Abstract

THE ROLE OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

ON SPECIAL EDUCATION REFERRAL

by

Shomara Yolanda Reyes

August, 2009

Chair: Michael Brown, Ph.D.

Major Department: Psychology

African American students continue to be overrepresented in classes for students with high incidence handicaps. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of cultural competence on pre-service teachers' decisions to make a special education referral. Two hundred twenty-six pre-service teachers completed a cultural competence survey and an analogue case study. Participants were given the option to make no referral of the student in the case study, make a referral for academic problems, behavior concerns, or for both. There was no significant difference in the overall rate of referral across the participant group. Participants with lower levels of cultural competence, however, were more likely to make a referral for behavioral concerns and were more likely to refer the African American student for behavioral concerns. The participants with lower levels of cultural competence may not accurately assess the severity of behavior issues exhibited by students from different cultural backgrounds. This may account for the higher rate of referral of the African American student for behavioral concerns.

Cultural competence is increasingly more important as the students of the United States become more racially and ethnically diverse. Helping teachers to increase their level of cultural competence may assist teachers in providing more effective instruction in the general education

classroom. This may also reduce the number of referrals of African American students for special education and thereby reduce the overrepresentation of African Americans in special education classes.

THE EFFECT OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

ON SPECIAL EDUCATION REFERRAL

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of Psychology

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Psychology

by

Shomara Yolanda Reyes

August 2009

THE EFFECT OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

ON SPECIAL EDUCATION REFERRAL

by

Shomara Yolanda Reyes

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF THESIS: _____
Michael Brown, Ph.D.

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____
Larry Bolen, Ed.D.

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____
Laura Anderson, Ph.D.

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

_____
Kathleen Rowe, Ph.D.

INTERIM DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES

_____
Paul Gemperline, Ph.D.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Brown, my thesis director for his guidance and support. In

addition, I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Bolen and Dr. Anderson for

their suggestions and assistance with my research. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr.

D'Andrea for developing a great instrument to measure cultural competence. It is my

hope that this study would help to expand research in education.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Equity in education has become increasingly important within the United States. Racially and ethnically diverse learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are overrepresented in special education categories at rates significantly higher than those of Caucasian students (Trent, Rea, & Oh, 2008). This disproportionality can be attributed to many variables: inconsistent identification processes, instrumentation bias, or socioeconomic variables. However, an increasingly common variable is cultural difference (Hosp & Reschly, 2003). The state of education has changed significantly with the re-enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (No Child Left Behind). This legislation seeks to "provide all children with a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a quality education" (No Child Left Behind, 2001, p. 3). Accountability, research-based education, flexibility, and parent options are the tools used by this legislation to address the racial achievement disparities and disproportionality (Cartledge, Singh, & Gibson, 2008).

Student learning is contingent on a teacher's ability to create and sustain optimal learning environments (Brown, 2003). Teachers are charged with the responsibility to work with students in the classroom for long periods and promote student learning regardless of potential difficulties such as poverty, an educational or emotional/behavioral disability, physical disabilities, a dysfunctional home, or an abusive environment (Habersham, 1995). This is a unique challenge for many teachers in the United States, since the student demographic in classrooms is not directly representative of the teacher demographic in some areas of the country (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). Eighty-three percent of the teachers in the United States are White, Non-Latino, middle-class,

women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). The student population, however, has become increasingly racially and ethnically diverse (Cartledge, Singh, & Gibson, 2008). This is particularly so within urban and some rural centers of the country.

Disproportionality in Special Education

The disproportionate representation of racially and ethnically diverse students in special and gifted education programs is among the most critical issues in education today. Disporportionality is the representation of a group in a category that exceeds the expected placement rate, which differs substantially from the representation of others in that category (Skiba et al., 2008). The representation within a category can be relative to the proportion of the group population or rate at which the group is found eligible for services when compared to other groups (Cutinho & Oswald, 2000). The disproportionate representation of minority students in special education has been a constant concern for nearly four decades (Hosp & Reschly, 2004).

Racially and ethnically diverse learners are less likely to be enrolled in programs for gifted students and more often placed on remedial education tracks, and more likely to be assessed as intellectually or learning disabled (Fletcher & Naverette, 2003). For example, African American students are overrepresented in the learning disabled (LD), intellectually disabled (ID), and emotionally disabled (ED) categories, while being underrepresented in the gifted and talented category (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). Though this problem has been consistently documented, there has not been a clear picture of the causes of this phenomenon and the complexity of the issue is not yet understood. However, one thought on the overrepresentation of African Americans and other minorities in special education, is that disproportionality may be the systematic responses

of educators who mistake cultural differences for cognitive or behavioral disabilities (Trent, Kea, & Oh, 2008).

African Americans and Special Education

African Americans are referred and placed for special education services more than any other ethnic group (Blanchett, 2006). The Department of Education concluded that the proportion of African Americans in special education programs was larger than their representation in the general school population, which has remained consistent from 1992-2000 (Artiles & Trent, 2002). There has been no evidence that African American families are, on average, more dysfunctional than other families (Skiba et al., 2008). Nor has it been shown that African American children are more unruly, defiant, aggressive, or conduct disordered than their Caucasian counterparts (Low & Clement, 1982). Some have attributed poor academic achievement of African American students to characteristics such as race and dialect, which may bias teachers' ratings and expectations of future performance (DeMeis & Turner, 1978).

Although there are many sociopolitical factors that can attribute to lower achievement within this group, there is some evidence of differential treatment of African American students in instructional practices, administration of corporal punishment, and referral for special education programs (Chang & Sue, 2003). The differential treatment may link back to the tolerance level a teacher has for a student's behavior. If teacher tolerance potentially leads to differential treatment, are African American students disproportionately placed in special education because of ethnic biases, or are they referred because their classroom behavior is less adaptive than their counterparts (Low & Clement, 1982)?

Classroom Behavior

Academic achievement is one of the most important predictors of identification for special education services (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). Failure to meet academic expectations within the classroom may prompt a teacher to make a referral for special education. Teachers who perceived their student's behavior as problematic reported a higher likelihood of referring the student for special education (Abidin & Robinson, 2002). Once a child is referred for a psychoeducational evaluation, the probability is very high that he or she will be placed within the special education continuum (Harrington & Gibson, 1986; Hosterman, DuPaul, & Jitendra, 2008).

Problematic behaviors can be described as aggressive, non-compliant behaviors that disrupt the classroom routine (Drame, 2002). The problem with this perception is the amount of variance in the teacher tolerance of these types of behaviors (Shinn, Tindal, & Spira, 1987). Different teachers place different demands on different students. These demands depend on the teachers' own behavior standards, expectations, and the degree to which they are willing to accept these types of behaviors (Shinn, Tindal, & Spira). This variance has lead to inconsistent identification processes that may be a factor in the overrepresentation of minorities, particularly African Americans in special education.

Referral Decisions

Teacher decision making is pivotal in determining special education placement (Gartner, 1986). When asked what outcome they expected from the referral, a majority of teachers stated that they expected the student to be tested and placed into special education (Ysseldyke, Christenson, Pianta, & Algozzine, 1983). The decision to refer may be complex, but it is widely accepted that intuitive theories and beliefs play a

significant role in the decision making process (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Several models propose that teacher efficacy is an important factor in this decision making process, rooted in the belief that teachers make referrals because they believe they cannot teach the difficult-to-teach student (Soodak & Podell, 1993). While other models have found that teacher beliefs about classroom management, student motivation, and control, affect this sense of efficacy and are important variables in the decision making process (Soodak & Podell). These beliefs about management, motivation, and control can vary from teacher to teacher and lend themselves to some of subjectivity within the referral process.

Investigators have suggested that disproportionality in special education can be linked to poverty, discrimination or cultural bias in the referral and assessment process, unique factors related directly to ethnicity, or school-based factors (Serwatka, Deering, & Grant, 1995). There may be an interaction of these factors can be linked to student characteristics, teacher capabilities and attitudes, and unanalyzed sources of structural inequity and racial stereotype (Skiba et al., 2008). It is proposed that interpersonal misunderstandings occur when the cultural backgrounds of teachers and students are incongruent, which may lead to the increased rate of referral (Artiles, Harry, Reschly, & Chinn, 2002). The factor closely linked to referral decisions influenced by cultural or ethnic factors are observations based on subjective information drawn from values, beliefs, and customs rooted in poor cultural understanding of another ethnic group (Artiles, Harry, Reschly, & Chinn).

Cultural Competence

A teacher must have an appreciation of the cultural, linguistic, and social characteristics of his/her students (Brown, 2007). Teachers can create a learning

environment where African-American students are afforded the best opportunities to learn by utilizing three dimensions within a cultural framework: academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness (Barnes, 2006). A person is considered culturally competent when they possesses the cultural knowledge and skills of a particular culture necessary to deliver effective interventions to members of that culture (Whaley & Davis, 2007). A culturally competent teacher would seek to ensure all students are successful in school and within society, regardless racial or ethnic background. Obtaining a level of cultural competence can increase the teacher's knowledge of his or her students and their culture, ultimately increasing the learning processes for racially and ethnically diverse learners.

Teachers come to the classroom with their own cultural perspectives, hopes, values, stereotypes, prejudices, and misconceptions (O'Hair & Odell, 1993). It is recommended that educators examine their own backgrounds and experiences to determine the values and attitudes they bring to the classroom (O'Hair & Odell). This is especially important because these assumptions can affect how teachers will see their students and their families (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Teachers with inaccurate self-perception could continue perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices within the classroom. Research has shown that the act of trying not to think in stereotypical terms may actually increase stereotype activation (Hogg & Cooper, 2003). One solution is to provide teachers with adequate resources, information, and motivation, so that a person may be able to focus their attention away from solely using stereotypical information (Hogg & Cooper).

Between 1970 and 1987 the National Council for Accreditation for Teacher

Education (NCATE) revised their accreditation standards for teacher education programs

to require all member teacher-education institutions to implement components, courses,

and programs in multicultural education (Banks, 1997). Multicultural education is a

systematic process of learning involving politics, society, and education which moves

beyond curriculum reform, but also includes content about ethnic groups, women, and

other cultural groups (Brown, 2004). Although the criteria may vary from state to state,

each state's Department of Public Instruction decides which coursework in multicultural

education is a requirement for teacher credentialing (Keim, Warring, & Rau, 2001).

These requirements were established to address the growth of culturally and linguistically

diverse learners in schools, and the limited expansion of the teacher demographic to

reflect this new student population.

The systematic process of multicultural education (i.e. becoming a multicultural

person) requires reflection, reconstruction, and response (Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark,

2007). These components assist teachers in developing new competencies of perceiving,

evaluating, believing, and doing in multiple ways (Banks, 1988). Teachers tend to assume

their own intellectual, social, family and moral life to be the norm and that their task as

teachers is to socialize the next generation of children to the same norms (Aaronsohn,

Carter, & Howell, 1995). Teachers, including pre-service teachers, routinely display

biased behaviors and attitudes in their field placements (Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark).

Multicultural education for teachers may be necessary due to the cultural mismatches

between the student and the teacher. The challenge faced by many teacher education

programs is to facilitate this process for students with a small base of knowledge relative

to their own and other cultural histories and values systems (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Multicultural education programs have become imperative because in order to be effective, teachers must possess the skills to provide a classroom environment that addresses student needs, validates diverse cultures, and advocates for equitable educational opportunities (Gay, 2000).

The methods with which teacher education programs seek to promote pre-service teachers' cultural competence vary across programs. Service learning and clinical practica experiences are important educational practices (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007). Both of these opportunities provide invaluable learning and training opportunities to promote the understanding of students from diverse socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. Service learning experiences allow for authentic community or school-based experiences, while clinical practica experiences expose the pre-service teacher to the school setting within a more controlled environment.

Statement of the Problem

Approximately 40% of the United States school population is composed of African American, Asian American, Native American, or Hispanic American students. The ethnic composition of the teaching population stands in direct contrast, composed of less than 20% of teachers from a racially and ethnically diverse background (Groulx, 2001). Cultural competence can enable teachers to become effective vehicles of change for racially and ethnically diverse students in the classroom (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). How does a teacher's current level of cultural competence interact with important decisions made in the classroom when culturally responsive teaching strategies are not in place? Does the interaction of cultural competence between teachers and African

American students differ from the interaction of cultural competence between teachers and Caucasian students in the classroom? One proposed reason for disporportionality is a cultural mismatch between teachers and racially and ethnically diverse students, particularly African American students.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of pre-service teachers' cultural competence on referral decisions for special education services. The research questions examined by this study are:

1) Does cultural competence influence the decision to make a referral for special education services overall?

2) Does cultural competence influence the frequency of academic and behavioral referrals for special education services?

3) Does cultural competence influence the referral rates of African American students referred for special education services?

The hypotheses stated in the form of the null hypothesis are as follows:

1) There is no difference between the pre-service teachers' cultural competency scores and overall decision to make referral decisions.

2) There is no difference in the frequencies between academic or behavioral referrals for special education based on cultural competence.

3) There is no difference in the frequency of referrals between African American students and Caucasian students based on the teacher's level of cultural competence.

The results of this study will increase our understanding of influence of a teacher's level of cultural competence and the decision to refer for special education services. Cultural competence is an essential component in reaching the goal of No Child Left Behind, to provide an equitable education for all students.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Achieving equity in public education for disadvantaged learners has been an important objective of educational legislation in the United States. Equity includes but is not limited to the following ideals: Eliminating discrimination in schools, achievement for all students, recognizing the diversity of all students, as well as meeting the needs of students through the equal distribution of resources (Equity and Civil Rights, n.d.). During the 1970s, child advocates called our attention to the fact that there was an on-going issue of disproportionate numbers of minority students, notably African Americans, in special education. The controversy surrounding ethnic minorities in special education has been a long-standing, complex, and reoccurring issue for almost four decades (Hosp & Reschly, 2004).

Disproportionality in Special Education

The term disproportionality is commonly used to describe the overrepresentation of certain populations, particularly minority students, qualified and placed in special education services when compared to other ethnic groups (MacMillian & Reschley, 1998). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) mandates that students with disabilities be served in the least restrictive environment necessary to address their educational needs (Skiba, et al., 2006). Data has continually shown, however, that disparities in identification and placement in special education continue to occur despite the protections afforded by IDEIA. This issue has been the focus of many federal agencies, including the Office of Civil Rights and the Office of Special Education Programs (Hernandez, Ramanathan, Harr, & Socias, 2008). Though the patterns of disproportionality vary between and within states, ethnic minority students are

more likely to identified and placed in special education categories than their Caucasian counterparts (Sullivan, et al., 2005).

There are many different approaches to describe and interpret the ethnic variation in special education. However, these different approaches have resulted in conflicting information that is often difficult to interpret, leaving the data underutilized for research. (Coutinho & Oswald, 2000). The two most common approaches to measure disproportionality are the composition index, which assesses the extent a group is over- or underrepresented in a category compared to its proportion in the broader population (Skiba, et al., 2008) and the risk ratio method, which assesses the extent to which a group is found eligible for services at a rate different from other groups (Coutinho & Oswald).

The composition index examines the global population and compares the percentage of representation of a particular group within a special education category. This measure relies on the comparison of percentages to describe overrepresentation, but researchers have found this approach is both confusing and arbitrary (Coutinho & Oswals, 2000). In school districts where the population may have a higher number of minority students, this method in calculating the overrepresentation of a particular group may be misleading, allowing the overrepresentation numbers to exceed 100%. Although this method is easy to use, this was not the measure of disproportionality recommended by U.S. Department of Education (Skiba, et al., 2008).

The Office of Special Education programs recommended the risk-ratio method to measure disproportionality (Skiba, et al., 2008). The risk-ratio method measures the rate at which a particular group is at risk for being identified for a particular disability category. For example, one study has shown that African American students are 2.88

times more likely than Caucasians to be labeled as intellectually disabled (ID) and 1.92 times more likely to be identified as emotionally disabled (ED) (Skiba, et al., 2006). With provided instructions of how use this method to calculate for large and small populations, this measure has provided more accurate picture of disproportionality (Skiba, et al., 2008).

Factors influencing disproportionality include student/family socioeconomic status, teacher bias, assessment measures, and ethnic background (Artiles & Bal, 2008; Artiles & Trent, 1994; Sullivan, et al., 2009). There has been substantial research and conversation surrounding this phenomenon, however, no data clearly supports the influence of one factor over another. The issue of disproportionality continues to exist without a clear cause or solution (Artiles & Trent).

African American Students and Special Education

Special education has continued to be segregated along racial lines, particularly for African American students (Artiles, 2003). African American students continue to be overrepresented in certain special education disability categories, with particularly high rates of disproportionality within the categories of intellectual, emotional, and specific learning disabilities (Artiles, et al., 2002; Jordan, 2005). The cause of overrepresentation for African American students, similarly to overall disproportionality is unknown, but African American students are more often inappropriately referred and placed in special education (Patton). Even when African-American students are placed in special education to address their educational needs, they continue to have less access and equity while in special education, due to segregated education placements, or limited access to resources in the general education classroom (Blanchett, 2006). The overrepresentation of minority

students has serious and negative implications because of labeling, which is the placement of students into special education categories (Patton, 1998).

Minority students placed in special education are usually placed into more stigmatizing disability categories, for example, intellectual disability-mild or emotional disability (Soodak & Podell, 1993). These categories have a level of subjectivity and placement into these judgmental categories can deny students a higher quality of life (Artiles, et al., 2002), especially when there is data that questions the efficacy of special education (Soodak & Podell). The educational outcomes for African American students in special education include higher dropout rates, lower rates of academic performance, as well as less preparation for the workforce, and high unemployment rates (Blanchett, 2006). These outcomes may be due to missed opportunities in general education (Patton, 1998) and lack of access to peers without disabilities (Blanchett). This is problematic since African American students have a higher likelihood of inappropriate identification and placement into special education.

Variables Influencing Special Education Referral

Teachers' perceptions of student behaviors influence a teacher's decision to refer for special education. Examining teacher judgment is critical, since most referrals lead to eventual placement in special education (Feinberg & Shapiro, 2009). Teacher perceptions are a common source of information used to form impressions about students. However, there is concern that these perceptions and impressions are becoming the primary source of data in the referral decision-making process (Rong, 1996), increasing the likelihood of bias within the referral process.

Teacher Impressions and Perceptions. There has been some discussion around whether cultural differences between teachers and students are contributing to the overrepresentation of certain groups in special education (Rong, 1996). Teachers initiate the vast majority of referrals to special education, and since most of the referrals result in eventual placement, it is important to examine this stage of the referral process (Podell & Soodak, 1993). The teacher determines if a student's performance and/or behaviors are chronic or severe when compared to other students in the classroom (O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006). Teacher's perceptions about the student may bias their observations, potentially contributing to inappropriate referrals to special education (Podell & Soodak). These perceptions of a student's academic performance, social behaviors, or abilities often predict the future behavior and achievement of that student either through special education placement or by setting expectations of future student performances (Rong).

The ethnic backgrounds of teachers in the United States are not representative of the ethnic backgrounds of students in the public school classroom. Eighty-three percent of the teachers in the United States are classified as White, Non-Hispanic (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006), while ethnic minority students comprise approximately 40% of the student population in public schools (Zygmut-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007). Teaching practices often reflect teachers' beliefs, which typically reflect their own experiences (Burstein & Cabello, 1989). With the majority of teachers having a distinctly different cultural background than the students, this has become increasingly problematic in the classroom.

Pre-service teachers are entering classrooms with increased knowledge about diversity, but continue to display low levels of cultural competence (Colombo, 2007).

The low levels of cultural competence can be attributed to the lack of interaction these teachers may have with students from diverse backgrounds. As a result, their lack of understanding of diversity and how it interacts with their students, result in cultural and racial mismatches between student and teacher (Milner, et al., 2003). These mismatches between students and teachers are reflected in the teachers' beliefs about good work habits, compliance, motivation, classroom behavior, and academic performance (Drame, 2002). These beliefs are often shaped by the teacher's cultural history and value systems (Cockrell et al., 1999). In order to educate racially and ethnically diverse students, it is important to understand one's own cultural self in order to recognize and understand the culture of others (Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007).

Behavior. Student behavior is a common source of information that teachers use to make referral decisions is student behavior. There is a relationship between teachers' social expectations and a student's social behavior in school (Rong, 1996). Teachers are more likely to refer a student with externalizing problems than internalizing problems (Abidin & Robinson, 2002). Externalizing behaviors include aggression, hyperactive, non-compliant, or argumentative types of behaviors. Boys are more likely than girls to be referred for these types of behaviors, with African American boys experiencing the highest rate of referral (Drame, 2002). Usually misbehavior is not a sole reason for referral, but highly aggressive, non-compliant behaviors often trigger or expedite the referral process (Drame). Considering this fact, a student may not have a history of misbehavior but if the behavior is considered severe or occurring frequently enough by teacher standards, these behaviors can become the causative factor for referral (Gottlieb & Weinberg, 1999). A teacher's belief about student behavior may bias a teacher's

decision, contributing to the inappropriate referrals of students for special education (Podell & Soodak, 1993).

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is the thinking that people use to explain events happening around them when they lack specific information about the events (Dobbs & Arnold, 2009). The key distinction of the theory is peoples' understanding of whether outcomes are caused by internal attributions (individual characteristics) or external attributions (situational circumstances). Some research has shown that attributions of group members are often ethnocentric, favoring members within the group than persons outside of group (Hewstone, 1990).

If the ethnic background of student and teacher are the same then there may be a greater level of understanding about a behavior because the attributions are from an ethnocentric (within group) perspective. However, if the ethnic background of the teacher and student differ, then the attributions, a teacher may have about the student trend toward overestimating personal factors and underestimating situational factors (Hewstone, 1990). Simply stated, teachers may believe that a student is lazy or does not care about their education, as opposed to believing that the student has poor resources or support at home which prevent the student from achieving in the classroom. This overestimation or underestimation of factors affecting children may lead to an increased number of referrals and eventual placements into special education for minority students, particularly African American students. Addressing the attributions of teachers is particularly important since there is evidence that within group attributions are able to explain the successes and failures of other within group members (Hewstone). The

opposite is true for out of group members, within group attributions do not translate to out of group members. With backgrounds of the student population in direct contrast of the teaching population, it is important to understand a teacher's attributions and the interplay on referral rates of ethnic minorities.

Cultural Competence

Culture is a shared and negotiated system of meaning informed by knowledge that is learned and implemented by interpreting experience and generating behavior (Lassiter, 2002). Educators have tried to create a match between students' home culture and the culture of the school (Brown, 2007). The use of students' cultural orientation to design culturally compatible environments is believed to help provide students with multiple opportunities to display learning and success in the classroom (Habersham, 1995). These environments will also provide skills and knowledge that enable students to function within the dominate culture while maintaining their cultural identity, native language, and connection to their cultures. This new environment created from the cultural perspective of the students will further promote equitable and culturally sensitive instructional practices (Siwatu, 2006).

In order to facilitate the transformation of knowledge and increase cultural awareness, teacher education programs have increased their interest in building cultural competence in teacher trainees. Studies have continued to show that there is a lack of diversity among pre-service teachers (Rao, 2005). The lack of diversity is not only in the actual demographic but also in the extent of the teaching training programs are providing multicultural education. There is a documented discontinuity backgrounds of teachers

and students, which has propelled several important reforms in the field of teacher education (Artiles, 1994).

Previous research has found that pre-service teachers enter and exit cultural diversity courses unchanged, often reinforcing their perceptions of self and others in the process (Brown, 2004). One thought for this lack of change can be attributed to the pre-service teachers' resentment or resistance to multicultural doctrine, instruction, application, and interaction (Brown). This resentment is attributed to prejudices and usually established in childhood (Allport, 1979). Multicultural teacher training programs that examine self-concept, perception, and motivation have usually generated more receptive attitudes (Brown). As efforts to prepare pre-service teachers to become more culturally competent are employing the practices of culturally responsive teaching, it is becoming increasingly important that teacher training programs use the correct methods to prepare tomorrow's teaching staff for the classroom's diversity.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

Participants

The participants for this study were recruited from upper division undergraduate teacher preparation courses at a large southeastern university.

Instrumentation

The materials used for this study included the Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge-Skills Survey-Teacher edition (MAKSS-T), a case study, a demographic information sheet, a referral questionnaire, and consent form.

Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge-Skills Survey (MAKSS-T). The Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge-Skills Survey, Teacher Edition (MAKSS-T) was created to assess the level of cultural competence in teaching. The MAKSS-T survey consists of 20 items measuring the multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills of teachers. Multicultural awareness is the individuals' perceptions of reality, and the "facts" learned through the media, education system, family, and other sources of information. This information may be limited in depth or incorrect. While multicultural knowledge is the culturally acquired knowledge of recent multicultural research literature on culturally and linguistically diverse students (Martines, 2005). Lastly, multicultural skills are the skills necessary to bring cultural knowledge into the problem solving process (Martines).

The measure has been shown to be a reliable and valid measure for measuring cultural competence for teachers. To test the construct validity of the MAKSS-T a principal axis extraction and varimax rotation or the participants' responses from of 60 survey items used and generated a three-factor model that constituted 62% of the variance (D'Andrea, Daniels, & Noonan, 2003). The 20-survey items loaded at .30 or

higher were included in the final survey form. A Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the skills subset. The reliability coefficient of the entire scale is .93.

Demographic profile questionnaire. A demographic profile was used to collect information about the participants. Ethnic and racial background, gender, age, and annual family income are included in this questionnaire. Participants indicated if they are from a rural, suburban, or urban area, area of teaching (primary, secondary, or special education), and grade level the participants would be working with following graduation (elementary, middle or high school).

Consent Form. The consent form provided information about the study and the conditions of the study, and to obtain their consent for participation in this research.

Case Study. A case study was provided to all of the participants. The case provides general background information about a student who is having some academic and behavioral difficulties in his class. The cases were identical with the exception of the child's ethnicity.

Referral Questionnaire. The referral questionnaire was provided to participants to gather whether the participant would make a special education referral for academic and/or behavioral concerns of the case study.

Procedure

Participants were asked to participate in the study during a mandatory senior seminar for graduating education majors. Their participation in the study was optional. Once the consent forms were distributed and signed the primary investigator explained the instructions for completing the survey and the information needed from the case

study. The MAKSS-T survey of 20 items was administered to the group along with a case study and a special education referral question. Participants randomly received a case where the ethnicity of the child was either Caucasian or African American. One half of the participants received a case with an African American child and the other half of the participants received a case with a Caucasian child. The cases were identical with the exception of the child's ethnicity.

At the end of the case study the participants were asked to decide whether they would make a special education referral based on the information presented in the case. Demographic information was collected and provided descriptive information about the participants in the study. The surveys and referral questionnaires were counterbalanced to ensure that there was no interaction between the order in which the survey and referral questionnaire was presented to the participants. Privacy and anonymity of the participants was protected since all participants were assigned numbers on all materials and the consent form was collected separately from the survey materials.

Data Analysis

The materials were scored using the scoring system provided by the developer. The corresponding responses of whether the student teacher would make a special education referral based on provided information was tallied. Chi-Square analyses were primarily used to examine the data collected from the demographic profile and to examine the cultural competence scores of the participant group and their decision to refer students for special education services; with close examination of the interaction of the student's ethnicity on these referral decisions. An ANOVA was used to examine the difference between the means of the participants and their home location to determine if

there was a significant difference between competency scores and where teachers grew

up prior to coming to college.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics

Demographic information was collected to describe the characteristics of the participants of this study and is summarized in Table 1.

Gender. There were a total of 226 participants, 210 (92.9%) and 15 (6.6%) were men. One participant (0.4%) was missing this information on their questionnaire.

Race. Two hundred and six of the participants (91.2%) were Caucasian, 12 (5.3%) were African American, 2 (0.9%) were Hispanic, 2 (0.9%) were Asian American/Asian-Pacific Islander, and 4 (1.8%) considered themselves Multiethnic.

Age. The average age of the participants 24.45 years. The ages ranged from 20 years to 61 years of age. The largest percentage of the participants were 22 years of age, representing 33.6% of the sample.

Home Region. The participants were asked to identify the regional location where they grew up prior to coming to college. One hundred fifteen of the participants (50.9%) identified that they grew up in a rural area, 82 (36.3%) grew up in a suburban area, and 23 (10.2%) grew up in an urban area. Six (2.7%) of the participants did not complete this information on the questionnaire.

Teacher Preparation. One hundred thirty-eight (61.1%) indicated their degree would be in elementary education, 22 (9.7%) indicated their degree would be in middle grades education, 52 (23%) were seeking a degree in secondary education, 1 person (0.4%) was seeking a degree in special education, and 13 (5.8%) indicated their degree would be in the "other" category, which included degrees in birth- kindergarten education.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

Category	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	15	6.6
Female	210	93.3
Race/Ethnicity		
Caucasian	206	91.2
African-American	12	5.3
Hispanic	2	0.9
Asian/Asian Pacific Islander	2	0.9
Multiethnic	4	1.8
Age		
20-24	173	76.9
25-29	28	12.4
30-44	17	9.0
45-60+	6	1.7
Home Location		
Rural	115	50.9
Suburban	82	36.3
Urban	23	10.2

Table 1 *(continued).*

Area of Teacher Preparation

Elementary Education	138	61.1
Middle Grades Education	22	9.7
Secondary Education	52	23.0
Special Education	1	0.4
Other	13	5.8

Student Ethnicity

A Chi-Square analysis was used to determine if there was a significant difference of the competency level of pre-service teachers' on their referral decision based on the academic performance of a Caucasian or African American student (Table 2). This analysis indicated that there was no significant difference in the rate of academic referrals for Caucasian students, χ^2 (3, N=) =2.092, p=.553 or African American students, χ^2 (3, N=) =2.068, p=.558. The same analysis indicated that there was no significant difference in the rate of behavior referrals across competency levels for the Caucasian student, χ^2 (3, N=110) =4.907, p=.179. The pre-service teachers presented with the case of the African American student with lower cultural competence scores referred significantly more often for special education services due to behavior, χ^2(3, N=116) =8.115, p=.044.

Competency Level

A Chi-Square analysis was used to determine the overall difference of cultural competency on referral decisions (Table 2). There was no significant influence of competency the of pre-service teachers' decision to refer special education services, χ^2 (3, N=226) =3.127, p=.372.

Type of Referral Decision

A Chi-Square analysis was used to determine the overall difference of cultural competency and the type of referral decisions made by the participants (Table 3). There was no significant difference in pre-service teachers' decisions to refer based on academic reasons, χ^2 (3, N=226) = .516, p=.915. However, when examining the competency levels on the decision to refer for behavioral concerns, competency levels

Table 2

Chi-Square Test of Significance of Referral Decision and Ethnicity of Student

(Across Competency Level)

Variable	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Academic Referral			
Caucasian	2.092	3	.553
African American	2.068	3	.558
Behavior Referral			
Caucasian	4.907	3	.179
African American	8.115	3	.044

Table 3

Chi-Square Test of Significance between Competency Level and Type of Referral

Decision (Academic or Behavior)

Variable	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Academic Referral	.516	3	.915
Behavior Referral	11.720	3	.008

had a significant difference on the pre-service teachers' decisions to refer, $\chi^2 = (3, N=226)$ $=11.720, p=.008$.

Survey Administration

In order to determine if there was a difference on the method of survey administration to groups X and Y, the counterbalancing of the survey administration was analyzed with a Univariate ANOVA (Table 4). Using the mean score for each of the groups as the variable, there was no significant difference of the counterbalancing effect on the data received by groups X and Y, $F(1, N=225) =1.381, p=.241$.

Table 4

Chi-Square Test of Significance between Competency Level and Total Referrals

Variable	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Total Referral	3.127	3	.372

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of pre-service teachers' cultural competence on decisions to make referrals for special education. The overall level of cultural competence of the pre-service teachers was examined along with the interaction of referral type and student ethnicity.

Cultural Competence

There were 226 participants, the vast majority of whom were from North Carolina and lived in a rural setting prior to attending college. The participants were primarily Caucasian women who were elementary education majors between the ages of 22-25. The demographic of this participant group is similar to that of the current teacher population in the United States (Colville-Hall, MacDonald, & Smolen, 1995; Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007).

The cultural competency scores for the majority of the participants were within the extremely low range of competence. The low competency scores could be related to the regional homogeneity of the group or may not have had many experiences with racially or ethnically diverse populations. The lack of experience with racially and ethnically diverse persons may lead to misconceptions about cultural diversity and to the development of counterproductive beliefs about diversity (Siwatu, 2006). A teacher with a low level of cultural competence may not understand that their attitudes and expectations are culturally rooted (Howard, 1999) and may therefore not appreciate the cultural perspectives of others (Colombo, 2007). Teachers with low levels of cultural competence may create a cultural discontinuity that produces negative interactions

between teachers and students while reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices (Barnes, 2006). This cultural discontinuity can affect the teachers' attitudes and expectations toward student achievement and affect their judgments about students and their abilities (Abinin & Robinson, 2002). The cultural competency scores of the participant group reflect the impact of their multicultural training to development or increase cultural competence. The cultural competency scores show either pre-service teachers enter education programs even lower levels of cultural competence than the scores reflected or pre-service teachers are not developing cultural competence while in their training programs.

Cultural Competence and Referral Decision

There was no significant difference in pre-service teachers' overall decisions to refer the student in the case study for special education based on the participants' level of cultural competence. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. Pre-service teachers at all levels of cultural competence made relatively equal number of referrals for African-American and Caucasian students. An explanation for this may be because the majority of the participant group scored within the extremely low range of cultural competence and therefore there was not enough variance for a statistical significance to emerge between levels of competency in their overall decisions to refer for special education services.

Type of Student Behavior

The second null hypothesis is that there was no difference between the frequency of referrals for academic or behavioral problems and the participants' level of cultural competence. Participants with lower competency scores referred the student in the case

study significantly more often for behavior concerns; thus the null hypothesis is rejected. A teacher with lower cultural competence is likely to assess student behavior based on personal beliefs or expectations, making differential appraisals using student characteristics as the determining factor in the referral decision (Abidin & Robinson, 2002). These differential appraisals are affected by the pre-service teachers' beliefs in how well they can effectively manage behavioral problems. Externalizing behavior (similar to the behavior of the example student) is more difficult to manage in a classroom setting (Abidin & Robinson) and pre-service teachers' beliefs may be more influenced by the externalizing behaviors.

These varied appraisals may be due to the lack of experience these pre-service teachers have in the classroom. The short time spent in the classroom to develop classroom management and other skills necessary to manage student behavior may have an effect on their sense of personal efficacy and impacting their cultural competence (Martin, 2004). Consistent with the previous studies, this study shows that student behavior is often the most influential factor in a teachers' decision to refer for special education (Abidin & Robinson, 2002).

Student Ethnicity

The third null hypothesis was that there was no difference in referral rates for African American students or Caucasian students. The pre-service teachers in this study referred the African American student for special education services for behavior significantly more than they referred Caucasian student. Consistent with previous research, African American students were more likely to be referred for behavioral reasons and more likely to be labeled as emotionally disturbed than Caucasian or

Hispanic/Latino students (Gottlieb, Gottlieb, & Trongone, 1991). A teacher with a low level of competence may view the culturally defined differences in student behavior as skill deficits (Colombo, 2007). Teachers' initial beliefs about student can elicit performances that confirm their belief (Rosenthal, 1963), causing both teacher and student's behavior to change (Snyder & Swann, 1978). The inconsistency between cultural expectations of the teacher and the cultural background of the student places the student at greater risk for being identified as having a behavior problem (Hosp & Reschly, 2003). If teachers' perceptions of "normal" behavior vary across ethnic group, a teacher may provide a differential appraisal for same behavior displayed by students with different ethnic backgrounds (Chang & Stanley, 2003). This is because teachers are less tolerant with student behaviors inconsistent with their cultural expectations (Gerber & Semmel, 1984). The stricter the teacher's standards are, the lower their tolerance for specific behaviors, particularly aggressive behaviors (McIntyre, 1990).

African American students are more often referred to and placed in special education categories such as intellectual disability, emotionally disturbed, or learning disabled (Blanchett, 2006), categories that represent disabilities with no organic cause (O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006) and rely more on the teacher judgments, which are often subjective and vary across setting (Blanchett). These judgments involve the teachers' beliefs and expectations within the classroom. For example, a study found that the African American behavioral style had higher need for physical movement (Hosp & Hosp, 2001). If this behavioral style is not what the teacher believes is appropriate, then this may lead to assumption that the child is immature or has a behavioral disorder (Hosp & Hosp). Caucasian teachers were more likely to notice behavioral symptoms, such as

34

ADHD, in ethnic minorities and referred those students more often (Hosterman, DuPaul, & Jitendra, 2008), however, studies have shown that African American students are no more unruly than Caucasian students (Andrews, Wisniewski, & Mulick, 1997).

Implications

Minority students, particularly African Americans, continue to be overrepresented in special education despite measures to create equity within the classrooms. The overrepresentation of certain ethnic groups in special education may be due to teachers' lack of cultural competence. This study showed that cultural competence has an effect on decisions to refer students, particularly African American students to special education for behavior issues, especially for new teachers.

Referral is a strong predictor of special education eligibility and eventual placement (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). Beliefs and experiences may play a role in creation of attitudes and expectations for racially and ethnically diverse students (Shealey & Lue, 2006). It is important to recognize that the accurate interpretation of information of racially and ethnically diverse learners is needed to mitigate teacher judgments and beliefs. Without this information, attributions are assigned to ethnic minority students and their abilities that will have an important impact on their educational experience. The increased focus on developing cultural competence in pre-service teachers is an important effort to reduce the overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in special education.

The majority of the pre-service teachers in our study have a low level of cultural competence. Increasing teachers' cultural competence would be an important factor to lessen the effect of these cultural attitudes on referral decisions. Teachers need to understand their own culture prior to recognizing and understanding the culture of

another (Zeichner, 1992). Although teacher education programs are attempting to address the issue of cultural sensitivity (Milner, et al., 2003), there is little research on how pre-service teachers develop cultural competency (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). One strategy being implemented in the field is culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). Culturally responsive teaching addresses the education needs of racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse learners (Barnes, 2006). This strategy allows a teacher to use the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of students to present curriculum in a way that provides a closer fit between a student's home culture and the culture of the school (Brown, 2007). However, culturally responsive teaching is not implemented in all classrooms, so what can be done when there is not a program or set curriculum to follow?

Teachers with low cultural competence must take time to examine their stereotypes about African American students. The importance of culture of the student and the teacher is an important interaction within the classroom. African American students along with other students of color are more persistent in their efforts to maintain cultural identity (Neal, et al., 2003). This often increases the misunderstanding between teachers who are unfamiliar with student diversity (Hosterman, Paul, & Jitendra, 2008). If these expectations lead to misunderstandings, it becomes increasingly more important to develop cultural competence in our teachers.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is the use of an analogue case to examine the referral decisions made by the group. Some researchers believe that responding to the appropriateness of referral does not fully take into account the complex decision-making process about student teachability (Bahr & Fuchs, 1991). Many of the pre-service

teachers' who participated in the current study, mentioned that they would attempt

classroom-based interventions prior to making the referral for special education services.

Classroom-based interventions are often provided prior to referral for services and with

the help of a team of teachers and other school professionals to address the student's

issue. This case provided no opportunity for the participants to select an alternate strategy

prior to making the decision to refer. This oversimplification of the decision-making

strategy could have had an effect on the outcome of this study.

Another limitation is the generalizability of this study. All of the participants

attended the same university, the same general region of the country, about the same age,

and all primarily all the same majors. There is no way to ensure that these would be the

results had there been another participant group. Recruiting another participant group in a

different regional location or a group with student teaching experiences in a larger, urban

area may have provided different results that could provide greater insight into the

development of cultural competence in pre-service teachers. Also, recruiting a

participant group with heterogeneity in age and experience levels could have provided

greater insight of the development of cultural competence. The participant group was

primarily the same age and had little, if any, experience in the classroom or workforce

prior to beginning their teacher-training program. These types of participants would have

been helpful in examining if cultural competence gained through experience, time, and/or

exposure?

Implications for Research

Future research to assess how teachers' beliefs about behavior normalcy lend to

evaluating students' behavior would be important. How do teachers assess student

37

behavior in the classroom? Gathering information about teachers' comfort levels in managing behavior problems in the classroom would also be useful. Also, a study following up with the pre-service teachers about 2-5 years after they completed their training program. Would their levels of cultural competence increase over time? Comparing previous scores with their current scores, after working in the field for some time would provide insight to what is the required length of time for a teacher to become culturally competent?

A study to analyze the school system's role within a school in regards to teacher support and special education referral, with particular emphasis on the academic needs of the low achieving learner in relation to intervention and special education services (O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006). If a school is low in support and resources for teachers, teachers may use special education as additional classroom assistance. Examining school support and teachers' levels of cultural competence would allow us to see if a lack of cultural competence or lack of resources are increasing the referral rates within certain schools.

Conclusion

To ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to work with racially and ethnically diverse learners, teacher education programs must build upon students' current knowledge bases with cultural knowledge, experiences, and processes, to develop essential skills to become a culturally competent practitioner (Brown, 2006). As school districts are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, cultural competence is becoming a required skill for our teachers. Without cultural competence, the influence of teachers' thoughts, beliefs, and social norms can impede the intended effect of creating a

learning environment where all students are provided with the best opportunities to learn

regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It is

REFERENCES

Aaronsohn, E., Carter, C. J., & Howell, M. (1995). Preparing monocultural

teachers for a multicultural world: Attitudes toward inner-city schools. *Equity &*

Excellence in Education, 28, 5-9.

Abindin, R. R., Robinson, L. L. (2002). Stress, bias, or professionalism: What drives

teachers' referral judgments of students with challenging behaviors? *Journal of*

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 10, 204-212.

Allport, G.W. (1979). *The nature of prejudice.* Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.

Andrews, T. J., Wisniewski, J. J., Mulick, J.A. (1997). Variables influencing

teachers' decisions to refer children for school psychological assessment

services. *Psychology in the Schools, 34*, 239-244.

Artiles, A. J., & Bal, A. (2008). The next generation of disproportionality

research: Toward a comparative model in the study of equity in ability

differences. *Journal of Special Education, 42,* 4-14.

Artiles, A. J., Harry, B., Reschly, D. J., & Chinn, P.C. (2002). Over-identification

of students of color in special education: A critical overview.

Multicultural Perspective, 4, 3-10.

Artiles, A. J., & Trent, S. C. (1994). Overrepresentation of minority students in special

education: A continuing debate. *The Journal of Special Education, 27*, 410-437.

Bahr, M. W., & Fuchs, D. (1991). Are teachers' perceptions of difficult-to-teach

students racially biased? *School Psychology Review, 20*, 599-609.

Banks, J. A. (1988). *Multiethnic education: Theory and practice.* Boston: Allyn and

Bacon.

Baldwin, S. C., Buchanan, A. M., & Rudisill, M.E. (2007). What teacher candidates

    learned about diversity, social justice, and themselves from service-learning

    experiences. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *58*, 315-327.

Banks, J. (1997). *Educating citizens in a multicultural society*. New York: Teachers

    College Press.

Barnes, C. J. (2006). Preparing pre-service teachers to teach in a culturally

    responsive way. *The Negro Education Review*, *57*, 85-100.

Blanchett, W. J. (2006). Disproportionate representation of African American

    students in special education: Acknowledging the role of white privilege

    and racism. *Educational Researcher, 35*, 24-28.

Brown, D. F. (2003). Urban teachers' use of culturally responsive management

    strategies. *Theory into Practice. 42*, 277-282.

Brown, D. F. (2004). Urban teachers' professed classroom management strategies:

    Reflections of culturally responsive teaching. *Urban Education*, *39*, 266-289.

Brown, M. R. (2007). Educating all students: Creating culturally responsive

    teachers, classrooms, and schools. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, *43*, 57-62.

Burstein, N. D., & Cabello, B. (1989). Preparing teachers to work with culturally

    diverse students: A teacher education model. *Journal of Teacher Education, 40*,

    9-16.

Cartledge, G., Gibson, L., & Singh, A. (2008). Practical behavior-management

    techniques to close the accessibility gap for students who are culturally and

    linguistically diverse. *Preventing School Failure, 52*, 29-38.

Chang, D. F., & Sue, S. (2003). The effects of race and problem type on teachers' assessments of student behavior. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 71*, 235-242.

Cockrell, K. S., Placier, P.L., Cockrell, D.H., & Middleton, J.N. (1999). Coming to terms with "diversity" and "multiculturalism" in teacher education: Learning about our student, changing our practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *12*, 351-366.

Colombo, M. W. (2007). Developing cultural competence: Mainstream teachers and professional development. *Multicultural Perspectives, 9*, 10-16.

Colville-Hall, S., MacDonald, S., & Smolen, L. (1995). Preparing preservice teachers for diversity in learners. *Journal of Teacher Education, 46*, 295-303.

Coutinho, M. J. & Oswald, D. P. (2000). Disproportionate representation in special education: A synthesis and recommendations. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 9,* 135-156.

D'Andrea., M., Daniels, J., & Noonan, M. J. (2003). New developments in the assessment of multicultural competence. In D. B. Pope-Davis, H. L. K. Coleman, W. M. Liu, & R. L. Toporek (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural competencies in counseling and psychology* (pp. 154-168). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

DeMeis, D. K., & Turner, R. R. (1978). Effects of students' race, physical attractiveness, and dialect on teachers' evaluations. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 3*, 77-86.

Dobbs, J., & Arnold, A. H. (2009). Relationship between preschool teachers'

  reports of children's behavior and their behavior toward children. *School*

  Psychology Quarterly, 24, 95-105.

Drame, E. R. (2002). Sociocultural context effects on teachers' readiness to refer for

  learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 69*, 41-53.

Feinberg, A. B. & Shapiro, E. S. (2009). Teacher accuracy: An examination of

  teacher-based judgments of students' reading with differing achievement levels.

  The Journal of Educational Research, 102, 453-462.

Gartner, A. (1986). Disabling help: Special education at the crossroads. *Exceptional*

  Children, 53, 72-76.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice.* New

  York: Teachers College Press.

Gerber, M. M., & Semmel, M. I. (1984). Teacher as imperfect test: Reconceptualizing the

  referral process. *Educational Psychologist, 19*, 137.

Goodwin, A. L. (1997). Preservice teachers' conceptions of and responses to issues

  of diversity. *Urban Education, 32*, 117-145.

Gottlieb, J., Gottlieb, B. W., & Trongone, S. (1991). Parent and teacher referrals for a

  psychoeducational evaluation. *Journal of Special Education, 25*, 155-167.

Gottlieb, J., & Weinberg, S. (1999). Comparison of students referred and not

  referred for special education. *The Elementary School Journal, 99*, 189-199.

Groulx, J. G. (2001). Changing preservice teacher perceptions of minority schools.

  Urban Education, 36, 60-92.

Haberman, M. (1995). Selecting 'Star' teachers for children and youth in urban

poverty. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*, 777-781.

Harrington, R. G., & Gibson, E. (1986). Preassessment procedures for learning

disabled children: Are they effective? *Journal of Learning Disabilities,
19*, 538-541.

Hernandez, J. E., Ramanathan, A. K., Harr, J., & Socias, M. (2008). Study of the

effects of an intervention to reduce the disproportionate identification in

the category of emotional disturbance in the Los Angeles unified school

district. *Journal of Special Education Leadership, 21*, 64-74.

Hewstone, M. (1990). The ultimate attribution error? A review of literature of

intergroup casual attribution. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 20*,

311-335.

Hogg, M. A. & Cooper, J. (2003). *The SAGE handbook of social psychology*.

London: SAGE Publications.

Hosp, J. L., & Hosp, M. K. (2001). Behavior differences between African American and

Caucasian students: Issues for assessment and intervention. *Education &
Treatment of Children, 24*, 336.

Hosp, J. L., & Reschley, D. J. (2003). Referral rate for intervention or assessment:

A meta-analysis of racial differences. *The Journal of Special Education, 37*, 67-

80.

Hosp, J. L., & Reschly, D. J., (2004). Disproportionate representation of minority

students in special education: Academic, demographic, and economic

predictors. *Exceptional Children, 70*, 185-199.

Hosternman, S. J., DuPaul, G. J., & Jitendra, A. K. (2008). Teacher ratings of ADHD
symptoms in ethnic minority students: Bias or behavioral difference? *School
Psychology Quarterly, 23*, 418-435.

Howard, G. (1999). *We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial
schools.* New York: College Press.

Joint policy recommendations for implementation. (n.d.) Retrieved August 3, 2009,
http://www.k12.wa.us/equity/jointpolicy.aspx.

Jordan, K. (2005). Discourses of difference and the overrepresentation of black
students in special education. *The Journal of African American History, 90,*
128-149.

Keim, J., Warring, D. F., & Rau, R. (2001). Impact of multicultural training on
school psychology and education students. *Journal of Instructional
Psychology, 28*, 249-252.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally
relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice, 34*, 159.

Larke, P. J. (1990). Cultural diversity awareness inventory: Assessing the
sensitivity of preservice teachers. *Action in Teacher Education*, *12*, 23-
30.

Lassiter, L. E. (2002). *Invitation to anthropology.* Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

Low, B. P., & Clement, P. W. (1982). Relationships of race and socioeconomic
status to classroom behavior, academic achievement, and referral for
special education. *Journal of School Psychology, 20*, 103-112.

Martin, S. D. (2004). Finding balance: Impact of classroom management conceptions

    on developing teacher practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20,* 405-422.

Martines, D. (2005). Teacher perceptions of multicultural issues in school settings. *The*

    Quantitative Report, 10, 1-20.

McAllister, G., & Irvine, J. J. (2000). Cross cultural competency and multicultural

    teacher education. *Review of Educational Research, 70*, 3-24.

McPhatter, A. R. (1997). Cultural competence in child welfare: What is it? How

    do we achieve it? What happens without it? *Child Welfare, 76*, 255-278.

MacMillan, D. L., & Reschly, D. J. (1998). Overrepresentation of minority

    students: The case for greater specificity or reconsideration of *variables*

    examined. *Journal of Special Education, 32*, 15-24.

Milner, H. R., Flowers, L. A., Moore, E., Moore, J. L, & Flowers, T. A. (2003).

    Preservice teachers' awareness of multiculturalism and diversity. *The High School*

    Journal, 87, 63-70.

Navarrete, L. & Fletcher, T. (2003). Learning disabilities or difference: A critical

    look at issues associated with the misidentification and placement of

    hispanic students in special education programs. *Rural Special Education*

    Quarterly, *22*, 37-46.

Neal, L. V. I., McCray, A. D., Webb-Johnson, G., & Bridgest, S. T. (2003). The effects

    of African-American movement styles on teachers' perceptions and reactions.

    Journal of Special Education, 37, 49-57.

Nisbett, R. & Ross, L. (1980). *Human inference: Strategies and shortcomings in*

    social judgment. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)/ESEA. (n.d.) Retrieved August 2, 2008, from

   http://www.nea.org/home/NoChildLeftBehindAct.html.

No Child Left Behind. (2001). Retrieved September 12, 2008, from

   http://www.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/execsumm.pdf

O'Connor, C., & Fernandez, S. D. (2006). Race, class, and disproportionality:

   Reevaluating the relationship between poverty and special education

   placement. *Educational Researcher, 35*, 6-11.

O'Hair, M. J., & Odell, S. J. (1993). *Diversity and teaching.* Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace

   Jovanovich.

Singh, N. N. (1999). Ethnic representation in special education: The influence of school-

   related economic and demographic variables. *The Journal of Special Education,*

   32, 194-206.

Patton, J. M. (1998). The disproportionate representation of African Americans in

   special education: Looking behind the curtain for understanding and

   solutions. *The Journal of Special Education, 32,* 25-31.

Podell, D. M. & Soodak, L. C. (1993). Teacher efficacy and bias in special

   education referrals. *Journal of Educational Research, 86*, 257-253.

Rao, S. (2005). Effective multicultural teacher education programs:

   Methodological and conceptual issues. *Education, 126*, 279-291.

Rong, X. L. (1996). Effects of race and gender on teachers' perception of the

   social behavior of elementary students. *Urban Education, 31*, 261-290.

Rosenthal, R., & Fode, K. L. (1963). Three experiments in experimenter bias.

   Psychological Reports, 12, 491-511.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2003). Schools and Staffing Survey: Public

School Teacher, BIA School Teacher, and Private School Teacher Data Files,

Retrieved September 08, 2008, from

http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass_2004_18.asp

Serwatka, T. S., Deering, S., & Grant, P. (1995). Disproportionate representation of

African-Americans in emotionally handicapped classes. *Journal of Black*

Studies, 25, 492-506.

Shealey, M. W., & Lue, M. S. (2006). Why are all the black kids still in special

education? Revisiting the issue of disproportionate representation. *Multicultural*

Perspectives, 8, 3-9.

Shinn, M. R., Tindal, G. A., & Spira, D. A. (1987). Special education referrals as an

index of teacher tolerance: Are teachers imperfect tests? *Exceptional Children*,

54, 32-40.

Siwatu, K. O. (2006). Pre-service teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-

efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*,

1086-1101.

Skiba, R. J., Simmons, A. B., Ritter, S., Gibb, A. C., Rausch, M. K., Cuadrado, J., &

Chung, C. (2008). Achieving equity in special education: History, status, and

current challenges. *Exceptional Children, 74*, 264-288.

Skiba, R. J., Poloni-Staudinger, L., Gallini, S., Simmons, A. B., & Feggins-Azziz, R.

(2006). Disparate access: The disporportionality of African American students

with disabilities across educational environments. *Exceptional Children, 72*, 411-

424.

Snyder, M., & Swann, W. B. (1978). Behavioral confirmation in social interaction: From social perception to social reality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 14*, 148-162.

Soodak, L. C. & Podell, D. M. (1993). Teacher efficacy and student problem as factors in special education referral. *The Journal of Special Education, 27*, 66-81.

Trent, S. C., Kea, C. D., & Oh, K. (2008). Preparing pre-service educators for cultural diversity: how far have we come? *Exceptional Children, 74*, 328-50.

Webb-Johnson, G., Artiles, A. J., Trent, S. C., Jackson, C. W., & Velox, A. (1998). The status of research on multicultural education in teacher education and special education. *Remedial & Special Education, 19*, 7-15.

Whaley, A. L., & Davis, K. E. (2007). Cultural competence and evidence-based practice in mental health services: A complementary perspective. *American Psychologist*, *62*, 563-574.

Ysseldyke, J. E., Pianta, B., Christenson, S., Wang, J. J.,& Algozzine, B. (1983). An analysis of prereferral interventions. *Psychology in the Schools, 20*, 184-190.

Zeichner, K. M. & Liston, D.P. (1996). *Reflective teaching: An introduction*. New Jersey: Erlbaum Associates.

Zygmunt-Fillwalk, E. & Clark, P. (2007). Becoming multicultural. *Childhood Education*, *83*, 288-293.

APPENDIX A: MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS-KNOWLEDGE-SKILLS   SCALE,
TEACHER EDITION (MAKSS-T)

1. How would you rate your ability to conduct to teach students from cultural background significantly different from your own?

   Very Limited   Limited   Good   Very Good

2. How would you rate your ability to effectively assess the needs of students and their families from a cultural background different from your own?

   Very Limited   Limited   Good   Very Good

3. How well would you rate your ability to distinguish ∀formal" and "informal" teaching strategies?

   Very Limited   Limited   Good   Very Good

4. In general, how would you rate yourself in terms of being able to effectively deal with biases, discrimination, and prejudices directed at you by culturally different students and their families?

   Very Limited   Limited   Good   Very Good

5. How well would you rate your ability to accurately identify culturally biased assumptions as they relate to your professional training?

   Very Limited   Limited   Good   Very Good

6. How well would you rate your ability to discuss the role of "method" and "context" as they relate to the process of teaching students from culturally different backgrounds?

   Very Limited   Limited   Good   Very Good

7. In general, how would you rate your ability to accurately articulate a student's behavioral problem when the student is from a cultural group significantly different from your own?

   Very Limited   Limited   Good   Very Good

8. How well would you rate your ability to analyze a culture into its component parts?

   Very Limited   Limited   Good   Very Good

9. How would you rate your ability to identify the strengths and weaknesses of standardized tests in terms of their use with students from different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds?

   Very Limited   **Limited**   **Good**   **Very Good**

10. How would you rate your ability to critique multicultural education research?

    Very Limited   **Limited**   **Good**   **Very Good**

11. In general, how would you rate your skill level in terms of being able to provide appropriate educational services to culturally different students?

    Very Limited   **Limited**   **Good**   **Very Good**

12. How would you rate your ability to effectively consult with another mental health professional concerning the educational and behavioral needs of students whose cultural background is significantly different from your own?

    Very Limited   **Limited**   **Good**   **Very Good**

13. How would you rate your ability to effectively secure information and resources to better serve culturally different students and their families?

    Very Limited   **Limited**   **Good**   **Very Good**

14. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and educational needs of female students?

    Very Limited   **Limited**   **Good**   **Very Good**

15. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and educational needs of male students?

    Very Limited   **Limited**   **Good**   **Very Good**

16. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and educational needs of older students?

    Very Limited   **Limited**   **Good**   **Very Good**

17. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and educational needs of male students who may be gay?

    Very Limited   **Limited**   **Good**   **Very Good**

18. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and educational needs of female students who may be lesbians?

    Very Limited   **Limited**   **Good**   **Very Good**

19. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and educational needs of students with disabilities?

    Very Limited   **Limited**   **Good**   **Very Good**

20. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the behavioral and educational needs of students who come from very poor socioeconomic backgrounds?

    Very Limited   **Limited**   **Good**   **Very Good**

APPENDIX B: ANALOGUE CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY

James is a 9-year- old African American boy in third grade. He lives with his parents, brother, uncle, and three sisters. His family has recently relocated to the area from another school district. He has made a successful social transition at his new school. He is social with peers and has some friends. He has adequate verbal skills, but is quite low in reading and writing. He is often distracted when completing reading & writing assignments. When reading and spelling tasks are presented, he will begin to exhibit more off-task behavior. He will often stop working and put his head on the desk, draw, or look at the pictures. When he is redirected to complete these types of tasks, he will ignore the request or becomes more verbal and uncooperative. In contrast, he was far more focused on arithmetic and art activities.

CASE STUDY

James is a 9-year- old Caucasian boy in third grade. He lives with his parents, brother, uncle, and three sisters. His family has recently relocated to the area from another school district. He has made a successful social transition at his new school. He is social with peers and has some friends. He has adequate verbal skills, but is quite low in reading and writing. He is often distracted when completing reading & writing assignments. When reading and spelling tasks are presented, he will begin to exhibit more off-task behavior. He will often stop working and put his head on the desk, draw, or look at the pictures. When he is redirected to complete these types of tasks, he will ignore the request or becomes more verbal and uncooperative. In contrast, he was far more focused on arithmetic and art activities.

APPENDIX C: REFERRAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Answer the following questions as if the child described in the above scenario was child in a regular education class that you were teaching.

1. Based on academic performance, would you be likely to refer this child for special education services?

   Yes _____   No _____

2. Based on his behavior, would you be likely to refer this child for special education services?

   Yes _____   No_____

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT

Principal Investigator: Shomara Reyes
Thesis Advisor: Michael Brown, PhD.
Institution: East Carolina University
Address: Department of Psychology
Telephone #: (252) 328-4170:
My name is Shomara Reyes and I am conducting research designed to assess pre-service
teachers' judgments about students. You will be asked to fill out a brief questionnaire and
will be asked to read a case study, providing a scenario about a student. At the end of the
scenario, you will be asked to answer two questions. This study will take no longer 30
minutes to complete. The data obtained from this study will be used to improve our
understanding of teachers' judgments. There are no known risks involved in this study.

Your privacy will be protected and confidentiality maintained during and after the
completion of this study. Each questionnaire & corresponding case study will be given a
number and no name will be connected to any identifying information. The data will be
coded by the number placed on the questionnaire and case study will be locked in a file
after completion of this study. Only the principal investigator and co-investigator will
have access to this information. No identifying information will be released or reported.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no
penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. The investigators will be available to
answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the
principal investigator, Shomara Reyes, at phone number 704-806-3749, or Dr. Michael
Brown at 252-328-4170.

I certify that I have read all of the above, asked questions and received answers
concerning areas I did not understand, and have received satisfactory answers to these
questions. I willingly give my consent form for participation in this research study.

_____
Participant's Name (Print)

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date
If you would like a copy of the results of this study, please print you address below.

_____

Circle one: MALE   FEMALE

Age _____

Race: _____ African American (non-Hispanic origin)
_____ Asian American/Asian/Pacific Islander
_____ Hispanic (any race)
_____Native American
_____White
_____Multi-Ethnic (Please List: _____)

State and Description of Residence (prior to coming to college):
State _____
Rural _____
Suburban _____
Urban   _____
Country (if not U.S.) _____

Area of Teaching Preparation: _____ Elementary Education
_____ Middle Grades Education
_____ Secondary Education
_____ Special Education
_____ Other

APPENDIX F: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER

University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board
East Carolina University • Brody School of Medicine
600 Moye Boulevard • Old Health Sciences Library, Room 1L-09 • Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** • Fax **252-744-2284** • www.ecu.edu/irb
Chair and Director of Biomedical IRB: L. Wiley Nifong, MD
Chair and Director of Behavioral and Social Science IRB: Susan L. McCammon, PhD

TO: Shomara Reyes, BS, 3005 Kingston Circle #M, Greenville, NC , NC 27858

FROM: UMCIRB *slv*

DATE: March 16, 2009

RE: Human Research Activities Determined to Meet Exempt Criteria

TITLE: "The Influence of Multi-Cultural Competence on Special Education Referral"

UMCIRB #09-0249

This research study has undergone IRB review on 3.9.09. It is the determination of the IRB Chairperson (or designee) that these activities meet the criteria set forth in the federal regulations for exemption from 45 CFR 46 Subpart A. These human research activities meet the criteria for an exempt status because it is a research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects and 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.

The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this **unfunded** study **no more than minimal risk.** This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any changes must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review prior to implementation to allow determination that proposed changes do not impact the activities eligibility for exempt status. Should it found that a proposed change does require more substantive review, you will be notified in writing within five business days.

The following items were reviewed in determination exempt certification:
- Internal Processing Form (dated 2.16.09)
- Informed Consent Informed Consent
- Case Study
- Demographic Profile
- Pre-Service Teacher Survey

It was furthermore determined that the reviewer does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

The UMCIRB applies 45 CFR 46, Subparts A-D, to all research reviewed by the UMCIRB regardless of the funding source. 21 CFR 50 and 21 CFR 56 are applied to all research studies that fall under the purview of Food and Drug Administration regulations. The UMCIRB follows applicable International Conference on Harmonisation Good Clinical Practice guidelines.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418
IRB00004973 East Carolina U IRB #4 (Behavioral/SS Summer) IORG0000418
Version 3-5-07

UMCIRB #09-0249
Page 1 of 1