% of the students enrolled in these classes coming from minority or low socioeconomic status backgrounds. With over 30 years of documented disproportionality (Gamm, 2007; Hosp & Reschly, 2004), research has explored a plethora of reasons for disproportionality of African American students in special education. Research contends that factors such as socioeconomic status (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010); poverty (Zhang & Katsiyannis, 2002); class size (Artiles, Harry, Reschly, & Chinn, 2002); and lack of school funding (Kozol, 1991) are factors that influence disproportionality in special education. To reduce disproportionality further, prereferral teams were implemented to fulfill two primary functions: (a) reduce inappropriate referrals to special education, and (b) to enhance the teacher’s skills in addressing the needs of students who are academically or behaviorally at-risk (Buck, Polloway, Smith-Thomas & Cook, 2003). According to Friend and

Bursuck (2006), reducing inappropriate referrals and placements that are possibly discriminatory is the main function of the multidisciplinary team (MDT). However, despite the intended purpose of the problem-solving team to remain unbiased when designing interventions for students with academic and/or behavioral difficulties and recommending special education testing or placement, teacher bias has been found to influence decisions refer student to the Student Support Team and, ultimately, special education (Knotek, 2003; Peters, Kranzler, Algina, Smith, & Daunic, 2014). To extend the aforementioned assertion, subjective decisions may be based on a teacher's biased perceptions of students' behavior or students' low socioeconomic status; thus, the Student Support Team's problem-solving process becomes "less reflective and more reflexive" (Knotek, 2003, p. 11). This warranted an investigation of this phenomenon.

While a gap exists in the literature regarding implicit bias and disproportionality in special education, implicit bias has influenced the treatment of African Americans across various disciplines. Implicit bias has been implicated in law enforcement (Goff et al., 2014), pediatricians (Cooper et al., 2012); and teacher expectations (van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, & Holland, 2010). The aforementioned findings mirror the disparities in school discipline. For example, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights' findings indicated that "African American students without disabilities are more than three times as likely as their White peers without disabilities to be expelled or suspended" (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014, p. i). While there are numerous explanations for discipline disparities with African American students exist (Skiba et al., 2011), implicit bias—the unconscious bias that influence people's perceptions, behaviors, and

decision making—is one explanation for the societal inequities experienced by African Americans (Staats, 2014).

Carnes et al. (2012) approached implicit bias as a habit that can be remediated by providing an educational intervention to promote bias literacy as a first step towards gender equity. The results indicated that within four to six months of participation in the Bias Literacy Workshop, three quarters of the individuals demonstrated increased bias awareness with descriptions of a plan to change. Carnes et al. (2015) found that intentional behavioral change has the potential to help faculty break gender bias habits and create a departmental culture that supports the career advancement of female faculty in the university. Bias Literacy Workshops may enhance bias literacy among teachers, administrators, and staff regarding their perceptions of African American students.

This research explored implicit bias as a causal factor of disproportionality of African Americans in special education (Fletcher, 2014). To that end, the researcher exposed the participants to the Implicit Associations Test-Race and the Bias Literacy Workshop to learn about implicit bias and strategies to mediate those biases and ignite participants' consciousness about their decisions and expectations of African American students. It is important to note that while reduction of implicit bias is a multistep process, awareness is the first step in the change process of reducing prejudiced behavior (Carnes et al., 2012). The next section clarifies the researcher's rationale for employing the Teacher Expectations Scale and Personal Objectivity Scale as pretest and posttest measures.

Rationale for Instrumentation

For the purpose of this researcher study, the researcher elected to focus on two primary factors in the pre- and posttest: *teacher expectations* and *personal objectivity*. Brophy (1983) contended that teacher expectations about a student can lead to the student's behavior confirming the teacher's expectations. For example, McKown and Weinstein (2008) conducted research utilizing cross sectional data archives. The findings indicated that teacher's expectations for Black and White students differed, resulting in teachers having lower expectations for Black students. Furthermore, the effects of these flawed perceptions impact students' self-images, which potentially affects them throughout their career in school (Gniewozs, Eccles, & Noack, 2012). Brophy (1983) found, "Teachers sometimes differentially interact with individual students, groups, or classes in ways that seem likely to maximize the achievement progress of high expectation students but limit the progress of low expectation students" (pp. 643-644). Considering the teacher is typically the initiator of the referral to Student Support Team (Harry, 2008), it is incumbent upon the researcher to focus on the possibility of the teacher's bias, which could potentially result in an inappropriate referral to special education (Harry, 2008). The literature indicates that teachers' expectations can potentially affect student outcomes (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016). Thus, teachers can perpetuate biased expectations in how they teach, evaluate, or advise marginalized students; as a result, the stigmatized students will adapt to the biased teacher expectations, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy (Brophy, 1983; Ferguson, 2003).

The second factor measured in the pre-and posttests was personal objectivity. Historically, the rationale behind the Student Support Team was that a group of professionals using various criteria would make less-biased referrals to special education than making decisions independent of the team (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1989; Ysseldyke, 1983). However, Eidle, Boyd, Truscott, and Meyers's (1998) study of prereferral teams revealed the referral process may not be as objective as intended, especially in the case of the students referred to, and placed in, special education. Furthermore, Fletcher (2014) found that Student Support Team members consistently applied White middle class norms to their African American students and families. Fletcher's research found that students failing to conform to established norms were often misunderstood. Consequently, implicit bias may exist in the multidisciplinary team (MDT) members' decision to refer an African American student for special education (Fletcher, 2014).

Summary of Study

The researcher administered the pre- and posttest to the intervention group. The quantitative analysis used an independent samples *t*-test to examine the difference between the pretest and posttest group responses. The visual analysis of the histogram of each group indicated bimodal distributions on the posttest measures, and the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test were statistically not significant for the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale (.84) and Teacher Expectations Scale (.11), although the Teacher Expectations Scale approached significance.

The results of the Levene's Test for Equality were calculated to determine the homogeneity of variances for the pre and posttest groups. The results indicated

significance on the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale $F(8.020)$, $p = .006$, and significance on the Teacher Expectations Scale $F(11.913)$, $p = .001$. Thus, since the p value from the aforementioned test was less than .05, the researcher established the following criteria that the Levene's test for Equality of variance was not met; therefore, the nonparametric tests were also included in the analysis due to the skewed distribution of the dependent variable.

The results of the independent samples t -test demonstrated statistical significance between the pretest and posttest results. Therefore, it is appropriate for the researcher to conclude that the teachers and administrators' participation in the Bias Literacy Workshop resulted in participants' bimodal results for the pre- and posttest measures of the Teacher Expectations Scale and Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale. The mean on the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale yielded bimodal results on the histogram, suggesting that the intervention of the Bias Literacy Workshop and the Implicit Association Test-Race impacted participants' posttest perceptions of their self-perceived objectivity. Consequently, it is appropriate for the researcher to conclude that the teachers and administrators' participation in the Bias Literacy Workshop and taking the Implicit Association Test-Race resulted in participants' bimodal results for the pre- and posttest measures of the Teacher Expectations Scale and Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale.

In summary, the mean comparison of the pre- and posttest of the Teacher Expectations Scale (Dusek & Joseph, 1983) and Personal Objectivity Scale (Armor, 1999) suggest that teachers' expectations of the last student referred to special education increased and the objectivity mean increased. The results also suggest that the interactive

effect of using the IAT-Race as a conscious-raising tool (Morris & Ashburn, 2010) in conjunction with the Bias Literacy Workshop as a habit-breaking intervention to address implicit bias (Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox, 2012) promoted a sense of awareness among participants regarding their personal bias against African Americans and provided the participants with strategies to reduce implicit bias. Therefore, the evidence is promising in that the IAT-Race and the Bias Literacy Workshop provide baseline data suggesting these methods can reduce implicit bias, thereby promoting awareness of teachers and administrators' bias and the impact of their personal bias on the referral of African Americans to special education, resulting in disproportionality. Interestingly, the participants' posttest mean scores were higher in comparison to their pretest mean scores, indicating their expectations for the last student referred to special education were lower, than after the exposure to IAT-Race and the Bias Literacy Workshop. Additionally, participants considered themselves to be more objective in decision making after the exposure to the IAT-Race and the Bias Literacy Workshop.

On the other hand, the skewed distribution affects the reliability of the mean in interpreting the data. Based on the mixed results, the researcher assumes that changes occurred by exposing participants to the Bias Literacy Intervention and the Implicit Associations Test-Race. However, the specifics or the degree to which exposure to the intervention had on participants is unknown. Another plausible rationale for mixed results is the sample size of participants in the pretest versus posttest, in which "experimental fatality" effect posed a threat to the internal validity, which determines whether the treatment made a difference or not. Another plausible rationale for the

polarization in the quantitative results is Incentive Theory of Self Persuasion (Janis & Gilmore, 1965). Janis and Gilmore (1965) contended that when a person accepts that task of improvising a point of view that aligns with their personal convictions, the person can experience thoughts of positive arguments, while at the same time suppressing irrelevant negative attitudes, referred to bias scanning. Although the extent to the bias scanning effect is unknown, it serves as a plausible explanation to the polarizations of results.

The qualitative findings for the second and third research questions resulted in a set of clustered data identifying themes prominent in the participants' responses yielding the following descriptors in the narrative: (a) student learning levels and (b) descriptions of student attributes and behaviors. The results indicated behavioral challenges and academic difficulties especially with reading were student characteristics that impacted these students' grade levels and teachers' decisions to refer African American students to special education. Research suggests that inadequate progress of the students in acquisition of grade level standards, thus resulting in the teacher referring the student for a special education evaluation (Buck et al., 2003). Regarding student attributes and/or behavior, participants used the following descriptors when describing the last student referred to special education students: "quiet," "unable to focus," "understanding," and "disruptive". Maholmes and Brown (2002) argued that a teacher's deficit perspective displaces blame for underachievement solely on the student, while negating ecological factors that may contribute to the identified academic or behavioral problem. The analysis of the qualitative data revealed that teachers' descriptions of students' academic

and/or behavioral performance led with deficit language. While teachers' responses were indicative of genuine concern for the student's inadequate academic and/or behavioral progress, their descriptions were laden with unfavorable descriptions of their students. Maholmes and Brown (2002) purported that while it is important to describe academic and/ or behavioral challenges of students, "the use of language has the power to negatively impact a child's entire educational experience and ultimately the choices they make through adulthood" (p. 54).

Discussion of Findings

These results suggest that priming of participants with the Implicit Association Test-Race and the intervention of the Bias Literacy Workshop does have an effect on their personal objectivity and expectations for students as assessed by the Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale. Bias Literacy Workshops can potentially reduce the impact of such bias on members of an organization (Carnes et al., 2012; Jackson, Hillard, & Schneider, 2014). In other words, post workshop, the participants perceived that they were more objective. The Self-Perceived Objectivity Scale has been used in other studies to "prime" participants' self-objectivity that led to biased decision-making (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2007).

Fine et al. (2014) found that the implementation of bias workshops during a search and hiring practice increased the odds of academic departments hiring women. Carnes et al. (2015) found that bias workshops improved the climate within the department and the attitude of the faculty towards women. A review of literature supports the need for bias literacy workshops to increase awareness of implicit bias, and

the impact bias has on decisions. While the longitudinal impact of Bias Literacy Workshops study found before Implicit Bias Training is a gap in the literature, the implementation of Bias Literacy Workshops holds promise for reducing disproportionality. Further research is necessary.

Research supports the findings that teachers hold differential expectations towards African American students in special education, in comparison to other race groups (van den Bergh et al., 2010). Boser, Wilhelm, and Hanna (2014) found that high school students whose teachers have higher expectations about their future success are far more likely to graduate from college. Addressing teacher expectations through bias reduction workshops, such as the Bias Literacy Workshop in this study, holds promise in reducing the harmful effects of stereotype threat thus confirming the low expectations in the students' emotional response that directly harm the trajectory of their academic performance and cause students to misidentify with the educational environment (Steele, 1997).

This investigation into the social construction of race and the role it plays in the education policies that impact minorities as discussed by Critical Race Theory provides an additional perspective to the literature on the education of African Americans in special education. The purpose of using Critical Race Theory as a framework for this study is to challenge the social construct of multidisciplinary teams and identify implicit bias as an influential factor in the decision to refer African Americans to special education. Furthermore, the researcher utilized Critical Race Theory as a lens to identify race as a factor in inequitable practices within the education system. Through the lenses

of Critical Race Theory, the researcher encouraged teachers to examine their unconscious assumptions regarding special education students. This critique also examines the underlying belief that marginalization persists within our educational system, despite the changes in policies and procedures to reduce inequities our education system.

Furthermore, the researcher explored the frequently overlooked personal variables that affect the expectations of and decisions to refer African American students to special education. Within the context of this study, the researcher exposed the participants to the IAT-Race to challenge their personal bias towards African Americans. This process challenged the participants' unconscious thoughts about African Americans. The Bias Literacy Workshop provided an opportunity for participants to discuss their reactions to the IAT-Race and learn strategies to mitigate implicit bias in their practice. While the results of this study yielded mixed results, it is evident to the researcher that the IAT-Race and the Bias Literacy Intervention had some effect on participants, as evident in the change in their pretest and posttest results, although the degree of the impact is unknown to the researcher.

Implications

The employment of implicit bias training as a means to improve equity in schools by P-12 educators is becoming increasingly prevalent. As stated previously, implicit bias can infiltrate educators' practice with children and create a pipeline to inequities for children of color. This research offers encouragement for raising the consciousness of teachers and providing ongoing professional development to relay strategies to mitigate their bias. Although the intervention of the IAT-Race and Bias Literacy Workshop to

mediate change in the unconscious minds of educators working with urban youth yielded mixed results, the change was significant enough to hold promise for replications in practice and in future research studies. The IAT has been used as a consciousness-raising tool in classrooms (Morris & Ashburn-Nardo, 2010) and in diversity training (Castillo, Brossart, Reyes, Conoley, & Phoummarath, 2007). Devine et al. (2012) contended that implicit bias is a “habit of mind”. The Bias Literacy Workshop encompasses effective practices for adults, behavioral change, and continuous professional learning opportunities (Boonyasai, Windish, Chakraborti, Feldman, & Bass, 2007).

While policies and procedures are implemented to impose accountability measures to ensure equitable practices in P-12, Bias Literacy Workshops and the IAT-Race provides educators with tools to become change agents and practice mitigating bias in practice. Research evidence indicates that implicit bias explains the social inequities mirrored in other disciplines, such as criminal justice and healthcare (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Thus, in education, the practical implications that implicit bias can create invisible barriers that marginalize students and prevent the student from exposure to opportunities and achievement are blatant contradictions to the essence of educators’ values and intention for joining the profession. Therefore, it is highly critical for educators to move beyond policies and procedures and address the unconscious ideals of educators that influence decision making and expectations for special education students.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. To extend this study, the first recommendation is to conduct follow up interviews with participants to delve deeper into their individual personal

experiences regarding African American students and the prereferral process. Furthermore, future research would benefit from exploring the participants' responses to the Implicit Association Test-Race. Although overall mean scores provided statistically significant results in pre- and posttest measures after the Bias Literacy Workshop, exploring individual responses and reactions contributes greatly to understand the impact of the workshop on individual members.

2. The second recommendation to further this research study is to conduct a repeated measures statistical analysis, which further compares individuals to their pre- and posttest results.
3. The third recommendation to further this research is to extend the study to all schools within a school district as means of creating systemic change in relations to African American students and the prereferral process. The school district in this study was disproportionate in terms of discipline infractions for African Americans and students with disabilities. Further research may consider providing administrators and teachers with bias training and measuring over time the impact on disproportionality.
4. The fourth recommendation to extend this study is to conduct a similar study involving other members of the Student Support Team, such as the school psychologist, speech pathologist, behavioral specialist, and other members of the Student Support Team.

Summary

The findings of the research questions, although suggestive and not conclusive, provided evidence that using the Implicit Associations Test-Race to encourage awareness while learning strategies to mitigate bias during the Bias Literacy Workshop proved beneficial in raising the teachers' expectations and teachers' objectivity of students subsequently referred for academic and/or behavioral challenges to the Student Support Team. Sample items on the Teacher Expectations Scale include "He or she will probably have a successful school career" and "He or she is an intelligent student". The pretest primed the participants to think about the last person they referred to special education, although 22% had not done so. The significant increase of the Teacher Expectations Scale may indicate that participants' understanding of their own bias, or at least the role implicit bias has on society, may have led to a more optimistic view of those students, or at least their decision-making in regards to those students. While the impact of the Bias Literacy Workshop on the referral of African American students to special education is unknown, the results indicate that the workshop may potentially raise awareness of such bias on members of an organization.

The finding for the quantitative analysis found a significant change in posttest scores on the Personal Objectivity Scale after exposure to the Bias Literacy Workshop, although the results were not conclusive. The qualitative analysis yielded two primary themes: (a) student learning levels and (b) descriptions of student attributes and behaviors. In this study, the workshop increased participants' beliefs in their ability to be more objective in their decision-making toward making referrals to special education.

This chapter provided an in-depth discussion of the connection between the study's findings and research. Also included were implications and the researcher's recommendations for future studies to study implicit bias and prereferral teams, and bias literacy workshops to mediate bias of team members. Whether this leads to fewer future referrals was not part of the scope of this study; however, perhaps participants perceived that they understood their own biases better in the framework of special education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL



*Institutional Review Board
For Research Involving Human Subjects*

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

Ms. Jilian K. Whitley
3001 Mercer University Drive
Tift College of Education
Atlanta, GA 30341

RE: Implicit Bias as a Contributing Factor to Disproportionality of African-American Males in Special Education (H1611327)

Dear Ms. Whitley:

On behalf of Mercer University's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 28-Nov-2016 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with Federal Regulations [21 CFR 36.110\(b\)](#) and [41 CFR 46.110\(b\)](#) (for expedited review) and was approved under category(ies) 6, 7 per 63 FR 60364.

Your application was approved for one year of study on 07-Dec-2016. The protocol expires on 06-Dec-2017. If the study continues beyond one year, it must be re-evaluated by the IRB Committee.

Item(s) Approved:

New faculty minimal risk application for quantitative research study. Human subjects will be involved in the collection of the data through the use of survey instruments and interviews. In order to maintain confidentiality, any identifying information (i.e. names) will be substituted with pseudonyms. A mixed method approach will be used to collect and analyze the data. The sample for this study will be a multidisciplinary team in one middle school located within a public school district. Instrumentation for the study will be in the form of a survey. Methods for collecting the data include the Teacher Expectancy Scale, Personal Objectivity Scale and Implicit Associations Test.

NOTE: Please report to the committee when the protocol is initiated. Report to the Committee immediately any changes in the protocol or consent form and ALL accidents, injuries, and serious or unexpected adverse events that occur to your subjects as a result of this study.

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our [Satisfaction Survey](#) and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

Ave Chambliss-Richardson, M.Ed., CIP, CIM.
Associate Director of Human Research Protection Programs (HRPP)
Member
Institutional Review Board

"Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonization's (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice."

Mercer University IRB & Office of Research Compliance
Phone: 478-301-4101 | Email: ORC_Mercer@Mercer_Edu | Fax: 478-301-2329
1501 Mercer University Drive, Macon, Georgia 31207-0001

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT



Informed Consent

IMPLICIT BIAS AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO DISPROPORTIONALITY OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators

The principal investigator involved in the research study is Jillian Whatley, M.S., M.A., Psy.S. The researcher is from Mercer University-Tift College of Education. The faculty advisor for this research study is Dr. Edward Bouie located at Mercer University 3001 Mercer University Drive Atlanta, Georgia 30341. Dr. Bouie's contact number is 678-547-6165. The researcher for this study can be reached at 404-661-0867 or email at Jillian.Whatley@gmail.com.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to examine implicit bias as a contributing factor of disproportionality by examining the decision process made by members of the MDT. The imperative phase in the special education referral process, the pre-referral process and the multidisciplinary teams, will be studied. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004 established the objective *prereferral process* to manage referrals, assessments, and placements of students in special education by implementing policies and procedures to guide decision making in a nondiscriminatory way (Gritzmacher & Gritzmacher, 2010). The primary responsibility of the *multidisciplinary teams (MDT)* is for reducing inappropriate placements and referrals that may be discriminatory (Friend & Bursuck, 2006).

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Protocol
Expiration Date 12/06/2017

The rationale behind the problem-solving team is to maintain objectivity in decisions regarding interventions to assist with academic and behavioral challenges and to refer students objectively for eligibility for special education. However, occasionally, the decisions are subjective and may rely on biased information presented by the classroom teacher (Knotek, 2003; Peters, Kranzler, Algina, Smith, & Daunic, 2014). This warrants an investigation of this phenomenon. First, this study will examine implicit bias as a contributing factor of disproportionality by examining the decision process made by members of the MDT. As a result of this study, the researcher encourages stimulating change among educators by encouraging them to identify and examine their own hidden biases, perceptions, stereotypes, and beliefs that may negatively affect African American students. Furthermore, the researcher hopes to contribute to the extensive body of literature documenting disproportionality and examine this imperative phase in special education placement, the pre-referral intervention process.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete demographic information, the Teacher Expectancy Scale, the Personal Objectivity Scale, Implicit Associations Test, and Bias Literacy Workshop. For those participants interested, the researcher will interview volunteers the following week. The first phase including the scales and intervention will take 1 hour. The follow up interviews with volunteers will take 30-45 minutes.

Potential Risks or Discomforts

There are no foreseeable risks associated with the study.

Any possible foreseeable risk may include emotional discomfort while viewing results from the Implicit Associations Tests, and during the interview. Provisions for managing the foreseeable risk include the subject's right to discontinue participation, either temporarily or permanently.

Potential Benefits of the Research

The researcher contends that the data collected from the research study benefits the participants by providing an opportunity for self-assessment of the teachers'

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expectations of students (Teacher Expectancy Scale) and their personal objectivity when making decisions (Personal Objectivity Scale). Also, the Implicit Associations Test and Bias Literacy workshop seeks to make conscious any implicit bias and strategies to reduce the influence of bias. Furthermore, the researcher asserts that this body of research potentially benefits members of Multidisciplinary Teams in becoming aware of their bias against African- Americans and learning how to mitigate that bias with strategies, to ultimately reduce the numbers of African-American students referred and ultimately placed in special education.

Confidentiality and Data Storage

In an effort to maintain confidentiality, any information (i.e. names) will be substituted with pseudo names. Furthermore, any tapes or videos utilized during this research study will be used to identify patterns and themes identified by the subjects and the survey. These tapes and videos will not be made available to others; only the researcher, Dr. Edward Bouie, the advisor for the research study; and Dr. Carol Isaac, the methodologist.

Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. As a participant you may refuse to participate at anytime. To withdraw from the study please contact Jillian Whatley at Jillian.Whatley@gmail.com. To withdraw from the study, please write a brief statement and submit it to Jillian Whatley with your signature.

Questions about the Research

If you have any questions about the research, please speak with Jillian Whatley. You may reach Ms. Whatley at Jillian.Whatley@gmail.com or Dr. Edward Bouie at Bouie_EL@mercer.edu or at 678-547-6165.

Audio or Video Taping

The interviews with participants will be audio recorded. Any identifying characteristics will be replaced with a pseudonym in order to maintain anonymity of the participants

This project has been reviewed and approved by Mercer University's IRB. If you

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Resubmission Date 12/06/2017

believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Chair, at (478) 301-4101.

You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to your satisfaction. Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this research study.

KEEP SIGNATURES

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Rev.08/19/2010

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APPENDIX C

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY THROUGH BIAS LITERACY

PRETEST & POSTTEST

Directions: Please circle the number indicating how accurately that trait describes you, using the following rating scale.

Disagree Strongly Very Moderately Slightly Neutral Slightly Moderately Very Strongly
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

	Strongly disagree	Very	Mod	Slight	Neutral	Slight	Mod	Very	Strongly agree
a. In most situations, I try to do what seems reasonable and logical.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
b. When forming an opinion, I try to objectively consider all of the facts I have access to.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
c. My judgments are based on a logical analysis of the facts.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
d. My decision-making is rational and objective.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Describe briefly the last student that you referred to special education:

Teacher Expectations (Dusek & Joseph, 1983):	Not applicable				Totally applicable
He or she is a smart student.	1	2	3	4	5
He or she will probably have a good school report at the end of this school year.	1	2	3	4	5
He or she performs well in school.	1	2	3	4	5
He or she will probably have a successful school career.	1	2	3	4	5
He or she is an intelligent student.	1	2	3	4	5
He or she will probably have a high score on the final school achievement tests.	1	2	3	4	5

Circle:

Gender: Male Female

Professional Status: Undergraduate Graduate Postgraduate

Are you interested in participating in a follow-up interview? Yes No

email address: _____

APPENDIX D
WORKSHOP EVALUATION



Educational Leadership Program

Research Presentation EVALUATION

“Mitigating Implicit Bias through Bias Literacy”

Please rate each item by circling appropriate number:

		Poor			Excellent	
1.	Quality of content	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Effectiveness of speaker	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Relevance of topic to your needs	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Usefulness of topic to your workplace	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Has this workshop increased your knowledge about bias?	1	2	3	4	5

Write down a strategy you commit to using to reduce:

1. Bias at work

2. Bias in your personal life

What new information did you gain from the workshop?

Other comments:

Name: _____

email address: _____

APPENDIX E

PERMISSIONS TO REPRODUCE OR ADAPT COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

For *Figure 1*:

Permission to Replicate Information

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For *Figure 2*:

Ms. Whatley,

I absolutely grant you permission to use the Expressions of Racism chart from my dissertation. When I am back in my office I will sign the form and get it to you as soon as possible. I would be very interested in reading your dissertation if you are open to sharing it. Good luck with the final stages of your doctoral process and congratulations on being almost done.

Take good care,

Chris E. Martin, LMSW, PhD
Assistant Professor
School of Social Work
St. Ambrose University
1950 54th St. Davenport, IA
563.333.3916

For *Figure 3*:

Permission to Replicate Information

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For *Figures 4-7*:

Dr. Zhang:

I am a doctoral student at Mercer University in Education Leadership. I am in the process of preparing my dissertation and I am seeking permission to include the following material in my publication. A copy of the article is attached to this email. I am requesting permission to use the charts on page 121.

The work will be used in the following manner: My dissertation topic is Implicit Bias as a Contributing Factor to Disproportionality in Special Education. The charts will be used in tandem with other research to document the extent of the problem (disproportionality).

Please let me know if there is a fee for using this work in this manner.

Please indicate your approval of this request by signing the letter where indicated below and returning it to me as soon as possible to 1816 Temple Park Drive Loganville, GA 30052. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own the copyright to the above-described material.

Very truly yours,

Jillian Whatley, Psy.S., NCSP
For copyright owner use:

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

By: *Dalan Zhang*

Title: *professor*

Date: *5/6/2016*

For *Figures 9 and 10*:

Good afternoon:

I am a doctoral student at Mercer University in Education Leadership. I am in the process of preparing my dissertation and I am seeking permission to include the following material in my publication.

Set of Tasks on the Implicit Association Test (IAT)

Reprinted from IAT Design In Online Psychology Laboratory, n.d., Retrieved August 28, 2016, from <http://opl.apa.org/Experiments/About/AboutIATRace.aspx>. Copyright by

Online Psychology Laboratory

The work will be used in the following manner: My dissertation topic is Implicit Bias as a Contributing Factor to Disproportionality in Special Education. The charts will be to provide a visual of the Implicit Associations Test for the reader.

Please let me know if there is a fee for using this work in this manner.

Very truly yours,

Jillian Whatley, Psy.S., NCSP

From: "Boenau, Martha" <MBoenau@apa.org>

Date: September 5, 2017 at 9:34:10 AM EDT

To: "jillian.whatley@gmail.com" <jillian.whatley@gmail.com>

Subject: FW: FW: Permission to Use Images

I think the email below from our General Counsel, Jesse Raben, should provide this information you need.

Martha E. Boenau, MS | Associate Director
Precollege and Undergraduate Education
Education Directorate | [202-336-6140](tel:202-336-6140) |
mboenau@apa.org
American Psychological Association
www.apa.org

Advancing psychology to benefit society and
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From: Raben, Jesse
Sent: Wednesday, September 28, 2016 2:50 PM
To: Boenau, Martha <MBoenau@apa.org>
Cc: Thomas, Karen <kthomas@apa.org>; Hailstorks, Robin <rhailstorks@apa.org>
Subject: RE: Permission to Use Images

Sounds like if it is just the figure, it is the project implicit' s and they have given permission so I am ok with that.

Jesse Raben | Associate General Counsel
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For Table 1:

Dr. Allen,

I am a doctoral student at Mercer University in Education Leadership. I am in the process of preparing my dissertation and I am seeking permission to include the following material in my publication.

Tenets of Critical Race Theory

CRT Tenet	Definition	Source
Ordinariness	Recognizes that race is common and ordinary. Racism is difficult to curve and address.	Delgado & Stefancic (2001)
Interest Convergence	Culture will change only in the interest of the dominant group.	Lopez (2003)
Social Construction	Race is historically and social constructed by how people are perceived and treated in everyday life.	Marable (2003)
Differential Racialization	Society assigns various roles to different minority groups and forces competition among the groups.	Winant (2004)
Legal Story Telling	Minority groups communicate their stories through life experiences.	Stefancic (2001)

Note. Reprinted from “A Critical Race Theory Analysis of Disproportionate Representation of Blacks and Males Participating in Florida’s Special Education Programs,” by A. G. Allen, 2010, p. 35. Copyright 2010 by Anthony G. Allen. Reprinted with permission.

The work will be used in the following manner: My dissertation topic is Implicit Bias as a Contributing Factor to Disproportionality in Special Education. The chart will be used in tandem with other research to document the extent of the problem with racism and bias.

Please let me know if there is a fee for using this work in this manner.

Please indicate your approval of this request by signing the letter where indicated below and returning it to me as soon as possible to 1816 Temple Park Drive Loganville, GA 30052. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own the copyright to the


above-described material. The letter is attached to this email. I have also attached a copy of my curriculum vita to this email.

Very truly yours,

Jillian Whatley, Psy.S., NCSP

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Title: *Author*

Date: *October 4, 2016*