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Effects of Ethnicity, Walking Style, and Verbal Expression on
Education Majors' Perceptions of Students

Angela C. Brinson

Effects of Ethnicity, Walking Style, and Verbal Expression
on Education Majors' Perceptions of Students

DISSERTATION

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by

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Area of Specialization: Exceptional Student Education

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Area of Specialization: Exceptional Student Education

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated education majors' perceptions of adolescent males based on their ethnicity, walking style, and verbal expression. More specifically, this study examined the interaction effects between student ethnicity (African American and White), walking style (stroll and standard), and verbal response style (standard and slang), on education majors' ratings of student learning, behavior, the need for special education services, and positive or negative attributes. A questionnaire judging learning, behavior, the need for special education and an adapted version of the Adjective Checklist (Gough & Heilbrun, 1983) were used immediately after the participants watched a short video in which the independent variables were manipulated. One hundred and nine education majors attending a private university participated in this study. Results indicated that, overall, verbal expression was the most influential variable that affected participants' perceptions of students having behavioral problems, needing special education services, and having positive or negative attributes. Students who spoke standard English, rather than slang, were perceived as less likely to have behavior problems, less likely to need special education services, and less likely to be described by participants using negative attributes. No differences were found in the perception of students having learning problems in the different video conditions. Of those students who were perceived as needing special education services, the category selected most frequently was Emotional/Behavior Disorder (EBD).

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CHAPTER I

Jordan slowly strolls down the hall of his middle school, with a movement and grace that his peers consider “cool.” The girls in his class consider Jordan to be handsome, well dressed and a “player.” A 14-year old African American male, Jordan is performing slightly below grade level academically. However, his teachers (all European American) have serious concerns about his academic future, as he has difficulty staying in his seat and concentrating on his work. Several office referrals also highlight Jordan’s “superior and pompous attitude,” exemplified by the way he walks and talks (Neal, McCray, Davis, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003). His teachers are concerned about his baggy ‘hip-hop’ dress that demands the attention of his peers to the point of distraction in the classroom, as well as his frequent stares at teachers who demand that he walk and talk more like those who are successful in mainstream society (Neal et al.). Numerous methods of behavior interventions have been tried, to no avail. On several occasions, Jordan actively challenged teacher directives designed to alter the way he walks and talks in class. His teachers insist that Jordan needs special education placement for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders [EBD] (Neal et al.).

Introduction

Jordan’s story is one that has become more commonplace for many African American males in our schools. Unfortunately, many teachers fail to engage in the consultation necessary to avoid making conclusions like the one in the scenario. As a result, a persistent and pervasive trend in the disproportionate representation of African American males in special education programs continues to be a concern in discussions of educational inequity (De Valenzuela, Copeland, Qu, & Park, 2006).

For example, upon further investigation and consultation, it is determined that Jordan’s home culture and school culture are mismatched. At school, rules are a priority in order to

succeed. Second, Jordan has strict teachers with very structured and organized classrooms, who expect rules to be followed or consequences will occur (Atanasio, 2003). However, Jordan is accustomed to very few rules and consequences. This, in turn, provides a mismatch between Jordan and his teachers. Finally, it is determined that, despite his current academic performance, Jordan has developed a strong bodily kinesthetic and interpersonal intelligence. He enjoys learning through touch, movement, and cooperative group work. In fact, he excels in hands-on demonstrations, role-playing, and team games (Perini, Silver, & Strong, 2000).

Populations at Risk

The issue of overrepresentation of African Americans in special education continues to surface as a source of conflict among educators, communities, advocacy groups, and policymakers (McCray & Webb-Johnson, 2003; Valles, 1998). Despite the current attention on minority overrepresentation, the proportion of African American students identified as having learning, behavioral, and emotional disabilities has changed very little from 38% in 1975, when African American students constituted 15% of the school population (Patton, 1998). Harry and Anderson (1994) report that in 1991 African Americans, ages 6 through 21, made up 16% of the nation's school population and 35% of the special education population.

In 1999, African Americans accounted for 20.2% of the special education population (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). It is clear that African American students continue to be grossly overrepresented in programs for learning disabilities, emotional and behavior disorders, with some studies reporting that their representation in these programs is at least double their representation in the actual student population (Brayboy, Castagno, & Maughan, 2007; Ferri & Connor, 2005; Oswald, Coutinho, Best, & Singh, 1999; Skaggs, 2001).

Delinquent behaviors by African American male adolescents is of significant concern as it impacts their academic achievement, which often results in special education placement, as well as

placement in juvenile detention centers and adult prisons. Moreover, delinquent behavior adds to their frightening morbidity and mortality statistics. In 1997, African American adolescents represented about 15% of the total U.S. adolescent population; however, they represented 41% of the juvenile delinquency cases involving detention and 52% of juvenile delinquency cases judicially waived to criminal court (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). In 1998, 47% of homicide victims aged 15-19 years were African American males (Center for Disease Control Prevention, 2000). In 1999, 44% of African American male high school students reported that they had been in a physical fight within the past 12 months and 23% reported carrying a weapon (e.g., gun, knife) at least once in the past 30 days (Center for Disease Control Prevention). In 2000, African American males made up 62% of the overall detention population (Cahn, 2006). Moreover, according to studies conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), African American male detention populations between the ages of 13 and 17 were projected to increase 31 percent by 2006 (OJJDP, 2002).

High rates of delinquent behavior on school property have also been reported for African American males, which has adversely affected relationships with their teachers and peers, leading to a disproportionately high frequency of disciplinary actions (Noguera, 2003). This has contributed to persistent academic failure and placement in special education programs for students with emotional and behavior disorders (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). For these reasons, understanding and preventing overrepresentation among African American males in special education is crucial.

There are many theories as to why the overrepresentation in Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) is so prevalent in the African American community. Artiles and Trent (1994), in their review of the history of the overrepresentation debate, identified a number of variables that affect the referral, identification, and placement process: (a) litigation and the growth of

understanding by educators of students' rights to an education; (b) the ongoing debate about systemic issues such as the pre referral, referral, and assessment processes; (c) the debate surrounding the basic constructs (e.g., learning disabilities, mental retardation) and their definitions; (d) socioeconomic status and its effect on the learning process; (e) school success and school failure; and (f) the correlation between cultural diversity and disability. Hosp and Reschly (2003), Warger and Burnett (2004), and Reid (2000) suggest that minority overrepresentation is due to a lack of a consistent identification process, bias in instruction, family and community issues, misleading and invalid assessment instruments, negative teacher perceptions, and cultural differences.

Rationale

Why Education Majors?

This study focused on education majors because the catalyst for education reform is the individual teacher and his/her perceptions of the diversity of the children he/she will teach. Teachers make the vast majority of referrals for special education. Ysseldyke, Vanderwood, and Shriner (1997) further suggest that more often than not, students who are referred to special education by teachers are eventually placed in such programs. This study focused particularly on middle class education majors. Middle class elementary-school teachers possess greater inclination towards racial biases with regard to achievement expectations and perceptions of student behavior largely on the basis of non cognitive considerations (e.g., speech patterns and dress) Ysseldyke et al.

Statement of the Problem

Although many studies have addressed the need to prepare preservice teachers to become culturally aware and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds of the students they will teach, very few studies have specifically addressed the perceptions of education majors toward cultural

movement and verbal response styles. The only research found that addressed teachers' perceptions of African American adolescent males' cultural movement styles was the Neal, McCray, Davis, Webb-Johnson, and Bridgest (2003) study. However, these researchers used veteran middle school teachers to examine teachers' perceptions of African American males' aggression, achievement, and the need for special education services based only on cultural movement styles, e.g., a standard walking style vs. a non-standard walking style or "stroll."

According to Neal et al. (2003), a standard walking style, used primarily among European American adolescents, was defined as an erect posture with leg and arm swing synchronized with posture pace, a steady stride, and a straight head. A non-standard walking style, or stroll, which is characteristic of some African American adolescent males, was defined as a deliberate swaggered or bent posture, with the head held slightly tilted to the side, one foot dragging and an exaggerated knee bend (dip). The results of the Neal et al., study indicated that veteran teachers perceived students with a non-standard walking style or "stroll," as being lower in achievement, higher in aggression, and more likely to need special education services than students with a standard walking style. The authors also found that veteran teachers perceived both African American and European American males with a "stroll" as more likely to need special education services than students with a standard walking style.

Theoretical Framework

Ogbu's (1981) Cultural-Ecological Approach (CEA) served as a theoretical guide in the present study. The CEA addresses questions of school socialization, whereby behaviors of students' or teachers' perception of "negative" student behavior could be explained as a result of subjective processing of the reciprocal relations between conditions in the school environment and the student's individual, cultural, and personal attributes.

The CEA suggests that African Americans are caste-like or involuntary minorities. Involuntary minorities do not become minorities by choice (Ogbu, 1981). Rather, they are forced into minority status against their will by conquest, colonization, enslavement (e.g., African Americans) or arbitrary subjection to the status of a pariah caste (e.g., the Burakumin of Japan). Involuntary minorities are characterized by differences that are developed after the minority cultures come into contact with the mainstream, and they are more a matter of style than content. According to Ogbu, these differences include ways of walking, talking, or dressing that are designed to signal identity in a particular group. Since the differences are intended to indicate distinctions between the minority group and members of the mainstream culture, they act the same way at school and outside of school (Ogbu).

The CEA also attempts to account for differences in school performance. Ogbu (1981) suggests that cultural differences for African Americans are often in opposition to the mainstream, leading to a pattern of discontinuity between the home and school environment. African Americans, in many cases, develop a folk theory for success that puts a low value on education because it is perceived as “acting White.” According to Fordham and Ogbu (1981), “acting White” refers to a common ridicule among African Americans, namely teasing and harassment, endured by academically achieving adolescents or “nerds.”

Researchers have concluded that when teachers are not aware of the dimensions of other cultures, for example African Americans, their own behaviors, values, beliefs, and ambitions to respond negatively to cultural differences may result in negative outcomes for students (Asante, 1991; Zimmerman, 1995). These negative outcomes include underachievement, isolation, and referral for special education services (Ogbu, 2002).

Purpose of the Present Study

The present study examined the perceptions of education majors based on African American and White adolescent males' walking styles, as well as their verbal response styles. The main goals of this study were to determine the effects of adolescent males' cultural movement styles and verbal response styles on education majors' perceptions regarding: (1) learning, (2) behavior, (3) the need for referral for special education services, and (4) positive and negative descriptive attributes.

This study expanded the work of Neal and others (2003) by including education majors rather than veteran teachers to examine the effects of African American and White adolescent males' cultural movement styles and verbal response styles on perceptions of learning, behavior, the need for referral for special education services, and attributes.

This study is of major relevance based on the overrepresentation of minorities in special education programs. For the majority of our students, the process of referral and placement into special education programs starts when the general education teacher becomes concerned about a student's behavior or academic achievement (Smith, 2006). Many of our culturally diverse students bring particular styles of learning, speaking, and behaving with them from home, and schools are sometimes quick to reject those differences. Teachers who perceive cultural differences as disrespect or are uncertain about how to approach the students have more perceived problems with discipline. Boys, who are perceived as generally more aggressive and rambunctious, are disciplined in school at much higher rates than girls (Kunjufu, 2005). Thus, culturally diverse students, particularly boys, are often disciplined for how they speak as much as for what they say, often resulting in referral for special education services.

One goal of teacher education programs is to assist teachers in challenging racial bias in the school culture (Jairrels, 1999). A prerequisite for achieving this goal is that teachers and

education majors must be willing to confront their own attitudes and prejudices before they can explore the effectiveness of their practices in accommodating the various cultures, lifestyles, and learning styles of their students (Ladson-Billings, 2000). As such, the results of this study could have implications for teacher education programs as well as for in service training for veteran teachers.

Research Questions

This study examined the interaction effects between student ethnicity (African American and White), walking style (stroll and standard), and verbal response style (slang and standard), on education majors' ratings of student learning, behavior, the need for special education services, and attributes. The data gathered for this research was obtained by asking education majors to respond to demographic questions, a questionnaire judging learning, behavior, the need for special education services, and an adapted version of the Adjective Checklist (Gough & Heilbrun, 1983). These instruments were administered to the participants immediately after watching a short video in which the independent variables (ethnicity, walking style and verbal response style) were manipulated.

The researcher attempted to answer the following questions related to education majors' perceptions of adolescent males based on ethnicity, walking styles, and verbal response style:

1. Does the walking style (stroll vs. standard) of African American adolescent males, compared with White adolescent males, affect education majors' perceptions of students' learning, behavior, need for referral for special education services, and attributes?
2. Does the verbal response style (slang vs. standard) of African American adolescent males, compared with White adolescent males, affect education majors' perceptions of students' learning, behavior, need for referral for special education services, and attributes?

3. Of those students who are perceived to need to be referred for special education services, in which disability category would they classify these students?
4. What are participants' overall perception of students, based on their ethnicity, walking style, and verbal response style, as measured by a checklist of attributes?

Significance of the Present Study

The increasing incidence in the rate of African American males in special education programs is cause for great concern. Moreover, most education majors are prepared to work effectively with only one socioeconomic group, the middle class, as well as only one culture, the mainstream or dominant culture (Canella & Reiff, 1994). Bandura (1997) suggests that the catalyst for education reform is the individual teacher and his or her behaviors, values, beliefs, and ambitions, which may be enhanced or suppressed during student teaching.

Veteran teachers as well as education majors must be made aware of their own prejudicial attitudes and biases towards culturally diverse students in order to be effective in the classroom. This is especially true in a society where teachers are said to represent surrogate parental figures, role models, and can easily build on the cognitive and learning styles of children from diverse populations. As such, the results of this study may have a significant impact on teacher education programs by making preservice teachers more aware of the impact their attitudes and perceptions have on the culturally diverse students they will service.

Definition of Terms

African American - A member of an ethnic group in the United States whose ancestors, usually in predominant part, were indigenous to Africa (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 b). Many African Americans have European, Native American, and/or Asian ancestry (U.S. Census Bureau). Ogbu (2002) suggests that African Americans have an oppositional collective identity that began to form before emancipation and has remained to the present. This collective identity according

to Ogbu, refers to a sense of who they are, their “we-feeling,” or “belonging.” African Americans express their collective identity with emblems or cultural symbols which reflect their attitudes, beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and language or dialect.

Culturally Responsive Teaching - Using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them (Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, Davis & Bridgest, 2003).

Emotional and Behavior Disorders (EBD) - Many terms are used interchangeably to classify children who exhibit extreme or unacceptable chronic behavior and/or emotional problems that significantly impede academic and social progress (Forness & Knitzer, 1992).

European American/White - A European American, or more commonly a Euro American, is an American of European descent, usually referring to White people or Caucasians (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 a).

Learning Style- According to Dunn and Dunn (1993), learning style is the way each individual begins to concentrate on, process, internalize, and remember new and difficult information or skills.

Overrepresentation in Special Education - Minority overrepresentation occurs when the percentage of a culturally different group is greater in special education classes than in the regular education program (Patton, 1998).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law mandating that all children with disabilities have available to them a free and appropriate education (IDEA, 1997).

Low-Effort Syndrome- Suggests that African American students do not try hard in school, exhibit behavior problems, and dissuade peers from seeking high achievement (Ogbu, 1989).

Slang – The use of highly informal words and expressions that are not considered standard in the

speaker's dialect or language. Slang is very often colloquial; the language and dialect tend to be specific to a population or territory (Dumas & Lighter, 1978).

Special Education - Describes an educational alternative that focuses on the teaching of students with academic, behavioral, health, or physical needs that cannot sufficiently be addressed using traditional educational programs or techniques (Turnbull & Rutherford, 1993).

Verve- African American people often place a high value on unique expressions. Boykin (1992) calls this element verve.

Verbal Response – The ability to express one's own concept verbally in a discreet, relevant, and approximately factual manner (Fletcher & Reynolds, 2004).

Standard Walking Style- A standard walk is characterized by a straight head, erect posture, coordinated leg and arm swing, and a steady brisk pace (Neal et al., 2003).

Stroll- A tilted head, swaggered or bent posture, one foot dragging and an exaggerated knee bend (Neal et al., 2003).

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The Overrepresentation of African Americans in EBD Programs

The purpose of this section is to discuss the overrepresentation of minorities in special education programs. After reviewing the literature, there appears to be several recurring themes that are based on basic assumptions, worldviews, beliefs, as well as statistical data (Patton, 1998). These include: issues concerning parenting practices, a shortage of African American male teachers, cultural discontinuity, high-stakes testing, differences in learning styles, and placement issues including inappropriate referrals, and biased assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Ogbu's (1981) Cultural-Ecological Approach will serve as the theoretical construct for this study. Recommendations to address the disproportionate representation of African Americans in special education, specifically in EBD programs, will also be discussed.

Youth and Parental Correlates of African American Males and Academic Achievement

African American students have experienced poor academic achievement at disproportionately higher rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Kaufman, Kwon, and Klein (2000) suggest that African Americans continue to experience lower high school graduation rates than the overall population (56% compared to 71% overall). Research indicates that the family environment and parenting practices play a significant role in influencing the psychological and physiological paths of African American students (Aquilino & Supple, 2001).

Ogbu (2003) cites the failure to engage in consistent parent-child interactions as an explanation of the disappointing academic performance of African American children. Schwartz (2003) suggests that due to economic pressures, the need for African American parents to work long hours to earn an adequate income accounts for some of the problem. Ogbu further concludes that there is a belief among some African American parents that they fulfill their

educational obligations for their children by simply living in suburban areas and paying hefty school taxes. However, these same parents are failing to attend parent-teacher meetings, to supervise their children's homework, and to take an aggressive role in their child's learning (Ogbu).

Studies examining the role of parenting styles of African Americans and academic achievement have yielded less consistent and more mixed results (Attaway & Bry, 2004). Most of the research in this area relies on data involving parenting *practices* used by parents of African American males, as opposed to parenting *styles* (e.g., authoritarian and authoritative), because parenting practices are posited to influence youth outcomes more directly than parenting styles (Aquilino & Supple, 2001).

With regard to parenting practices, research indicates that "control" is among the major pathways by which African American parents influence psychological trajectories (Aquilino & Supple, 2001). Parental control is defined as practices of influence used across different areas of a child's life, e.g., supervision/monitoring, restrictiveness, punitiveness, hostility, and psychological coercion (Clark, Dogan, & Akbar, 2003). In studies with representative numbers of African American youth, control practices characterized by hostility and psychological coercion were significantly related to poor psychological outcomes (Clark et al.; Paschall, 2003). For example, Paschall found that coercive parenting control practices were among the main factors related to significant behavior problems in African American students in school.

Similarly, Walker-Barnes and Mason (2001) found that the use of coercive and guilt induced parental control practices were associated with poor behavior outcomes (e.g., gang involvement and delinquency). Moreover, it is suggested that the use of guilt induction, psychological withdrawal, or constant communication of dissatisfaction may be interpreted by African American youth to mean that such aggression, manipulative, and coercive practices are

acceptable ways of interacting with others (Walker-Barnes & Mason). A study by Attaway and Bry (2004) also found that the greater the amount of control that African American parents felt they should have, the lower their children's grades were.

It is probable that parenting practices involving coercive and guilt induction are associated with poorer outcomes because they hamper the recognition of scholastic issues, (e.g., homework completion and unsatisfactory grades), problem behaviors (classroom disruption, truancy, sexual promiscuity, smoking, and drug use) psychological symptoms (mood changes, anxiousness, and somatic complaints), and negative peer association (Clark et al., 2003).

Involved, supportive, and vigilant parenting that features high levels of instrumental and emotional support along with knowledge of youth's activities and extra familiar relationships promote cognitive and behavioral self-regulations that enable youth to be more resilient (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Low levels of repetitive arguing between a parent and child are particularly important to the development of self-regulating behavior during early adolescence (Luthar et al.). It suggests that the parent and youth are able to resolve disagreements through means other than anger-laden interactions (Brody & Ge, 2001). As a result, African American youth become more inclined to adopt their parent's norms and behave in accordance with those norms in their parents' absence, for example in the school setting (Brody & Ge).

Clark and others (2003) examined the effects of youth and parenting factors on school functioning in preadolescent African American males. Results of the study indicated that exposure to aggressive and coercive behaviors are related to an increased propensity of youth to display similar behaviors in school as youth may come to view these behaviors as normative or adaptive.

There is also a great deal of concern about the absence of fathers in African American families and the negative effects this may have on the development of young African American

males (Mincy, 1994). Single African American mothers are often reported to have limited financial resources, greater social isolation, and fewer coping resources than mothers in a two-parent family, which may limit their ability to monitor, supervise, and communicate effectively with their children (Paschall, 2003). Not surprisingly, the majority of studies to date with a focus on the effects of living in a single parent versus two-parent household suggest significantly higher incidence of delinquent behavior (Paschall). However, many of these studies do not specify the ethnicity of the families. Harris, Terrel, and Allen (1999) suggest that African American mothers with more formal education in comparison to their counterparts, provided more structure, verbal guidance, and elaboration when teaching their children. Moreover, Brounstein, Hatry, Atschuler, and Blair (1989) found no association between family structure (or father absence) and delinquent behavior in African American males.

African American Teachers

At the end of the year 2000, children from minority backgrounds comprised one-third of all students enrolled in public schools, and it is projected that by the year 2020, this figure will increase to 40% (Cusher et al., 1996). However, the majority of public school teachers are from backgrounds with limited exposure to cultural diversity (Cooper, 2003). In fact, 95% of elementary school teachers are middle-class, Caucasian females (Zimpher & Ashburn, 1989). Jones (2002) also found that White women make up more than 83% of the nation's elementary school teachers, followed by African American women, then men. It is important to note, however, that the state of Florida is not representative of the entire country regarding the shortage of African American teachers. According to the Florida Department of Education (May 2002), for every African American teacher, there are 36 African American students.

Graybill (1997) suggested that the need for more African American teachers was not as much of a concern before schools desegregated, because African American teachers usually

taught African American students. Unfortunately, in 1970, African Americans accounted for only 12% of the teaching profession (Singh, 1996). In 1991, the number dropped to 8% (King, 1993). Singh also reported that in 1996, the proportion of White, middle-class, female, American teachers increased to approximately 95%. Based on these projections, one can only assume that the proportion of African American teachers has continued to decline significantly.

Despite the need for proportionate representation of African American teachers, few studies have actually focused on prospective African American teachers: who they are and why they want to teach (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992). Of those studies, researchers have found a number of attitudes and techniques that are unique to African American teachers when compared to their counterparts (McCray, Sindelar, Kilgore, & Neal, 2002). These categories include: socio-cultural awareness, contextual interpersonal skills, self-understanding, risk-taking, and perceived efficacy (Sachs, 2004). Batchelder (2002) suggests that the African American sermonic style - following the teacher as preacher model - actually lessened the social distance between African American teachers and students, and created identification with indigenous African American cultural norms.

Hoffman (2001) suggests that African American teachers tend to be more direct and firm in their handling of students. They tend to employ a teaching style filled with rhythmic language and rapid intonation with many instances of repetition, call and response, high emotional involvement, creative analogies, figurative language, gestures and body movements, symbolism, aphorisms, and lively and often spontaneous discussion (Hoffman). Irvine (2006) also cites African American educators' more informal attempts at connecting with students. For example, they often tease and joke with their students using dialect or slang, and they show concern for students directly by expressing interest in their personal lives (Irvine).

Sympathy for the students' situation is part of what drives the role of advocacy in African American teachers (Batchelder, 2002). Many see themselves as the last person standing between their inner city students and the street culture that consumes so many of them (Batchelder). As such, African American teachers typically perceive themselves as parental surrogates and advocates for their African American students (Milner, 2004).

Shortage of African American Male Teachers.

Research suggests that African American boys are more likely than their European counterparts to fail academically, be assigned to special education placement, drop out of school, and be incarcerated (Singh, 1996). Historically, African American male teachers, therefore, have been viewed as having a father's firm discipline and unquestioned authority that helps African American male students steer clear of violence and discipline (Graybill, 1997).

The African American male teaching style is unique and correlated with achievement gains by African American students (Okezie, 2003). The reason for this success is believed to be the understanding of African American male students' needs that African American male teachers have derived from their own backgrounds (Batchelder, 2002). Kunjufu (1992) suggests that being a male in a classroom designed for female students is especially hard on African American males, who can go from kindergarten through sixth grade and the only African American role models they are most likely to see are the custodian, security guard, or physical education teacher.

Thirty-five years ago, it was common for African American men to go into the teaching profession, as it was one of the few professions open to them (Basinger, 1999). Okezie (2003) cites specific reasons for the current lack of African American males in the teaching profession. They include: the watered down curriculum that minority students receive in elementary and secondary schools; strong competition from non-teaching professionals that offer higher salaries

and better status to top graduates; the increase in testing requirements in many states, that effectively discourages some minority men (who are adversely affected by tests) from pursuing teaching careers; and the heavy reliance on loans in college financial aid packages.

This is unfortunate because children who connect with their teachers are in turn more likely to become engaged in their schoolwork, learn to read, achieve academic self-efficacy, and have self-discipline (Ladson-Billings, 2000). As a result, children who master those skills are less likely to be referred and placed in special education programming (Ladson-Billings).

Cultural Discontinuity

An often-cited reason for school failure and referral to special education for African American students is the cultural incongruence between their home and school settings (Dunn, 1968; Graybill, 1997; Kea & Utley, 1998; Townsend, 2002b). In other words, mismatches involving differences or cultural discontinuity between home and school may contribute to disharmony in school settings (Townsend). Cultural discontinuity occurs when the student's language, behavior and/or learning style are Afrocentric, while the teacher, administrator and school structure are Eurocentric (Graybill).

Boykin and Toms (1985) identified nine dimensions of African American culture that encompass the essence of African American experiences and interactions. They are: spirituality, harmony, movement, verve, affect, communalism, expressive individualism, oral tradition, and social time perspectives of ecological interactions (Boykin & Toms).

A cultural emphasis on the interweaving of movement, rhythm, percussion, music, and dance has been central to the psychological health and development of African Americans (Boykin & Toms). One example of stylized movement, often referred to as the "cool pose," is considered characteristic of many African American males (Majors & Billson, 1992). According to Majors and Billson, the cool pose is a ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors,

scripts, physical posturing, impression management and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message of pride, strength, and control. African American boys, according to this perspective, adopt a strategy for coping with group membership that appears to be incompatible with identification with academics (Yeakey, 2002). Unfortunately, these types of cultural behaviors are sometimes viewed negatively and sometimes threatening by European American schools (Ogbu, 2002).

Neal, McCray, Davis, Webb-Johnson, and Bridgest (2003) examined teachers' perceptions of African American vs. European American males' aggression, achievement, and the need for special education based on cultural movement styles (e.g., a standard vs. non-standard walking style). According to the authors, a non-standard walking style, also referred to as a stroll, which is used by some African American adolescent males, was characterized as a deliberate swaggered or bent posture, with the head held slightly tilted to the side, one foot dragging, and an exaggerated knee bend [dip] (Neal et al.). Results of the study indicated that teachers perceived African American and European American students displaying African American culture-related movement styles (stroll) as lower in achievement, higher in aggression, and more likely to need special education services than students with standard movement styles (Neal et al.).

Cultural Differences in Learning Styles

According to Dunn and Dunn (1993), learning styles are the way each individual begins to concentrate on, process, internalize, and remember new and difficult information or skills. Learning styles vary with age, achievement level, culture, and global versus analytical processing (Milgram, Dunn, & Price, 1993). A body of literature exists dedicated to presenting persuasive arguments that African Americans' cognitive functioning and learning styles differ when compared to their European American counterparts (Ferguson, 1998).

Differences in the learning styles of African Americans versus European Americans, continues to be a controversial subject. Although African Americans have made vast strides in educational attainment, as a group they continue to be high on the list of being at risk for school failure (Boykin, 1992). In 1986, only 60% of all African Americans aged 26 and older had earned a high school diploma (Allen & Majida-Ahi, 1989). Moreover, between 1997 and 1999, African Americans ages 20 to 24 who had dropped out of school were more than twice as likely to be unemployed compared to White youth who had dropped out of school (US Department of Education, 2001).

According to the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), 63% of African American 4th graders read below grade level, compared to 27% of their White peers (Jones, 2002). Moreover, Jones suggests that children who are unable to read by 4th grade face a downward spiral in their academic achievement. In fact, it is suggested that these students will likely lack academic self-efficacy, as they will not be able to complete reading and writing assignments or pass tests that help them move on to higher grades (Whaley & Smyer, 1998). These children often end up in special education programs and/or drop out of school (Patton & Townsend, 2001).

Hale (1986) suggests that African American children have a more relational, person-oriented learning style than White children. Some characteristics of the relational style are a tendency to be self-centered, global, emotional, over-involved in all activities, unaware of structure, and focused on the unique and discrete (Gilbert & Gay, 1985). African Americans also personify the abstract and perceive the field as responding to the person (Sleeter & Grant, 1988). African Americans are said to be Gestalt learners; they embed words in context for meaning and have fluent spoken language with strong, colorful expressions (Hale). This style is in sharp

contrast to and leads to conflict in schools which value rules, standardization, conformity, control, memory for specific facts, logical and hierarchical organization, and scheduling (Hale).

Boykin (1992) notes the most important learning styles of African American students:

Expressive: African American people place a high value on unique expression. Boykin calls this element “verve.” African American students often spend time developing a style of expression in both language and dress that is singularly theirs. The contrasting trait among White students is compliance. African American students also have a low tolerance for monotony. Traditional ways of controlling children’s behavior by disallowing their expressiveness may in fact be discouraging them from learning.

Affective: African American children are said to be more feeling oriented than White children. They hold values and personal belief systems as more important than logic and abstractions. African Americans like working in cooperative more than in the competitive mode. Because schooling becomes more impersonal and less affective as children proceed from K-12, the more feeling oriented child may have a sense of isolation that leads to dropping out of school.

Movement Oriented: African American households have fewer restrictions on movement than white households. Continual and continuous movement is encouraged especially in developing body expressiveness. People flow in and out of many African American homes, dialogue is continuous and overlapping, the radio and TV are on. Movement is a way of life.

Person Centered: African American children tend to be person centered and look to the person in authority for social cues and behavior. Unlike their white peers, they are more likely to overlook cues that are oral unless spoken directly to them.

Additionally, Willis (1989) suggests that the learning styles of African American children also tend to be harmonious: African American children tend to respect and encourage the interdependence and harmonic/communal aspects of people and environment. They seek

knowledge for practical, utilitarian, and relevant purposes as well as holistic approaches to experiences.

Boykin (1992) suggests that overall White teachers tend to interact less often with African American males than with females or white students. While White teachers typically demonstrate considerable concern and interest in White female's academic work, they tend to pay more attention to the social behaviors of African American males (Boykin; Bahr & Fuchs, 1991). Kunjufu (2002) reports that the reality is that teachers do not know how to deal with African American boys, and their expectations for them are minimal. He asks, "What's a boy supposed to be good at?" "If they learn from TV, they're supposed to be good at rapping or sports" (Kunjufu). In his research, Kunjufu asked teachers what causes the achievement gap between African American and white students. According to Kunjufu, the vast majority of them reported it to be genetics, low-income and fatherlessness. Kunjufu suggests that this sort of subconscious or conscious racism can destroy a child's self-esteem.

Boykin (2002) found that African Americans are socially accepting of their peers who are high achievers through dimensions of African American culture (e.g., communication, verve, movement), but less accepting or even rejecting of peers who are high in achievement via conformity to mainstream cultural dictates of individualism and competition. These findings support Ogbu's Cultural-Ecological Approach, which suggests that minorities view school as an inappropriate aspect of "proper" African American identity (Ogbu, 1992). Ogbu argues that African American children are encouraged to value aspects of society that are in opposition to White values.

Kunjufu (2002) also suggests that low expectations are not the only reason African American children aren't doing well in school. He suggests that African American children often associate being smart with being "White." This affects their academic and behavior

performance as well as their self-esteem (Kunjufu). African American boys are especially looked down on if they choose to study instead of hanging out with their “homeboys.” Kunjufu states, “unless a young brotha can fight, play basketball, rap, and wear nice clothes, he’s not going to be “down” p.12.

The Need for an Afrocentric Curriculum

Asante (1991) argues that providing African American students with an Afrocentric curriculum would enhance their self-esteem and learning. The framework for an Afrocentric curriculum would include revising the current curriculum to embrace a more African-centered curriculum base inspired by the history of Africans and the research and writing of African American scholars, where phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person (Keto, 1990).

Other authors, for example Kunjufu (2002), lend support to this position that an Afrocentric curriculum results in improved overall academic performance by African American students. A sub issue of this theory involves providing not only an Afrocentric curriculum for African American students, but also all male classes or predominantly African American neighborhood male schools (Townsend, 2002a). Advocates for the Afrocentric curriculums, taught in single-sex schools, by African American male teachers suggest that this type of program will combat the present epidemic of academic failure and male on male violence (Asante, 1991).

Asante (1991) suggests that in Afrocentric educational settings, teachers do not marginalize African American children by causing them to question their own self-worth, because their people’s story is seldom told (Asante). The assumption is that, if African American children were taught to be fully aware of the struggles of their African forebearers, they would find a renewed sense of purpose and vision in their own lives (Ogbu, 2002). Jones

(2002) suggests that African American children will make the connection and increase their academic self-efficacy if they have textbooks that show African American scientists, lawyers and doctors that they can identify with.

Some authors denounce this movement as an extreme example of a “cult of ethnicity” (Harris, 1992; Schlesinger, 1991). It is suggested that the sweeping call for an Afrocentric curriculum is based on untested, unproved premises (Schlesinger). Moreover, because it intentionally exaggerates differences, it seems likely to exacerbate racial and ethnic tensions (Ravitch, 1990). Would it then be necessary to give all cultures separate curriculums to ensure equitable treatment, e.g., Native Americans, Puerto Rican/Latin and Asian American (Ravitch)? Moreover, does an Afrocentric curriculum suggest that only African Americans can teach other African Americans (Ravitch)? This leads to the assumption that because only African Americans can comprehend the African American experience, only African Americans should teach African American history leading to the assumption that African Americans can teach and write only African American history. Thus, Chinese people must be restricted to Chinese history, and so forth (Ravitch). Ravitch also questions whether an Afrocentric curriculum implies that African American students are not capable of a first-class education, because they learn, “differently.”

Ravitch (1990) further implies that once ethnic pride and self-esteem become the criterion for teaching history, other important things cannot be taught. He suggests that the cult of an Afrocentric curriculum exaggerates differences, intensifies resentments and antagonisms, and drives even deeper the awful wedges between races and nationalities. Others suggest that the end game is self-pity and self-ghettoization and Afrocentricity as expounded by ethnic ideologues implies Europhobia, separatism, emotions of alienation, victimization, and paranoia (Harris, 1992; Schlesinger, 1991).

High Stakes Testing

The debate over high stakes testing as it relates to accountability continues to be one of the most central issues facing public education (Townsend, 2002c). Moreover, now confronted with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the glaring racial gaps in academic skills raise even more questions about the educational system, and the African American community has responded by attacking schools, teachers, and even the tests themselves (Townsend).

Critics of high stakes testing charge that the tests are not worthless but they are racially biased (Kwate, 2001). Supporters of this view suggest that high stakes testing is abusive, inaccurate, meaningless, and a highly effective means of social control (Kwate; Townsend, 2002c). Those opposed to high stakes testing also suggest that if society takes children who are already getting a bad education and coming from a situation of social crisis, and then makes them unemployable in the process, we are not helping them or their communities (Townsend, 2002c). Myers (2002) argues that while all high-stakes assessments should not be condemned, they can spell trouble in terms of equity since students in high poverty areas and many minority students tend to score lower than their counterparts on these assessments.

Others argue that high-stakes assessments underestimate the strength of African American students, especially in the area of content bias (Noll, 2001). The rationale is that tests that assess vocabulary and reading skills pose a complicated issue, since some African American students come from homes in which “African American English or Ebonics,” rather than standard English is spoken (Noll). Conversely, advocates of high-stakes testing argue that: (1) math tests are not racially biased and (2) students who hope to do well in American society need to know standard English at least by the time they complete high school (Sattler, 2001).

The National Education Association [NEA] (2000) is advocating for what it terms, “smarter testing.” For example, the NEA advocates the use of portfolios for example, as an

alternate assessment tool. The NEA further contends that although portfolios are inadequate as a complete measure of acquired academic skills, they might be a valuable part of information about a student's skills and knowledge. Critics of the "smarter tests" argue that the portfolio would not substitute for a good history test or adequate high school exit exam (Noll, 2001). Advocates of high stakes testing further argue that when the NEA calls for so-called "smarter-tests" like portfolios, it is really objecting to the basic idea that all students must be able to display a certain measurable level of competence in the basic subjects (Noll).

The Referral, Assessment, and Labeling Process

Referral. Suspicion that teachers are biased in their referral judgment has also produced considerable interest (Abidin & Robinson, 2002). Academic-related problems are believed to be the primary reason for teachers' decisions to refer students for special education services. However, researchers have demonstrated that student misbehavior is the most influential factor in teachers' decisions to refer a student for special education (Skiba, McLeskey, Waldron, & Grizzle, 1993).

With regard to behavior problems, it appears that teachers are more likely to refer students exhibiting externalizing behavior problems significantly more often than students exhibiting internalizing behavior problems (Greene, Clopton & Pope, 1996). Although teachers' opinions are extremely important in determining eligibility for special education, research suggests that students labeled as EBD are typically based on teacher complaints, not actual behavioral assessment data (McIntyre, 1990). This suggests that if teachers are stressed by the particular behavior of a student, they may become unrealistically biased in their judgments, resulting in referral for special education placement for the child (McIntyre). Abidin and Robinson (2002) found that the best predictors of teachers' judgments about the likelihood of referring a student are the teachers' perceptions and judgments about the presence of

externalizing behavioral problems. When teachers are not aware of the dimensions of culturally diverse students, they can misinterpret cultural behaviors as misbehaviors (Hosp & Reschly, 2003). For example, an African American student who is very active and verbal is often referred to as “loud, rude, and hyperactive” (Neal, et al., 2003). He might, however, be demonstrating his social propensity toward stylized movement and a *vervistic* (enthusiastic, energetic, and spirited expression) mode of interaction (Neal, et al.).

As part of the pre referral process, multidisciplinary teams (MDT's) are mandated to: (a) support students' educational functioning through systematic group problem solving and intervention, and (b) offer protection against bias to students who may be referred for special education assessment (Knotek, 2003). However, given the number of African Americans who are over represented in special education programs, there are obvious concerns about the actual objectivity and fairness of the MDT process (Patton, 1998).

Assessment. Programs for Emotional/Behavior Disorders (EBD) are one of the most common special education placements for African American males in the school setting (Hilliard, 1992). Andrews, Wisniewski, & Mulick (1997) found that African American males are two times more likely to be referred for services in EBD programs than African American female students. Moreover, serious concerns have been expressed regarding the assessment of EBD with culturally diverse students.

The most commonly used assessment in the diagnosis of EBD is the behavior rating scale, e.g., the Achenbach Behavior Rating Scale (Sattler, 2001). One of the strengths of behavior rating scales is that the large number of subjects used in developing rating scales allows for normative comparisons (Barkley, 1990). However, there is a growing body of literature that suggests that cross-cultural factors are not adequately addressed in these assessments, leading to

outcomes of psychological factors being independent of cultural factors (Marsella & Kameoka, 1989).

Another assessment commonly used in the diagnosis of EBD measures intellectual ability, referred to as IQ tests. Helms (1992) argues that because intelligence tests like the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) are heavily loaded with White cultural influences, test scores essentially measure mastery of White culture. Kwate (2001) suggests that IQ tests do not access African American children's ability to problem solve within a liberating framework or to produce self-sustaining behaviors, and fails to incorporate African American ways of knowing.

Advocates of intelligence testing suggest that if culturally and linguistically diverse children obtain low scores, it means that the educational system needs to be improved, not that IQ tests should be abandoned (Sattler, 2001). Sattler suggests that several studies have examined the validity of intelligence or vocabulary tests for culturally and linguistically diverse children, supporting the conclusion that intelligence tests are generally good predictors of academic outcomes and measure the same abilities for African Americans, Hispanic American, and European American children.

Another argument against assessments used for EBD is that culturally and linguistically diverse children are handicapped in taking intelligence and other standardized tests because of differences in motivation, test practice, test anxiety, and limited exposure to the culture (Sattler, 2001). Research disputing this argument suggests that these areas of concern regarding standard scores are also true of the children belonging to the majority culture (Frisby, 1993). In fact, there is little evidence that African American children learn in ways that are fundamentally different from the ways that European American and/or children from low socioeconomic status communities learn (Frisby).

A final argument postulates that rapport and communication problems exist between White examiners and minority children that result in negative outcomes (Sattler, 2001). The argument is that examiners may exhibit paternalism, excessive empathy, indulgence, reactive fear, or inhibition for African American students (Sattler). In turn, African American children may exhibit fear, suspicion, verbal constriction, strained and unnatural reactions or facades of stupidity to avoid appearing “uppity” or possibility of personal threat (Sattler). A careful study of the literature in this area refutes the myth of racial examiner effects (Sattler & Gwynn, 1982). In fact, Quay (1974) found that African American children scored no higher on standardized tests when the examiner was African American and administered the test in African American dialect.

Attempts to develop tests that have been culturally loaded have not been successful. Williams (1972) developed a 100 item multiple-choice test termed the African American Intelligence Test of Cultural Homogeneity (BITCH) based on items drawn from the African American culture. Unfortunately, several studies reported that the BITCH has questionable validity and did not appear to be useful in the assessment of the cognitive ability of African American children (Long & Anthony, 1974).

Assessments can provide valuable information on minority children’s cognitive strengths and weaknesses and assist in evaluating change and progress. Doing away with standardized assessments would deprive clinicians and educators of vital information needed to assess children (Sattler, 2001). Despite arguments that intelligence tests lack cultural validity and fail to measure African American ways of knowing, they provide good indices of future levels of academic success and performance as defined by the majority culture (Sattler).

Sattler (2001) suggests that probably no test can be created that eliminates the influence of learning and cultural experience; therefore every test is culturally loaded to some extent. He further suggests that intelligence and standardized tests are not tests of intelligence in some

abstract, culture free way. They are measures of the ability to function intellectually by virtue of knowledge and skills in the culture of which they are a sample (Sattler).

Labeling. The influence of negative labels such as EBD, are believed to have deleterious effects on the treatment of and outcomes for African American males (Patton, 1998). Compared to their counterparts, African American males are statistically less likely to succeed academically, more likely to drop out, and more likely to be imprisoned both as teenagers and as adults (Kunjufu, 2002). Experts believe those troubles work in a vicious circle, with each risk factor raising the odds of the other (Hosp & Reschly, 2003). Moreover, Artiles and Trent (1994) suggest that research into the effectiveness of special education placement has been inconclusive and occasionally contradictory.

Cultural Competency in Teacher Training Programs

Cultural competence is defined as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991). Educators who are unfamiliar with movement as a dimension of the African American culture for example, may be at risk of developing and maintaining perceptions of learners who demonstrate the stylized movement that is affirmed and supported by their culture (Neal, et al., 2003).

Teacher education programs have a responsibility to prepare education majors for working with diverse populations and implementing an effective multicultural curriculum (Van Hook, 2002). Teachers may have preconceived ideas about teaching diverse populations based on their unique socialization process and previous experiences (Van Hook). This is of significance because what teachers say, perceive, believe, and think can either support or thwart student success (Nel, 1992).

A significant part of acquiring cultural competency entails transforming the culturally isolated backgrounds of education majors in order for them to become aware and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds of the students they will teach. Conversely, Kea and Bacon (2000) suggest that the achievement of this goal is not only unattainable, but also that teacher education programs have limited ideas and methods for the successful realization of this goal.

Van Hook (2002) investigated preservice teachers' perceived barriers for implementing a multicultural curriculum as part of their teacher education program. Results of the study revealed several themes identified by preservice teachers including: difficulty discussing sensitive topics, e.g., race and religion for fear of creating controversy; policies and practices detrimental to diversity; difficulty implementing diversity curriculum, e.g., developing the curriculum, teaching strategies, time constraints and financial constraints; and an inability by many segments of the population to recognize and accept diversity, e.g., society, teachers, parents and children (Van Hook).

In a survey of preservice teachers who were asked to consider their level of comfort in working with culturally diverse populations and developing a multicultural curriculum, only 20% of preservice teachers reported feeling adequately prepared to work with culturally diverse children (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999). Schultz (1996) suggests that preservice teachers are fairly naïve and have stereotypic beliefs about children from urban settings. Preservice teachers are reported to have a tendency to use colorblindness as a way of coping with fear and ignorance, which carries over into the classroom (Schultz). Preservice teachers of color, on the other hand, bring a richer multicultural knowledge-base to teacher education (Su, 1997). They are generally more committed to multicultural teaching, social justice, and providing children of color with an academically challenging curriculum (Su).

Theoretical Framework: The Cultural Ecological Approach (CEA)

Why do certain American minorities, particularly African American males do so poorly in school as compared to their counterparts? Ogbu (1992) suggests that when compared to their counterparts, African Americans do poorly because they do not apply themselves. However, this lack of effort, or “low effort syndrome,” Ogbu maintains, has to be understood as a result of the students’ adaptation to the limited opportunities to benefit from their education. In other words, there is considerable interplay between African American students’ lack of motivation on one hand, and their lack of opportunity in a white-dominated society on the other (Schwartz, 2003).

The CEA speaks to involuntary or non-immigrant minorities who see school as an inappropriate aspect of “proper” African American identity. Ogbu argues that African American children are encouraged to value other aspects of society, usually whatever is in opposition to White values, as appropriate for themselves. He labels this phenomenon cultural inversion (Ogbu, 1999). According to Ogbu, cultural inversion refers to the process whereby symbols, (e.g., dress, language, and behaviors) that are associated with a dominant culture are deemed inappropriate for a subordinate culture. He suggests that cultural inversion eventually leads to an “alternate cultural frame of reference,” for some African Americans. The inversions remain because there are few incentives to give them up while members of those groups still feel subjugated and oppressed (Ogbu).

More specifically, Ogbu (1992) suggests that African American academic underachievement results from the historical ill treatment of African Americans leading to unconscious decisions for them to choose not to compete for academic attainment, preferring other means, e.g., hustling, leading to behavior resulting in high rates of disciplinary action, referral to special education programs, and school failure. Moreover, African Americans identify academic achievement as being in opposition of their cultural norms (Ogbu , 2003). Thus,

African Americans are “punished” for behaving like Whites (Ogbu, 1999). In the African American culture, “acting White” refers to e.g., dressing conservatively, speaking standard English, taking honors classes, earning good grades and studying (Bergin, 2003). As a result, African Americans adopt a negative strategy for coping, not wanting to face the burden of ‘acting White’ if they have academic success (Ogbu, 1999).

Figure Caption

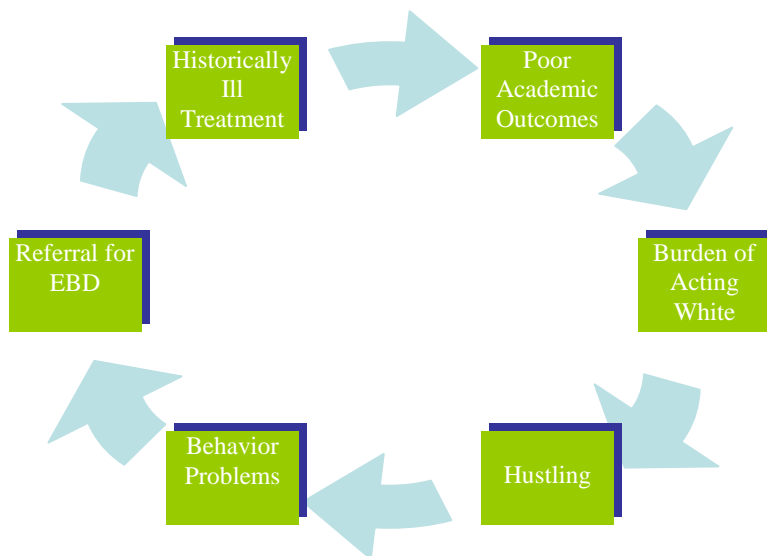


Figure 1. Model of Ogbu’s Cultural Ecological Approach (CEA).

Summary: Moving From Overrepresentation to Decisive Action

The state of education in many communities of color, as well as in many poor White communities, is in a state of crisis (Sleeter, 2001). Students are underachieving, becoming disengaged, and dropping out of school at alarming rates, regardless of ethnicity (Sleeter).

Asante (1991) argues that having an Afrocentric curriculum promises to not only enhance the self-esteem of African American children, but to increase their academic achievement. African American students benefit from seeing themselves in the context of teaching and learning environments (Asante). He suggests that rather than attempting to control African

American students, teachers will benefit from teaching African American students to control their own behaviors (Asante). This can be done by: (a) identifying students' strengths and needs; (b) constructing logical meaning of students' movement styles and other nonverbal communications; and (c) developing approaches and teaching methods aimed at preventing students' alienation (Neal, et al, 2003). By doing so, teachers are promoting improved student support and interactions that in turn discourage perceptions of aggression and non-compliance (Townsend, 2002b).

Gay (2000) suggests that there are some elements that have direct implications for teaching and understanding behaviors of diverse ethnic groups. These elements include: values, communication styles, contributions, social problems, levels of ethnic identity development, and affiliation. Teachers must also avoid measuring African American students against the European American norm, which leads to thinking in terms of deficit education and compensatory skills, rather than focusing on how best to accommodate individual learning styles (Graybill, 1997). For example, research suggests that the learning style of African American students tends towards cooperation, discussion, a focus tied to people, hands on activities, and "whole-to-part," learning (Gilbert & Gay, 1985). However, their European American counterparts tend toward independent, reading-oriented, "part to whole," learning (Gilbert & Gay).

Van Hook (2002) concluded that many preservice teachers expressed the belief that parents are not as knowledgeable as they should be, and are therefore, less caring of their children. He also found that, of those preservice teachers surveyed, 63% identified parents as the greatest obstacle to teaching in diverse classroom and promoting an anti-bias curriculum. For example, Van Hook found that preservice teachers believed that parents would oppose and perhaps prevent teachers from integrating culturally diverse teaching in the classroom. Additional investigation of preservice teachers' perceived barriers will hopefully assist teacher

educators in the identification of themes for reflection, (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, and past experiences). Cabello and Burstein (1995) also suggest that a reflection on one's attitudes and beliefs will have a significant impact on perceived barriers for preservice teachers as well as veteran educators, which will in turn allow for effective integration of diversity in the classroom.

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT).

Gay (2000) suggests that in order for education reform to be successful for African American students, as well as other minority groups, it is imperative to implement the concept of Cultural Responsive Teaching (CRT). CRT as defined by Gay is the concept of using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them. CRT involves critical cultural consciousness, cultural responsive classroom climates, learning communities, multicultural content, and culturally congruent strategies (Gay, 2002).

Culturally responsive teachers develop intellectual, social, emotional and political learning by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1992). For example, math instruction in a culturally responsive classroom would incorporate everyday-life concepts, such as economics, employment, and consumer habits of various ethnic groups (Gay, 2000).

Kea and Utley (1998) also suggest that models like CRT must be part of the curriculum for all teacher preparation programs. Thus, the graduates of such programs will be caring, child-centered, culturally affirming and competent teachers who are able to work effectively with diverse families and colleagues (Kea & Utley).

How can equal educational opportunities for all children be ensured? Can opportunities for the educational success for African American students be substantially improved by providing an Afrocentric curriculum as suggested by Asante (1991)? Or is there merit to the

contention that an Afrocentric curriculum has the potential to teach myths as facts, continue to isolate African Americans, and fail to address the problems of race and inequality in the schools as well as in society?

In summary, the education community must begin to understand and respect differences in race and culture as positive contributions to differences in learning, not differences in ability (Flowers & Richardson, 1996). Much can be said for the cultural richness, strong contextual interpersonal skills, supportive communication, and parental figuring that African American teachers bring into the classroom (Sachs, 2004). However, all educators, regardless of race must become more responsive to the needs of culturally diverse students through specialized training in multicultural education (Townsend, 2002b). Moreover, upon completion of coursework, teaching candidates should engage in a practicum experience in a culturally diverse setting with a successful supervising teacher (Townsend). As a result of CRT, children in these classrooms will know that they are valued, that the classroom is an emotionally safe and supportive place where they can be themselves, that learning is exciting, and that there is no negative or privileged stigma attached to the varying levels of ethnicity, ability or disability (Gay, 2002).

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used to examine the proposed research questions of the current study. The study examined the interaction effects between student ethnicity (African American and White), walking style (stroll and standard), and verbal response style (slang and standard), on education majors' ratings of student learning, behavior, the need for special education services, and positive and negative attributes. The data gathered for this research was obtained by asking education majors to respond to demographic questions; a questionnaire judging learning, behavior, and the need for special education services; and an adapted version of the Adjective Checklist (Gough & Heilbrun, 1983). The instruments were administered to the participants immediately after watching a short video in which the independent variables (ethnicity, walking style, and verbal response) were manipulated.

Research Questions

The researcher attempted to answer the following questions related to education majors' perceptions of adolescent males based on ethnicity, walking styles, and verbal response styles:

1. Does the walking style (stroll vs. standard) of African American adolescent males, compared with White adolescent males, affect education majors' perceptions of students' learning, behavior, need for referral for special education services, and attributes?
2. Does the verbal response style (slang vs. standard) of African American adolescent males, compared with White adolescent males, affect education majors' perceptions of students' learning, behavior, need for referral for special education services, and attributes?
3. Of those students who are perceived to need to be referred for special education services, in which disability category would they classify these students?

4. What are participants' overall perception of students, based on their ethnicity, walking style, and verbal response style, as measured by a checklist of attributes?

Method

Participants

One hundred and nine education majors attending a private university participated in this research study. This university was chosen, because its student body is racially, ethnically, and economically diverse. All participants were enrolled at the private university in the School of Education, majoring in either, Special Education, Reading, Pre-Kindergarten or Elementary Education. This group of students in education was chosen since the primary focus of this study was on education majors' perceptions of students.

As described in Table 1, a total of 17 (15.6%) males and 91 (83.5%) females participated in the study (one participant did not answer the gender question). There were 40 (40.4%) African Americans, 16 (14.7%) Whites, 31 (28.4%) Hispanics, and 15 (13.8%) participants who listed their ethnicity as other. Three participants did not answer this question. There were 7 (6.4%) undergraduates, 72 (66.1%) Masters/Specialists, and 30 (27.5%) Ph.D. students. Results indicated that there were 76 (69.7%) Special Education majors, 14 (12.8%) Reading majors, 3 (2.8%) Pre-Kindergarten majors, 2 (1.8%) Elementary Education majors, and 12 (11.0%) participants who listed their major as Other. Two participants did not answer this question.

Participants were asked to indicate if they were teaching at the time of data collection. Results indicated that 66 (60.6%) participants reported that they were teaching, and 41 (37.6%) participants were not teaching. Two participants did not answer this question. Although many participants were not teaching at the time of this data collection, 51(46.8%) reported having one year or less of teaching experience, 31 (28.4%) reported having two to four years of teaching experience, 22 (20.2%) reported having five or more years of teaching experience and five

participants did not report their years of teaching experience. The demographics of the sample are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Frequency Table for Gender, Ethnicity, Education Status, Program, Teaching Status, and Teaching Experience

	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	17	15.6
Female	91	83.5
Ethnicity		
African American	40	40.4
White	16	14.7
Hispanic	31	28.4
Other	15	13.8
Education Status		
Undergraduate	7	6.4
Masters/Specialist	72	66.1
Ph.D.	30	27.5
Program of Study		
Special Education	76	69.7
Reading	14	12.8
Pre-K	3	2.8
Elementary Education	2	1.8
Other	12	11.0
Currently Teaching		
Yes	66	60.6
No	41	37.6
Years of Teaching Experience		
1 or less	51	46.8
2 to 4	31	28.4
5 or more	22	20.2

Design and Procedure

Questionnaires. Two questionnaires were developed for this study for participants to complete. Section I of the first questionnaire requested demographic information from each participant regarding their gender, ethnicity, education status, program of study, and years of teaching experience. In Section II of the same questionnaire, participants were asked to ascertain whether either or both of the students in the video they watched had a learning problem and/or a behavior problem. This was followed by a question that used a 4-point Likert scale: (1 = very unlikely, 2 = unlikely, 3 = likely, and 4 = very likely) to determine if participants would rate the students in the video as needing special education services (see Appendix A). The question read as follows: “In your opinion, how likely is it that the student would need special education services?” If participants agreed that either or both of the students in the video would “likely or “very likely” need special education services, they were asked to suggest which category of disability the student would belong to. The question read as follows: “If likely or very likely, which category would you suggest that he would most likely belong: Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD) or Mentally Retarded (MR)?”

With respect to the second questionnaire, The Adjective Checklist [ACL] (Gough & Heilbrun, 1983) was used for the development of an adapted attributes checklist. The original ACL consists of 300 adjectives and adjectival phrases commonly used to describe a person’s personal attributes (Gough & Heilbrun). Although the checklist is arranged into 37 scales, the scales are highly related and should be interpreted in clusters rather than as measures of independent personality factors. The ACL may be administered to an individual to elicit a self-evaluation or a characterization of someone else; or it may be used by observers in a clinic, counseling center, or research laboratory as a convenient, standardized method for recording personal attributes of clients or research subjects (Gough & Heilbrun).

In general, the ACL appears to be a well developed and relatively reliable instrument. Gough and Heilbrun (1983) provide reliability data based upon internal consistency and test-retest data. The sample used to compute test-retest data for females was very small ($N = 45$) and restricted only to college students (Gough & Heilbrun). As such, generalizability of such reliability data to other groups included in the standardization sample is difficult to achieve (Gough & Heilbrun). Further reliability studies employing greater N s from the various groups employed in the standardization sample would improve the psychometric characteristics of the instrument (Gough & Heilbrun). Reliability coefficients for the various scales show wide variation (.34 to .95); however, median values in the mid 70's attest to generally adequate reliabilities for most of the scales (Gough & Heilbrun). The appendix in the manual provides correlational data with the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) and the California Personality Inventory (CPI) as well as several other test instruments, and the authors provide a brief section on factor analysis of the various scales. However, no attempt is made to summarize this data in terms of the ACL's validity as a personality measure.

For the purposes of this study, an adapted version of the ACL was created. The adapted checklist consisted of 113 positive and negative attributes (50 and 63, respectively) derived from eight of the 37 original subscales of the ACL. The adjectives selected for the creation of the checklist of attributes used in this study were based on their relevance to learning, behavior, and need for special education services.

A description of the eight subscales used for the development of the adapted checklist of attributes in this study is as follows:

Communality – To engage in the spirit of cooperation that exists among members of a community.

Achievement – To strive to be outstanding in pursuits of socially recognized significance.

Dominance – To seek and maintain a role as a leader in groups, or to be influential and controlling in individual relationships.

Aggression – To engage in behaviors that attack or hurt others.

Change – To seek novelty of experience and avoid routine.

Self-Control – To engage in behaviors that demonstrate discipline and restraint.

Personal Adjustment – To be aware of self-concern, feel satisfied with self, and appear socially at ease.

Adult – To engage in behaviors that demonstrate genuine dependability and reliability.

The adapted adjective checklist allowed participants to select both favorable and unfavorable attributes of the two students in the video based on their demonstration of walking style and verbal response. Each participant completed two adapted adjective checklists, one for each of the students in the video (See Appendices B and C).

Development of videotapes.

A scenario was developed to illustrate different walking styles and verbal response styles. The scenario was the same in each video, however the variables: student ethnicity (African American and White), walking style (stroll and standard), and verbal response style (slang and standard) were manipulated across each of the eight video conditions.

A middle/high school was selected as the venue for the filming of the videos to provide education majors with a visual background of a familiar location. An African American and a White student “actor” performed each walking style (standard and stroll) and verbal response style (standard and slang). A White adult male “acting” as a school administrator initiated the verbal exchange between himself and the student.

Each video scenario begins the same way, with the school bell ringing at a middle/high school to signify the changing of classes. A group of students is seen walking out of a classroom

and down a hallway. One of the student “actors” (African American or White) is then seen walking down the hallway alone, opposite of the other students (either with a standard walking style or a stroll walking style). In each video scenario, the administrator notices the student and calls out to him, “*Excuse me, young man, Excuse me, young man!*” The student stops and turns to face the administrator and responds to him with either a standard verbal response, “*Oh, I’m sorry, are you talking to me?*” or a slang verbal response, “*Man, What’s up?*” This scenario was developed because it is an image that can be routinely observed in middle/high school. Each video scenario lasted three minutes.

The faces of the student “actors” were blurred to avoid their identification. To control for dress, both student actors wore attire similar to what a middle/high school student would wear, e.g., blue jeans, athletic shoes and a white oversized T-shirt. To control for physical size, the student actors selected were of similar height and weight. To control for language variability, both actors were Americans. The adult “actor” wore a suit and tie. This attire was chosen for the adult actor as it represents a familiar presence of school administrators.

In summary, the African American and White student actors were eighth graders who performed the walking styles and verbal response styles as directed by the researcher. The adult actor who performed the role of the “school administrator,” was a White male who works at the school as a teacher. The two student actors signed a Consent for Collaboration, which was developed by the researcher, prior to participating in the development of the video (see Appendix D). The adult actor also signed a Consent for Collaboration, prior to participating in the development of the video (see Appendix E). All “actors” were selected by the researcher and compensated with gift cards of \$25.

Videotape Reliability and Validity. Five observers (a psychologist, a behavior specialist, an administrator, a professor and a teacher) previewed the videotaped scenario. After watching

the videotape, the observers completed a checklist that the researcher developed to confirm that the students' characteristics, such as height, weight, clothing, walking styles, and verbal response styles were similar (see Appendix F). Inter rater agreement was established when each observer, using the checklist, verified the similarities of the African American and White students, in their physical characteristics as well as their walking styles and verbal responses. Using the checklist, the observers also validated the scenario by confirming that students engaged in similar scenarios that are typical of middle school students.

Procedure

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher sought permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at a private University to protect the ethical integrity of this study and to protect all participants involved in it. To mitigate bias, neither the researcher nor her advisor discussed the purpose of the research with the professors of the classes used for this study. In addition, the study took place during a class when the topics were unrelated to cultural diversity in order to prevent the results from being skewed due to participants' sensitivity training on cultural diversity. Participants were only advised that they were participating in a study about observations of students.

The primary goal of this study was to investigate the interaction effects between student ethnicity, walking style, and verbal response style. As such, in each of the eight video conditions the ethnicity of the student actor (African American or White), walking style (standard or stroll) and verbal response (standard or slang) were manipulated.

Eight classes of education majors participated in this study. As mentioned previously, a total of eight video scenarios were filmed. The eight video scenarios were collapsed into four video groups; thus, each video included two video conditions or scenarios. In the final four developed videos, the appearance of the White or African American student was

counterbalanced, in such a way that some videos started with a scenario including the White actor, while other videos started with a scenario including the African American actor. Every two classes were assigned to watch one of the four videos, which each contained two video conditions as follows:

Video 1:

Video Condition 1 - African American student demonstrating a stroll walking style and a standard verbal response

Video Condition 2 - White student demonstrating a standard walking style and slang verbal response

Video 2:

Video Condition 3 - White student demonstrating a stroll walking style and a standard verbal response

Video Condition 4 - African American student demonstrating a standard walking style and a slang verbal response

Video 3:

Video Condition 5 - African American student demonstrating a stroll walking style and a slang verbal response

Video Condition 6 - White student with a standard walking style and standard verbal response

Video 4:

Video Condition 7 - White student demonstrating a stroll walking style and a slang verbal response

Video Condition 8 - African American student with a standard walking style and a standard verbal response

The following script was read to the participants in each group by the researcher: *“The research project that you have agreed to participate in is about observations of students by their teachers. You will view one video with two scenarios in which a student will be going about their normal routine at school. Following the video, please complete the enclosed questionnaire based on your observations.”*

After providing general instructions to each group of participants, each group watched one video, consisting of two scenarios. Immediately after watching the video, participants were instructed to proceed with the completion of the questionnaires. Completion of the questionnaires took between 8 to 10 minutes per class. Twenty participants viewed Video 1 (13 in class 1 and 7 in class 2), 29 participants viewed Video 2 (21 in class 3 and 8 in class 4), 27 participants viewed Video 3 (18 in class 5 and 9 in class 6) and 33 participants viewed Video 4 (11 in class 7 and 22 in class 8). The data from classes that watched the same videotape (1, 2, 3 or 4) were later collapsed for more meaningful analyses. Table 2 shows the distribution of participants assigned to each video group.

Table 2

Frequency Table for Number of Participants in each Video Group

Video Groups and Scenarios	<i>n</i>
Video Group 1:	
AA (stroll and standard response) and White (standard walk and slang response)	20
Video Group 2:	
White (stroll and standard response) and AA (standard walk and slang response)	29
Video Group 3:	
AA (stroll and slang response) and White (standard walk and standard response)	27
Video Group 4:	
White (stroll and slang response) and AA (standard walk and standard response)	33

Note. AA = African American

As previously mentioned, a videotape depicting two scenarios with students walking and responding verbally to an administrator was used in this study to examine education majors' perceptions of student learning, behavior, the need for special education services, and attributes. Viewing of the videotape was immediately followed by the completion of the two questionnaires. The first questionnaire requested demographic information, and asked participants to rate their perceptions of learning, behavior, and the need for special education services. The second questionnaire, an adapted version of the ACL, contained a checklist for participants to select the positive and negative attributes of the students in the video. Upon completion of the study, participants were informed that the students in the videos were "actors," for the purposes of this study.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the interaction effects between student ethnicity (African American and White), walking style (stroll and standard), and verbal response style (slang and standard) on education majors' ratings of student learning, behavior, the need for special education services and positive and negative attributes. The data gathered for this research was obtained by asking education majors to respond to demographic questions, a questionnaire judging learning, behavior, the need for special education services, and an adapted checklist of attributes. The questionnaires were distributed immediately after watching a short video in which the independent variables (ethnicity, walking style, and verbal response style) were manipulated. The data obtained from the demographic questions, the main questionnaire, and the checklist of attributes were coded and entered in the SPSS-15.0 computer program for statistical analyses. (*Note:* for all reports, 'participants' refers to the education majors, while 'students,' refers to the student actors in the videos).

Descriptive Analysis

The primary goal of this study was to investigate education majors' (e.g., participants) perceptions of students based on their ethnicity, walking style and verbal response style. Therefore, the study reviewed the preliminary data to examine whether participants differed in their perceptions of students based on their demographic background.

Preliminary Analyses

T-tests for independent means were performed to examine the relationship between participants' gender, type of program (Special Education compared to Reading, Pre-Kindergarten and Elementary Education), participants' teaching experience, and students' need for special

education services, perceptions of learning problems, behavior problems, and descriptive attributes. Results indicated that no significant differences were found by participants' gender, type of program or teaching experience in their attitudes toward students' need for special education services. The same trend (no significant differences in participants' gender, type of program and teaching experience) was shown regarding students' learning, behavior problems and number of positive or negative attributes used to describe the students in the videos.

To explore the relationship between participants' ethnicity and their attitudes toward students' learning problems, behavioral problems, need for special education services and the number of positive or negative attributes, one-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were performed. Only one of the analyses (need for special education services) showed significant results. Table 3 summarizes the means and standard deviations for needing special education services on a scale that ranged from (1) *very unlikely* to (4) *very likely*, by participants' ethnicity, with higher means indicating greater likelihood of needing special education services.

Table 3

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Participants' Ethnicity and Perceptions of Needing Special Education Services

Participants' Ethnicity	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
African American	1.95	.764
White	2.00	.655
Hispanic	2.45	.723
Other	2.27	.961

Table 4 summarizes the ANOVA results for students needing special education services by participants' ethnicity. Results indicated that, overall, participants differed significantly by

ethnicity in their perceptions of the students in the videos needing special education services, $F(3, 99) = 2.82, p < .05$, with a small effect size ($ES = .079$).

Post Hoc analyses using the Least Statistical Difference (LSD) Alpha (.05) criteria for significance indicated that Hispanic participants ($M = 2.45, SD = .723$) were more likely to perceive students in the videos as needing special education services than were participants who were African American ($M = 1.95, SD = .764$), (White $M = 2.00, SD = .655$), and Other ($M = 2.27, SD = .961$).

Table 4

Summary of Analysis of Variance for Participants' Ethnicity and Perceptions of Needing Special Education Services

Source	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Between subjects					
	4.999	3	1.666	2.819	.043*
Within subjects					
	58.516	99	.591		

* $p < .05$

Main Inferential Analyses

Learning and Behavior Problems

Chi-square analyses were conducted to investigate whether students in the different video conditions were perceived as having a learning or behavior problem. The relation between video condition and learning problems was not significant, $\chi^2(7) = 9.274, p = .234$. Overall,

participants did not differ in their perceptions of students having a learning problem based on ethnicity, walking style, and verbal response style. Since no differences on students' learning problems were found, further analyses did not focus on perceptions of learning problems.

Behavior Problems

Chi-square tests of independence were performed to investigate the relationship between students' behavioral problems as perceived by the participants and students' ethnicity, walking style and verbal response style. The results are explained in the following sections. The relation between video condition and perceptions of having a behavior problem was significant, $\chi^2(7) = 39.131, p < .000$, with a small effect size ($ES = .150$). Results indicated that students in videos who exhibited a slang verbal response style (the African American student exhibiting a stroll and slang verbal response, the White student exhibiting a stroll and slang verbal response, the African American student exhibiting a standard walking style and slang verbal response, and White student exhibiting a standard walking style and a slang verbal response) were significantly more likely (100%, 92.3%, 87.5%, and 77.8% , respectively) to be perceived as having a behavior problem than students with a standard verbal response (average proportion of 39.15%).

Behavior Problems and Ethnicity

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between participants' perceptions of behavioral problem and ethnicity. Overall, more participants perceived the African American student in the video as more likely to have behavior problems ($n = 42, 75%$) than the White student ($n = 30, 53.6%$). The relation between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 42) = 5.60, p = .018$, with a small effect size ($ES = .224$). The African American student was perceived by significantly more education majors as more likely to have a behavior problem than the White student across all video conditions.

Behavior Problems and Walking Style.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between perceptions of having behavior problems and students' walking style. Overall, students exhibiting a stroll walking style, were perceived as more likely to have behavior problems ($n = 41, 73.2\%$), than students exhibiting a standard walking style ($n = 31, 55.4\%$). The relation between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 41) = 3.889, p = .049$, with a small effect size ($ES = .186$). Regardless of ethnicity, students exhibiting a stroll were perceived by significantly more participants to have behavior problems than students with a standard walking style across all video conditions.

Behavior Problems and Verbal Response Style.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between perceptions of having a behavior problem and students' verbal response style. Overall, students who exhibited a slang verbal response were considered by more participants as having behavioral problems ($n = 51, 91.1\%$) than students who exhibited a standard verbal response ($n = 21, 37.5\%$). The relation between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 51) = 35.000, p = .001$, with a medium effect size ($ES = .559$). Students exhibiting a slang verbal response were perceived by significantly more participants as having behavior problems than were students with a standard verbal response across all video conditions.

Need for Special Education Services

To explore whether participants differed in their perceptions about students in the diverse video conditions needing special education services, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed. Table 5 summarizes the means and standard deviations by video condition with higher means indicating a greater likelihood of needing special education services.

Table 5

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Needing Special Education Services

Video Condition		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	AA with stroll and standard verbal response	2.21	.918
2	White with stroll and standard verbal response	2.14	.803
3	AA with stroll and slang verbal response	2.22	.847
4	White with stroll and slang verbal response	2.16	.735
5	White with standard walk and slang verbal response	2.45	.826
6	AA with standard walk and slang verbal response	2.50	.839
7	White with standard walk and standard verbal response	1.74	.656
8	AA with standard walk and standard verbal response	1.94	.727

Note. AA = African American

Two separate ANOVAS were conducted to investigate whether students in the 8 video conditions were perceived differently in needing special education services. In order to avoid violating the assumption of independence of observations in inferential statistics, the two observations conducted by the same participant were separated by dividing the analysis into two ANOVAS. The first ANOVA compared video conditions 1, 3, 5, & 7 and the second ANOVA compared 2, 4, 6, & 8. Thus, all the observations in each ANOVA were independent.

Table 6 summarizes the ANOVA results for needing special education services by video conditions (1, 3, 5, & 7). Results indicated that, overall, participants differed significantly in their perceptions of students needing special education services based on the video conditions, $F(3, 89) = 3.323$, $p < .023$, with a small effect size ($ES = .083$).

Table 7 summarizes the ANOVA results for needing special education services by video conditions (2, 4, 6, & 8). Results indicated that, overall, participants differed in their perceptions of students needing special education services based on the video conditions, $F(3, 114) = 2.646$, $p < .052$, with a small effect size ($ES = .086$).

Post Hoc analyses using the LSD Alpha (.05) criteria for significance indicated that the African American student exhibiting stroll and standard verbal response ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .839$); the African American student exhibiting a stroll and slang verbal response ($M = 2.22$, $SD = .847$); the White student exhibiting a stroll and slang verbal response ($M = 2.14$, $SD = .803$); the White student exhibiting a standard walking style and slang verbal response ($M = 2.45$, $SD = .826$); and the African American exhibiting a standard walking style and slang verbal response ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .839$) were significantly more likely to be perceived as needing special education services than the White student exhibiting a standard walking style and standard verbal response ($M = 1.94$, $SD = .727$). The analyses also indicated that the White student exhibiting a standard walking style and slang verbal response ($M = 2.45$, $SD = .826$) and the African American student with a standard walking style and slang verbal response ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .839$) were perceived as significantly more likely to need special education services than the African American student with the standard walking style and standard verbal response ($M = 1.94$, $SD = .727$).

Table 6

Summary of Analysis of Variance for Students Needing Special Education by Video Conditions 1, 3, 5, & 7

Source	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Between subjects					
	6.492	3	2.164	3.323	.023*
Within subjects					
	57.960	89	.651		

* $p < .05$.

Table 7

Summary of Analysis of Variance for Students Needing Special Education Services by Video Conditions 2, 4, 6 & 8

Source	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Between subjects					
	4.770	3	1.590	2.646	.052*
Within subjects					
	68.493	114	.601		

* $p < .05$.

Overall, regardless of ethnicity, students in the videos exhibiting a standard walking style and a standard verbal response style were significantly less likely to be classified as needing special education services than other variations of the video conditions.

Additional Analyses on Special Education Services

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine whether there were significant differences in the special education categories that the participants selected for students who were perceived as needing special education services. Of the participants who thought that at least one of the students needed special education services ($n = 77$), 50 (23%) selected the Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) category, 24 (11%) selected Specific Learning Disability (SLD), and 3 (1.4%) selected Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH). There were significant differences in the selection of the three categories in special education, $\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 38.484, p < .05$. Students were rated as needing services for EBD significantly more than for SLD and EMH.

Special Education and Ethnicity.

A t-test was performed to examine the relationship between the ethnicity of the students in the video conditions and the need for special education services. Results indicated that there were no significant differences in the perceived need for special education services based on the ethnicity of the students in the videos.

Special Education and Walking Style.

A t-test was performed to examine the relationship between the walking style of the students in the video condition and the need for special education services. Results indicated that there were no significant differences in the perceived need for special education services based on the walking style of the students in the videos.

Special Education and Verbal Response Style.

A t-test was performed to examine the relationship between the verbal response style of the student in the video and the need for special education services. Results indicated that across video conditions, with higher means indicating a greater likelihood of needing special education services, students who exhibited a slang verbal response ($M = 2.32$, $SD = .811$) were significantly more likely to be perceived as needing special education services than students who exhibited a standard verbal response ($M = 1.99$, $SD = .778$), $t(209) = 3.017$, $p = .003$, with a medium effect size ($ES = .42$).

Positive and Negative Attributes

All of the attributes that were classified as positive or negative in the original Adjective Checklist Manual were summed up to provide two total scores, one for positive attributes and one for negative attributes (50 and 63, respectively) for the checklist of attributes. In addition, five professionals independently verified the positive and negative ratings of the attributes. An inter rater agreement of 95% was established across the raters.

One-way ANOVAS were conducted to investigate the differences in the number of positive and negative attributes used to describe the students in each video condition. The results are explained in the following sections. Consistent with the ANOVAS conducted on the need for special education services, the analyses for the 8 means were divided into 4 ANOVAS (2 for positive adjectives and 2 for negative adjectives) separately comparing video conditions 1, 3, 5, & 7 and 2, 4, 6, & 8. Thus, each ANOVA included independent observations of the videos.

Positive Attributes.

Table 8 summarizes the means and standard deviations for positive attributes in each video condition, with higher means indicating the use of more positive attributes to describe the students in the videos.

Table 8

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Positive Attributes

Video Condition	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1 AA with stroll and standard verbal response	8.95	5.978
2 White with stroll and standard verbal response	7.62	4.938
3 AA with stroll and slang verbal response	3.85	4.605
4 White with stroll and slang verbal response	4.91	5.496
5 White with standard walk and slang verbal response	4.85	3.937
6 AA with standard walk and slang verbal response	3.31	2.880
7 White with standard walk and standard verbal response	9.59	6.247
8 AA with standard walk and standard verbal response	6.73	5.603

Note. AA = African American

Table 9 summarizes the ANOVA results for positive attributes for video conditions 1, 3, 5, & 7. Results indicated that, overall, significant differences existed in the number of positive attributes used to describe the students, based on the video condition, $F(3, 90) = 7.250, p < .000$, with a small effect size ($ES = .157$).

Table 10 summarizes the ANOVA results for positive attributes for video conditions 2, 4, 6, & 8. Results indicated that, overall, significant differences existed in the number of positive attributes used to describe the students, based on the video condition, $F(3, 120) = 4.543, p < .005$, with a small effect size ($ES = .153$).

Post Hoc analyses using the LSD Alpha (.05) criteria for significance indicated that the African American student with the stroll and standard verbal response, the White student with stroll and standard verbal response, the White student with the standard walking style and

standard verbal response, and the African American student with the standard walking style and standard verbal response were described with significantly more positive attributes than the other video conditions, where the students' verbal response style was slang. It should be noted that the White student exhibiting a standard walking style and standard verbal response was described with significantly more positive attributes than students in the other video conditions.

Table 9

Summary of Analysis of Variance for Positive Attributes for Video Conditions 1, 3, 5, & 7

Source	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Between subjects					
	613.734	3	204.578	7.250	.000***
Within subjects					
	2539.426	90	28.216		

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Table 10

Summary of Analysis of Variance for Positive Attributes for Video Conditions 2, 4, 6, & 8

Source	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Between subjects					
	327.781	3	109.260	4.543	.005*
Within subjects					
	2886.307	120	24.053		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Negative Attributes.

Table 11 summarizes the means and standard deviations for negative attributes in each video condition, with higher means indicating the use of more negative attributes to describe the student in the videos.

Table 11

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Negative Attributes

Video Condition	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1 AA with a stroll and standard verbal response	7.25	7.144
2 White with a stroll and standard verbal response	4.83	4.591
3 AA with a stroll and slang verbal response	10.11	6.858
4 White with a stroll and slang verbal response	7.70	6.065
5 White with a standard walking style and slang verbal response	13.45	7.409
6 AA with a standard walking style and slang verbal response	10.07	6.563
7 White with a standard walking style and standard verbal response	2.11	2.136
8 AA with a standard walking style and standard verbal response	3.15	.3784

Note. AA = African American

Table 12 summarizes the ANOVA results for negative attributes for each video condition. Results indicated that, overall, differences existed in the number of negative attributes used by the participants to describe the students, based on the video condition, $F(7, 210) = 11.736, p < .001$, with a small effect size ($ES = .281$).

Table 13 summarizes the ANOVA results for negative attributes for each video condition. Results indicated that, overall, differences existed in the number of negative attributes used by the participants to describe the students, based on the video condition, $F(7, 210) = 11.736, p < .001$, with a small effect size ($ES = .284$).

Post Hoc analyses using the LSD Alpha (.05) criteria for significance indicated that the African American student exhibiting a stroll walking style and slang verbal response, the White

student exhibiting a standard walking style and slang verbal response, and the African American student exhibiting a standard walking style and slang verbal response were described with significantly more negative attributes than students in the other video conditions, where the verbal response was standard. It should be noted that the White student exhibiting a standard walking style and slang verbal response was described with significantly more negative attributes than the students in the other video conditions.

Table 12

Summary of Analysis of Variance for Negative Attributes for Video Conditions 1, 3, 5, & 7

Source	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Between subjects					
	1661.286	3	553.762	14.859	.000***
Within subjects					
	3354.033	90	37.267		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 13

Summary of Analysis of Variance for Negative Attributes for Video Conditions 2, 4, 6, & 8

Source	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	P
Between subjects					
	865.723	3	288.574	10.092	.000***
Within subjects					
	3431.212	120	28.593		

*p < .05, **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Attributes and Students' Ethnicity

A *t*-test was performed to examine the relationship between the ethnicity of the students in the videos and the attributes used to describe them. Results indicated that there were no significant differences in the use of attributes to describe the students in the videos based on their ethnicity.

Attributes and Walking Style

Two *t*-tests were performed to examine the relationship between positive and negative attributes used to describe the students based on their walking styles. The results indicated that no significant differences were noted by walking style and the total number of positive or negative attributes used to describe the students in the videos.

Attributes and Verbal Response Style

Two *t*-tests were performed to examine the relationship between the verbal response style of the students in the videos and the total number of positive and negative attributes used to

describe them. The first *t*-test results indicated that across video conditions, with higher means indicating the use of more positive attributes, students who exhibited a standard verbal response ($M = 8.08, SD = 5.712$) were described with significantly more positive attributes than students who exhibited a slang verbal response ($M = 4.21, SD = 4.406$), $t(216) = -5.603, p = .000$, with a large effect size ($ES = .88$). The second *t*-test results indicated that across video conditions, where higher means indicated the use of more negative attributes, students who exhibited a slang verbal response ($M = 9.98, SD = 6.846$) were described with significantly more negative attributes than students who exhibited a standard verbal response ($M = 4.09, SD = 4.799$), $t(216) = 7.355, p = .000$, with a large effect size ($ES = 1.23$). These results supported the ANOVA results regarding the relationship between the type of verbal response and number of positive or negative attributes assigned to the students.

Summary of Findings

To facilitate the understanding of the results presented in the current study, a summary of the findings are presented below.

Perceptions of Behavioral Problems

- Overall, the African American student was perceived by significantly more education majors as more likely to have a behavior problem than the White student across all video conditions.
- Regardless of ethnicity, students in videos who exhibited a slang verbal response were significantly more likely to be perceived as having behavior problems than students who exhibited a standard verbal response.
- Regardless of ethnicity, students in the videos who exhibited a stroll walking style were perceived by significantly more participants to have behavior problems than students who exhibited a standard walking style.

Need for Special Education Services

- The African American student exhibiting a stroll and standard verbal response, the White student exhibiting a stroll and slang verbal response, the White student exhibiting a standard walking style and slang verbal response, and the African American exhibiting a standard walking style and slang verbal response were significantly more likely to be perceived as needing special education services than the White student exhibiting a standard walking style and standard verbal response.
- The White student exhibiting a standard walking style and slang verbal response, and the African American student exhibiting a standard walking style and slang verbal response were perceived as being significantly more likely to need special education services than the African American student exhibiting a standard walking style and standard verbal response.
- Overall, regardless of ethnicity, students in the videos exhibiting a standard walking style and a standard verbal response style were significantly less likely to be perceived as needing special education services than other variations of the video conditions.
- Of the participants who thought that at least one of the students needed special education services, students were rated as needing services for EBD significantly more than for SLD and EMH.
- There were no significant differences in the perceived need for special education services based on the ethnicity of the students in the videos.
- There were no significant differences in the perceived need for special education services based on the walking style of the students in the videos.

- Students who exhibited a slang verbal response were significantly more likely to be perceived as needing special education services than students who exhibited a standard verbal response.

Positive and Negative Attributes

- Students exhibiting a standard verbal response style were described with significantly more positive attributes than the other video conditions, where the students' verbal response style was slang.
- The White student exhibiting a standard walking style and standard verbal response style was described with significantly more positive attributes than students in the other video conditions.
- Regardless of ethnicity, students exhibiting a slang verbal response style were described with significantly more negative attributes than students in the other video conditions, where the verbal response was standard.
- It should be noted that the White student exhibiting a standard walking style and slang verbal response was described with significantly more negative attributes than the students in the other video conditions.
- No significant differences in the use of attributes to describe the students in the videos based on their ethnicity.
- No significant differences were noted by walking style and the total number of positive or negative attributes used to describe the students in the videos.
- Students who exhibited a standard verbal response were described with significantly more positive attributes than students who exhibited a slang verbal response.
- Students who exhibited a slang verbal response were described with significantly more negative attributes than students who exhibited a standard verbal response

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the interaction effects between student ethnicity (African American and White), walking style (stroll and standard), and verbal response style (slang and standard), on education majors' ratings of student learning, behavior, the need for special education services, and attributes. The data gathered for this research was obtained by asking education majors to respond to demographic questions, a questionnaire judging learning, behavior and the need for special education services, and an adapted attribute checklist. The questionnaires were distributed immediately after watching a short video in which the independent variables (ethnicity, walking style, and verbal response style) were manipulated.

Summary and Interpretation of Findings

The results of this study revealed that across all video conditions, the verbal response style (standard vs. slang) of the students in the videos was the most influential variable affecting education majors' perceptions of students having behavior problems and needing special education services. Moreover, the verbal response style of the students in the videos was also the most influential variable affecting education majors' use of positive or negative attributes to describe the students across all video conditions. In other words, overall, students who exhibited a standard response style, rather than slang, were perceived as less likely to have behavioral problems, less likely to need special education services, and less likely to be described by participants using negative attributes. However, the verbal response style did not affect the perceptions of education majors regarding whether the students in the videos had a learning problem.

The finding that the verbal response style was so influential on the perceptions of education majors could be an indication that verbal response style or expressive language is possibly viewed as a form of behavior. For example, Ebonics is a form of verbal expression, or language used primarily among African American students and has not been examined closely nor acknowledged until recently (Baugh, 2000). Ebonics is a way of communicating feelings, thoughts, opinions, and ideas that is commonly used by African American students in the classroom because they are accustomed to expressing themselves in the same manner at home. However, Ebonics or “verve,” creates cultural discontinuity between the home and school environments because it is in opposition with traditional Eurocentric school structure and language expectations (Boykin, 2002). As a result, Ebonics, as a verbal response style, may be perceived by educators as inappropriate “behavior,” that compromises students’ success in the general education setting as well as in future career possibilities.

The data revealed that participants did not differ in their perceptions of students having a learning problem based on the students’ ethnicity, walking style or verbal response style. However, participants in this study did differ in their perceptions of students having a behavior problem based on the students’ ethnicity, walking style, and verbal response style. The data revealed that African American students were perceived as being significantly more likely to have a behavior problem than White students across all video conditions. The fact that participants differed in their perceptions of behavior problems based on the ethnicity of the student in the video supports empirical research that suggests that cultural related identities and their manifestations are relevant to school achievement (Boykin, 1985). However, this finding is inconsistent with Neal and associates (2003), who found no differences in teachers’ perceptions of aggression of students based on the students’ ethnicity.

The results also showed that students who exhibited a stroll walking style were significantly more likely to be perceived as having behavior problems than students with a standard walking style across all video conditions. This finding was consistent with the study conducted by Neal and others (2003), who found that, overall, teachers perceived students who exhibited a stroll walking style as lower in achievement, higher in aggression, and more likely to need special education services than students with a standard walking style. Although African American boys, according to this perspective, have adopted this ritualized form of cultural movement style for coping with group membership, it appears to be incompatible with perceptions of academic success and sometimes even viewed as threatening in European American schools (Ogbu, 2002).

The present study was designed to build on the work of Neal and others, (2003), who used 136 veteran middle school teachers to examine perceptions of African American and European American males' aggression and achievement and the need for special education services based on African American students' cultural movement styles (e.g., walking). Participants in this study viewed videotapes of an African American and an European American student, where the walking style was manipulated (standard or stroll), followed by the completion of a questionnaire. In the present study, the ethnicity, the walking style, and the verbal response style of the students in the videos were manipulated. The majority of participants in the Neal and others study were White females. However, in the present study, participants were African American, Hispanic, and White. Unlike the Neal and others study, participants in the current study were education majors attending a private University. This population of participants was chosen as an extensive review of the literature suggests that although many studies have addressed the need to prepare teachers to become culturally aware and sensitive to

the diverse backgrounds of the students they will teach, very few have addressed the perceptions of education majors toward cultural movement styles and verbal response styles.

Another aspect of the present study investigated participants' perceptions of the students in the videos needing special education services based on manipulations of the independent variables. The results showed that across video conditions, regardless of ethnicity, students exhibiting a standard walking style and standard verbal response were significantly less likely to be perceived as needing special education services than other variations of the video conditions. Moreover, of those students perceived as needing special education services, participants rated them as needing services from EBD programs significantly more than services from programs for SLD or EMH.

The selection of positive or negative attributes used to describe the students in the videos corroborated the general findings of this study. The data indicated that, overall, differences existed in the total number of positive and negative attributes used to describe the students based on the video conditions. The White student exhibiting a standard walking style and standard verbal response style was described with significantly more positive attributes than students in the other video conditions. Overall, across all video conditions, the students exhibiting a standard verbal response style were described with significantly more positive attributes than the video conditions where the students' verbal response style was slang. Overall, across all video conditions, the students exhibiting a slang verbal response style were described with significantly more negative attributes than the video conditions where the students' verbal response style was standard. Moreover, these results were very important, given the large effect sizes of the *t*-test analyses indicating the existence of differences in the in the number of positive or negative attributes used to describe the students based on their language styles.

However, no significant differences were found in the total number of positive or negative attributes used to describe the students in the videos based solely on their ethnicity or on their walking style. Surprisingly, the White student exhibiting a standard walking style and slang verbal response style was described with significantly more negative attributes than the students in the other video conditions. This interesting finding speaks to an existing racial climate commonly referred to as “acting black.” The phenomenon of acting black refers to a perceived betraying of one's culture, by performing in opposition of the social expectations of mainstream White society, particularly in the United States (Fryer, 2006). For Whites perceived as acting black, this encompasses such things as speaking Ebonics, dressing in hip hop attire, engaging in behaviors that are in opposition with striving for academic success, and otherwise attempting to conform to behavior approved of by the African American culture (Fryer).

These findings suggest that regardless of the ethnicity of the educator, the mainstream culture appears to be accepted as the standard of success. More specifically, these findings suggest that “acting black,” e.g., speaking slang is perceived as a form of noncompliance that is in opposition of the path for successful academic outcomes.

Data in this study were also analyzed to determine in what respects education majors differed in their perceptions of students based on their demographic backgrounds. Results indicated that no significant differences were found by participants' gender, teaching experience, or type of program (special education vs. other programs) on participants' attitudes toward the students in the videos. However, participants did differ by their ethnicity in their perceptions of students in the videos needing special education services. More specifically, the Hispanic participants were significantly more likely to perceive students as needing special education services than participants who identified their ethnicity as African American, White, or Other. One possible explanation for this finding is that although Hispanics are considered a minority

culture, they may identify more often than not with the European mainstream culture. As such, the slang verbal response style and stroll walking style may be perceived by Hispanics as counterproductive to assimilation into the main culture. The White participants were the smallest subgroup in this study, and clear differences were not found with the other groups.

To summarize, the results in this investigation showed that, overall, the verbal response style of the students was the most influential variable in education majors' ratings of students' behavioral problems, the need for special education services and selection of descriptive attributes across all video conditions. Although slightly less influential, walking style and students' ethnicity also influenced participants' perceptions. The results of this study addressed some of the concerns captured by the study of Neal and others (2003) study. More specifically, in addition to ethnicity, educators view culture related identities (e.g., walking styles and verbal response styles) as manifestations of behavior that predict outcomes for behavior, the need for referral for special education services, and use of negative descriptive attributes.

The results in this study provide empirical support for Ogbu's (1981) Cultural Ecological Approach (CEA), which argues that, overall, African American children do poorly in school because they value other aspects of society that are typically in opposition to European cultural norms. He suggests that this mentality stems from the historical ill treatment of African Americans (Ogbu). As an unconscious consequence, African Americans choose not to compete for academic attainment, leading to behavior resulting in placement in special education programs, school failure and incarceration (Ogbu).

The concept of Ogbu's CEA is observed in the present study. Slang was used as a verbal response style in the present study to investigate education majors' perceptions of students. It has been suggested that slang is derived from a dialect created by African Americans to separate themselves and not wanting to face the burden of "acting White" (King, 2002). However, this

pillar of Afrocentricism is in opposition to mainstream standards of school expectations and academic success (Boykin, 2002). It is also suggested that Whites as well as other cultures who engage in speaking slang, or “acting Black,” do so to assert their independence from adults and to identify with a unique culture (King).

Slang may be an acceptable form of verbal expression in the home environment; however it is not accepted at school. Although many parents, regardless of ethnicity, insist that their children speak standard English at home, children insist on the use of slang for “group identification,” in favor of a style or attitude. This results in cultural discontinuity between the home and school environments (Neal, 2003). Moreover, when educators attempt to “correct” this perceived form of unfavorable behavior, it often leads to disciplinary action and referral for special education services, particularly for African American students. As seen in the present study, regardless of the ethnicity, education majors perceived students who spoke slang as having behavior problems, needing special education services for EBD as having significantly more negative attributes than students who spoke standard English.

This study focused on education majors’ perceptions of the ethnicity, walking styles and verbal response styles of adolescent males. The findings presented here support empirical research suggesting that patterns of cultural discontinuity exist between the home and school environments when educators have a misunderstanding of and overreaction to students’ culturally conditioned behaviors, particularly, verbal response style. Yeakey (2002) noted for example, that teachers significantly lowered their expectations of the academic abilities of African American students who spoke non-standard English or slang. These practices and beliefs must be examined more closely as they very often result in psychological discomfort, referral for special education services, and ultimately school failure for some culturally diverse students.

Limitations of the Current Study

The current study has some limitations that impact the generalizability of the findings.

The limitations of the study are as follows:

1. This study used a relatively small sample size. Although the goal was to investigate perceptions of education majors, the sample size was limited to students enrolled at a private University. Although the findings were significant and support research in this area, the sample size presented in this study may limit what can be said about the generalizability and validity of the results.

2. The study had an unequal proportion of male to female participants. There were only 17 males and 91 female participants. However, preliminary analyses indicated that participants did not differ in their perceptions based on their gender.

3. This study was conducted in South Florida, a large metropolitan area where the student population is very culturally diverse. South Florida is made up of a large percentage of Hispanics, Caribbean Islanders, Haitians and other cultures from many countries. As a result, the findings presented here may not generalize to more homogeneous, mostly European American areas of the country.

4. As with the study of Neal and others (2003), the current investigation was a simulation and, as with all simulations, there is an assumption that people's behavior in a staged context generalizes to natural contexts. The generalization of this study's findings to the school setting should be conducted with caution.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional research should be geared toward assessing the effectiveness of University teaching programs in working with culturally diverse populations. The results of this study stimulated the researcher to recommend adding at least one class to the curriculum of universities that specifically addresses cultural issues prior to educators going into the classroom. By doing

so, it is hoped that the amount of unrealistic biased judgments regarding culturally diverse students will be significantly reduced.

It would be interesting to examine longitudinally what happens to African American students who are referred for special education services based on cultural discontinuity (between home and school environments). Specifically, which special education programs they are placed in as well as the clinical factors that support placement in EBD programs.

This study focused on the education majors' perceptions of the ethnicity, walking styles, and verbal response styles of male students. Since the majority of behavioral research focuses on males, it will be very important to extend a similar design to investigate perceptions of the cultural behaviors of African American males vs. females. Of particular interest would be to investigate how females are perceived by education majors when exhibiting culturally related behaviors, including different walking styles, verbal response styles, and body language, e.g., (eye-rolling).

A final area of interest would include cross-cultural studies comparing two English speaking countries (e.g., United States vs. South Africa, and the United States vs. Canada) to investigate the perceptions of education majors in other countries. Particularly, it would be helpful to investigate cross culturally how the cultural behaviors of African Americans (e.g., walking style, verbal response style and dress attire) are viewed by countries outside of the U.S. based on the stereotypes often presented by the media as cultural norms.

Implications for Special Education

Based on the numerous studies regarding the overrepresentation of African Americans in EBD programs, it was expected that African Americans would be perceived as more likely to have behavior problems and more likely to need special education services when exhibiting a stroll walking style in the videos. However, as was previously mentioned, this study revealed

that the verbal response style was the most influential variable in education majors' perceptions of students. Specifically, both African American and White students who exhibited a slang verbal response were perceived as having behavior problems, needing special education services and were described with significantly more negative attributes and less positive attributes than African American and White students who exhibited a standard verbal response. Moreover, education majors in this study tended to perceive students in the videos to need special education services from EBD programs. Research by Moore (2002) corroborates this finding by suggesting that African Americans are overrepresented and misplaced in programs for EBD at an alarming rate based on unrealistic judgments about cultural behaviors. The largest percentage of African American males who are misidentified and placed in special education programs are in the middle-school and high school age group, 12-17 years old (Neal et al., 2003). Additionally, the independent and negative effects of misidentifying African American males in special education programs for EBD increase the risk of problem behaviors e.g., higher school drop-out rates, psychological disturbance, engaging in illegal activities, unemployment and underemployment in adulthood (Clark et al., 2003; Gay, 2000).

As part of the pre referral process in our schools, multidisciplinary teams (MDT) are mandated to determine the function of behaviors, create individualized intervention plans, and offer protection against bias to students who may be referred for special education assessment (Knotek, 2003). However, given the number of African Americans who continue to be overrepresented in programs for EBD, there are serious concerns about the reliability and validity of the MDT process.

Although children should not be penalized or held back in school for cultural behaviors, e.g., speaking slang, parents must encourage and insist that their children speak and write in standard English at home and in school. Regardless of their ethnicity, parents should make it a

goal to speak and write in standard English at home. This is crucial as the language practiced by parents at home is very often recognized as the primary form of communication by the child.

The elementary years are a good time to help students get comfortable with speaking standard English in front of others as well as in peer interactions. By doing so, it is hoped to help children avoid the feeling of being ridiculed for speaking correctly or for “acting White.” Also, it will be helpful if schools developed a Standard English proficiency program, so that when students speak and/or write in slang, the teacher would repeat the correct words and have the student use the correct words. It is also very important to encourage elementary school children to strive for academic success, e.g., taking honors and advanced courses.

The middle/high school years are the most prevalent time for cultural discontinuity between the home and school environments to have negative and adverse affects for students. At this level, it would be helpful if schools added social skills training and role-play activities to the curriculum to address thoughts and feelings associated with collective identity. Additionally, schools must ensure that students understand that reading and writing standard English is a prerequisite for college admission and/or gainful employment.

Another way to address this issue at the school level would be for schools to mandate annual cultural competency workshops that focus specifically on the differences in learning styles, behaviors, and educational needs of the diverse students in our schools. Secondly, at the training level, colleges must ensure that teacher education programs have curricula that are designed to promote cross-cultural competencies. More specifically, teacher training programs should be obligated to ensure that education majors actively work with students from diverse backgrounds during their training. This should include the development and implementation of a multicultural curriculum by each student teacher. Secondly, it would be helpful to provide incentives for student teachers working in schools that are in areas of lower socio-economic

status. Third, minimize prerogatives that allow student teachers to pick their assignments, in order to avoid working in schools that have a predominately minority student culture. Finally, state and national agencies should advocate for the implementation of models like the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), which studies suggests builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school environments as well as between academic abstractions and socio cultural realities (Gay, 2002).

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

Demographic Information

Please provide the following information.

1. **Gender** Male Female
2. **Ethnic Group** African American White Hispanic Other (*Explain*) _____
3. **Status in college** Undergraduate Graduate
4. **Program of Study** ESE Reading Pre-K Elementary Education
5. **Are you currently teaching?** Yes No
6. **If currently teaching, years of experience?** 1 or less 2 to 4 5 or more

Questionnaire

Directions: Now that you have viewed the video, please read each question and circle the answer that best represents your thinking.

1. Does either student have a behavior problem? Yes or No
2. If yes, which student has a behavior problem? Student 1 Student 2 Both
3. Does either student have a learning problem? Yes or No
4. If yes, which student has a learning problem? Student 1 Student 2 Both
5. In your opinion, how likely is it that Student 1 would need special education services?
1 = very unlikely 2 = unlikely 3 = likely 4 = very likely

If likely or very likely, which category would you suggest that he would belong?

Specific Learning Disability (SLD) Emotional Behavior Disturbed (EBD) Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH)

6. In your opinion, how likely is it that Student 2 would need special education services?
1 = very unlikely 2 = unlikely 3 = likely 4 = very likely

If likely or very likely, which category would you suggest that he would belong?

Specific Learning Disability (SLD) Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD) Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH)

APPENDIX B

Student 1

Adapted from The Adjective Checklist

by Harrison G. Gough, Ph.D. & Alfred B. Heilbrun, Jr., Ph.D.

DIRECTIONS: This page contains a list of adjectives. Please read them quickly and put an **X** in the box beside each one you would consider to describe *Student 1*. Do not worry about duplications, contradictions, and so forth. Work quickly and do not spend too much time on any one adjective. Try to be frank, and check those adjectives which best describe *Student 1* as they appear in the video.

- active adaptable anxious appreciative capable cautious civilized conscientious
 considerate cooperative curious dependable fair-minded friendly healthy
 honest impatient individualistic intelligent charming reasonable
 reliable cruel deceitful dominant infantile obnoxious quitting shallow
 shiftless strong undependable unfriendly unintelligent unkind
 unscrupulous whiny aggressive alert ambitious assertive confident
 conscientious determined dominant efficient energetic enthusiastic forceful
 independent persistent opportunistic apathetic careless distractible
 dominant easy going indifferent irresponsible lazy leisurely
 unambitious opinionated argumentative arrogant excitable headstrong
 hostile impatient irritable opinionated outspoken quarrelsome rebellious
 sarcastic vindictive calm mannerly meek mild submissive timid
 unemotional withdrawn nervous trusting unstable conservative disorderly
 loud opinionated unaffected understanding warm moody dull cynical
 dissatisfied spunky prudish weak boastful defensive hasty peculiar touchy tense
 zany excitable reflective logical mature self-centered

APPENDIX C

Student 2

Adapted from The Adjective Checklist

by Harrison G. Gough, Ph.D. & Alfred B. Heilbrun, Jr., Ph.D.

DIRECTIONS: This page contains a list of adjectives. Please read them quickly and put an **X** in the box beside each one you would consider to describe *Student 2*. Do not worry about duplications, contradictions, and so forth. Work quickly and do not spend too much time on any one adjective. Try to be frank, and check those adjectives which best describe *Student 2* as they appear in the video.

- active adaptable anxious appreciative capable cautious civilized conscientious
 considerate cooperative curious dependable fair-minded friendly healthy
 honest impatient individualistic intelligent charming reasonable
 reliable cruel deceitful dominant infantile obnoxious quitting shallow
 shiftless strong undependable unfriendly unintelligent unkind
 unscrupulous whiny aggressive alert ambitious assertive confident
 conscientious determined dominant efficient energetic enthusiastic forceful
 independent persistent opportunistic apathetic careless distractible
 dominant easy going indifferent irresponsible lazy leisurely
 unambitious opinionated argumentative arrogant excitable headstrong
 hostile impatient irritable opinionated outspoken quarrelsome rebellious
 sarcastic vindictive calm mannerly meek mild submissive timid
 unemotional withdrawn nervous trusting unstable conservative disorderly
 loud opinionated unaffected understanding warm moody dull cynical
 dissatisfied spunky prudish weak boastful defensive hasty peculiar touchy tense
 zany excitable reflective logical mature self-centered

APPENDIX D

Consent for Collaboration (Student)

Dear Research Collaborator:

Your collaboration in a research project is requested. The research is being conducted by Angela C. Brinson, a doctoral student in the Adrian Dominican School of Education at Barry University, who is seeking information that will be useful in the field of special education. The aim of the research is to investigate teachers' observations of students and their reactions to these observations. In accordance with this goal, the following will be asked of you:

As a student collaborator, you have been selected for this experiment. If you desire to participate, you will be acting in a short, 3 minute film. Your dress for the videotaping will consist of attire very similar to what middle/high school students wear (e.g., blue jeans, athletic shoes and an oversized white T-shirt). Attire will be subject to approval by the researcher. You will be given a short script depicting a particular walking style and verbal response to be acted out in a school hallway. We will practice the acting part several times before we film it.

Your consent to be a collaborator in this experiment is strictly voluntary. Should you decline to participate or should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, there will be no adverse effects on your employment, grade or the relationship with your school. Additionally, the researcher reserves the right to eliminate you from the experiment, at her discretion. Collaborators will receive a \$25 gift certificate following the completion of the videotaping.

There are no known risks for collaborating with the researcher in this study. Although there are no direct benefits to you, your participation in this study will help our understanding of teachers' observations of students. As a collaborator in this experiment, the information you provide will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. The anonymity of the student actors will be maintained by distorting their faces in the videotape.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your collaboration with the study, you may contact me, Angela C. Brinson, at (305) 684-1390, my supervisor Dr. Clara Wolman, at (305) 899-3737 or the IRB contact official, Mrs. Nildy Polanco, at (305) 899-3020. If you are satisfied with the information provided and are willing to collaborate in this research, please signify your consent by signing this consent form.

Voluntary Consent

I acknowledge that I have been informed of the nature and purposes of this experiment by Angela C. Brinson and that I have read and understand the information presented above. I give my voluntary consent to participate as a collaborator in this experiment.

Signature of Collaborator

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix E

Consent for Collaboration (Adult)

Dear Research Collaborator:

Your collaboration in a research project is requested. The research is being conducted by Angela C. Brinson, a doctoral student in the Adrian Dominican School of Education at Barry University, who is seeking information that will be useful in the field of special education. The aim of the research is to investigate teachers' observations of students and their reactions to these observations. In accordance with this goal, the following will be asked of you:

If you desire to participate, you will be acting in a short, 3 minute film. As the "administrator" in this collaboration, you will be given a very short script to read verbatim. Your attire will consist of a suit and tie. Attire will be subject to approval by the researcher. We will practice the acting part several times before we film it.

Your consent to be a collaborator in this experiment is strictly voluntary. Should you decline to participate or should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, there will be no adverse effects on your employment, grade or the relationship with your school. Additionally, the researcher reserves the right to eliminate you from the experiment, at her discretion. Collaborators will receive a \$25 gift certificate following the completion of the videotaping.

There are no known risks for collaborating with the researcher in this study. Although there are no direct benefits to you, your participation in this study will help our understanding of teachers' observations of students. As a collaborator in this experiment, the information you provide will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Your anonymity will be maintained by distorting your face in the videotape.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your collaboration in the study, you may contact me, Angela C. Brinson, at (305) 684-1390, my supervisor Dr. Clara Wolman, at (305) 899-3737 or the IRB contact official, Mrs. Nildy Polanco, at (305) 899-3020. If you are satisfied with the information provided and are willing to collaborate in this research, please signify your consent by signing this consent form.

Voluntary Consent

I acknowledge that I have been informed of the nature and purposes of this experiment by Angela C. Brinson and that I have read and understand the information presented above. I give my voluntary consent to participate as a collaborator in this experiment.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature of Collaborator	Date	Signature of Researcher	Date

APPENDIX F

Observer Checklist

Directions: Based on your observation of the video tapes, please circle your response to each of the following characteristics. If you select no for any of the characteristics, please provide an explanation.

Were the following characteristics similar for both the African American and White student?

Height Yes or No If No, explain _____

Weight Yes or No If No, explain _____

Clothing Yes or No If No, explain _____

Standard walking style Yes or No If No, explain _____

Stroll walking style Yes or No If No, explain _____

Standard verbal response Yes or No If No, explain _____

Slang response Yes or No If No, explain _____

Was the scenario that each student was engaged in similar to scenarios that are typical of middle school students? Yes or No If No, explain _____