

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION REFERRAL PROCESS  
FOR BLACK MALES BASED ON ACE: ADMINISTRATION, CULTURE  
AND ENVIRONMENT

by

Malik Douglas

Liberty University

A Dissertation Proposal Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this causal comparative study is to contribute to the understanding of Critical Race Theory by using a parametric test to compare the independent variable of human characteristics to the dependent variables of Administrative, Cultural, and Environmental/ Hereditary (ACE) factors to develop a picture of parents'/guardians' and educators' attitudes about factors that may explain the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs. A total of 162 participants completed a self-reporting demographic characteristic survey and the Gresham survey to provide information on the attitudes towards the administrative, cultural, and environmental/hereditary factors that may be correlated with the overrepresentation of Black males in special education, as perceived by each stakeholder group. Participants were drawn from the sample of Black, male, high school students' parents/guardians and educators from 10 high schools within School System A in the metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia area. Parents/guardians included those stakeholders responsible for making legal decisions and supervising students' overall living. Those selected from the educator stakeholder group consisted of tutors, school teachers, and administrators. The results of this study indicated that there are significant differences on the administrative and cultural factors between the gender, age, ethnicity, and type of stakeholder, within the decision process of referring Black males to special education, which may ultimately lead to the overrepresentation of the Black male student in special education programs. The study may have implications for special education, as the insights provided from the data may indicate opportunities for additional training, teacher preparation, or evaluation and placement processes for special education.

## **Dedication**

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7 KJV).

First, I would like to thank the Lord for His grace and mercies that no doubt have been refreshed every morning. To my wife, Janice Douglas, who has supported me through this long journey, thank you for being my rock and providing a foundation that allowed me to continue to push forward to complete my goal. Also, thank you for your understanding, patience, and words of encouragement through the many absent days that kept us from each other. To my daughter Victoria, thank you for your patience and sacrifices through the busy days that I could not be there with you. I appreciate your independence and support of your Daddy through this process.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction**

The main research problem addressed in this study is the overrepresentation of Black males in special education; the goal of this study is to extend and refine the existing body of knowledge on the issue of Black student referrals to special education. The study will focus on the perceptions of stakeholders regarding Black male disproportion in special education for academic reasons rather than social or behavioral problems more often than White male students, and the consequences of the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. This section provides a background of the highlighted research, introduces the problem, and addresses the general purpose and significance of the study.

### **Background**

Special education was commonly provided in special schools, which were started many centuries ago in an effort to ensure that students with special needs were provided with services to suit their needs (Brandon, Higgins, Pierce, Tandy, & Sileo, 2010). Such schools focused primarily on physical disabilities and were intended to serve specific populations such as those who were blind, deaf, or lame (Dyson & Kozleski, 2008). One of the first schools providing special education services was the Institut National des Jeunes Aveugles, which was founded in 1784 (Brandon et al., 2010). This Paris Institute focused mainly on the blind to ensure that they to acquired education regardless of their special needs. It was from schools such as this one that the number of schools providing special education services grew in different parts of the world.

Charles Dickens is one of the first scholars to address the issue of disabilities and the inhumane conditions in schools (Gabel, Curcic, Powell, Khader, & Albee, 2009). In his literary works, Dickens observed that people with disabilities have the same compassion and insight of

learning as those without disabilities. Thus, he advocated for the inclusion of students with special needs in normal schools, but with the provision of services to support their learning. It was from prevailing literature that reforms were established in the referral of students to special schools. Brandon et al. (2010) also noted scholarly literature was essential, as it enlightened many parents about the necessity to educate children with special needs in special schools rather than keeping them at home.

Special education of Black children can be traced throughout the United States history; the struggle to provide appropriate special education services for students in need parallels the race relations and struggles of the Black American. Just as children with disabilities were systematically discriminated against, so too were Black students in the public school system. The struggle to obtain a proper education for Black citizens was forged from the early attempts of teaching young free Black children in the late 1800s to read and write, attempts to become equal through the fight in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), and the eventual 1954 landmark Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (Skiba et al., 2008).

The earliest advocates of special education in public schools emerged from the struggles of the civil rights movement, which provided the focal point and emergence of the special education legislation of Public Law 94-142 and eventually Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Public Law 108-446 (Skiba et al., 2008; Smith & Kozleski, 2005). Lloyd Dunn was one of the first pioneers to address issues surrounding special education and the overrepresentation of minority students. He proposed that the separation of early language learners and minority students of different ethnic backgrounds from their White peers violated their civil rights. He also confronted the racial integration of schools and the reluctance of teachers to properly deal with these students, and demanded the provision of a decent and fair

education for all students of all colors and abilities (Dunn, 1968). The review of special education in the public school was further highlighted by Jane Mercer in 1973, when she proposed that the public school system, more than any other children's organization, tended to find more students of ethnic backgrounds intellectually disabled (Markson, 1974).

The new developments in special education have been established with the development of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 1997; this legislation focused on the rights of people with disabilities in the public education system. Gabel et al. (2009) observed that the form and function of services in special education changed over time, following the implementation of the act; this affected the services in special education schools. One of the major issues affected by the new developments was the enrollment and referral of students to special education institutions.

Primarily based on the understanding that special schools included students with particular levels of disabilities, particularly physical, the identification and referral of these students was obvious among the different stakeholders (Dyson & Kozleski, 2008). According to Brandon et al. (2010), student referrals were based on needs emanating from their disability. For instance, lame referrals would focus on special schools that provided services to support the lame, while the blind would be referred to institutes that catered specifically to the blind. However, this categorization was later challenged in practice, when disability was diversified in meaning and content, and was no longer limited to physical disabilities (Brandon et al., 2010). After being re-defined, the psychological and social aspects of students were included as those who required individualized attention in special schools. Referral of students with special needs was a major challenge due to the issues of identifying students who did not have visible disabilities.

Additionally, following the different policy developments that included IDEA and No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the meaning of special needs included students who performed poorly in education outcome (Hart, Cramer, Harry, Klingener, & Sturges, 2010). The introduction of NCLB policy brought challenges to stakeholders (parents and teachers) in regards to student referrals; prior to the implementation of Public Law 94-142 and eventually IDEA, there was no existing foundation for what criteria to use in identifying students for special needs referrals (Hart et al., 2010).

Over the years, academic work has focused on the challenge of identifying and serving students with special needs (Dyson & Kozleski, 2008). Various legislative acts, including PL 94-142 and IDEA, have classified poorly performing students in different categories of special education services, for the purposes of ensuring student access to individualized services for academic achievement support (Gabel et al., 2009). Students are identified in part through the use of standardized tests and evaluations. In the state of Georgia, students are measured by their performance on the Criterion Reference Competency Test (CRCT) during their elementary and middle school years, and are later measured by the Georgia High School Graduation Test and End of Course Test.

While the intentions to include poor performing students were good, such students were negatively impacted when standards for achievement became standardized and expectations were unified (Blanchett, 2006). The problem with such a transition was that it hinged on the assumption that high achievement was hindered by controllable factors. However, poor achievement can be caused by environmental, economic, social, and political factors and not necessarily by disability; based on this understanding, it is discriminatory to set standards of

measuring student academic achievement to diagnose disability, especially if students are subjected to uncontrollable factors that affect their learning (Dyson & Kozleski, 2008).

Hart et al. (2010) noted patterns of persistent low achievement in particular areas, corresponding with economic and social challenges; these low achievements led to continued referral of students from particular regions in special schools. Standardized evaluations fail to consider that some students do not have access to the same educational opportunities as students in other regions; this results in the existing and persistent achievement gaps that are being observed under NCLB. A 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report indicated that the disparity in achievement between Black and White students has existed over the course of 15 years (1992 to 2007). This achievement gap revealed that during the Black students' fourth grade year, they maintained a 27 point gap in reading and a 26 point gap in the area math (Education Commission of States, 2009). The gap continues and remains constant or increases as the Black and White students' progress through their educational career, with the gap at the eighth grade level for reading at 26 points and math at 31 points (Education Commission of States, 2005).

The argument for the achievement gap between White and minority students should be focused on the economic disparities and inequities in the funding between the two groups of students. The present day funding of urban schools, which are primarily made up of minority students, is significantly less than that of the suburban schools that contain a majority of White students. This economic disparity presents a disparaging picture of educational inequalities and how society values the education of different groups of students (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

To facilitate this current study, the critical race theory (CRT) will be adopted as the main theoretical framework. CRT is based on five principles:

- Considering racism as endemic;
- Challenging the dominant ideology of racism;
- Unmasking the ideologies;
- Challenging the historical analysis of race and racism; and
- Bringing to the foreground the experiences of people of color (Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2011).

Akom (2008) viewed racism as a dominant, systemic and structural force, shaping the lives of individuals. Based on this theory, the main focus of this study will be to understand the five principles of CRT and how they apply to the overrepresentation of Black students in special education.

The increased referrals to special education have mostly affected Black students, who make up only 16% of the total student population but comprise 21% of the total special education population (Codrington & Fairchild, 2012; Dyson & Kozleski, 2008). Though the legitimacy and quality of services in special education institutions may be questioned, an increase in the referral of Black male students compared to the total number of White male students, as demonstrated by recent statistics, has raised major concerns (Artiles & Bal, 2010). Artiles and Bal (2010) argued that most of these referrals are unjustified, and possible dishonest intent behind some of these referrals was observed.

Special education referrals are usually determined by one or more of the stakeholders in the education sector, including teachers and parents (Artiles & Bal, 2008). As noted by Artiles and Bal (2008), special education involves individually-oriented teaching procedures focused on the special needs of the individual. This might also engage the adoption of particular equipment and materials that are specifically designed to assist learners with special needs. These



interventions are advanced with the aim of removing barriers and improving the self-sufficiency and success of children with special needs in school.

### **Problem Statement**

The number of Black students in special education continues to visibly increase at a higher rate, with the Black male student identified as intellectually disabled 2.3 times as often as their White counterparts (Codrington & Fairchild, 2012). Of particular interest is the increase in Black males in special education. According to Akom (2008), Black males are among the minority population of students in the United States, yet they comprise the majority in special education. This raises the question of whether the increase in Black student referrals to special institutions is correlated with race. This issue will be explored by examining the phenomenon through the use of quantitative methods, including a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test. If assumptions for normality of data are violated, a Mann-Whitney test will be substituted for the MANOVA.

The study will focus on special education stakeholders involved with the referral process; an evaluation will be conducted to examine parents'/guardians' and teachers' attitudes of disproportionate representation among students by race. Three attitudes will be assessed: Administrative, Cultural, and Environmental/Hereditary. From the identified population, data will be collected through online surveys to develop an understanding of human characteristics as a factor contributing to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the understanding of CRT by using a parametric test to compare the independent variable of human characteristics to the dependent variables: Contribution of Administrative, Cultural, and Environmental/Hereditary (ACE).

Although there is acknowledgement of the disproportion between Black and White student referrals, there is inadequate and insufficient research that investigates or explains the cause of this problem.

Moreover, this study will examine differences in ACE contribution by stakeholder type, age, gender, and ethnicity of those who are informed that the discrimination occurs during the special education referral process. If differences present themselves, policy makers and stakeholders will know who is informed and what demographic groups are concerned or unconcerned. Knowing which groups among stakeholders are concerned may lead to further research in understanding why certain groups are less concerned than others, despite knowing that discrimination occurs in the special education referral process.

While the issue of race and special education has been presented by different scholarly works in the fields of education, human rights, child welfare, psychology, and sociology (Artiles & Bal, 2010; Skiba et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2011), most scholars have not focused on the factors that contribute to the overrepresentation of Black male students in special education or those who have increased the referral of Black students in special education. Therefore, drawing from prior research, it is apparent that there is a need to conduct further study to broaden knowledge on this issue. This study has been designed to elaborate on the existing literature by assessing parents'/guardians' and educators' attitudes of the existing situation concerning special education referrals. With an expansion on the existing literature, the study may assist in finding solutions to the problem of Black males' overrepresentation in special education.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study will contribute to the knowledge base in the field of special education services. Contributions to the field of special education will be made by enlightening readers

and different stakeholders on special education referrals (Brandon et al., 2010; Dyson & Kozleski, 2008). The study may challenge the different legislative acts related to this phenomenon, including IDEA and NCLB policies about how special education placement should be carried out. Across the different institutions providing special education, the study will be relevant in opening up a review of the standards used to qualify students from different races for special education (Gabel et al., 2009).

Additionally, the study may significantly contribute to the decrease in discrimination and favoritism in the placement practice of students in special education institutions. The results of this study may affect placement practices because it will analyze how race could be among the major factors contributing to the discrimination and overrepresentation of Black students in special education. The study may also shed light on changes that need to be enacted in the education system in order to ensure that placement in special education is fair and free of any favor, especially in regard to race.

This study is of particular value to the stakeholder groups of students, parents, teachers, and institutions. For students, the main importance of this study will be an enhanced awareness of what constitutes fair evaluation in the referral to special education, as guided by the recommendations provided at the end of this research. The parents will also benefit, as they can be assured of the quality of services provided to the students and of the fairness of the referral process. However, the major relevance will be to the institutions and teachers who facilitate the referral process; they may gain much by understanding what ideal process would be amicable in the placement of students in special education programs without any favoritism or discrimination. Special education teachers, who have a direct role in the administration of

special education programs, will also benefit from the insights provided in this study and will be able to integrate the findings of this study into their teaching and administrative practices.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

**Research Question 1:** What is the difference in stakeholders' attitudes, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on stakeholder type (Educators and Parents/Guardians)?

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) leading to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on stakeholder type (Educators and Parents/Guardians).

**Research Question 2:** What is the difference in stakeholders' attitudes, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on gender (Male, Female)?

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on gender (Male, Female).

**Research Question 3:** What is the difference in stakeholders' attitudes, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on age by category (21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61+)?

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on age (21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61+).

**Research Question 4:** What is the difference in stakeholders' attitudes, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on ethnicity of stakeholders (White/Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, Native American, Asian, Mixed, or Other)?

**Hypothesis 4:** There is no significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) leading to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on ethnicity of stakeholders (White, Hispanic, Black, Native American, Asian, Mixed, or Other).

### **Identification of Variables**

For the purposes of this study, a MANOVA statistical test will be used. A MANOVA was chosen to compare differences between group means, such as age, ethnicity, gender, and stakeholder type on three dependent variables in Research Questions 1-4. If assumptions for normality of data are violated, a Mann-Whitney test will be substituted for the MANOVA. The identification of variables within the study is necessary to provide details and explain the chosen research design.

## **Independent Variables**

**Stakeholder Type.** Stakeholder type is defined as those individuals that impact special education and the students in special education through direct instruction within the classroom or referral into special education as an educator and educational administrator, and the parents'/guardians' interaction in the education of their child that is referred into the special education program. The stakeholder type will be the independent variable for research questions one and two. This data will be nominal and will be collected through a demographic survey.

**Gender.** Gender is the dependent variable for Research Question 3 and is defined as the stakeholder's sexual identification as a male or female. This information will be collected from the demographic survey through the participants selecting their identified sexual orientation. Gender is nominal.

**Age.** Age is the independent variable for Research Question 4, and is defined as the length of time that the stakeholder has lived. This information will be collected from the demographic survey through participants selecting their identified age group. This will be measured at the interval level.

**Ethnicity.** Ethnicity is defined as the stakeholders' identification to a particular cultural or racial background, and it is the dependent variable for Research Question 5. This information will be collected from the demographic survey through the participant selecting their identified ethnic group. This data will use the nominal level of measurement.

## **Dependent Variables**

**Attitudes about administrative contribution for overrepresentation of Black students.** Administrative contribution is the dependent variable for all four hypotheses. Administrative contribution refers to stakeholders' attitudes of Black males being referred to

special education programs for reasons related to school or district administrative procedure and processes. This information will be collected from the Gresham survey through a Likert-type question; thus, administrative contribution will be measured at the interval level.

**Attitudes about cultural contribution for overrepresentation of Black students.**

Cultural contribution is one of the dependent variable for all four hypotheses. Cultural contribution refers to stakeholders' attitudes of Black males being referred to special education programs for reasons related to culture. This information will be collected from the attitudes survey through a Likert-type question; thus, cultural contribution will be measured at the interval level.

**Attitudes about environmental/hereditary contribution for overrepresentation of Black students.** Environmental/Hereditary contribution is also one of the dependent variable for all four hypotheses. Environmental/Hereditary contribution refers to stakeholders' attitudes about Black males being referred to special education programs for reasons related to their Environmental/Hereditary. This information will be collected from the attitudes survey through a Likert-type question; thus, Environmental/Hereditary contribution will be measured at the interval level.

## **Definitions**

### ***Accommodation***

“An accommodation is a change or alteration in the regular way a student is expected to learn and complete assignments or participate in classroom activities” (Alberta Education, 2006, p. 1). Examples of accommodations are special teaching or assessment strategies, equipment, or other forms of support that minimize or remove the impact of a student's special education

needs. Accommodations are an attempt to provide special needs students with the same educational opportunities to succeed as other students.

### ***Disabilities***

This can refer to impairments, activity limitations, and/or participation restrictions. Impairment refers to body function or structure problems; an activity limitation refers to the difficulty in executing a task or action; and participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Thus, “disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person’s body and features of the society in which he or she lives” (World Health Organization, 2012, p. 1).

### ***Disproportionate Placement***

Disproportionate placement is the situation where group representation of a certain people, defined by race, religion, income, or other variable, in a particular area (job field, school, social program, etc.) is greater than their population percentage (Harry & Anderson, 1994a, p. 602).

### ***Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)***

IDEA is a United States federal act that “governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to children with disabilities. It addresses the educational needs of children with disabilities from birth to age 18 or 21” (Preboth, 2000, p. 65).

### ***Individualized Education Program (IEP)***

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandated a plan to support the provision of individual needs of students with disabilities; this plan was IEP (Preboth, 2000, p. 70).



### ***Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)***

LRE is a principle advanced in IDEA to mean that a disabled student had the right of being educated with non-disabled peers and in the most appropriate manner (Dybwad, 1980).

### ***No Child Left Behind (NCLB)***

NCLB is “a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which included Title I, the government's flagship aid program for disadvantaged students” (Education Week, 2011).

### ***Pyramid of Interventions (POI)***

A graphic organizer that illustrates layers of instructional efforts provided to students according to their individual needs (GADOE, 2011).

### ***Response to Intervention (RTI)***

RTI is a method used in the United States as an academic intervention to assist children with learning difficulties in their early stages (NASDSE, 2005).

### ***Student Support Team (SST)***

A multi-disciplinary team that utilizes a problem-solving process to investigate the educational needs of students who are experiencing academic and/or social/behavioral difficulties. SST, which is required in every Georgia public school, uses a data-driven process to plan individualized supports and interventions and the method of assessing their effectiveness (GADOE, 2011).

## **Research Summary**

A causal comparative research design using MANOVA will be used to analyze the factors of the stakeholder’s knowledge toward the referral of students into special education programs. In a causal comparative research study, the researcher investigates two or more

independent and dependent quantitative variables (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The quantitative research design will also be used to develop a picture of parents'/guardians' and educators' awareness and concerned, as attitudes, of Black males being disproportionately referred to special education programs compared to White males.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **Introduction**

The second chapter of this study provides an overview of the theoretical framework that guides this study and the relevant information contained within literature. Information relating to the foundation of special education programs, IDEA and NCLB are examined within the chapter to establish a baseline of understanding of the special education formation, process, and impact it has on Black male students. The chapter further explores the reasons that contribute to the referral process of Black males; educational and social inequities; teacher bias and parent perception of the special education program; and Black male participation. The chapter also provides a characterization of individuals and themes that are relevant to the foundation of this study.

The factors and influences on special education placement within the context of race are complex, and have been influenced by both legislation and social climate. CRT, in conjunction with a historical overview of education legislation that has guided both general and special education, provides insights into these complexities. This review explores these factors individually and in conjunction with one another.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

The UCLA School of Public Affairs stated,

CRT recognizes that racism is engrained [sic] in the fabric and system of the American society. The individual racist need not exist to note that institutional racism is pervasive in the dominant culture. This is the analytical lens that CRT uses in examining existing power structures. CRT identifies that these power structures are based on White privilege

and White supremacy, which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color. (UCLA School of Public Affairs, 2009)

CRT was born out of legal scholarship. The theory was developed to help analyze the two concepts, race and racism, from a legal and critical point of view. However, as Jain, Herrera, Bernal, and Solorzano (2011) observed, CRT has not only been advanced and adopted in the legal field, but has also been spread across many disciplines such as education, psychology, and sociology.

In further evaluating CRT, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) observed that one major approach to the development of CRT was the rejection of liberalism and meritocracy traditions. As explained by Delgado and Stefancic (2001), traditional systems dictated a legal discourse with the assertion that there is neutrality and fairness in enactment of the law. However, by challenging this fact, CRT advanced the argument that this tenet was used in favor of gaining self-interest, power, and privilege. To help understand the theory better, CRT advanced the intersectional concept to “the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation, and how their combination plays out in various settings” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 51).

The tenet was used profoundly in the application of CRT across major disciplines in an effort to understand the inequalities and oppressions facing people of color (Yosso, Ceja, Smith, & Solorzano, 2009). Additionally, CRT has been used predominantly across major disciplines in efforts to understand and reduce inequality among different groups of people differentiated by color. As Solorzano (1998) stated, CRT has been used in “eliminating racial oppression as a broad goal of ending all forms of oppression” (p. 122).

As Solorzano and Ornelas (2002) explained, CRT offers an analysis of educational achievement by discussing inequality within the context of race and racism. Lynn, Yosso, Solorzano, and Parker (2002) also observed that CRT has been effectively used in challenging prevailing notions of fairness, neutrality, meritocracy, and colorblindness, in the education of racial minorities. A basic principle of CRT is the permanence of racism. Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, and Freeman (2010) addressed the issue of critical race and that racism is part of life and an integral feature of society. This perspective of race CRT challenges racial oppression with a focus on all fields, including institutional and educational domains.

There are five major themes Lynn et al. (2002) highlighted as the strong points of CRT—endemicism of racism; the challenge of racism as an ideology; the understanding of racism ideologies; the challenge of analyzing race and racism as presented in historical literature; and the presentation of racist experiences for people of color. By referring to racism as endemic, Solorzano and Ornelas (2002) noted that, due to the nature of the global society, different cultures have merged as though the result has been the development of the racism concept where one culture aims at establishing superiority over another.

Additionally, Lynn et al. (2002) emphasized that racism has been normalized across different societies; therefore, it is no longer featured as an issue of concern among many societies. This is because, in most societies, racism has been rendered invisible, requiring that scholars develop an analytical position of CRT to understand its existence. According to Solorzano and Ornelas (2002), gender, language, class, and immigration status are the tenets that have been advanced in supporting racist concepts across different disciplines of life.

The understanding of experiences of Black males has been adequately analyzed through CRT (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). As Solorzano et al. (2000) stated, social, political, and

economic factors have been advanced to help understand what Black males experience in their school period. Based on the endemic nature of race and racism as espoused in CRT, Solorzano (1992) developed a framework for understanding the conditions of Black males in societies. Additionally, Smith, Yosso, and Solorzano (2011) looked into how schooling in the United States has been influenced by the two concepts, race and racism. Solorzano et al. (2000) added that racism is one of the major factors that limit racially marginalized students from accessing equal opportunities within schools and, thus contributes to the differences in performance. In fact, racism affects the form and function of schools, which has a significant effect on marginalized groups within the environments by affecting the mechanisms to learn (Solorzano, 1992).

However, even with CRT used widely in different fields to understand the impact of racism on marginalized and minority groups, there is a lack of literature on the use of CRT to understand the representation of Black male students in special education. Some scholars (Lynn et al., 2002; Smith et al., 2011; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2002; Solorzano et al., 2000) have made efforts to understand the status of Black males in schools. Of particular relevance across the different scholarly works is the analysis of the difference between Black and White student achievements in schools. These scholars have looked into the impact of racism on Black students' education within the traditional classroom setting. The major findings are that Black students are being discriminated against in schools, and this challenges their abilities for higher achievement in education (Smith et al., 2011; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

However, these scholars have not analyzed the representation of students across races in special schools. As Arnold and Lassmann (2003) stated, the issue of race and racism has raised major concerns in student representation in special schools. The available literature lacks

adequate analysis of information on why Black males are overrepresented in special schools as compared to students from other races (Lynn et al., 2002). In this study, CRT has been applied to better understand the overrepresentation of Black students in special education. The theory is postulated to help advance and develop an understanding of factors leading to the overrepresentation and the impact of overrepresentation in special education on Black students.

CRT is a useful framework in the exploration of special education because CRT is embedded in the cultural history of the United States and the impact that race has had in a variety of social settings, including public school. The following section explores the history of special education. Modern special education as a discipline and specialization within the education field has evolved and gained stature within similar time periods as the civil rights era. The alignment between the rise from oppression for those with special needs and the rise from oppression for those of a minority race is an important point of symmetry when examining each history.

### **Special Education History**

Special education was defined by Wilmshurst and Brue (2010) as educational approaches that address individual differences and needs of the different students with special needs. In using special education, Turnbull (2002) highlighted that individually-oriented teaching procedures are involved with a focus on the special needs of the individuals. This might also engage the adoption of particular equipment and materials, designed particularly to assist learners with special needs. All these interventions are advanced with the aim of improving self-sufficiency and success of the children with special needs in schools (Wilmshurst and Brue, 2010).

Among the major needs in learning that are defined as *special* are communication challenges, physical disabilities, and emotional and behavioral disorders (Turnbull, 2002).

According to Pardini (2002), based on the special needs of these children, different services are accessed, such as technology, different teaching approaches, specifically adapted resources, or teaching rooms.

The history of developments in special education began when Pedro Ponce de León created the first documented experience of deaf children in 1578. Other major developments were presented in 1760 by Abbé Charles Michel de l'Épée who created the Institute for Deaf; and in 1829 by Louis Braille's "Braille script" (Wilmshurst & Brue, 2010).

In the modern era, developments in special education have overseen the enactment of laws and policies. Two main laws have been enacted in the United States in relations to special education, including IDEA and NCLB policy. These developments have been advanced in an effort to support education for all, including children with special needs and those coming from marginalized societies.

### **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

In the United States federal law, the IDEA was enacted in 1990 following a series of events related to special education (NICCYD, 2000). Access to equal educational opportunities for everyone was the main focus of this law. Earlier, the country saw the introduction of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which was viewed as discriminatory for the disabled since they were not granted equal opportunity through the introduction of rehabilitation. In fact, the Rehabilitation Act was viewed as only allowing for administrative hearing, which the parents perceived as of no value to their children who were already experiencing discrimination (Yell, 2006).

As Keogh (2007) stated, IDEA was introduced with a major focus on welfare of the individual and not much on the condition of the student like in the case of the previous acts. By



establishing a major focus on the welfare of the individual, National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICCYD, 2000) noted that IDEA became popular among institutions of learning.

IDEA has been implemented as an act to govern the provision of special education among states and public agencies. Keogh (2007) noted that the Act places a major focus on educational needs of children with special needs in learning. However, the act does not apply to all throughout the country because it is referred to as “spending clause” legislation, meaning an act that only applies to agencies that receive federal funding from IDEA (NICCYD, 2000). However, the Act has been implemented nationwide, because of acceptance funding under IDEA and thus school systems are practicing the Act within their education systems.

There are particular provisions of IDEA that apply; among them are eligibility for services such as individualized education programs, related services that benefit the students in special education, free appropriate public education, least restrictive environments, discipline of a child with a disability, prohibition on mandatory medication, child find or early intervention programs, and procedural safeguards. Based on NICCYD (2000), IDEA does not guarantee special education for all disabled children. To access the special education services, the disability must be assessed as challenging the ability of the child to participate in schools and requiring different services. In the act, a disabled child is defined as,

A child... with an intellectual disability, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance..., orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; AND, who... [Because of the condition] needs special education and related services. (20 U.S.C. 1401(3); 1401(30))

Under these conditions, a child can be justified as eligible for IDEA services and can access special education services within learning facilities. The other aspect of IDEA is individualized education programs, which mandate following the eligibility of a student to special education; an institution should create an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the student. This provision states that the child's unique educational needs must be met through the design of this program (NICCYD, 2000). However, in designing the program, it is not only the professions that should be involved; the parents and the teaching staffs are also engaged to consider their input towards developing a specialized program.

The other provision under IDEA is the related services that include all services that support a disabled child to access the special services among them developmental, corrective, and other supportive services (NICCYD, 2000). Services for the disabled child may include psychological services, music, occupation therapy, speech-language pathology, and audiology services.

The other IDEA provision is the principle of a free appropriate public education, which states that the designed programs must meet the specific needs of the children who are termed disabled. The free appropriate public education provision is defined as,

Education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, 20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(3))

There is also the least restrictive environment provision which provides the guideline that disabled children should not be segregated in separate and special institutions because of their conditions. IDEA asserts disabled children should not be separated from the others in learning but to provide equal opportunities for these children within the same facilities. However, the

disabled children can only be separated in cases where they cannot access particular support and learning assistance. In IDEA, punishment of the disabled is explained; provisions under the discipline of a child with a disability are also adequately explained.

As NICCYD (2000) observed, IDEA highlights that there is need for evaluation of appropriateness of disciplinary actions, particularly when disciplining disabled children. In fact, the main issue is to take the disability of the child into consideration before administering the punishment. This is a provision which was introduced in an effort to prevent any harm to students with disabilities when learning.

Among the other provisions in the Act are the procedural safeguards. As explained by NICCYD (2000), the procedural safeguards include parent involvement, which allows the parents to monitor their child's welfare when learning. In this case, the parents have the authority to review their child's educational records, participate in IEP team meetings, and in placement decisions. All this is in effort to ensure that the parents participate in facilitating special education provisions for their children and support the improvement of their welfare in learning institutions.

IDEA provides an adequate description of the condition in which a child can be placed under special education. As presented by the different scholars, IDEA provides clear guidelines for schools on how they make decisions of placing students under special education. National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE, n.d.) noted the referral of Black males to special education as still a major issue of concern because most of the IDEA provisions do not have full adherence. In fact, the NABSE (n.d.) publication stated that IDEA only acts to provide support for administrators in the context of managing overrepresentation of Black students in special education. However, IDEA does not provide appropriate solutions on what should be done to

control the overrepresentation, and thus lacks the capability of developing interventions. Based on the NABSE (n.d.) publication, there is a lack of literature on the issue of how IDEA provisions impact the solutions for overrepresentation of Black males in special education. Therefore, there is still a need to adequately study this topic at length in order to develop knowledge and contribute relevant information linking the identified variables.

### **No Child Left Behind Act**

NCLB is a policy with a long history in the education field that applies across the United States (Jill, 2012). NCLB was passed in 2001; since then, it has been the nation's general education law (Jill, 2012). Based on the understanding as advanced by Jill, the act enhanced the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), with the main aim of aiding the disadvantaged students. NCLB was introduced to support standards-based education reform in the United States; this was integrated in the act's main premise that to improve individual educational outcomes, it is appropriate to set high standards and establish measurable goals (Lance, 2004).

From the main policies of NCLB, different states are expected to develop assessments in basic skills, which are aimed at setting particular standards in education. NCLB mandates schools to conduct assessments among all students with the aim of receiving federal school funding (Lance, 2004). NCLB has survived beyond all odds because of the strategy adopted, where there is no assertion of the national achievement standard (Lance, 2004). The act mandates that each state set its own standards of assessing the students. According to Mathis (2003), through such an approach, NCLB has been effective because of the removal of the national achievement standard, which could be discriminatory and biased in assessment. In fact,

through the states' asserted standards, it is possible to allow for efficient assessment of students in consideration of the factors that affect them with the different states.

A number of measures were designed in NCLB to increase student achievement among the different states (Mathis, 2003). Mathis (2003) further discussed that the introduction of these measures aimed at increasing the level of accountability in schools and foster great progress among the students. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education stated that these measures had significant impact on the improvement of education among different schools through the enactment of changes in the education landscape. One of the measures taken in NCLB was annual testing. Annual testing is a measure taken in the act mandating states to test reading and mathematics subjects among the students in grades 3rd through 8th (McMillian, 2003). The annual testing was aimed at assessing the students' performance and thus helping develop strategies that would handle all the issues related to student's performance in the two main subjects.

Another important measure taken in NCLB was the definition of academic progress (McMillian, 2003). This is a measure that mandated states to bring all students up to the "proficient" level. In this context, the states were mandated to ensure that students from different schools improved in their performance. In fact, through this measure, the students were subjected to state tests to assess their level and work towards improving academic proficiency. Additionally, NCLB included the introduction of report cards in schools as another measure of improving education outcomes across the states (Mathis, 2003). Through this measure, years 2002 and 2003 saw the furnishing of annual report cards in schools, which included student-achievement data.

The report cards also indicated school districts' performance with a provision of school performance by school data. Through these cards, the main aim was to enhance accountability in schools, which was expected to contribute to greater efforts among schools to prevent a bad image across the states. According to Mathis (2003), the introduction of report cards in schools provoked the need for improvement among schools which resulted to improved education outcome.

### **No Child Left Behind Act and Black Males**

Only a few scholars have looked into how NCLB addressed the issue of Black male referrals to special education (Knaus, 2007; McMillian, 2003; Smith, 2002). Therefore, it could be argued that there is inadequate research on how NCLB is integrated in scholarly discussions to understand the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. Among the major arguments related to this phenomenon was a position advanced by Smith (2002), who stated that NCLB has only created high expectations among the Black population and that their grievances on representation in the education sector will be heard.

Smith (2002) stated that NCLB could only be effective if some of the policies advanced address the main problem of overrepresentation of Black males in special education. However, NCLB is only viewed as promoting the need to have all children educated regardless of where and how. In fact, Smith (2002) added that NCLB only addresses the need to ensure that Black males challenged by deficit in finances also access education in different institutions. However, the policy does not address the issue of unjustified and unfair referral of Black males to special education institutions. Though the policy was advanced to address the racial bias in terms of accessibility of education opportunities, it does not adequately address the racial bias in the placement of Black students in special education.

Conversely, McMillian (2003) conducted a study on impact of NCLB on the education of the minority groups. The study showed that although NCLB focuses on handling the issue of racial inequalities in education, it does not address fundamental inequalities in schooling. Further, McMillian asserted that inequalities in education, particularly with regard to financing education, are the root of America's educational challenges. In fact, McMillian observed that there are major inequalities in schools, such as the overrepresentation of Black males compared to Whites in special education institutions. McMillian observed the issue as not addressed in NCLB.

Additionally, McMillian noted that NCLB only addresses the issue of ensuring teaching to bare minimums among all students but does not ensure that these students acquire meaningful education. In special education, students require meaningful education if they are to address their needs which NCLB does not assure. Therefore, it is clear that Black males who are the majority in special schools are barely benefitting from NCLB. They might be accessing education opportunities in special schools, but acquiring meaningful education is nevertheless still equally important.

Knaus (2007) also noted that NCLB has created a huge separation in the educational system and, thus, resulted to unequal opportunities. In explaining this, Knaus observed that NCLB introduced standardized tests for students of all races and genders, which are used to evaluate students' abilities. These tests, according to Knaus, have discriminated against Black males who have been subjected to the same level of evaluation to Whites, yet the latter have experienced outdated information and education. In fact, these test result in the Black male being referred to testing for special education services, because of their lower scores compared to

Whites in these tests. Therefore, the main argument from Knaus is that NCLB has a long way to go before it addresses the issue of inequality in the American education system.

### **Response to Intervention**

Response to Intervention (RTI) is the process of providing academic and behavioral interventions for all students (Short & Wilkins, 2009). The interventions that are provided to the student are designed to assist the student at all academic levels and ensure his or her success in the classroom. RTI includes the screening of all students, and continuous monitoring of the students, throughout the intervention process. The RTI process is also designed to distinguish between ineffective instructional methods and a student's learning disability (Short & Wilkins, 2009).

Prior to the implementation of the RTI model, students with learning disabilities were assessed and identified through the discrepancy model. The discrepancy model identified students who had a significant discrepancy between their ability and their achievement (Sullivan & Castro-Villarreal, 2013). This discrepancy was identified through the use of a standardized test to identify intellectual ability and a second standardized test to determine academic achievement (Sullivan & Castro-Villarreal, 2013).

Multiple problems have been identified with the discrepancy model, such as variability in the decision making process, the student being several grade levels behind prior to being identified, lack of differentiation for identifying learning disabled students from those that are not learning disabled, failure of educational planning and the implementation of intervention strategies, and the overrepresentation of minority students for special education programs (Sullivan & Castro-Villarreal, 2013). As a result of these multiple problems with the discrepancy model, it has come to be considered a "waiting to fail" model. RTI was implemented as a



replacement for the discrepancy model in 2002, and focuses on the instruction, assessment and intervention process.

Effectively identifying struggling students academically or behaviorally is imperative for the teacher, school administrators, and parents. RTI is an effective tool that is provided to assist in the early identification of students who need assistance. Unlike the discrepancy model that focused on the aptitude and achievement of the students and their expected response to instruction or lack of response, the RTI process identifies the struggling students prior to them falling behind in their grade level expectations (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Brown-Chidsey, 2007; Kashi, 2008).

Early identification is imperative to ensuring that the students maintain success during their academic careers. This is accomplished by allowing the teachers to receive continuous updates on the students' progress, and through the use of data collection and interpretation of the data to determine students' needs. In addition to ensuring academic success, RTI assists educators in the identification of students who may require special education services. Effective use of RTI also ensures that the teacher's curriculum is effectively reaching all students (Noll, 2013).

The identification of struggling students and evaluating the curriculum in the classroom is paramount to ensuring the success of all students. The RTI process provides the tools that all teachers and administrators can use to assist them in this process. Because of the implementation of high stakes testing in the majority of the school districts in the United States, and their use in determining the students' academic abilities and schools' annual yearly progress (AYP), it is imperative that students who are not performing well be identified early in the school year (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). This identification should not be conducted through the teachers' personal

beliefs or through a recommendation process, and should be conducted only through a systematic approach that utilize academic resources and early testing of the students' current academic abilities. The utilization of RTI is intended to be a preventive and proactive measure for aiding struggling and students with disabilities, and is derived from data and scientifically-based intervention models (CEC, 2007).

RTI is a multisystem, tiered process that assist the student achieve academically, and teacher teams refine and reform their teaching methods and assessment methods to meet the unique needs of each student (Nellis, 2012). In many secondary education systems, the tier system is comprised of three levels, with each level focused on providing specific instructional methods and student monitoring. Figure 1 displays the three-tiered model that is widely utilized by most states to identify the needs of their students, and is accepted by The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) and the Council of Administration of Special Education (CASE; Bender & Shores, 2007).

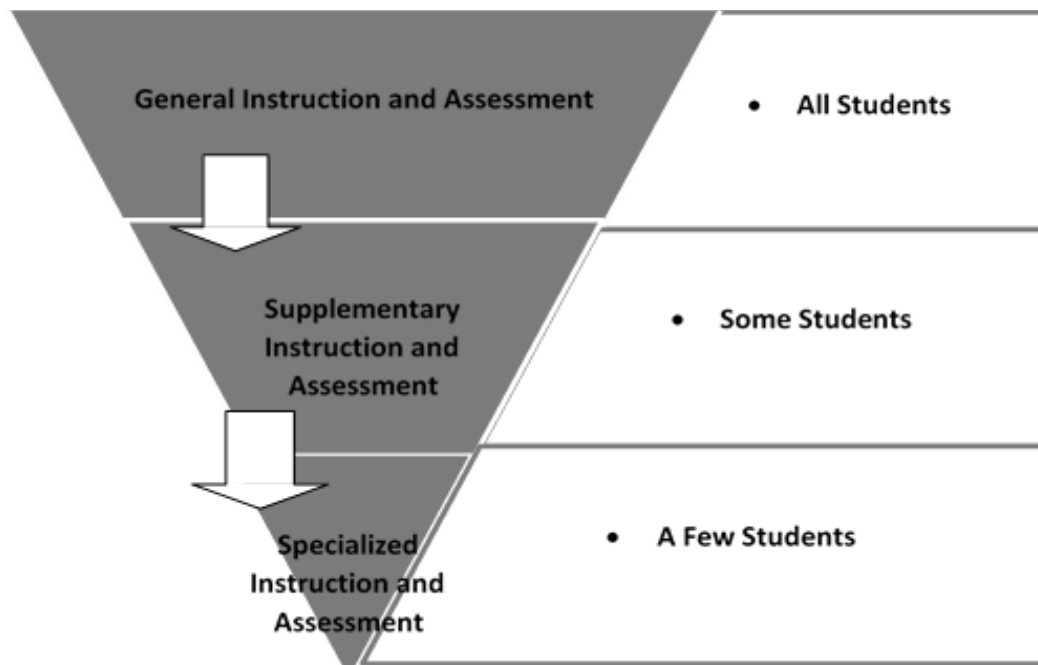


Figure 1. Three-tiered RTI model (Brown-Chidney & Steege, 2007).

Tier 1 of the RTI model has a specific focus on the education of all students, with an emphasis on specific instructional methods that are based on scientific research. The instruction of the students occurs in the general education setting classrooms and is comprised of approximately 80% of all students (Sullivan & Castro-Villarreal, 2013). Tier 2 identifies students who are performing below their identified grade level, and requires interventions to assist in their instructional needs. It is estimated that 15% of all students fall into this tier; their instructional needs are met through the use of small group instruction, additional instructional time and may be taught by specialized teachers (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Sullivan & Castro-Villarreal, 2013). Tier 3 provides individualized instruction to students that require additional support beyond Tier 2. Students who enter Tier 3 require a comprehensive psychoeducational evaluation and strict monitoring that informs the educational needs of the students and the potential for students to enter into special education programs (Sullivan & Castro-Villarreal, 2013).

### **Georgia Response to Intervention Model**

Though the majority of RTI programs subscribe to the three-tiered system, Georgia has implemented a four-tiered Pyramid of Interventions (POI) model that is inverted and follows a bottom-up approach. Figure 2 displays the State of Georgia's model and the progression of the student as they require more interventions to ensure success in the school environment.

Similar to the three-tiered system, the first tier of Georgia’s POI includes all students participating in the general education curriculum with the implementation of a standards based classroom learning model that ensures 80% to 100% of students are successful in the general education setting (GADOE, 2011). The focus of the standards based learning is based on the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) and aligned with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) that includes evidence-based instruction with differentiation to meet the learning needs of all students.

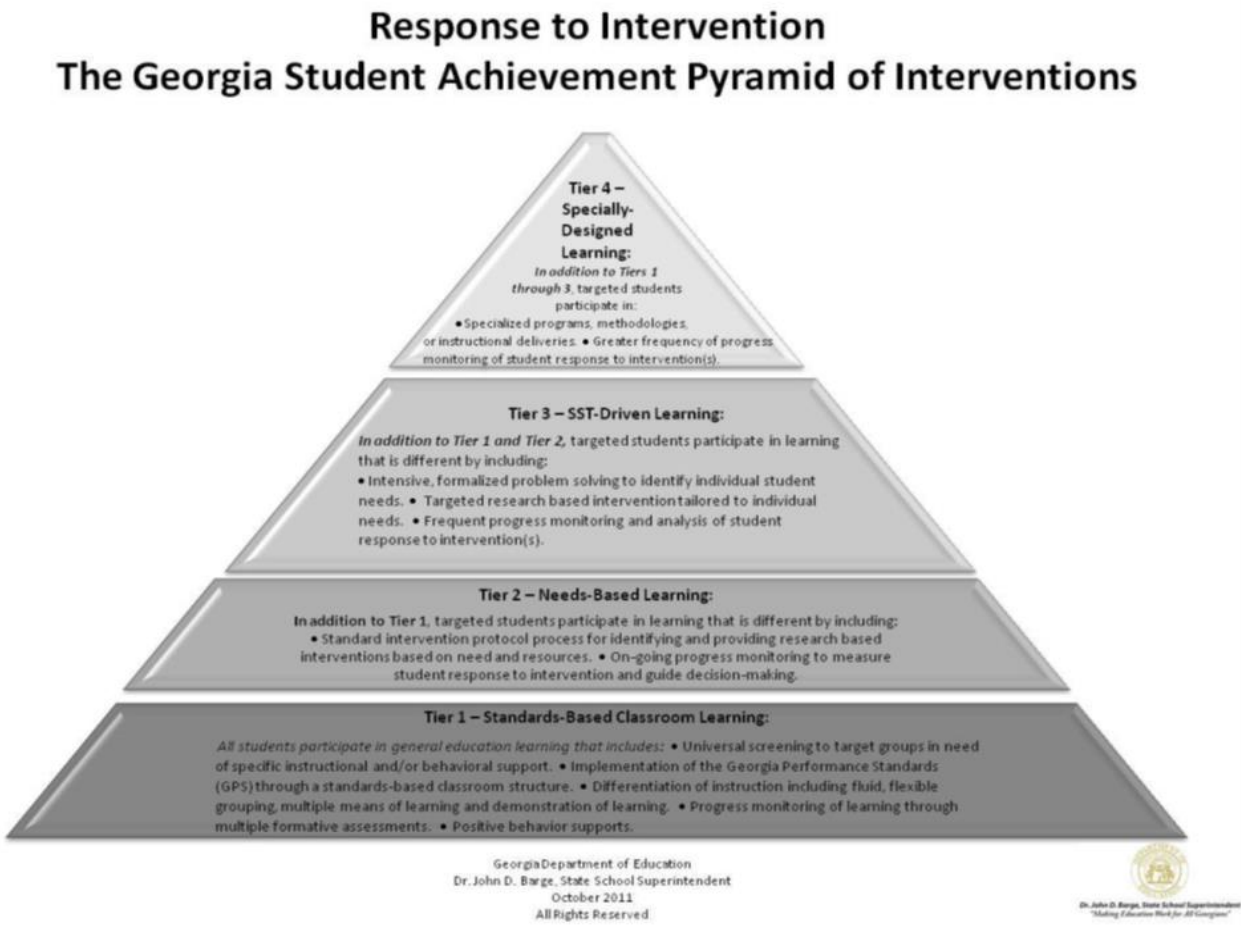


Figure 2. Georgia four-tiered RTI Pyramid of Interventions (POI) model (Georgia Department of Education, 2011).

Common formative assessments are used to monitor student progress, and the data from the assessments will determine and guide classroom instruction by allowing the teacher to tailor the learning environment based on the student's needs (GADOE, 2011). This level of the POI has a limited number of interventions and the student is referred to Tier 2 only after the Student Support Team (SST) has collected a data sufficient to determine the need for additional instructional interventions (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005; CEC, 2007; GADOE, 2011; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2009).

The second tier of Georgia's POI model continues instruction based on the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) and targets student participation in instruction that includes research-based intervention protocols (GADOE, 2011). The students who participate in Tier 2 require additional support and are not sufficiently successful or academically challenged at the Tier 1 level (GADOE, 2011). Students who are in the second tier of the POI receive additional monitoring to measure their response to the applied interventions, which allows the teacher to utilize data to guide their instructional practices in ways that ensure students' academic needs are met (Sullivan & Castro-Villerreal, 2013).

The Tier 1 teacher and Tier 2 teacher or specialist must perform collaboratively to discuss, plan, and create a common language of instructional focus for the student who requires additional instructional interventions (GADOE, 2011). The instructional focus and interventions for Tier 2 students are not a substitute for the Tier 1 general curriculum, but serve as a layered addition to Tier 1 to develop and increase the student's academic skills. Students will not move from Tier 2 to Tier 3, until the Student Support Team determines the fidelity of the interventions, decides if additional interventions are required, and conducts a comprehensive review of the data to assess the student's academic progress (GADOE, 2011).

Tier 3 of the Georgia RTI model includes the use of extensive interventions, including school specialists who might include the school psychologist, intervention specialist, behavior specialist, counselors, social workers, and speech-language pathologists (GADOE, 2011). This tier is SST-driven instruction and is considered unique to a data driven problem solving model, designed to answer the “why” of the student’s academic and/or behavioral struggles. Unlike Tiers 1 and 2, Tier 3 is focused on the student data and the scientific analysis of the data, to determine the root cause of the academic and/or behavioral problem (GADOE, 2011).

The Student Support Team records and documents all utilized research-based instructional interventions to provide a recommendation for future or additional interventions that can be used to assist in the student’s learning. The team will conduct a 6 to 12 week assessment of the applied interventions to determine their effectiveness and determine whether the student is responding and making adequate progress. At the conclusion of the 12 week assessment, if the student continues to struggle academically or behaviorally and has shown little to no progress, the Student Support Team may refer the student to testing (GADOE, 2011).

Testing at Tier 3 can be in the form of Intelligence Quotient (IQ), academic, and behavior assessments that will assist in the determination for the best placement of the student. To be highly effective in meeting the instructional needs of the student, the Student Support Team will need all stakeholders (parents/guardians and educators) to be engaged and involved in the process of identifying and developing the student’s academic abilities (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). At the conclusion of all applied interventions and a comprehensive evaluation of the data, the Student Support Team will consider the possibility of the student having a disability and refer for a comprehensive special education evaluation and to Tier 4 of the RTI model.

The final tier is designed to provide specific instructional support to the student who did not respond to the interventions that were applied in the previous tiers. The instruction provided in Tier 4 is targeted, specialized, and includes instructional accommodations for students that include English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and those placed in gifted and special education (GADOE, 2011). At the conclusion of a psychoeducational evaluation, the committee will meet to determine the student's eligibility for services that will be provided in a special education setting. If the student is determined to be eligible for special education services, the committee will develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for the student that outlines the specific academic accommodations or modifications that will be used to assist the student (CEC, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2009, GADOE, 2011). If it is determined that the student is not eligible for special education services, they will return back to Tier 3, and the Student Support Team will implement additional interventions to assist in the student's learning.

### **Limitations of RTI**

The implementation of RTI cannot occur over a short period of time and requires a great deal of planning, gathering data, and training (Noll, 2013). Noll (2013) outlined various ways that administrators and teachers ineffectively utilize or implement the RTI model. The first failure of the implementation of RTI is in the form of using commercially-produced programs that are only research-based and not evidence-based (Noll, 2013). Administrators and teachers should focus on interventions that have been shown to be highly effective and are both evidence- and research-based. Additionally, administrators should focus on the skills of the educators and not rely on a tool (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Noll, 2013).

The professional development of all educators about the process and implementation of RTI is oftentimes overlooked and not effectively utilized by school leaders (Noll, 2013). The

achievement of a successful RTI model must include the implementation of professional development for all educators. Professional development should be based on developing and expanding the educator's range of instructional interventions that can be used within the classroom. In addition to increased training of teachers, administrators must be engaged in exploring data that identifies educators who may be struggling to provide effective interventions that improve student learning (Noll, 2013).

RTI is a data-driven model that requires all educators to extensively examine their students' progress and responses to applied interventions (Keller-Margulis, 2012). Many school districts utilize multiple assessment tools to determine student progress and performance. Many educators do not have time to properly analyze the collected data and make instructional changes based on the data (Noll, 2013). In addition to having a limited amount of time to analyze the data, many educators have not received the proper training on analyzing data in ways that can be helpful to developing instructional interventions (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012; Noll, 2013).

### **Overrepresentation of Black Male Placement in Special Education**

A major issue that has been of concern across the different scholarly works in the fields of education, human rights, child welfare, psychology, and sociology has been the representation of students from different races in special education (Artiles & Bal, 2010, Blanchett, 2006, Harry & Anderson, 1994b; Kunjufu, 2004; Mills, 2003; Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Gallini, Simmons, & Feggins-Azziz, 2006; Skiba et al., 2008). Figure 3 illustrates the disproportionate representation of students of color in special education. Based on the works of Skiba et al. (2006), the issue of Black male placement in special education has raised a major concern particularly because of latest statistics on their referrals to schools that provide such services. Skiba et al. argued that though the legitimacy and quality of services in special education institutions may be questioned,



some of the major issues that arise in this field are the increased referral of Black males to the institutions as compared to White students.

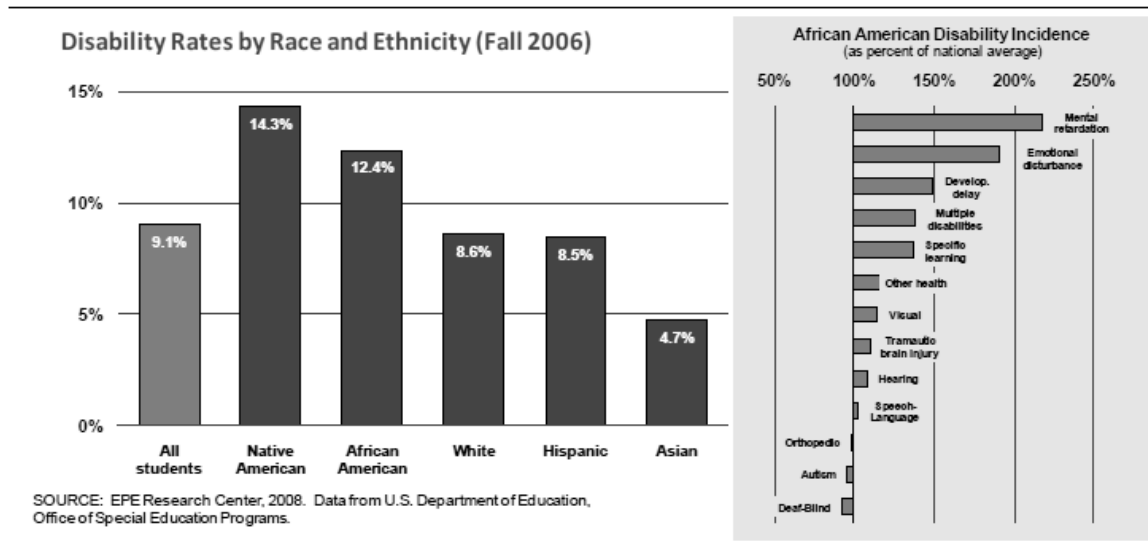


Figure 3. Disability rates by race and ethnicity (Fall 2006). Reprinted from *Special Education in America* (p. 10), by C. B. Swanson, 2008, Bethesda, MD: As first appeared in *Education Week* November 3, 2008. Reprinted with permission from Editorial Projects in Education.

Skiba et al. (2006) found that over the recent years, the number of males being referred to special institutions has increased. Figure 4 highlights the disparate proportion of males in special education for all races. They also argued that most of these referrals are unjustified, and observed that there could be foul play in some of these referrals. However, even with such arguments, Skiba et al.'s study could only be viewed as speculating and nothing much of the justification of facts can be drawn from their arguments. This is because their study only observed the increase in Black male referrals but did not empirically prove that there could be any link between the increase referrals and any unfair practices among the different stakeholders. Therefore, their study only arouses the need to conduct further research in this field with the aim of broadening the knowledge and information related to the identified research issue.

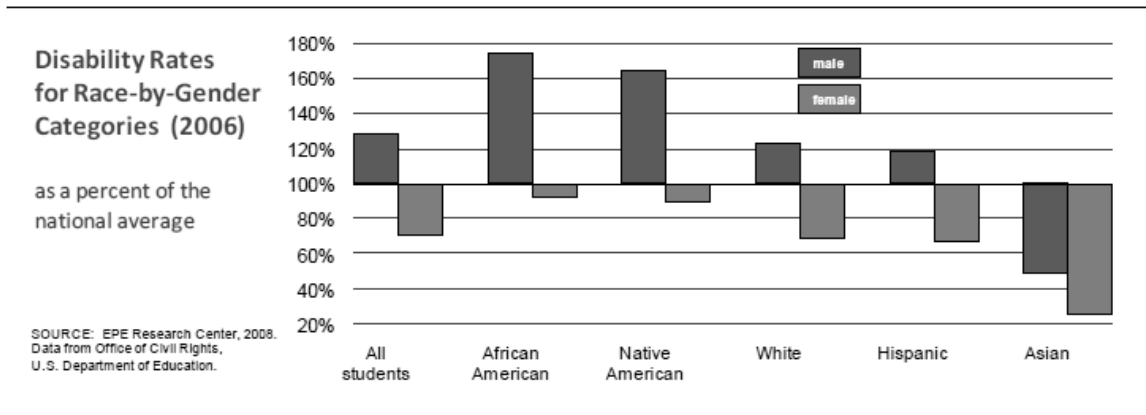


Figure 4. Disability rates by race and gender (2006). Reprinted from *Special Education in America* (p. 11), by C. B. Swanson, 2008, Bethesda, MD: As first appeared in Education Week November 3, 2008. Reprinted with permission from Editorial Projects in Education.

Conversely, Ebersole and Kapp (2007) examined the rising costs of providing special education services to children with special needs. They noticed that though there is a need to understand the quality of services in these institutions, the overrepresentation of Black males in these institutions is of huge concern. However, though they highlighted this as an important issue requiring further study, they did not engage in an empirical study to present data. Therefore, this challenged their conclusion and established a need to conduct further studies to test their claims and build on them to develop and prove the hypothesis. However, Ebersole and Kapp are among the scholars who have made efforts to conduct empirical studies and provide empirical data on the issue of overrepresentation of Black males in special education.

Based on Mills' (2003) findings, the United States has seen a disproportionate percentage of minority males in special education. His study revealed that with Black males being 17% of all U.S. students, the overrepresentation in special education is evident as they make up 41% of the students in special education. From his study, it was concluded that statistics provide evidence that overrepresentation in special education among Black males is a phenomenon that should raise concern among scholars and policy developers.

The main question he raises is why Black males are the majority in special education; yet, they are the minority in the student population within the country. However, the study by Mills (2003) did not adequately address the issue of overrepresentation; instead, scholars presented the statistics as they were within the schools for providing special education services. The concept of overrepresentation was not adequately addressed. In fact, Mills only relied on assumptions that Black students are the minority of the student population; their majority representation in special education indicates overrepresentation and unfair referrals. However, this assumption would require an in-depth review of whether indeed there is overrepresentation and what factors could cause such a phenomenon. Therefore, Mills' (2003) study only opens up the field of study and helps future scholars to develop hypotheses to test through empirical data.

Another study proposing to prove the overrepresentation of Black males in special education was by Harry and Anderson (1994a), who observed that in evaluating the proportion of representation, there is a difference between the enrollment of Black students in a school and their representation in special education programs. Harry and Anderson advanced the "10% rule" in an effort to understand the representation claiming that the number of Black students in special schools is equal to or greater than 10% of the student population in the country. Kunjufu (2004) also conducted a study in a bid to support the findings by Harry and Anderson on the "10% rule". In their study, Kunjufu (2004) found out that fair representation of the percentage of Black students in special schools in the K-12 school system should be between 15.3% and 18.7%. Any statistics highlighting a higher range indicate the overrepresentation of Black students in special education.

Kunjufu (2004) conducted mathematical computation where 10% of the total number of Black students account for 17% was calculated, amounting to 1.7% as the number of students

who should be in special education. Kunjufu then subtracted 1.7% from the 17% in order to come up with the range indicating the fair representation of Black students in the education system. However, though Kunjufu conducted mathematical statistics and presented the data, the reliability of these statistics is challenged by the fact that there was no empirical data on the highlighted issue. Among the major issues that are not integrated in the works of Kunjufu are the many factors that contribute to the placement of Black students in special education, among them economic and social issues. Therefore, Kunjufu lacks the reliability concept, thus prompting the need for an in-depth evaluation of the phenomenon in future studies.

### **Factors Contributing to Black Male Placement in Special Education**

Having discussed the statistics that indicate the overrepresentation of Black males in special education, the need to understand some of the factors that lead Black overrepresentation in special education arises. There are several scholars who have made attempts to discuss some of the factors in a bid to understand why Black males make up the highest population in special education (Brown, Higgins, Pierce, Hong, & Thomas, 2003; Freeman & Alkin, 2000; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2002; Harry & Anderson 1994b).

### **Teachers' Bias**

Among the major factors that have been identified as contributing to the overrepresentation of Black males in education is the issue of teacher bias (Harry & Anderson, 1994b; Matuszek & Oakland, 1979; McIntyre & Pernell, 1985; Sadock & Sadock, 2003; Tobias, Cole, Zibrin, & Bodlakova, 1982). As observed by Acker (2006), among the major issues related to teacher bias as a cause of overrepresentation include innate personal beliefs and racial preferences. Acker identified the two aspects related to teacher bias and noted that influence of

race is a major factor that scholars should review when developing an understanding of why teachers refer more Black students to special education.

Acker (2006) highlighted that there is a higher probability of teachers referring students of a different race to special education than students of their own race. Based on the findings, Acker asserted that with majority of teachers in the United States being White, Black students have suffered the fate of difference in race and negative perceptions in the context of White teachers towards Blacks. However, though Acker made efforts to explain racism as a concept affecting the referrals in special education, his study did not adequately address the reason for overrepresentation of Black males in special schools. Although race was highlighted as an influencing factor, Acker failed to provide empirical data and in-depth evaluation of why White teachers were more likely to refer Black students to special education, as compared to Black teachers' referrals of White students to special education.

Conversely, Gravois and Rosenfield (2006) found that the stereotypes about Black males as adopted in learning institutions has contributed to their overrepresentation in special education. Gravois and Rosenfield (2006) and Abidin and Robinson (2002) observed that Black males are associated with the Black race where major stereotypes of being emotionally disturbed are advanced. In this context, the teacher referrals are based on mere assumptions that, being among the Black race, Black students deserve to be in special institutions to experience special care and attention.

Another study that supported this finding was by Gardner and Miranda (2001) who observed that, in most referrals for Black students in special education, the students are placed in the category of mild intellectual disabled and emotional disturbance and not in the category of hearing or visual impairments. Gardner and Miranda (2001) explained that this is due to some of

the subjective decisions made by the teachers under the influence of the stereotypes about Blacks.

As per the data presented by The Data Accountability Center (2009), the rate of subjective category of emotional disturbance stood at 1.27 for Black students, while it was at 0.6 for White students. These prevalence rates indicated that there were major stereotypes about Blacks being emotionally disturbed. In further evaluating the issue Gravois and Rosenfield (2006) also observed that because of the stereotypes, even the tests used to determine the authenticity of the student referrals to special education may not be accurate. In fact, the teachers are identified as having lower expectations for Black students in tests, and thus the assessments of performance in tests may be highly biased. As Gravois and Rosenfield (2006) explained, some teachers do not expect Black students to pass these tests, and this at times serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy of student failure and condemns them to referrals to special education.

Other scholars have revealed that another most common factor which influences overrepresentation of Black students in special schools is the training and classroom management of teachers (Matuszek & Oakland, 1979; Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003; Stover, 1999; Thrasher, 1997, Tobias et al., 1982). Matuszek and Oakland (1979) conducted a study and interviewed teachers in an effort to understand how teacher training affects the referral decisions of students to special education. In this respect, Matuszek and Oakland observed that classroom management and the adaptive behavior of the student has an impact on their behavior for the referral of Black students into special education programs.

In this context, the teachers of Black students were reviewed as less tolerant of specific behaviors of the Black student, and thus had a lower threshold of perceived misbehavior of the

Black student, which results in a higher referral rate to special education (Matuszek & Oakland, 1979). In fact, Matuszek and Oakland (1979) stated that most of the teacher referrals for students are based on behavioral conduct of the students.

Matuszek and Oakland (1979) and Bahr, Fuchs, Stetcher, and Fuchs (1991) also observed that some teachers assess troublesome behaviors among students as requiring special attention, which is why they seek special education for these students. However, based on IDEA, student behavior, with a focus on troublesome behavior, is not among the qualifications of students requiring special education (NICCYD, 2000). Therefore, the study by Matuszek and Oakland (1979) does not adequately justify the reliability of their findings to adequately address how the perceptions of teachers of students being troublesome succeeds as a factor contributing to the overrepresentation of Black students in special institutions.

On the other hand, Stover (1999) observed that White teachers are highly skilled, and thus affect more skills and training among their students. In this case, White students are viewed with a higher probability of passing NCLB tests as compared to Blacks; their probability of being referred to special education is lower. However, Stover's (1999) study did not adequately address the issue of how race as a concept impacts the level of training among teachers and how this could have an impact on student referral to special education. Could race be a mitigating factor among teachers in acquiring their training, and what could this mean for their attitudes towards students referrals to special education?

The relationship between teachers and Black students was also adequately addressed as a factor leading to overrepresentation in special education (Knotek, 2003). As explained in the works of Knotek (2003), there is a tendency among the teachers to base their referrals to special education on how they relate with students. In the study findings, it was indicated that some

teachers refer students who bother them in classes to special education, justifying that they require special attention. However, though Knotek (2003) discussed this issue, the study did not adequately address how these justify the need for these students to be referred to special education with “being a bother” not a reason enough in the school system criterion for special students. The study only made assumptions that teachers felt bothered and thus referred the students to special education to avoid the bother.

### **Institutional Racism**

From a different perspective, Coutinho and Oswald (2000) studied institutional racism as among the factors which have also had a major impact on the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. Based on their study findings, the K-12 system has had major challenges in the employment of Black teachers. In this case, most Black students lack a role model in their education system, which has contributed to engagement in negative activities, which Coutinho and Oswald (2000) highlighted as a major cause of their referral to special education. In fact, Coutinho and Oswald (2000) noted that with Black males comprising the minority within schools under the K-12 system, they often do not have adequate interactions with the other children; this can result in the development of deviant behaviors. This study was adequate in explaining this issue, but it did not develop an adequate relationship between the K-12 system and how it has contributed to the overrepresentation of Black students in special education. Though the institutions were noted to employ fewer Black teachers, the connection between that fact and the number of students in special education was not adequately addressed.

Based on further review by Powers, Hagans-Murillo, and Restori (2004), most of the aspects related to institutional racism are entrenched in the historical background of education in United States. Powers et al. stated that the country has experienced legal proscriptions against



the literacy of the Black population and longstanding separate and unequal educational opportunities. Based on these historical grounds, most of the institutions have advanced negative attitudes towards the Black population; these are some of the grounds of the overrepresentation of Blacks in special education.

In further discussing the issue, Romanoff et al. (2009) observed that there have been some misconceptions in the field of education where intellectual inferiority of Blacks has been popularly advanced in learning institutions. Romanoff et al. (2009) added that the negative attitudinal climate in the learning institutions has been supplemented by a history of economic impoverishment of Blacks who, due to their situations, are viewed as unable to afford education and are faced with challenges of emotional disturbances. Therefore, most of the institutions of learning have based their decisions on such historical conceptions, particularly in providing learning services within the country for both White and Black populations.

Because of their status, Blacks are viewed as concentrated in hardship areas with scarce educational resources and dilapidated facilities. It is in the evaluation of the socioeconomic factors of the Black student that major institution of learning develops negative stereotypes on the eligibility of the Black student and the potential enrollment in their institutions. In fact, the stereotypes advance the perceptions that these students belong to the special education institutions because they need special care and attention to support their learning. These are some of the issues that Rueda, Clingner, Sager, and Velasco (2008) highlighted as contributing to the structured inequalities even in referral to special education and observed them as inherent to America's education system.

To understand these inequalities, Powers et al. (2004) had studied the education placement in California and noted that even after the Larry P. case that outlawed the use of IQ

tests as referrals to special education, institutions are still entangled in the belief that Blacks are inferior to Whites in the education field, and overrepresentation in special education is still a major issue of concern.

In further aiming at explaining the institution racism, a study by Robinson (2003) argued that due to the historical context as portrayed in the education system, most of the children in the modern day suffer from the sins of a society. Robinson (2003) explained that the highlighted structured inequalities lead to pernicious educational effects among Blacks who are referred to as the minority groups. Ward (2010) also stated that in the contemporarily times, thought institutional racism has been fought, the issue of White privilege is still an issue in explaining the overrepresentation of males in special education. Ward observed that within learning institutions, Whites are offered more privileges in terms of resources both human and structural, and thus the equality in educational outcomes among Whites and Blacks is still challenged. In fact, because of such benefits of additional privileges, the stereotyping of lower performance in Black males is advanced even more, which Talbert-Johnson (2001) highlighted as a major factor leading to their overrepresentation in special education.

To evaluate the issue further, Zionts, Zionts, Harrison, and Bellinger (2003) observed that institutional racism as advanced by the historical structured inequalities may long be gone but Blacks are still condemned to poor performance following the allocation of resources within institutions. Zionts et al. stated that, in the contemporary system of education, most Blacks attend schools that are not adequately funded by the federal governments, following their parameters as set for allocation and distribution of resources. In this context, Black students are subjected to inappropriate and unresponsive curricula and thus disproportionality in special education is still evident within the system (Romanoff et al., 2009).

Chinweizu (2010) revisited the issue of the historical context of special education and noted that, though the allocation of resources may be a major factor contributing to a difference in representation in special education, the education approach in schools mostly attended by Blacks is a major issue of concern. Chinweizu (2010) studied this issue and noted that in most schools where Blacks are the majority, the educational approach is still affected by the concept of servitude. Based on their discussion, Chinweizu (2010) argued that White supremacy continues to play a role in Black education. As Chinweizu (2010) noted, in the past, Blacks were servants for Whites; thus, their education was oriented to serving Whites. This is an issue that Chinweizu (2010) highlighted as still prominent in the education system in the country, observing that most of the education was based on preparing Blacks to serve Whites; education for servitude has challenged adequate learning among Blacks.

Chinweizu (2010) asserted that,

No conscious campaign has been made to change the colonial character of our education....we still produce Black Africans who are fascinated with European ways, who are mindlessly obedient servants of Europe; who are filled with inferiority complexes; who are culturally de-Africanized, Europhile and Afrophobic, just like those produced by colonial schools| .... Furthermore, our neo-colonial education does not teach us how to face the perils of today; does not teach us to create our own future; does not prepare us to face the perils of the future. (p.4, 7)

Therefore, it is still a challenge among Blacks to compete with Whites in their education outcomes. Therefore, Blacks are evaluating and continuing to score lower than Whites, which is one of the strongest reasons for them being subjected to special education.

## **Testing Bias**

Human intelligence is a controversial issue in psychology, raising several issues about how intelligence is measured. Intelligence is used to measure the differences between people in their way of thinking and decision-making (George, 2000). Standardized testing used to assess both human intelligence and student achievement is a costly business, demanding full efforts of the government. The American educational system spends millions of dollars in organizing for tests, which are used as merit in admission into various educational programs in secondary and post-secondary institutions.

The cultural validity of these standardized tests has been called into question as a partial explanation for why minority students tend to fare less well on them than their majority counterparts (Ebersole & Knapp, 2007). Scholars have argued that White students are favored in the testing process, making them dominant in performance not because they are more intelligent or learn more, but because the tests are simply more culturally relevant to their background and experience (Harry & Anderson, 1994b). Scholars have questioned the intelligence tests carried out in both America and Europe, as they are found to be biased (Harry & Anderson, 1994b). The grading is given in relation to races where the White student appears to be favored more than the other races.

Some scholars have argued that the language used in standardized testing has a great impact on the results produced (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Black students are known to have problems interpreting the English vernacular, which often affects their performances on the test. White students are more conversant with the language used in testing, and thus may have fewer problems in the evaluation (Popham, 2012). It is also noted that many Black students, especially those who are accustomed to using what is termed as Vernacular Black English (VBE), spend a

big proportion of their time struggling to learn the English language and disconnect from the VBE language. This limits their time that could be used in preparation for the tests, and this may reduce their performance on the exams in comparison to White students.

Some scholars have argued that the tests contain inappropriate content (Popham, 2012). The questions and evaluation materials are geared toward the majority. The tests are mostly related to the issues more relevant to the culture of the White student, which provides an unfair advantage to them. The materials used in testing are often unfamiliar to Black student culture, hence they struggle to familiarize themselves with the materials (Popham, 2012). Connecting with the cultural context of the test requires additional time and concentration, which can thereby affect performance negatively. With the Black culture being in the minority, they have little influence on the setting of the tests; therefore, the majority White culture dominates the test development.

Lack of prior exposure to knowledge on the things to be tested is another issue on the bias testing being reported. The Black students have little knowledge about the nature of questions or tests to tackle in comparison to White students. Lack of prior exposure to such information regarding tests may induce anxiety for minority makes the Black students panic while being tested (Jensen, 2006). This results in poor performances that may not be truly reflective of aptitude or ability.

In addition to issues related to language bias and cultural context, White examiners tend to discriminate and intimidate those that are in the minority (Reynolds & Suzuki, 1990). The Black student oftentimes has difficulty comprehending what the White examiners are communicating within the test; this may be attributed to the examiners' use of Standard English, making it hard for the minority student to grasp the information. Tests on cultural issues favor

the White student, since they are already familiar with the dominant European White culture. The tests are also noted to favor the majority student, because the American schools are based on the foundation of a European culture, as the European system provided the foundation for White culture, and those experiences and elements are embedded in the examinations. Therefore, Whites are favored, allowing an unfair advantage over Black students (Robert, 2000).

Incentives and rewards for high test performance may also influence the performance of those who lag behind on the exams. The ideology favors the White students who are always at the top in performance. The reward system has a significant effect; those who are at the top are encouraged, while those who perform poorly remain humiliated and placed in special education classes or omitted from Advanced Placement classes. This has a great impact on the performance of the Black students, who always feel demoralized as their efforts go unnoticed and unrewarded (Grandy, 2010). This may contribute to a performance trend in which the White students maintain their top positions, while the Black student remain as poor performers and receive higher placement in special education classes.

Psychological professionals have developed findings that explain the widening biased testing experienced in the American schools (Reynolds & Suzuki, 1990). Ethnicity has contributed greatly to the unending testing bias in special education (George, 1993). White teachers tend to favor White learners in both the teaching process and in testing (Popham, 2012). This demoralizes the Black students making them perform poorly on the majority of standardized and IQ tests.

It is also important to note that test taking itself is a learned skill, and trends in early childhood education indicate that White students may be advantaged in this regard as well. Most Black parents do not see the need for early education or cannot afford the cost of placing their

young child in early education programs, and therefore these students may enter public school without the school-ready skills already in place for White children who were exposed to early childhood education; these skills can include the ability to take tests (High, 2008). The observed cultural differences make the Black students less equipped as they begin the education journey (Harry, 2009). Several issues have been raised on the widening intelligence gap between White and Black students. Some scholars have supported the widening gap, arguing that the Blacks are to blame of their negligence in giving their children enough support in education (Noguera, 2008). Some of the White cultural education ideologies have favored White students and discriminated other races like Black students, which continues to widen the intelligence gap between White and Black students.

### **Educator Perceptions toward Special Education and Black Males**

Among other major issues, which have been addressed across the different scholarly works on Black males in special education, is the issue of the perceptions of educators on special education and Black males (Gottlieb & Weinberg, 1999; Harris & Mamlin, 1998; Hutton, 1985; Kearns, Ford, & Linney, 2005). Acker (2006) conducted a study among teachers to collect and analyze their perceptions on Black males and their representation in special education. From their study, it was found out that many teachers, including the highly qualified, did not agree on being qualified to teach in African American schools.

In this case, most of the teachers perceived it as difficult and very challenging to handle Black students in these schools. In fact, a higher preference of teaching White students was observed among teachers, with the perception that this would be a less challenging task. Based on these perceptions, the findings develop conclusions that among the educators, Black students

are still perceived as challenging to educate, and thus there is a higher probability of being referred to special education.

The study by Kearns et al. (2005) did not develop an empirical study to test the hypothesis that, due to their difficultness of being educated, Black students have a higher probability of being referred to special education institutions, prompting the need for another study. Conversely, Harris and Mamlin (1998) conducted a study on a related issue and found out that due to the perceptions among the teachers that Black students are difficult to educate, their teaching approaches have a major impact on the student outcome. From this study, it was found out that Black students achieved lower grades because of a lack of confidence mainly impacted by their teachers' perceptions about them. Therefore, this also impacted more negative perceptions of the ability of Black students and thus increasing the probability of referral to special education institutions.

In support of these findings, Mills (2003) also indicated that the issue of race also affected the educator perceptions of special education and Black students. From this study, it was found out that White teachers had more negative perceptions about Black students than their fellow Black teachers did. Among the negative perceptions they developed were based on the less potential for success among Black students, increasing deviant behaviors, and deviant personality characteristics. Following such perceptions, the teachers tend to suggest further interventions for Black students, which is why they are most likely to refer them for special education.

In another study by Acker (2006), the results indicated that in most of White teacher's communication with Black students, they used more negative comments as compared to how they addressed White students. Due to their negative attitudes towards Black students, White



teachers were also biased in examining these students, and this impression and performance remained unchanged (Acker, 2006). However, though this study adequately addressed the issue of educator perceptions towards Black students, it did not empirically approach the issue of how these perceptions impact on the increased referrals to special education institutions and the overrepresentation of Black males in special education.

In addition to the communication styles of teachers with Black students, perceptions were formed based on the social class of the student, which oftentimes led to ability grouping. In a study conducted by Rist (1970), he identified how teachers' first impressions of their students at the start of the new school year resulted in a subjective evaluation on the students' abilities and traits of being a successful student. This evaluation of the students resulted in the division of students into the categories of slow learners and fast learners that led to the slow learners being "taught infrequently, subjected to more infrequent control-oriented behavior, and little support from the teacher" and the fast learners receiving "the majority of the teaching time, reward-directed behavior, and attention from the teacher" (Rist, 1970, p. 414). Rist's investigation on the ability grouping of students based on the teachers' ideology or perception of the student's social class revealed that there was limited effect on the student classified as slow or average, but allowed the fast learners to discover their potential for high academic achievement. Although Rist identified the issue of ability grouping based on teacher bias and perceptions, the study failed to identify the effects this grouping had on the referral process of students into the special education population.

### **Parent Perceptions toward Special Education and Black Males**

Studies related on special education among Black males across the different scholarly works have addressed the perceptions of parents (Harry, Kalyanpur, & Day, 1999; Patton &

Townsend, 1999; Zionts et al., 2003). One of the major issues analyzed among these studies is how the parents perceive the efficacy of special education (Zionts et al., 2003). As Zionts et al. (2003) discussed in their study, parents for Black males who have been referred to special education do not trust special schools to meet the special needs of these students. In fact, the study findings revealed that the majority of parents perceived efficacy of special institutions in meeting their children needs as lacking. Further findings from this study were that the parents perceived the referral of their children to special education as being faced with cultural insensitivity.

In discussing this issue further, Patton and Townsend (1999) observed that Black parents perceived the education system as being unfair in the student referral to special education. Their perceptions were that Black students were being discriminated and unjustifiably referred to special education. However, Townsend and Patton (1999) did not adequately relate the issue of bias to how the parents responded to their claims in an effort to contain the discrimination. In fact, their study should have adequately developed solutions for the increased and unjustified referral of Black students in special education.

According to Day-Vines (2000), parental perceptions about special education and Black males were also analyzed. Day-Vines (2000) came up with findings that parents perceived special schools as having less ability to help their students. In their view, they were not adequately engaged in their children's education in these special schools. These parents observed that not being involved in their children's education was a challenge because they were the ones that knew the children better and could understand their children's needs more than the teachers.

Day-Vines (2000) highlighted that the parents demanded more involvement in special schools if they were to agree on the efficacy of the institutions in supporting the education for their children; however, the study did not address the issue of causes of overrepresentation of Black males in these institutions. Their study only addressed solutions for the improvement of learning among students in special education.

A different study by Patton and Townsend (1999) also supported these findings with the observation that parents recommended their involvement in policy development and decision making in special education institutions if they were to agree on allowing their children to continue learning within these institutions. Townsend and Patton (1999) provided a recommendation that there was need for advocacy in special education institutions if the balance of power in parent-professional discourse was to be restored.

In contrast to the findings of the previous studies, Brantlinger's (1997) research on the information received by low-income families and the decision making process to place their child into special education was completely opposite to the negative findings of the other researchers. Her research revealed that although low-income parents of minority students had heated differences regarding the educational process and experiences that they and their child witnessed, they were generally pleased with the education that their child received in the special education classroom environment. Brantlinger revealed that 90% of the parents who did not have students in special education programs believed that those in special education settings benefited from the experience of "a chance to learn, an opportunity to get ahead, or get help," and indicated that they would be confident to have their child in special education classes (Brantlinger, 1997, p. 96). Additionally, 78% of parents or family members who had a relative in special education programs perceived it to be positive for the student, and provided statements

that “they get more attention from the teachers, better grades and they are learning” (Brantlinger, 1997, p. 97). Although the majority of the comments by the parents were generally positive on the educative process in special education, Brantlinger (1997) did discover that the negative comments were situational to the individual parental concern of special education, and not to the overall special education system; in these cases, parents often had a lack of understanding of specific special education terms, such as Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), due process, and mainstreaming, and lacked knowledge about the variety of services available to the special education student.

### **Summary**

In general, there is a vast base of literature on the issue of special education among Black males. In fact, most of the literature is related to IDEA, its impact on causes of increased representation of Black males in special education, aftereffects of the overrepresentation, and how overrepresentation can be reduced or managed. To understand causes of overrepresentation of Black males in special education, most scholars have used CRT. CRT has been adequately used to address some of the factors particularly related to race, which contribute to the increased referral of Black males in special education.

Additionally, among the major scholars, IDEA has raised huge interest as one of the acts explaining the referral of students to special education. These scholars have used IDEA in evaluating whether there have been any unfair referrals among Black students. These scholars also looked into teachers’ bias and institutional racism as factors contributing to Black male placement in special education. To address the issue and come up with solutions, vast literature has addressed the issue of parent and educator perceptions towards special education and Black males.

Through these approaches, the purpose of the study is to understand how the perceptions of both teachers and parents can be changed to help support the education of these children. Additionally, NCLB has also been integrated to help address solutions that could be important and effective in addressing the issue of overrepresentation of Black males in special education. Finally, though these studies address most of the issues related to referral of Black males in special education, there is still inadequate empirical data to support the hypothesis that there is overrepresentation of Black males in special education. Therefore, there is need for future studies to be conducted with the main approach being to develop empirical data to support this hypothesis and establish more reliable findings related to the research issue.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

A causal comparative research design will be used to develop a picture of parents'/guardians' and educators' attitudes about factors that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs. This chapter provides a detailed review of the research method used for this study, background information of the selected research method, the justification for using this method, and the expected limitations. The data collection methods and the instruments that will be used to conduct the research are also documented. Lastly, this section also details the sample characteristics, data analysis methods, and the ethicality within the study.

### **Research Design**

A causal comparative ex-post facto research design will be used to examine factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education between specified demographic characteristics (Clasen & Jochen, 2004). Specifically, the causal comparative ex-post facto study will be used as the framework to investigate differences in the dependent variable as a function of the four human characteristics. A causal comparative ex-post facto study means that the investigation occurs after the fact, wherein characteristics of the participants could not be manipulated (Salkind, 2004). That is, the human characteristics of Gender, Age, Ethnicity, and Stakeholder type (educator, parent/guardian), which serve as independent variables, will be tested to determine if they impact factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education.

A demographic survey and the Gresham survey will be used to collect information from educators and parents/guardians. The demographic survey is a self-report survey that asks participants to report specific demographic characteristics about themselves. The Gresham survey is also a self-report survey that will be used to obtain attitudes about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. The demographic survey is scaled to collect data at the nominal and ordinal level while the Gresham survey is scaled to collect data at the interval level. Given the design of the study and scaling of the variables, MANOVA is the appropriate statistical technique. If assumptions for normality of data are violated, a Mann-Whitney test will be substituted for the MANOVA.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

**Research Question 1:** What is the difference in stakeholders' attitudes, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on stakeholder type (Educators and Parents/Guardians)?

**Hypothesis 1<sub>o</sub>:** There is no significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) leading to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on stakeholder type (Educators and Parents/Guardians).

**Research Question 2:** What is the difference in stakeholders' attitudes, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on gender (Male, Female)?

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on gender (Male, Female).

**Research Question 3:** What is the difference in stakeholders' attitudes, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on age by category (21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61+)?

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on age (21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61+).

**Research Question 4:** What is the difference in stakeholders' attitudes, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on ethnicity of stakeholders (White, Hispanic, Black, Native American, Asian, Mixed, or Other)?

**Hypothesis 4:** There is no significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) leading to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on ethnicity of stakeholders (White, Hispanic, Black, Native American, Asian, Mixed, or Other).



## **Population and Sampling**

### **Participants**

This researcher will recruit a sample of Black, male, high school students' parents/guardians, educators and school administrators from School System A in the metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia area that has a large, diverse, and representative student population of Black males. Parents/guardians include those individuals responsible for making legal decisions and supervising students' overall living. Educators consist of tutors, school teachers, and administrators. The subjects will be selected through the use of random sampling measures.

A group will be identified after gaining permission from the school system and administration. Then, participants will be randomly selected to participate in the study. Additionally, a demographic survey will also be administered as a filter to ensure that the targeted population's data is included (see Appendix B). The demographic survey will be used to verify that participants are over the age of 18 and that they fall into one of the three groups (Educator or Parent/Guardian). To gain a significant sampling size, surveys will be distributed to all 10 high schools in School System A, with a request that all school staff members that are identified as having a valid Georgia teaching certificate complete the survey. Additionally, the parents/guardian of Black males receiving special education services from the 10 high schools in School System A will be contacted and requested to complete the survey. It is determined that to achieve reliable data, 120 participants will need to complete the survey.

### **Sampling Characteristics**

Sampling frame represents the entire population of the group under study (Wiersma & Stephen 2008). This study has been designed to solicit the attitudes stakeholders have on Black

male special education referrals caused by poor academic performance. The sampling frame can then be said to encompass all students within the Atlanta metropolitan area. The schools have an enrollment of about 40,000 students. The total population for all the schools cannot be used, which necessitated the selection of a particular sample.

### **Sampling Method**

A sample can be regarded as a subset of the whole population and is used by the researcher to carry out the study (Creswell, 2013). It is imperative that the selected sample bears all the characteristics of the population from where it is drawn. This necessitates the use of appropriate sampling methods. There are several methods used to select a sample from the entire population. These include probability (sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling) and non-probability sampling (quota sampling and snowball sampling) methods.

For this study, samples will be drawn from parents/guardians, educators and school administrators. Ideally, these groups, which exist within the entire population, would be included equally in the sample so as to avoid bias and sampling error. It is important to note, however, that in a causal comparative study, the researcher has only a limited degree of control over the sampling. To optimize the sample to the degree possible within a causal comparative design, stratified random sampling method will be used. Unlike random sampling, where sample elements are picked randomly, stratified random sampling allows the researcher to classify the elements of the population, and from all these classification, the researcher selects the sample randomly.

By grouping the population elements into strata/divisions, it is possible to ensure equal representations of all the stakeholders. This will ensure that there is no sampling error and sampling bias, where one element in the entire population has a higher value as compared to

others. The use of random sampling with the stratum ensures that the researcher does not select some individuals based on their perceptions. Random sampling ensures that the bias in respondents' data will be eliminated.

### **Setting**

The setting for the study will be School System A. School System A is one of 10 school systems in the Atlanta metropolitan area. It is located in the eighth most populous county in the state of Georgia and was identified as the tenth-fastest county in population growth within the United States (US Census, 2000). The average median family income for students enrolled in School System A is \$50,000, with home values ranging from \$99,000 to \$200,000. The school system has an enrollment of approximately 40,000 students and is the largest school employer, with approximately 5,000 employees. The school system has a richly diverse student population that is 45% African American, 40% Caucasian, 6% Hispanic, 4% interracial, and 3% Asian.

School System A prescribes common course requirements that all students must follow for graduation from a high school in Georgia, including completion of a minimum of 23 total units in order to graduate. The unit requirements consist of common core classes of English/Language Arts (4 Units); Mathematics (4 units); Science (4 Units); Social Studies (3 Units); and Health and Physical Education (1 Unit); additional graduation requirements include courses that are separate from the common core, and are the Career Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) and/or Modern Language/Latin and/or Fine Arts (3 Units) and electives (4 Units).

The respondents will be drawn from parents and educators of Black and White students at School System A, during the first semester of the 2013-2014 school year. A survey will be

issued to the participants. The survey data will be collected and analysed to generate the required results.

### **Instrumentation**

The Gresham survey will be used to collect information from educators and parents/guardians. There are two main components of the survey, including a demographic section and a section on attitudes about overrepresentation of Black students in special education programs. The demographic survey is a self-report survey that asks participants to report specific demographic characteristic about themselves. The attitudinal component is also a self-report survey that will be used to obtain attitudes about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. The demographic survey is scaled to collect data at the nominal and ordinal level, while the Gresham survey is scaled to collect data at the interval level. Given the design of the study and scaling of the variables, analysis of variance is the appropriate statistical technique to test differences between levels of the independent variables.

The Gresham survey is a questionnaire designed by Dr. Doran Gresham of George Washington University. Dr. Gresham was contacted for the explicit use of the survey within this research and to gain permission to modify portions of the survey for the purpose of this research. The Gresham survey is a 34-item questionnaire that was developed to study the attitudes of educators about the overrepresentation of Black male students at the elementary level in special education programs for emotional behavior disorders. The survey was developed to obtain attitudes about factors that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. The survey required minor modifications to capture information about parent/guardian of the Black male student in special education programs.

Three factors are identified in the survey, including Administrative, Cultural, and Environmental/Hereditary. The Administrative factor consists of 11 questions and is answered in questions 1-11. The Cultural construct consists of 12 questions and is answered in questions 12-23, while the Environmental/Hereditary construct consists of 11 questions and is answered in questions 24-34. There are two variables in the research questions; the dependent variable will be ACE, and the independent variable will be the four human factors. The four research questions are aligned with the Gresham Survey. Research Question One will be answered through analysis of survey questions 2-9. Research questions 2, 3 and 4 will be answered through analysis of survey question 1, as well as 11-34. The close-ended questions incorporate a Likert scale to enable participants to record a numerical value for their attitudes about special education referrals. The Likert scale has the following levels: (1) *Strongly Disagree*, (2) *Disagree*, (3) *Undecided*, (4) *Agree*, (5) *Strongly Agree*. Low scores mean that a participant feels the concept (or question) contributes little to overrepresentation while high scores reflect a large contribution. For each construct, an average score is calculated by adding up numerical responses and then dividing by the number of questions that make up the particular dimension.

### **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure the validity of a research project, it is the responsibility of researchers to show that they have performed their due diligence in establishing a rationale for the study; providing a clear description of the data and the methods used to analyze the data; and interpreting the data in a manner that is clear, concise, and easily understood by the reader (Williams & Morrow, 2009). According to Dr. Gresham, to ensure reliability of the instrument, it was piloted at a school that was not contained within the original study. The questions were formatted to one

overall concept, with the Cronbach alpha description of the reliability coefficient as .939 (Gresham, 2005).

The instrument's content was validated through a panel of 10 professionals that consisted of two general educators, one administrator from the host school system that participated in the pilot study, five professors of education from George Washington University, and two professors of special education that have authored several articles on the issue on disproportionate ethnic representation in special education (Gresham, 2005). The panel provided feedback on the content of the instrument and the applicability to the topic being studied.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Prior to contacting any participants or conducting research, permission will be requested and obtained from the school system's administration of School System A (Appendix B). After requesting and obtaining approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), potential participants will be contacted through an email, or by the mail system, inviting them to participate in the survey administered by Survey Monkey or the paper copy survey that they receive in the mail. The survey will be secure and no information regarding individual's identities will be accessible to anyone but the researcher.

Survey Monkey and the mail system will be used to collect data. Survey Monkey is an online tool that enables a researcher to upload a survey and securely deploy it to specified contacts via email. The mail system enables the researcher to contact potential participants that do not have an available email address. Data collection through the use of questionnaires is a primary data collection protocol. This method enables the researcher to collect firsthand information from the source. Primary data will be accurate, reliable, and updated. The main

drawbacks associated with primary data collection may include the outlay of considerable time and money, and difficulty in getting participants to respond.

**Informed Consent.** Prior to contacting any participants or conducting research, permission from the school system's administration will be requested (see Appendix B). After obtaining approval from Liberty University's IRB, prospective participants were informed that the research was not a direct reflection on the academic abilities, social and community life, or home, but was seeking to collect data so as to explore the special education program referral process and differences between Black male students and their peers/counterparts. The individuals who agreed to participate completed the consent form and returned it to the researcher; they were then considered participants in the study and were provided with further information on their option to opt out at any time during the study (see Appendix B). This letter/form will give the respondents the general information about research to be undertaken, the main objectives of the research, and also ask the respondents to sign if they consented to filling the questionnaires.

Following completion of the IRB process, a request for information pertaining to all Black male students that are receiving special education services and are currently in Grade 9-12 will be submitted to School System A. The information requested includes email address of educators and parents/guardians of school children. The researcher will ensure the privacy and safety of all participants by placing pseudonyms on all records and all information pertaining to the students and school. Participants' personal information will be redacted from the files, and all participants will be identified through a numbering system developed by the researcher.

## **Data Analysis**

After data collection, the information in the questionnaires will be amalgamated so as to yield the required results. Yin (2003) described data analysis as the process of examining, categorizing, tabulating, and testing the data so as to address the initial prepositions of study. For this research, data analysis process will utilize a MANOVA for research questions one through four. The MANOVA test will be used to determine the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The test will be carried out for all four hypotheses. If assumptions for normality of data are violated, a Mann-Whitney test will be substituted for the MANOVA. The data analysis process is outlined below:

### **Data Cleaning, Categorization and Tabulation**

All completed questionnaires will be inspected to ensure that they were correctly filled. Those wrongly filled questionnaires will be eliminated. Following this process, data will be categorized into groups, and the summary of the results from the questionnaires will be tabulated. Open ended responses will be grouped to determine specific word patterns, trends, and themes. The developed patterns, trends, and themes will be analyzed to develop a common theme among all responses. This will aid in the developing graphs to compare the knowledge among stakeholders.

### **Statistical Analysis**

After tabulation of data, data will be transferred to SPSS version 21.0. Various statistical computations will be carried out. Some of the major computations include determining the mean, median, and mode.



## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Introduction

As presented in Chapter One, the purpose of this casual comparative study was to develop a picture of the stakeholder's (parents'/guardians' and educators') attitudes about factors that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs. Moreover, this study examined differences in Administrative, Cultural and Environment/Hereditry (ACE) contribution by stakeholder type, age, gender, and ethnicity of those who are informed that the discrimination occurs during the special education referral process. The results of the study are presented based on the order of the research questions and are based on the analysis of the Gresham Survey results.

### Results

#### Descriptive Statistics

Data were collected from 166 participants and screened for missing responses. None of the participants left the survey early or left large non-random portions of missing entries. Descriptive statistics were conducted to describe the demographics of the sample. A large majority of the participants were female (117, 71%), and a slight majority were Black (92, 55%). Participants fell into one of five categories of age range, with 21-30 as the lower bound, including 10% of the sample ( $n = 16$ ), and 61+ as the upper bound, which included 4% of the sample ( $n = 6$ ). The age group which contained the largest amount of participants was the 41-50 year age group, which contained 43% of the sample ( $n = 72$ ).

Most of the participants responded that they were classroom teachers (91, 55%). Twenty-seven percent of participants were the parents of a Black student in special education ( $n = 44$ ) and an additional 10% responded they were the guardian of a Black student in special

education ( $n = 16$ ). Most participants had an associate's degree or higher. The most common degree earned within the sample was a master's (39, 44%), although 39 (24%) had earned a bachelor's, and 16 (10%) had a doctoral or post graduate degree.

Sixty percent ( $n = 99$ ) of the sample consisted of participants with a teaching degree. Fifty-three (32%) had taught ninth grade, 58 (35%) had taught tenth grade, 57 (34%) had taught eleventh grade, and 59 (36%) had taught twelfth grade. Each grade level taught was not mutually exclusive, and many participants who taught one of the grades indicated teaching one or more other grades as well. Seventy-four ( $n = 45$ ) participants responded they had never taught any grade level. Table 1 presents frequencies and percentages for the sample demographics.

Table 1

*Frequencies and Percentages for Sample Demographics*

Demographic	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	117	71
Male	49	30
Ethnicity		
Asian or Pacific Islander	2	1
Black, non-Hispanic	92	55
Hispanic	3	2
White, non-Hispanic	66	40
Other	3	2
Age		
21-30	16	10
31-40	47	28
41-50	72	43
51-60	25	15
61+	6	4
Position in School		
Classroom teacher	91	55
School administrator	13	8
Parent of a Black male in special ed.	44	27
Guardian of a Black male in special ed.	16	10
Parent and classroom teacher of a Black male in special ed.	2	1
Highest level of school or degree		

High school or equivalent (GED)	11	7
Some college but no degree	21	13
Associate degree	10	6
Bachelor degree	39	24
Master's degree or graduate degree	69	42
Doctoral or post-graduate degree	16	10
Currently has active teaching certificate in GA.		
Yes	99	60
No	56	34
Level(s) taught		
Ninth grade	53	32
Tenth grade	58	35
Eleventh grade	57	34
Twelfth grade	59	36
Did not teach any level (9-12)	74	45

*Note.* Due to participants' ability to select more than one response for level taught, and due to rounding error, some percentages may not sum to 100.

Means and standard deviations were calculated to describe the amount of years of teaching experience and years teaching in their particular school system. Participants had between one and five years teaching experience, with an average of 4.10 years. The standard deviation of 0.97 suggested that most teachers had between three and five years of teaching experience. Within their particular schooling system, participants again had between one and five years teaching experience, with an average of 3.81 years. The lower mean score here versus total years teaching indicated some participants had teaching experience at a former system. Means and standard deviations for these continuous responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations for Continuous Demographics*

Demographic	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Years teaching	4.10	0.97
Years teaching in this particular school system	3.81	1.22

## Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

Three composite scores were created for the purpose of research, each consisting of 11 to 12 survey items. Internal consistency was examined on these scores to establish reliability. Reliability determines if the scores computed by the survey instrument are useful and significant; or in other words, reliable. The Cronbach's alpha test of reliability provides a mean correlation, as an alpha coefficient, between each pair of items and the number of items in a scale (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2006). According to the rules of thumbs suggested by George and Mallery (2010), alpha coefficients range from unacceptable to excellent where  $> .9$  - Excellent,  $> .8$  - Good,  $> .7$  - Acceptable,  $> .6$  - Questionable,  $> .5$  - Poor,  $\leq .5$  - Unacceptable. Each composite had a good rating of internal consistency, and could be reliably used in analyses. The means, standard deviations, and alpha coefficients for the three composite scores are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach's Alpha Reliabilities for the Three Composite Scores*

Score	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	No. of Items	<i>A</i>
Administration	3.32	7.85	11	.89
Cultural	2.86	6.30	12	.84
Environmental	2.51	5.05	11	.82
Total	2.92	0.44	34	.91

## Hypothesis for Research Question One

**H<sub>01a</sub>:** There is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) leading to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on stakeholder type (Educators and Parents/Guardians).

**H<sub>0</sub>1b:** There is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about environmental factors leading to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on stakeholder type (Educators and Parents/Guardians).

**H<sub>0</sub>1c:** There is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about cultural factors leading to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on stakeholder type (Educators and Parents/Guardians).

To assess research question one, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was to be conducted to examine differences in stakeholder perceptions of administrative, environmental, and cultural factors which lead to overrepresentation of Black males between educators and parents or guardians. For this analysis, participants who responded that they were part of school administration were counted as educators. Prior to analysis, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance/covariance matrices were assessed. Normality was assessed with three one sample Kolmogorov Smirnov (KS) tests, using one for each dependent variable; and this assumption was violated ( $p < .001$  for all). Levene's test was used to assess equality of variance, and this assumption was violated for the administrative ( $p < .001$ ) and cultural ( $p < .001$ ) variables. Box's M test indicated that the assumption of equal covariance matrices was also violated ( $p < .001$ ). Because all of these assumptions were violated, three Mann-Whitney  $U$  tests were conducted in place of one MANOVA.

The Mann-Whitney  $U$  test is the non-parametric equivalent of the independent sample  $t$ -test and is the appropriate test to examine differences in a continuous variable between two groups when many of the assumptions of its parametric equivalent are violated. Because there are three dependent variables over which differences will be assessed, three Mann-Whitney  $U$

tests were conducted. Due to its non-parametric nature, the Mann-Whitney  $U$  bypasses the aforementioned assumptions.

The first Mann-Whitney  $U$  test was conducted on the administrative variable, and indicated a significant difference in scores between stakeholders ( $z = -7.44, p < .001$ ). This suggested a statistically significant difference in perceptions of administrative factors in the overrepresentation of Black males in special education between educators and parents or guardians. Educators had a mean rank of 61.02, while parents or guardians had a mean rank of 118.01, indicating that parents or guardians perceived the administration as having a significantly greater impact on the overrepresentation of Black males in special education than did educators. The null hypothesis for the administrative variable could be rejected in favor of the alternative. Results of the Mann-Whitney  $U$  test for assessing administrative scores between parents or guardians and educators is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Mann-Whitney U Test for Educators versus Parents or Guardians Perception of Administrative Effect on Overrepresentation of Black Males in Special Education*

Stakeholder	Mean rank	Z	P
Educator	61.02	-7.44	<.001
Parent or guardian	118.01		

The second Mann-Whitney  $U$  test was conducted on the cultural variable, and indicated a significant difference in scores between stakeholders ( $z = -7.29, p < .001$ ). This suggested a statistically significant difference in perceptions of cultural factors in the overrepresentation of Black males in special education between educators and parents or guardians. Educators had a mean rank of 62.04, while parents or guardians had a mean rank of 117.96, indicating that parents or guardians perceived the culture as having a significantly greater impact on the

overrepresentation of Black males in special education than did educators, and the null hypothesis for the cultural variable could be rejected in favor of the alternative. Results of the Mann-Whitney *U* test for assessing cultural scores between parents or guardians and educators is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

*Mann-Whitney U Test for Educators versus Parents or Guardians Perception of Cultural Effect on Overrepresentation of Black Males in Special Education*

Stakeholder	Mean rank	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Educator	62.04	-7.29	.001
Parent or guardian	117.96		

The third Mann-Whitney *U* test was conducted on the environmental variable, and indicated no significant difference in scores between stakeholders ( $z = -0.28, p = .779$ ). This suggested that parents or guardians and educators did not differ greatly in their perception of the environment's impact on the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. The null hypothesis for the environmental variable could not be rejected in favor of the alternative. Results of the Mann-Whitney *U* test for assessing environmental scores between parents or guardians and educators is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

*Mann-Whitney U Test for Educators versus Parents or Guardians Perception of Environmental Effects on Overrepresentation of Black Males in Special Education*

Stakeholder	Mean rank	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Educator	81.71	-0.28	.779
Parent or guardian	83.87		

## **Hypothesis for Research Question Two**

**H<sub>0</sub>2a:** There is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on gender (Male, Female).

**H<sub>0</sub>2b:** There is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about environmental factors that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on gender (Male, Female).

**H<sub>0</sub>2c:** There is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about cultural factors that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on gender (Male, Female).

To examine research question two, a MANOVA was to be conducted. Prior to analysis, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were assessed. Homogeneity of variance was assessed using Levene's test, and this assumption was not met for the administrative variable ( $p = .004$ ). Thus, due to this violation of homogeneity of variance, as well as the violations of normality as discovered in research question one ( $p < .001$  for all), three Mann-Whitney  $U$  tests were employed; again with one test for each factor. Due to the nature of these non-parametric tests, none of the assumptions of the MANOVA had to be assessed.

The first Mann-Whitney  $U$  was conducted on the administrative variable, and indicated a significant difference in scores between the genders ( $z = -2.52, p = .012$ ). This suggested a statistically significant difference in perceptions of administrative factors in the overrepresentation of Black males in special education between males and females. Females had a mean rank of 89.07, while males had a mean rank of 68.62, indicating that females perceived the administration as having a significantly greater impact on the overrepresentation of Black



males in special education than did males. The null hypothesis for the administrative variable could be rejected in favor of the alternative. Results of the Mann-Whitney *U* test for assessing administrative scores between females and males are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

*Mann-Whitney U Test for Females versus Males Perception of Administrative Effect on Overrepresentation of Black Males in Special Education*

Gender	Mean rank	Z	p
Female	89.07	-2.52	.012
Male	68.62		

The second Mann-Whitney *U* was conducted on the cultural variable, and indicated a significant difference in scores between the genders ( $z = -2.51, p = .012$ ). This suggested a statistically significant difference in perceptions of cultural factors in the overrepresentation of Black males in special education between males and females. Females had a mean rank of 89.54, while males had a mean rank of 69.08, indicating that females perceived the culture as having a significantly greater impact on the overrepresentation of Black males in special education than did males, and the null hypothesis for the cultural variable could be rejected in favor of the alternative. Results of the Mann-Whitney *U* test for assessing cultural scores between females and males are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

*Mann-Whitney U Test for Females versus Males Perception of Administrative Effect on Overrepresentation of Black Males in Special Education*

Gender	Mean rank	Z	p
Female	89.54	-2.51	.012
Male	69.08		

The third Mann-Whitney  $U$  test was conducted on the environmental variable, and indicated no significant difference in scores between genders ( $z = -0.91, p = .363$ ). This suggested that females and males did not differ greatly in their perception of the environment's impact on the overrepresentation of Black males in special education and the null hypothesis for the environmental variable could not be rejected. Results of the Mann-Whitney  $U$  test for assessing environmental scores between females and males are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

*Mann-Whitney U Test for Females versus Males Perception of Environmental Effect on Overrepresentation of Black Males in Special Education*

Gender	Mean rank	Z	p
Female	81.31	-0.91	.363
Male	88.72		

### **Hypothesis for Research Question Three**

**H<sub>0</sub>3a:** There is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on age (21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 60+).

**H<sub>0</sub>3b:** There is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about environmental factors that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on age (21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 60+).

**H<sub>0</sub>3c:** There is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders' perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about cultural factors that lead to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on age (21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 60+).

To examine research question three, a MANOVA was to be conducted. Prior to analysis, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were assessed. Homogeneity of variance was assessed using Levene's test, and this assumption was not met for the administrative ( $p = .022$ ) or cultural ( $p = .030$ ) variables. Thus, due to this violation of homogeneity of variance, as well as the violations of normality as discovered in research question one ( $p < .001$  for all), three Kruskal Wallis tests were instead conducted. The Kruskal Wallis test is the appropriate analysis to determine significant differences in a continuous score between two or more groups when the continuous score does not follow a normal distribution. Prior to analysis, descriptive statistics were reviewed to assure adequate group sizes. The 61+ age group was disproportionately smaller than the other groups, and was thus combined with the 51-60 group to create a 51+ age group.

The first Kruskal Wallis test was conducted on the administrative variable, and indicated significant differences ( $\chi^2(3) = 13.65, p = .003$ ). The 41-50 age group had the highest mean ranks (90.47), followed closely by the 31-40 age group (89.57), indicating these groups felt that school administration had a large impact on the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. The 51+ age group had slightly lower mean ranks (75.66), indicating they did not feel that the administration had as great an impact as did the 41-50 and 31-40 age groups. The 21-30 age group had the lowest mean rank (44.75), indicating they did not feel that the school administration had as great an impact as did the previous age groups. Thus, the null hypothesis for the administrative variable could be rejected in favor of the alternative. Results of the Kruskal Wallis test for the administrative variable are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

*Kruskal Wallis Test for Differences in Perceived Administrative Impact on Overrepresentation of Black Males in Special Education by Age Group*

Age group	Mean rank	$\chi^2(3)$	<i>P</i>
21-30	44.75	13.65	.003
31-40	89.57		
41-50	90.47		
51+	75.66		

The second Kruskal Wallis test was conducted on the cultural variable, and indicated significant differences ( $\chi^2(3) = 12.07, p = .007$ ). The 31-40 age group had the highest mean ranks (95.43), followed by the 41-50 age group (87.81), indicating these groups felt that school culture had a large impact on the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. The 51+ age group had slightly lower mean ranks (71.23), indicating they did not feel that culture had as great an impact as did the 31-40 and 41-50 age groups. The 21-30 age group had the lowest mean rank (52.88), indicating they did not feel that culture had as great an impact as did the previous age groups. The null hypothesis for the cultural variable could be rejected in favor of the alternative. Results of the Kruskal Wallis test for the administrative variable are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

*Kruskal Wallis Test for Differences in Perceived Cultural Impact on Overrepresentation of Black Males in Special Education by Age Group*

Age group	Mean rank	$\chi^2(3)$	<i>p</i>
21-30	52.88	12.07	.007
31-40	95.43		
41-50	87.81		
51+	71.23		

The third Kruskal Wallis test was conducted on the environmental variable, and indicated no significant difference in perception of the environment as a factor leading to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education ( $\chi^2(3) = 3.03, p = .387$ ). Because significant differences were not found, further interpretations were not made and the null hypothesis for environmental could not be rejected. Results of the Kruskal Wallis test for the environmental variable are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

*Kruskal Wallis Test for Differences in Perceived Environmental Impact on Overrepresentation of Black Males in Special Education by Age Group*

Age group	Mean rank	$\chi^2(3)$	<i>P</i>
21-30	92.06	3.033	.387
31-40	84.00		
41-50	77.14		
51+	93.10		

#### **Hypothesis for Research Question Four**

**H<sub>0</sub>4a:** There is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders’ perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about factors (administrative, environmental, and cultural) leading to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on ethnicity of stakeholders (White, Hispanic, Black, Native American, Asian, Mixed, or Other).

**H<sub>0</sub>4b:** There is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders’ perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about environmental factors leading to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education based on ethnicity of stakeholders (White, Hispanic, Black, Native American, Asian, Mixed, or Other).

**H<sub>0</sub>4c:** There is no statistically significant difference in stakeholders’ perceptions, as measured by the Gresham survey, about cultural factors leading to the overrepresentation of Black males in

special education based on ethnicity of stakeholders (White, Hispanic, Black, Native American, Asian, Mixed, or Other).

To examine research question four, a MANOVA was to be conducted. Prior to analysis, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were assessed. Homogeneity of variance was assessed using Levene's test, and this assumption was not met for the cultural variable ( $p = .001$ ). Thus, due to this violation of homogeneity of variance, as well as the violations of normality as discovered in research question one ( $p < .001$  for all), non-parametric tests were employed; again with one test for each factor. Due to the nature of these non-parametric tests, none of the assumptions of the MANOVA had to be assessed. Prior to analysis, descriptive statistics were reviewed to assure adequate group sizes. A great majority of the sample were either Black or White, with less than 5% of the sample represented by other races. For the purpose of analysis, and to assure that each racial group to be examined was equally represented, only Black and White participants were included. Because two groups were to be assessed, Mann-Whitney  $U$  tests were conducted.

The first Mann-Whitney  $U$  test assessed the administrative variable, and indicated a significant difference in administrative scores between Black and White participants ( $z = -7.88, p < .001$ ). Black participants had a mean rank of 102.99 while White participants had a mean rank of 45.05, indicating that Black participants felt that administration had a significantly larger impact on the overrepresentation of Black males in special education than did White participants. The null hypothesis for the administrative factor could be rejected in favor of the alternative. Results of the Mann-Whitney  $U$  test for administrative response by race are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

*Mann-Whitney U Test for Differences in Perceived Administrative Impact on Overrepresentation of Black Males in Special Education by Race*

Race	Mean rank	<i>z</i>	<i>P</i>
Black	102.99	-7.88	.001
White	45.05		

The second Mann-Whitney *U* test assessed the cultural variable, and indicated a significant difference in cultural scores between Black and White participants ( $z = -7.31, p < .001$ ). Black participants had a mean rank of 101.95, while White participants had a mean rank of 48.20, indicating that Black participants felt that culture had a significantly larger impact on the overrepresentation of Black males in special education than did White participants, and the null hypothesis for cultural could be rejected in favor of the alternative. Results of the Mann-Whitney *U* test for cultural response by race are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

*Mann-Whitney U Test for Differences in Perceived Cultural Impact on Overrepresentation of Black Males in Special Education by Race*

Race	Mean rank	<i>z</i>	<i>P</i>
Black	101.95	-7.31	.001
White	48.20		

The third Mann-Whitney *U* test assessed the environmental variable, and indicated no significant difference in environmental scores between Black and White participants ( $z = -0.51, p < .613$ ). This suggested that Black and White participants did not differ greatly in their perception of the environment's role in the overrepresentation of Black males in special education and the null hypothesis for environmental could not be rejected. Results of the Mann-Whitney *U* test for environmental response by race are presented in Table 15.

Table 15

*Mann-Whitney U Test for Differences in Perceived Environmental Impact on Overrepresentation of Black Males in Special Education by Race*

Race	Mean rank	<i>z</i>	<i>P</i>
Black	81.05	-0.51	.613
White	77.33		

**Summary of Results**

Research Question One examined if a relationship exists between stakeholder’s (educators, parents and guardians) perceptions toward the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs and special education administration, cultural and environmental factors. Based on the Mann Whitney *U* analysis, a significant difference in the administrative and cultural scores existed between the stakeholder’s perceptions, and the null hypothesis can be rejected in favor of the alternate hypothesis for the administrative and cultural factor. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between the stakeholders’ perceptions for the environmental factor, and the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

Research Question Two examined if a relationship exists between males and females perceptions toward the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs and special education administration, cultural and environmental factors. Based on the Mann Whitney *U* analysis, a significant difference in the administrative and cultural scores existed between the males and female’s perceptions, and the null hypothesis can be rejected in favor of the alternate hypothesis. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between the males and female’s perceptions for the environmental factor, and the null hypothesis could not be rejected.



Research Question Three examined if a relationship exists between the age of the stakeholder's perceptions toward the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs and special education administration, cultural and environmental factors. Based on the Kruskal Wallis analysis, a significant difference was found between the age groups. The results indicated that there were significant differences between the different age group perceptions for the environmental and cultural factor, and the null hypothesis was rejected. The results did not reveal a significant difference between the age groups for the environmental factor, and the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

Research Question Four examined if a relationship exists between the different ethnicities perceptions toward the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs and special education administration, cultural and environmental factors. The sample included a majority of Black and White participants, with less than 5% of the sample representing other ethnicities. To equally represent error and variance of all racial groups in the analysis, only the Black and White groups were used to group participants. Based on the Mann-Whitney *U* analysis, a significant difference in the administrative and cultural scores existed between the different ethnicities' perceptions, and the null hypothesis can be rejected in favor of the alternate hypothesis. The results indicated that there were no significant differences between the different ethnicities' perceptions for the environmental factor, and the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of stakeholders (educators and parents/guardians) regarding the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs based on the examined differences in Administrative, Culture, and Environment/heredity (ACE) contributions by stakeholder type, age, gender, and ethnicity of those who are informed that this discrimination occurs during the special education referral process. The researcher examined the stakeholders through a provided survey at a school system located in the metro-Atlanta, Georgia, area about their perceptions of ACE. The survey results were analyzed and are presented in this chapter: (a) the summary of the findings, (b) the discussion of the findings, (c) the limitations of the study, (d) the implications of the findings, (e) the recommendations for future research, and (f) the conclusion.

### **Review of the Study and Findings**

The disproportionate representation in special education programs has been discussed extensively in scholarly literature, education forums, and within the legal system. Moreover, the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs in public schools has been of great concern within the education community for over 30 years (Hosp & Reschly, 2004; McNally, 2003; Meyer & Patton, 2001). Lloyd Dunn was the earliest advocate to expose the issue of Black males being disproportionately placed in special education programs when he cited specific numbers of Black males who are being identified as students with disabilities. Coutinho and Oswald (1998) argued that the inappropriate placement of Black males in special education programs fails to allow them to obtain a quality education that leads to their ability to enhance their lives.

A review of the literature revealed that the referral of Black males to special education programs is a leading issue of concern, due to IDEA provisions not being adhered to and that the act only provides support to educational personnel for the management of the overrepresentation of Black students in special education (NABSE, n.d.). In conjunction with the issues of IDEA, McMillian (2003) discovered that NCLB fails to address the inequalities in schooling, such as financing an education and the overrepresentation of Black males compared to White students in special education. The literature revealed that teacher bias is a contributing factor in the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. This bias was attributed to the teachers' innate personnel beliefs, negative perceptions, and the stereotype of Black males as being emotionally disturbed (Acker, 2006; Abidin & Robinson, 2002; Gravois & Rosenfield, 2002). Teacher bias was also found in the area of teacher training, the referral of Black males to special education based on behavior, and the teachers being less tolerant of the Black males' behavior in the classroom (Matuzsek & Oakland, 1979).

The review of the literature also revealed that institutional racism is a contributing factor to the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. The issue of institutional racism in education is embedded in a historical context and legal proscriptions against the literacy of Black students, which ultimately contributed to the advancement of negative ideologies and attitudes towards the Black population (Powers et al., 2004). These negative attitudes and ideas about the Black population advanced the idea of economic impoverishment and that the Black students belonged in special education because they needed special care and attention to support their education (Rueda et al., 2008). The literature also found that an institutional bias was found in the cultural validity of standardized tests, the language used for the construction of the tests, and

that the content contained in these tests was inappropriate and typically geared towards the majority (Popham, 2012; Ebersole & Knapp, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Parents' perceptions in the literature review were found to be both negative and positive. The literature review showed that parents of Black males in special education did not trust these programs to meet the educational needs of their children and that the referral to special education was based on cultural insensitivity (Zionts et al., 2003). The literature further advanced the support for parental involvement in the policy development and decisions for the placement of Black students in special education (Patton & Townsend, 1999). Contrasting these findings in the literature, Brantlinger (1997) discovered that, although there was negativity from the parents towards the referral process and the education experiences of Black males in special education, some parents believed that those in special education benefited from the programs and perceived them as positive for the students. The negativity of the parents of Black males in special education centered on a lack of understanding of the terminology and services available to the students (Brantlinger, 1997).

The purpose of this study was to examine the differences in the ACE contribution by stakeholder type, age, gender, and ethnicity on the overrepresentation and referral process of Black males in special education programs.

Research question one examined if a relationship exists between stakeholders' (educators, parents and guardians) perceptions toward the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs and special education administration, cultural, and environmental factors. Based on the Mann Whitney *U* analysis, a significant difference in the administrative and cultural scores existed between the stakeholders' perceptions, and so the null hypothesis can be rejected in favor of the alternate hypothesis for the administrative and cultural factors. The

results indicated that there was no significant difference between the stakeholders' perceptions of the environmental factor, and so the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

Research question two examined if a relationship exists between males' and females' perceptions toward the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs and special education administration, cultural, and environmental factors. Based on the Mann Whitney U analysis, a significant difference in the administrative and cultural scores existed between the males' and female's perceptions, and so the null hypothesis can be rejected in favor of the alternate hypothesis. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between the males' and female's perceptions for the environmental factor, and so the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

Research question three examined if a relationship exists between the age of the stakeholders' perceptions toward the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs and special education administration, cultural, and environmental factors. Based on the Kruskal Wallis analysis, a significant difference was found between the age groups. The results indicated that there were significant differences between the different age groups' perceptions for the environmental and cultural factors, and so the null hypothesis was rejected. The results did not reveal a significant difference between the age groups for the environmental factor, and so the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

Research question four examined if a relationship exists between the different ethnicities' perceptions toward the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs and special education administration, cultural, and environmental factors. The sample included a majority of Black and White participants, with less than 5% of the sample representing other ethnicities. To ensure the equality of representation of all racial groups, only the Black and

White sample was used within the analysis. Based on the Mann Whitney U analysis, a significant difference in the administrative and cultural scores existed between the different ethnicities' perceptions, and so the null hypothesis can be rejected in favor of the alternate hypothesis. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between the different ethnicities' perceptions for the environmental factor, and so the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The overrepresentation and racial imbalance of Black males in special education has been identified as a problem for the professional educator (Dunn, 1968). The student who is identified as a person of color, from a lower socioeconomic class, or is classified as a non-native English speaker has a higher occurrence of being identified as disabled, referred to special education, and segregated into special classes (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Coutinho & Oswald, 1998). The findings of this research support previous studies' findings that there is a disparity between the stakeholders' perceptions of Black males in the education system and how they are referred to special education programs (Chinweizu, 2010; Knaus, 2007; Zionts et al., 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Harry & Anderson, 1994). This section presents the context of the findings, as related to the administrative, cultural, and environmental (ACE) factors that contribute to the placement of the Black males into special education programs.

### **Demographics**

The demographics collected from the participants indicated that the majority of the participants were female and of the Black ethnicity. The majority of the participants had an age range of 41 to 50 years old (43%), followed by 31 to 40 years old (28%). It was noted that most of the participants were from the teaching profession (55%), followed by the parents/guardians of Black males in special education programs (27%). The participants who indicated that they

were classroom teachers had an equal dispersion between the grade levels of ninth through 12th grade, with a range of 32% to 36%. The results showed that significant differences existed for the administrative and cultural factors when applied to the genders of the participants and specific age groups. The results also revealed that female participants had a greater perception of the administrative and cultural variables on the overrepresentation of Black males in special education than did the male sample. The age group of 41–50 years old had the greatest perception of the administrative and cultural variable on the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. This age group was closely followed by the age group of 31–40 years old, with the age groups of 51+ and 21–30 indicating that they did not perceive the administrative and cultural variable as having any impact on the overrepresentation of the Black males in special education.

### **Administrative**

The study found that there is a significant difference between the perceptions of the stakeholders of Black males and the administration of special education referrals, with the parental or guardian group having a greater impact than the educators on the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. A study conducted by Zionts et al. (2003) revealed that the parents of Black males have a general mistrust of special education and the efficacy of meeting the educational needs of the Black male students. Patton and Townsend's (1999) study found that parents and guardians perceived the administration of referring Black males to special education as discriminatory and unjustifiable.

Studies conducted by Smith (2002), McMillian (2003), and Knaus (2007) on the implementation of NCLB and the impact that it has on the academic achievement of Black males showed that the application of the law met the spirit of improving the educational standards for

all students, but failed at resolving the issue of the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. The problem with the implementation of NCLB and its association to the administration of special education can be attributed to the lack of financial resources, meaningful education, and an unbalanced testing program that leads to higher incidences of referrals of Black males to special education (Smith, 2002; McMillian, 2003; Knaus, 2007). In addition to the administrative problems within NCLB, issues surrounding the problems with testing of Black males were emphasized in studies conducted by Ebersole and Knapp (2007) and Ladson-Billings (1995), where they explored the disparity in standardized testing and the cultural variances between White and Black students, which supports the findings of administrative and cultural differences observed in the study and how the application (administrative) and perceptions of the test proctor and test taker often significantly impact the Black male students' ability to successfully navigate the test that perpetuates their advancement into special education referrals.

### **Cultural**

The findings of this study also support previous research that suggests that there is a cultural bias in the referral process that sends Black males into special education programs (Rist, 1970; Aker, 2006; Gravois & Rosefield, 2006). The study found that there was a significant difference between the stakeholders' perceptions of cultural factors in the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. Powers, Hagan-Murillo, and Restori (2004) discovered in their research that the institutional racism that perpetuates the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs is attributable to the legal proscriptions against the literacy of Black students in the United States educational system, which ultimately leads to the advancement of negative attitudes towards the Black students. Romanoff et al. (2009) further



advanced the idea of instructional racism in the education system and that the Black students were viewed as economically impoverished, which contributed to their challenges with emotional disturbances and their eventual placement into special education.

Studies conducted by Acker (2006) and Harris and Mamlin (1998) found that the teachers of Black males developed negative perceptions of the Black male students and that they were more challenging to teach than their White peers. The studies also discovered that the highly qualified teachers believed that they were not qualified to teach the Black males or in schools that had a significant Black population. The lack of confidence displayed by the teachers towards the Black male students impacted the students' confidence level in the classroom and this resulted in lower grades and referrals to special education. In a related study, Rist (1970) found that teachers were grouping students based on their first impression and perceived social class. This grouping of students categorized them into fast learners and slow learners and oftentimes led to the slow learners receiving infrequent support from the teacher and less control of the students' behavior.

### **Environmental**

The increased risk of a student being identified as having a disability can be linked to the socioeconomic status, structure of the family (single-parent household or both parents living at home), and the parents' educational level (Newacheck & Halfon, 1998; Yeargin-Allsopp et al., 1995). The study found that there were no significant differences between the stakeholders when the environmental factor of referring Black males to special education programs was applied. This finding suggested that all stakeholders' (educators, parents/guardians) perceptions did not differ on the environmental impact of the overrepresentation of Black males in special education.

These stakeholders agreed that Black males' environment and how they are perceived within society play significant roles in their educational process.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study contained several limitations that should be noted. The study is specific to the experiences of the participants on their perceptions of Black males and the correlation to their placement in special education programs. As a result of limiting the scope of the study to only Black males, the reproduction of this study for a different demographic population and racial make-up could change the outcome and results of the analysis.

Another limitation of this study is related to its dependence on all participants to answer honestly all the questions in the survey. The study relied on the participants to use sound judgment and base their responses on information that they have either learned from training or as a professional in the special education field. The received responses could have been skewed or inaccurate if the participants based their responses on their personal biases. Additional inaccurate responses could have been based on the participants' selection of one answer for all responses without fully reading all questions, due to their desire to complete the survey quickly.

A third limitation of this study involves the data collection techniques. The study required data collected from the online surveys by the educator sample and by the parent/guardian sample that only provided an email in the school system's database. The parents/guardians without an email were sampled through the use of the mail system. Because of these two different data collection methods, the study could have been delayed by those participants who received the survey through the mail system. If the parents/guardians did not update their email or postal addresses in the school system's database, then the survey could have not have been delivered to the correct participants and could have excluded all participants from participating in the study.

Finally, it should be noted that as a Black male special education teacher, this researcher could interject his personal bias into this study. The injection of this bias could occur during the planning, collection of data, analysis of the data, and final revisions of the study (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010). Understanding this bias and its early identification allows the researcher to critically review all aspects of the study and present unprejudiced results that do not encourage or influence the conclusions of the study.

### **Implications**

This research provides insights into the problem of overrepresentation, as presented from the stakeholders' view and perspective. The research can contribute to the broadening of the knowledge base of school officials, policymakers, and educators as to how cultural differences, potential individual racism, and hidden institutional racist practices lower the normal expectations and facilitate a lack of understanding of the referral process that adds to the problem of overrepresentation. There is evidence within this study that the school systems represented in this study are experiencing cultural and administrative differences that may not be obvious to the education leaders. The highlighted differences can provide insights for addressing these differences through professional development for the educators and cultural sensitivity training and a review of communication practices among all stakeholders of the Black males on the administrative implementation of the referral process to special education.

Educators, parents, and policymakers have the responsibility of ensuring that Black male students are successful in school and are not inadvertently placed in special education programs that lead to their overrepresentation in these programs. Considering the troubling social and economic issues that many Black male youths face, it is no surprise that these issues transcend

into the academic arena and then make any attainment of a significant education difficult or impossible for them to achieve.

In the majority of school districts throughout the United States, Black males are placed in special education programs, suspended, or expelled from school at a higher rate than any other racial group. In the 2000–2001 school year, Black males made up 8.6% of the United States' public school students' population, but in some school districts they accounted for 41% of the special education population (Smith, 2005). The dropout rate of Black male youths in urban school districts has surpassed the 50% mark. The Schott Foundation report on Public Education and Black Males (2008) found that there is a large disparity as to the education that Black males receive, compared to White, non-Hispanic children. It was reported that the New York, Florida, and Georgia public school systems have over one million Black male students, and they are twice as likely to not graduate with their class.

These statistics paint only one side of the problems that the Black males face. The school systems that these students attend are often under-resourced, lack highly qualified teachers and technology, the math and science labs are outdated or insufficient, the curriculum does not teach the students the standards needed for the standardized testing, and lack advanced placement classes for the students to attempt to achieve at higher levels. The teachers that they encounter will often have preconceived perceptions that they are troublemakers and low achievers and therefore have fewer expectations for a positive education. In addition to the barriers that the Black male students encounter with their teachers, the standardized test that they must complete annually to measure their academic performance has allowed them to become academically marginalized. Research has shown that the majority of Black male students do poorly on standardized testing. The standardized test that is administered only measures what is known as

construct validity, which is the measurement of the students' consistency in behaviors on the test and does not fully explain the students' "conglomeration of specifics" of their knowledge (Donnor & Schockley, 2010). This standardized testing often leads to the separation of the Black males from their original classes and places them in classes that receive special education services or additional academic supports based on their performance on the test and not their overall academic performance. The historic 1964 Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. The Board of Education* was intended to end the demoralization of racially segregated education and the eventual equalization of the education for all students regardless of their color. However, it can be argued that after 47 years, many of the same policies and procedures that were used to provide a substandard education to Black children still exist today.

Instructional and curriculum practices, cultural incongruence among the stakeholders of the Black males, and the implementation of educational policies have shaped the issue of the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. To ensure that this problem of overrepresentation is not occurring within a school system, the leaders within the education field must meet the academic and cultural needs of the Black males by ensuring they have adults within the school system as models, which requires that the hiring practices are equally represented and that cultural diversity training is provided during staff development. School officials must ensure that the implementation of policies for the referral process and the implementation of the RtI model are strictly followed and do not target specific populations or groups of individual students. During the pre-referral or advancement through the RtI tiers, school administrators and educators must be aware that the student being identified for issues that hinder the academic performance of that student is not based on the educator's cultural ideology or belief system. The pre-referral process should be effective in identifying the needs

and resources for academic success prior to the placement of the Black males in special education programs.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The following recommendations are based on the findings from this study and are provided for the stakeholders (educators, parents/guardians) who have a direct impact on the referral of Black male students into the special education programs. Based on these findings, analyses, and conclusions of this research, recommendations for further research and for the educators and parents of Black males are provided as practical school-based applications and to promote additional research.

1. A qualitative research study should be conducted to capture the insights and develop the themes of the stakeholders on the issue of the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. This information will be beneficial in determining the true representation of how they perceive the referral process of special education for Black males and provide insights on the differences that exist between the groups of stakeholders.
2. Research should be conducted to identify the communication methods of the special education referral process and the overall special education program that is used among school employees (administrators and teachers) and the parents/guardians of the Black males. Determining the communication process between these two groups can determine if a problem exists in the development of understanding the special education services that are available to Black male students.
3. It is recommended that the study be expanded to multiple school districts in urban and rural areas to determine if there are differences based on the location of the stakeholders,

and then compare the data for the different geographical groups. This can involve an increased sample size, which would provide a different outcome and perspective on the stakeholders on the overrepresentation of Black males in special education.

4. Research should be conducted in multiple school districts on the administration and application of the referral process to special education programs. If differences exist among the school districts, then the school leaders can develop standardized methods of administering special education referrals and provide a better understanding of the professional development for all educators on the application of special education referrals.
5. It is recommended that the research be duplicated and conducted at all levels of secondary education (elementary, middle, and high school) to determine if differences in perceptions exist at the various levels and if there is a transition point in the education system where the stakeholder develops a different perception. This can assist in identifying where a greater emphasis can be placed on the professional development of the educator and advance the educative process of the referral of students to special education for the parents and guardians.
6. An empirical study should be conducted on the administrative practices of special education referrals, based on the cultural differences and behaviors of the Black male within the school community, to determine if there are direct correlations of cultural beliefs and the overrepresentation of Black males in special education. The results of this research can enlighten those within the education community of the perceptions held on the cultural differences between the educators and Black male that can lead to them possibly being placed within the special education population. Consequently, the findings

of this study can influence and shape the personal and professional growth of the educator and be beneficial with the educational development of the Black male.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

The following are recommendations for the stakeholders (educators, parents/guardians) of Black males and are based on the analysis of the research.

#### **Educators**

1. Provide cultural-based training to all staff members who have a direct impact in the referral process for the Black male students. The training should be focused on confronting personal biases and attitudes of the educators that could impact or impede the learning process and the labeling of the Black male students.
2. Improve hiring practices so that they are culturally representative of the student population and follow the changing demographic trends of the community the school system serves. Recruit qualified personnel who understand the cultural differences of the students being served and allow the student to identify with the educators with similar cultural backgrounds.
3. Ensure that the educators are using a culturally relevant curriculum that provides self-awareness, improvement of self-esteem, and the promotion of cultural differences among all ethnicities and genders of the student population.
4. Scrutinize the administrative practices of the referral process to ensure that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the process and legalities associated with the placement of the students in special education programs.
5. Provide information sessions and training to the parents of special education students on the legalities of the special education laws (IDEA) and services that are available during



the pre-referral process and while their student is participating in special education programs.

6. Conduct a comprehensive review of the number of students by ethnicity who are placed in special education programs to determine if there is an overrepresentation of a particular ethnic group in special education.
7. Develop a comprehensive policy for addressing the overrepresentation of Black males in special education.

### **Parents/Guardians**

1. During the implementation of the special education process, the parents/guardians should become active members in the development and understanding of their child's IEP.
2. Actively discuss and understand the interventions used throughout the RtI process to ensure that the school system has employed all available resources prior to placing their child in special education programs.
3. Become an active participant in their child's education and be proactive in ensuring that there is a component of cultural relevancy in the curriculum so that the student can make connections within his/her community.

### **Conclusion**

The intent of the special education programs is to provide students who have a specific need get additional assistance in the school system based on their academic and behavioral performance. It is a service delivery model that should be based on an objective referral, psycho-educational assessment and evaluation, and placement of the student based on his/her eligible disability along with an exit strategy (Blanchett, Brantlinger, & Shealy, 2005). This study revealed that the unintended consequences of not following the spirit and intent of special

education have resulted in the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs. Since the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, school systems throughout the United States have diligently worked hard to remove the stigma of racism from the education system, but the practices to combat this problem have failed to eradicate the widening gap of achievement between White and Black students and ultimately the failure or underachievement of the Black male students and their eventual placement in special education.

The review of the literature revealed that the problem of Black males being overrepresented in special education programs has multiple layers of concern and cannot be solved with one simple answer. There are multiple factors discussed in the literature that contribute to this phenomenon of the overrepresentation of the Black males. These factors include culture and environment, socioeconomic status, teacher and school bias, and racial stereotypes. There have been multiple studies and theories developed that discussed these factors and have attempted to explain the causes for the overrepresentation of the Black males in special education, but the root of the problem has not been identified, nor have any substantive solutions been provided for correcting the problem of improving the academics of Black males and their continuous placement into special education programs. It is imperative to conduct further research that addresses the root causes of this problem, identifies where the point of failure is occurring for placing Black males into special education at a staggering rate within the education system, and ensures that the problem is addressed appropriately for the development of commonality within the referral process to special education programs.

The phenomenon of Black males being placed in special education programs at a staggering rate compared with their peers will not be magically fixed overnight. This problem will require all stakeholders to actively engage in providing a course correction and the

implementation of policies and procedures that correctly identifies and appropriately places all students in an educational setting that meets their needs. This study revealed that the stakeholders' perception of the administrative process and cultural factors for referring Black males into special education are a problem. It is imperative that the school system leaders examine the policies and procedures that are used in guiding and determining the placement or non-placement are thoroughly understood and communicated to all concerned parties within the process. The stakeholders must become an advocate of change and a voice for addressing the necessary changes at this critical stage and ensure that the administrative practices are culturally relevant and based on substantiated research that has been proven to address the academic needs of the Black males.

The most recent 2010 census report revealed that the minority population in the United States is growing at a faster rate than any other population (U.S. Census, 2010). This growth requires that school personnel become sensitive to the cultural differences of all the minority students and develop attitudes that are supportive of the minority students in the general education setting. It is imperative that all educators are representing the needs of the Black male students and developing an internal belief that they are capable of learning, despite their background, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. Patton's (1998) revelations on the misdiagnosis, misplacement, and labeling of the Black male student suggest that "a system needed in special education that nurtures, develops, and allows for the voices of African American knowledge producers to be heard, confirmed and affirmed" (p. 30). Therefore, the voices that speak for the Black males who are being placed in special education should be representative of them to ensure that their best academic interests are being met and not being subjugated into a system that labels them as a failure.

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## APPENDIX A

### The Gresham Survey (Section I)

<p>The following statements relate to your perception of causal factors about the overrepresentation of secondary aged Black males identified as students in Special Education</p> <p><b>To what extent do you agree that the following factors contribute to the overrepresentation of secondary aged Black males identified as students in Special Education?</b></p> <p>Please place an X under the response that best reflects your views</p> <p>(Page 1)</p>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b> (1)	<b>Disagree</b> (2)	<b>Undecided</b> (3)	<b>Agree</b> (4)	<b>Strongly Agree</b> (5)
1. Language barriers between teachers and students					
2. Ineffective behavior management strategies on the part of the general educator referring this student for special education services					
3. Inappropriate teacher training					
4. Subjectivity in the district referral process					
5. The lack of clarity in school guidelines for special education services					
6. Culturally biased assessment instruments					
7. Lack of minorities' involvement in producing special education theory					
8. Lack of minorities' involvement in producing special education laws					
9. Lack of minorities involvement in producing special education regulations					
10. There are more Black males in the high school general education school population					
11. The threat of student aggression					

12. The perception that Black males are low achievers.					
<p>The following statements relate to your perception of causal factors about the overrepresentation of secondary aged Black males identified as students in Special Education</p> <p><b>To what extent do you agree that the following factors contribute to the overrepresentation of secondary aged Black males identified as students in Special Education?</b></p> <p>Please place an X under the response that best reflects your views</p> <p>(Page 2)</p>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Undecided (3)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (5)</b>
13. Teachers' negative preconceptions about the behavior of Black males					
14. Ethic differences between teachers and students					
15. Cultural beliefs and/or differences between teachers and students (e.g. heritage, religion, socio-economic status SES)					
16. Cultural beliefs and /or difference between students and their peers					
17. Certain biases (e.g. racial prejudice) on the part of the general educator					
18. Certain biases (e.g. racial prejudice) on the part of the student					
19. Certain biases (e.g. racial prejudice) on the part of the student's families					
20. Students' style of dress					
21. Students' hairstyles					
22. Students' walking styles					
23. Students' use of culturally different speech patterns or Slang					
24. Hereditary factors (e.g. pre-natal exposure to drugs, biological transmission of mental illness etc.)					

25. Environmental factors (e.g. exposure to drugs and violence)					
<p>The following statements relate to your perception of causal factors about the overrepresentation of secondary aged Black males identified as students in Special Education</p> <p><b>To what extent do you agree that the following factors contribute to the overrepresentation of secondary aged Black males identified as students in Special Education?</b></p> <p>Please place an X under the response that best reflects your views</p> <p>(Page 3)</p>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Undecided (3)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (5)</b>
26. Being raised by a single parent (mother)					
27. Being raised by a single parent (father)					
28. Being raised by two biological parents					
29. Being raised by adopted parents					
30. Being raised by foster parents					
31. Being raised by extended family (e.g. aunt, uncle, grandparent)					
32. Being raised by legally separated or divorced Parents					
33. Being raised by economically wealthy parents or guardians					
34. Being raised by economically poor parents or guardians					

## The Gresham Survey (Section II-Demographics)

1. What is your gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
2. What is your ethnicity?
  - a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
  - b. Asian or Pacific Islander
  - c. Black, not of Hispanic origin
  - d. Hispanic
  - e. White, not of Hispanic origin
  - f. Other
  
3. What is your age level?
  - a. 21-30
  - b. 31-40
  - c. 41-50
  - d. 51-60
  - e. 61+
  
4. Please chose your status
  - a. Classroom Teacher
  - b. School Administrator
  - c. Parent of a Black male in Special Education
  - d. Guardian of a Black male in Special Education (Aunt, Uncle, Grandparent, Sibling, Foster parent, etc...)
  - e. Parent and classroom teacher of a Black male in Special Education
  
5. What is the highest degree you have earned?
  - a. Bachelor's Degree
  - b. Master's Degree or graduate degree
  - c. Doctoral or post –graduate degree
  - d. Associate's Degree
  - e. High School Diploma
  - f. Less than High School
  
6. Do you currently have an active teaching certificate in the state of Georgia?
  - a. yes
  - b. no
  
7. Which grade level(s) do you teach?
  - a. 9<sup>th</sup> grade
  - b. 10<sup>th</sup> grade
  - c. 11<sup>th</sup> grade
  - d. 12<sup>th</sup> grade
  
8. How many years have you been a teacher?
  - a. Less than one year
  - b. 1-3 years
  - c. 4-6 years
  - d. 7 years or above

9. How many years have you been teaching in this particular school system?

- a. Less than one year
- b. 1-3 years
- c. 4-6 years
- d. 7 years or above

**Comments (Section III)**

Please provide any additional information regarding your opinion, beliefs or additional information that you may have on the referral of Black males into special education programs. Please do not include the names or address of any parents, students, the school that the child/student is attending or have previously attended, or **“any identifying information”** of the parents, students or school(s).

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**Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey.**

## APPENDIX B

### Recruitment Letter to Participate in Study

Date:

[Recipient]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in education leadership, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to first read and sign the consent form to acknowledge your participation in the study. Then you will complete the survey that has been emailed or mailed to you in this packet. Once you have completed the survey, you will be expected to return the completed survey and the consent form. It should take approximately 20 minutes for you to complete the procedures listed. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be required.

To participate, go to [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and click on the link for the survey that is provided or complete the attached survey from the packet that was mailed.

An informed consent document is attached to this letter or will be emailed to you at the time of the conduction of this study. If you are completing the paper format of the survey, please sign the informed consent document and return it to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope. If completing the survey online, please click on the survey link at the end of the informed consent document to indicate that you have read it and would like to take part in the survey.

If you choose to participate, you will receive the opportunity to be entered in a raffle to receive one of six \$25.00 gift certificates.

Sincerely,

Malik Douglas  
Primary Investigator

## **APPENDIX C**

### **CONSENT FORM**

Stakeholder Perceptions of the Special Education Referral Process for Black Males Based on ACE:  
Administration, Culture and Environment  
Principal Investigator: Malik Douglas  
Liberty University  
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of the perceptions of stakeholders on the referral process of Black males to special education programs. You were selected as a possible participant because you are either a parent/guardian of a Black male that is receiving special education services or an educator of a Black male in special education programs. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Malik Douglas, School of Education.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to determine the knowledge and perceptions the stakeholders (parents/guardians, and educators) have towards special education referrals of Black male students due to academic reasons. The information you are asked to give in this questionnaire will yield beneficial results that can be used to improve the education system.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: First you will be asked to read this form to acknowledge your participation in the study. Then you will complete the survey that has been either emailed or mailed to you in this packet. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. If you completed the paper copy survey, you will be expected to return the completed survey in the postage provided envelop. Participants that complete the survey online, can keep a copy of this consent form for their records.

#### **Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:**

The risks involved by participating in this study are minimal to non-existent, the risks are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life. You may experience a minor amount of tension while completing the surveys, but the tension will not be life threatening or place you in any danger.

Participating in this study provides no direct benefits. Your responses will provide more information about Black male students' in special education programs, which will allow the identification of resources that can assist in increasing the African American male's academic resilience and performance in school.

#### **Compensation:**

You will receive the opportunity to be included in a random drawing at the conclusion of the study for a chance to win one of three (6) \$25.00 gift certificates.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

If you decide to be a participant in this study, your confidentiality will be maintained at all times. No identifying information will be collected or linked to the participant. The results of this study will only be reported in aggregate form. During the study, the data will be kept in a locked file cabinet at the home of the researcher, and all data will be destroyed three (3) years after the completion of this study.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Henry County School System. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Malik Douglas. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [mdouglas5@liberty.edu](mailto:mdouglas5@liberty.edu) or 678-858-9826 or contact Dr. Beth Ackerman (Faculty Research Chair) at [mackerman@liberty.edu](mailto:mackerman@liberty.edu) or 434-582-2445.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

**IRB Code Numbers:****IRB Expiration Date:**



APPENDIX D

**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 26, 2013

Malik Douglas

IRB Exemption 1706.112613: Stakeholder Perceptions of the Special Education Referral Process for Black Males Based on ACE: Administration, Culture, and Environment

Dear Malik,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**Fernando Garzon,**  
**Psy.D. Professor, IRB**  
**Chair Counseling**

**(434) 592-4054**



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## APPENDIX E

From: Doran Gresham <dvgresham@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, May 23, 2014 3:30 AM

To: Malik Douglas

Subject: Re: Dr. Malik Douglas

Kudos!

Sounds good to me as long as the name remains the same. Send me a copy of your abstract and any articles that you produce over time.

Glad to help.

On Thu, May 22, 2014 at 10:08 AM, Malik Douglas <malikdouglas@hotmail.com> wrote:

Hello Dr. Gresham,

I successfully defended my dissertation yesterday and earned the title of Doctor. Thank you for allowing me to use your survey in the collection of my data. The question came up on permission to use and publishing the survey and I wanted to confirm with you on if I can publish your survey in my study?

Thanks again

Dr. Douglas

## APPENDIX F

From: Albert Pat Blenke <ABlenke@doe.k12.ga.us>  
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2014 1:01 PM  
To: Douglas, Malik  
Subject: RE: Response to Intervention POI

Yes, you may use it as long as you cite the Georgia Department of Education as the owner of this property right.

Albert Patrick Blenke  
Program Manager  
Department of Education  
1754 Twin Towers East  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Dr. SE  
Atlanta, Ga. 30334  
ablenke@doe.k12.ga.us  
404 463-1765

“Making Education work for all Georgians”

From: Douglas, Malik [mailto:mdouglas5@liberty.edu]  
Sent: Monday, June 02, 2014 12:23 PM  
To: Albert Pat Blenke  
Subject: Response to Intervention POI

Good afternoon Mr. Blenke,

I'm in the final process of publishing my dissertation and I am also a teacher in Henry County. I referenced the Response to Intervention POI that was published in 2011 in my dissertation and prior to publishing I will need to obtain permission to use. I found that you were the project manager for the publication and I was wondering if the request to use needed to be forwarded to you. If you are the correct person, I would like to request your permission to use the POI within my dissertation and publish it.

Thank you for any assistance that you can provide.

## APPENDIX G

From: Rachel James <RJJames@epe.org>  
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2014 4:08 PM  
To: Douglas, Malik  
Cc: Holly Peele  
Subject: Reprint Permission

Thank you for your interest in Education Week and for contacting the library. You have our permission to use the graphics "Disability Rates by Race and Ethnicity (Fall 2006)" and "Disability Rates for Race-by-Gender Categories (2006)" from Special Education in America in your dissertation. Please be sure to include the source of the data used in the graphics as well as the following attribution for both of them:

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Please let us know if you need us to send the graphic to you as a jpg, and feel free to contact me with any other questions.

Best,  
Rachel James  
Library Intern  
Editorial Projects in Education  
6935 Arlington Road, Bethesda, MD 20814  
Phone: (301) 280-3100  
Email: rjames@epe.org

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## APPENDIX H

# RightsLink



### Permissions Request Requires Your Acceptance

Dear Dr. Malik Douglas,

Thank you for your recent permission request, which was reviewed and approved by Assn for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Prior to reusing this content, you must accept the license fee and terms.

**To accept or decline this order, please click the link below to open RightsLink.**

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