1996

An Investigation into Differences Between African American Males with Learning Disabilities Placed in Special Education Regular and Special Diploma Tracks

Desmond B. Butcher

AN INVESTIGATION INTO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES PLACED IN SPECIAL EDUCATION REGULAR AND SPECIAL DIPLOMA TRACKS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

Leadership and Education in

the Adrian Dominican School of Education of

Barry University

by

Desmond B. Butcher, B.A., M.Sc.

*****

Barry University

1996

Area of Specialization: Leadership

AN INVESTIGATION INTO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES PLACED IN SPECIAL EDUCATION REGULAR AND SPECIAL DIPLOMA TRACKS

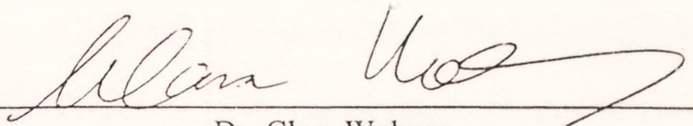
DISSERTATION

by

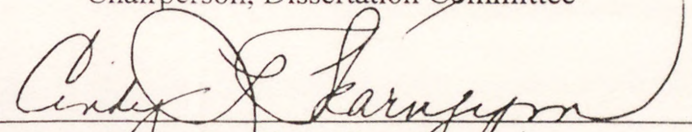
Desmond Berkley Butcher

1996

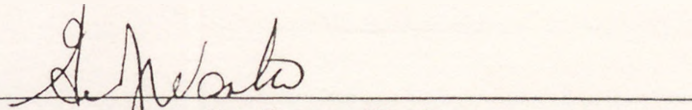
APPROVED BY:



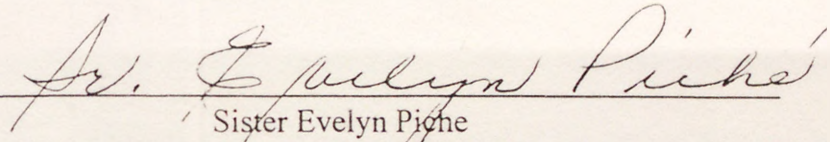
Dr. Clara Wolman
Chairperson, Dissertation Committee



Dr. Cindy Skarrupa,
Member, Dissertation Committee



Dr. George Wanko
Member, Dissertation Committee



Sister Evelyn Piche
Dean of the School of Education

ABSTRACT
AN INVESTIGATION INTO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES PLACED IN SPECIAL EDUCATION REGULAR AND SPECIAL DIPLOMA TRACKS

Desmond B. Butcher
Barry University, 1996

This study investigated whether African American male students with learning disabilities placed in the special diploma track and those placed in the regular diploma track, differed significantly in their social skills, problem behavior, and academic competence as perceived by their teachers. Ninety African American male students with learning disabilities from four Dade County Senior High Schools participated in this project. Teachers' ratings of social skills, problem behavior, academic competence were done using the Social Skills Rating System (Gresham & Elliot, 1990). Participants were classified into two distinct groups according to their placement in either the Regular Diploma Group or the Special Diploma Group. Preliminary t-tests revealed that the regular diploma group did not differ significantly from the special diploma group in SES and age, but differed significantly in IQ. Pearson r correlations revealed a highly moderate positive correlation between social skills and academic competence, a highly moderate negative correlation between social skills and problem behavior and a moderate negative correlation between problem behavior and academic competence. Three separate Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) were conducted on social skills, problem behavior and academic competence, controlling for IQ differences. Results revealed that the two groups did not differ significantly in social skills and problem behavior, but differed significantly in academic competence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with great appreciation that I acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Dr. Clara Wolman, whose tireless efforts resulted in my completion of this study. Her knowledge of special education and her genuine concern for students with disabilities was evident throughout the course of this study. Special thanks is awarded to Dr. David Molnar for providing indispensable assistance in the execution of statistical analyses, and for his assistance in interpreting statistical data. His knowledge of the discipline is immense, and his warm and nurturing manner was therapeutic, particularly in the final, hectic days of completing a dissertation. Special thanks also go to dissertation committee members, Dr. Cindy Skarrupa and Dr. George Wanko for offering valuable suggestions and advice, and for their genuine encouragement and support throughout the undertaking of this project. To all the professors at Barry who encouraged me along the way - Dr. Tom Foote, Sr. Ellen Rice, and Sr. Phyllis Superfisky, I thank you.

I also wish to acknowledge the support of all the teachers, parents, students and school administrators who assisted me in this project. In particular, I greatly appreciate the willingness of the teachers to participate.

Finally, I wish to thank my sons Jason and Damion who provided the inspiration, and allowed me to infringe on their quality time.

VITA

1981	B.A. (Honors) University of the West Indies Barbados. Best Thesis Award.
1983-1986	Teacher, Archbishop Curley High School, Miami, FL
1987	M.Sc. St. Thomas University, Miami, FL. Dean's Award.
1986-Present	Teacher, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, FL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS v

VITA vi

TABLE OF CONTENTS vii

LIST OF TABLES x

LIST OF FIGURES xii

Chapters

I. THE PROBLEM

Background of the Problem 1
Statement of the Problem 6
Conceptual Framework 8
Characteristics of Students with Learning Disabilities 8
Problem Behavior 10
Disproportionality 11
Psychometric Testing and Special Education Placement 12
Social Skills 14
Academic Competence 16
Teacher-Perception of Students' Behaviors 16
Justification of the Research 17
Research Question and Hypotheses 18
Definition of Operational Terms 20
Organization of Remainder of Study 21

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction 23
Historical Perspectives 25
Deficiency Theories and Special Education Placement 27
Categories of Deficiency Theories 28
Cultural, Economic, and Educational Disadvantage 30
Intellectual /Developmental Deficiency Theory 34
Institutional Deficiencies 38
Psychometric Assessment and Special Education Placement 39

Reliability and Validity of Psychometric Assessment 40
Alternatives to Standardized Measurement 44
Tracking and Ability Grouping 46
Diploma Options 48
Sociocultural, Behavioral and Psychosocial Factors
Associated with Placement 50
Race, Ethnicity and Special Education Placement 54
Socioeconomic Status and Special Education Placement 55
Teacher Attitude and Belief System 59
Social Skills and Achievement 62
Problem Behavior and Academic Achievement 64
Prescriptive Measures 65

III. METHODOLOGY

Introduction 70
Participants 70
The Schools 72
The Teachers 73
Instrument 74
Procedure and Data Collection 76
Statistical Analysis 78
Preliminary Analyses 78
Main Analyses 78

IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction 79
Preliminary Analyses 80
Main Statistical Analyses 84
Testing for Assumptions of ANOVA 84
Hypothesis Testing 88
Null Hypothesis #1 88
Null Hypothesis #2 90
Null Hypothesis #3 91
Summary of Statistical Analyses 93

V. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary 94
Interpretation of Findings 95
Discussion
Within-Group Variability 98

Importance of Study for Special Education 102
Limitations of the Study 103
Practical Implications of the Study 104
Conclusions 110
Recommendations for Further Research 112

References 113

APPENDIX A Parent/Student Consent Form 133

APPENDIX B Teacher Consent Form 134

APPENDIX C Sample Data Collection Sheet 135

APPENDIX D SSRS Questionnaire 136

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1 Percent of Diploma Graduates for EMH and SLD 1987-1988 49

TABLE 2 Frequency Distribution and Percent of Student Participants by Diploma Group and School. 71

TABLE 3 Means and Standard Deviations for Age and IQ and Percent Listings for Lunch Status by Diploma Groups 72

TABLE 4 Ethnic Composition of Participating Schools 73

TABLE 5 Teacher Participation by School and Ethnicity. 74

TABLE 6 T-test Comparisons Between Diploma Groups for IQ, SES and Age 80

TABLE 7 Means and Standard Deviations for Social Skills, Problem Behavior and Academic Competence by Diploma Group 81

TABLE 8 Interpretation of Raw Scores 82

TABLE 9 Social Skills Distribution of Research Sample 83

TABLE 10 Pearson Correlation Matrix between Social Skills, Academic Competence and Problem behavior 83

TABLE 11 ANOVA Showing Significance of Interaction Term on Social Skills 89

TABLE 12 ANCOVA on Social Skills by Diploma Group Controlling for IQ 89

TABLE 13 Results of ANOVA Investigating the Impact of Covariate on Problem Behavior (TRANS) 90

TABLE 14 ANCOVA on Problem Behavior by Diploma Group Controlling for IQ 91

TABLE 15 Results of ANOVA Investigating the Impact of IQ on Academic Competence.. 92

TABLE 16 ANCOVA on Academic Competence by Diploma Group Controlling for IQ. 92

TABLE 17 Means and Standard Deviations of Teacher-Ratings for Study Sample and Standardization Sample 102

LIST OF GRAPHS

GRAPH 1 Distribution of Social Skills For Total Sample 84

GRAPH 2 Distribution of Problem Behavior For Total Sample 85

GRAPH 3 Distribution of Academic Competence For Total Sample 86

GRAPH 4 Distribution of Problem Behavior for Total Sample after Transformation 87

This study is dedicated to my mother Edith Butcher

who made numerous sacrifices so that her children could have a better future.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM

Background of the Problem

The referral, assessment, and placement of minority students in special education programs in America's public schools continue to be among the major concerns facing educators today (Dunn, 1968; Figueroa, 1989; Harry, 1994; Maheady, Towne, Algozzine, Mercer & Ysseldyke, 1990; Mercer, 1973; Stainback & Stainback, 1992). In particular, the disproportionate placement of African American students in special education programs is a major issue in this debate (Artiles & Trent,1994; Ford & Webb, 1994; Grant, 1992; Harry, 1994; Serwatka, Deering & Grant, 1995; Wilson & Banks, 1994). While African American children constitute 17% of all students nationally, they comprise 41% of all special education placements, primarily in the Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH), and Emotionally Handicapped (EH) categories (Serwatka et al, 1995). Black males in particular are over represented, constituting 85% of all African Americans in special education (Grant, 1992; Harry, 1994; Sigmon, 1990). They continue to be perceived not only as low achievers, but also as potential sources of classroom disruptions (Irvine, 1990). Artiles and Trent (1994) note that this over representation of minorities in special education classes is partly attributed to the growing recognition that children with mild disabilities are basically indistinguishable in learning and behavioral characteristics across categories.

This national trend is also observed in Florida where African Americans make up 24% of the total public school student body, but 52% of EMH, 34% of EH, 25% of Learning Disabilities (LD) populations, and 6% of the Gifted student population (Profiles of Florida School Districts,

1992-1993). In Broward County, African American students make up 33% of the students in the district, but 66% of students in EMH classes (Marks, 1994). Similarly, in Dade County, Statistical Abstracts (1994) reveal that, while African American students comprise 34% of the total student population, they comprise 58% of the EMH population, 31% of the LD, and 44% of those labeled EH. Conversely, they make up only 16% of students in the Gifted Programs and 9.8% of the total placements in advanced level courses. This trend is likely to continue into the twenty-first century (Agada & Obiako, 1994). Based on these and similar statistics, the concept of disproportionality has been developed (Harry, 1994; Reschly, 1987).

A multiplicity of problems reflected in poor scores on standardized tests, the disproportionate numbers of African American students reported for indoor and outdoor suspensions (43% and 54%, respectively), a 60% referral rate for alternative education programs, and a 41% referral rate to court/juvenile authorities (Dade County Schools Statistical Abstracts, 1993-1994) suggest the need to investigate the factors associated with disproportionality, placement, and subsequent educational outcomes.

Placement decisions inevitably impact academic achievement, and hence future success or failure of African American children (Rivers, Anderson, Jones & Ladner, 1975). African American males are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as white males (Hollister, 1989; Leonard, 1985; Wright, 1992). Furthermore, the unemployment rate for older African American males, 20-24 years old is about 25% compared with 10% for whites, and 14% for Hispanics. Compounding this, is the shortage of black male teachers, the lack of adequate black role models, as well as high drop out and absenteeism rates (Wagner, 1991), which Stewart (1992) notes can have "disastrous consequences for students' success" (p.19). This has a severe impact on the

number of African American males who rise to positions of influence and leadership in American society, particularly in higher education, business, legal and medical professions in which African Americans are under represented (Blackwell, 1991; Garibaldi, 1991; Hollister, 1989; Ready & Nickens, 1991; Simmons & Grady, 1990; Stewart, 1992; Sum & Fogg, 1990), given the important linkage that exists between level of education and economic success (Grant, 1992; Murnane & Levy, 1993). Moreover, the disproportionately high number of African American men in federal, state and local prisons (35% of the 91,621 federal prison inmates and 43% of the nearly 1.2 million state and local prisons and jails), as well as dwindling college enrollment (Boyd, 1996; Garibaldi, 1991; Daniels, 1994; Hyllegard & Lavin, 1992), is possibly linked to early labeling and placement in special classes. African American females however, seem to fare better than the average black male in terms of entering the traditional professions. Lloyd (1992) notes that about 60% of all the black students in college are women - the highest female to male ratio of any racial group. He posits that black women are likely to (1) take an even greater share of more lucrative jobs and (2) assume more leadership positions than black men in the near future. The U.S. Department of Education (1993) reports a similar rate for African American women.

These statistics reflect the precipitous erosion of social capital which Coleman (1987) notes is crucial to social and economic development. Social capital refers to "the social networks of adult relationships which nurture children during their development" (Henley, Ramsey & Algozzine, 1993, p.315). Coleman (1987) further notes that a deterioration in the family as a source of nurturing has undermined the development of social capital which is effected when adults bond together through shared goals and beliefs.

The U.S. Department of Education estimated that 200,000 school children were homeless

(Reed & Sautter, 1990). Pallas, Natriello and McDill (1989) projects that by the year 2020, the rate of African American and Latino-American disadvantaged youth population (0-17years) will rise from 15.2% to 30.5% (a rate of 200.66%). Additionally, in 1990, an African American child born in inner-city Boston had less chance for survival than an infant from Uruguay, Panama or South Korea (Children Defense Fund, 1990). Similarly, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported a dramatic increase in the death rate of young African American males, from 174 per 100,000 in 1985 to 252 in 1990.

Both short and long term consequences can result from disproportionate placement of African American children in special education classes which in practice, constitutes a form of tracking or low ability grouping. These classes may offer students less than basic marketable skills (George & Rubin, 1992; Irvine, 1990; Oakes, 1985; Wenning, 1992). Given the widespread practice of tracking and ability grouping in Florida, and the possible effects on students' self-esteem, academic achievement, racial, ethnic and income isolation (George & Rubin, 1992), students placed in special diploma classes may be placed at an educational disadvantage. Even though Nevi (1987) points out that such grouping allows for individualized instruction, the development of more positive self-concepts, and more effective and efficient instruction, research shows that low ability grouping can have negative consequences (Crosby & Owens, 1993; Oakes, 1985). Grant (1992) specifically notes that low academic achievement and low self-esteem are among the negative outcomes for African Americans. He posits that the self-esteem and achievement levels of African American children have been systematically kept at lower levels than whites due to the disproportionate numbers placed in special or low ability classes . Additionally, he argues that any placement of African American children in special classes which

prevent them from earning regular high school diplomas, and consequently limits their chances of pursuing higher education, will as a result produce youth without credentials, job skills, and experiences, resigned to accepting the most minimal or low-paying jobs, such as floor washers, dishwashers, and warehouse workers.

If over representation in special education is one of the factors which make for the failure of African American males in the educational system, then this failure is partly to be blamed for dismal economic and social conditions pervasive in many black communities across the nation. Stewart (1992) points out that in 1989, among the estimated number of youth (25,025) in long term state operated juvenile institutions, 41.1% were African American. Specifically, in age categories, of the 3,096 who were 11 to 14 years old, 46.7% were African American; of the 15,130 who were 15-17 years old, 40.3% were African American; and of the 6,798 who were 18 and older, 40.5% were African American. He concludes that failure of African American males in the educational system is a major contributing factor in these high rates of juvenile delinquency, and high rates of unemployment. Irvine (1990) added that the disproportionate use of severe disciplinary practices is a factor associated with black non-achievement. She also noted that teachers' perceptions of black students (particularly black males), as well as the media's portrait of blacks as violent, gang-oriented, and abusive, contribute to a losing situation for African American males. Daniels (1994) also echoed this sentiment when he noted that black males are disproportionately represented in areas such as student suspensions, corporal punishment, student-grouping in low ability classes, school drop out rates, below average achievement scores, juvenile delinquency and incarceration. The impact of negative decisions made in the classroom can therefore have short and long term severe negative consequences for African American males.

Teacher attitudes and beliefs play a vital role in this process (Soodak & Podell, 1993).

Statement of the Problem

Not only is there a disproportionate number of African American male students in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) in Dade County public schools in general, but a considerable number of them who have learning disabilities are placed in the Special Diploma track. The Special Diploma was created by the Florida Legislature (s.232.247,F.S), and is designed to give students with varying disabilities, the option to graduate from high school with a Special Diploma if they are unable to meet the minimum academic and course requirements necessary for a Regular Diploma. Placement may be temporary, since parents, students, teachers or counselors may request a change of placement if the need arises. However, once students graduate from high school with this diploma, they cannot reenter the school system to earn a Regular Diploma. They however have the option to continue in an adult education program and earn a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED). In spite of the post-secondary option which allows special diploma graduates to enroll in GED classes, special diploma graduates enter the labor force with limited marketing skills, and are therefore severely hampered in their chances for long term economic success. The tracking of African American males students in these low ability tracks (i.e., special diploma track) may therefore contribute to the long-term academic and economic failure of African American males in American society, given the widespread practice of tracking (i.e., special diploma placement) in Florida public schools (George & Rubin, 1992).

The Special Diploma is unlike the Regular Diploma in that a lesser academic standard is required for graduation, thereby lessening the chances for these students to achieve future economic success. Braddock and Dawkins (1993) point out that chances for academic, social and

economic success are severely hampered by placement in low ability classes. Students receiving a Special Diploma additionally do not have to take the High School Competency Test (HSCT) mandated by Florida State for a Regular High School Diploma, but they do have to master certain minimum student performance standards set forth by the school district, outlined in its Pupil Progression Plan. The fact that special diploma students do not have to prepare for the HSCT precludes them from exposure to higher skills in mathematics and communication which this test requires. Even though placement is not permanent, students who are placed in the special diploma track may remain there even after their academic achievement prove that the regular diploma track would have been the better option. This inevitably contributes to the lessening of qualified black males in the job market, as well as to long term underachievement (Irving, 1990).

The implementation of a two-track diploma policy for students with learning disabilities therefore raises the question of whether or not differences between the regular diploma group and the special diploma group are great enough within this disability category to justify placement into two distinct diploma tracks. Furthermore, placement in these groups may result in differential instructional practices, lower teacher expectations, as well as the development of low student self-esteem which inevitably affects their academic, social, and long-term economic success (Edgar, 1987;Irvine, 1990). This success is crucial, considering that, in today's job market, where a college degree now assumes the importance that a High School Diploma used to assume, anything less than a Regular (standard) High School Diploma falls even shorter of the work required for employability in even the most menial of jobs. Placement of African American male students in the special diploma track therefore puts these students at risk for developing prosocial skills, achieving academic success, and acquiring marketable skills required in an advanced technological

age.

Conceptual Framework

This study focuses on the differences between African American males with learning disabilities who are placed in regular and special diploma tracks within Dade County, Florida. To provide a framework for the study, sociocultural factors associated with disproportionality are examined in the light of empirical research and advocacy studies. Theories of intellectual inferiority, cultural and educational disadvantage (Hernstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1969; Reissman, 1965) which offer explanations for differences between the African American student population and other groups are also examined in the light of current and past research. Related research studies are also examined from a theoretical perspective. The complex and multidimensional nature of the learning disabilities construct is discussed within the framework of social, behavioral, and academic behaviors characteristic of this population (Henley et al, 1993; McKinley, 1987). Additionally, psychometric assessment and its role in special education placement decisions (Hilliard, 1987; Nobles, 1987; Reschly & Ward, 1991); social skills, problem behavior and academic competence of students with learning disabilities (Chadsey-Rusch, 1992; Gresham & Elliot, 1989) , as well as teacher perception and assessment of these behaviors (Alinder, 1995; Ashton & Webb, 1986) all form part of the conceptual framework of this study.

Characteristics of Students with Learning Disabilities

Students with learning disabilities form part of the special education group with mild disabilities, including the Emotionally Handicapped (EH), and Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH). Students with learning disabilities additionally account for more than two-thirds of all students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education Report, 1990). There is no sharp

definition of learning disabilities, since these students share many of the learning and behavioral characteristics of students in the mild disability categories (Henley et al, 1993; Reschly, 1987). Research further suggests that students with learning disabilities as a group have fewer social skills, more problem behavior, and less academic competence than their non-disabled peers (Bramlett, Smith & Edwards, 1994; Bursuck, 1989; Gresham & Elliot, 1989; Haager & Vaughn, 1995). These students however, comprise that group defined in PL94-142 as those who manifest disorders in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written language, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia, but excludes learning problems related to visual, hearing or motor handicaps, emotional disturbance, mental retardation, environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage (Federal Register, 1977, 65083). Federal regulations also stipulate that if there is a discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading comprehension, mathematical calculations or reasoning as determined by a multi-disciplinary team, the child can be diagnosed as having a specific learning disability (Henley et al, 1993).

Conte and Andrews (1993) agreed with an earlier position taken by the Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities (ICLD) that social skills deficits should be included in the construct of learning disabilities. They argue that social skills deficits fall within the commonly used definitions of learning disabilities. On the other hand, Gresham and Elliot (1989) argued that social skills deficits should not be included as part of the definition of learning disabilities, since

these deficits could not have resulted from neurologic dysfunctions as stipulated in the Federal definition, but rather from other variables (i.e., mental retardation, behavioral disorders) associated with learning disabilities. In this study, the concept of learning disabilities as defined in federal regulations, and used by school districts across the United States was used. This definition provides the legal framework for instructional and other services designed for this population of students.

Problem Behavior

Students with learning disabilities very often exhibit behavioral problems (Bender, 1989). The terms "behavior disordered", "emotionally disturbed", "disruptive" or "conduct problem" have all been used to describe students who exhibit behaviors or emotional problems in schools (Henley et al, 1993). The great majority of these students are males (Patterson, Reid & Dishion, 1992). Henley et al (1993) point out that students with behavior disorders are those who "exhibit persistent and consistent behavioral patterns that disrupt their own or others' learning" (p.20). Regardless of the terms used, they all seek to describe students "whose behavior falls significantly outside the norms of their peer groups on two broadband behavioral dimensions that are now commonly referred to as internalizing and externalizing" (Kauffman,1993, p.24). Gresham and Elliot (1990) also describes problem behaviors in terms of internalizing and externalizing behaviors, but add hyperactivity as another dimension. Externalizing behaviors are inappropriate behaviors involving verbal or physical aggression towards others, poor control of temper and arguing; internalizing behaviors are those indicating anxiety, sadness, loneliness and poor self esteem. Hyperactivity involves excessive movement such as fidgeting, and other impulsive reactions. Smith, Wood and Grimes (1987) pointed out that none of these labels defines an

exclusive group, since students who are learning disabled, or educable mentally handicapped, might also suffer behavioral disorder problems. Additionally, Henley et al (1993) noted that there are no fixed standards for evaluating problem behavior, since (1) very often judgements represent opinions about the appropriateness of behavior in a specific classroom, (2) the concepts of normality and abnormality are relative, and are based on interactive processes involving the actor, the observer and the environment, and (3) reactions to behavior may vary according to the skills, expectations, and tolerance of the teacher. They point to variance in state prevalence figures, and differences in state criteria for identifying schools as evidence of the inherent relativity in behavioral disorders.

However, the legal framework for servicing students classified as behaviorally disordered is also mandated in federal legislation incorporated in the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1990. This Act identifies behaviorally disordered students as those who exhibit (1) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, (2) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, (3) types of inappropriate behavior or feelings under normal conditions, (4) a general, pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, and (5) a tendency to develop physical symptoms, pains, or fears associated with school problems. Not only are the vast majority of these students with emotional or behavioral disorders rejected by their regular class peers (Hallenbeck & Kauffman, 1995), but these behaviors are counterproductive to academic success or acquiring socially accepted skills (Henley et al, 1993).

Disproportionality

With two-thirds of special education students in the mild disabilities categories, and a

disproportionate number of African-American students placed in these categories, an understanding of disproportionality must take into account (1) the proportion of minority children in the general student population, (2) the size of the educational program to the disproportionate placement, and (3) the variability in the over representation data (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Harry, 1994; Reschly, 1987). Some researchers (Heller, Holtzman & Messick, 1982) agree with Reschly that the size of program is an important variable to be considered in deciding disproportionality. Specifically, they argue that the size of a program is directly related to over representation of minority students. The bigger the educational program, the larger the disproportion of minority students. In addition to these variables, Artiles and Trent (1994) argue that identity of ethnic group must be added to this conceptual framework of disproportionality because "the current changes in the educational system and in the sociodemographic sphere of this society demand that we be precise in our analyses" (p.415). They also argue that erroneous conclusions about the over representation problem and its implications could be reached if contextual factors are not taken into account. The question of disproportionality must therefore take into account all the demographic information pertaining to the population deemed to be disproportionately represented. It is directly related to the percentage of students in the general or local population versus the percentage placed in specific special education programs.

Psychometric Testing and Special Education Placement

The concept of disproportionality is inextricably linked to psychometric assessment and testing which usually precedes placement in special education programs. Formal or informal measures of psychoeducational variables, particularly intelligence (IQ), as measured by the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children - Revised (WISC-R), the Stanford Binet or some other

standardized measurement, though controversial, play a prominent role in special education placement decisions. Reschly (1991) noted that the "overwhelming majority of items on current tests are not biased according to statistical criteria" (p.14). He also points out that IQ testing is typically done after students have exhibited much of the behaviors - low achievement and behavioral problems which might lead them being referred for placement. On the opposite side of this argument however is Hilliard (1987;1992), who posits that the prevalence of the IQ score as an index of normalcy, results in the disproportionate number of African American students in special education programs because of linguistic and cultural biases inherent in test constructs. Furthermore, the reliability of the IQ score as a fixed measurement of intelligence is called into question. Meyen (1990) argues that these scores are not perfectly reliable, and any measurement at a given time should not be considered a permanent representation of children's intelligences. Multiple intelligences theory as conceptualized by Gardner (1983,1993) and Levin (1994), and the concept of accelerated schooling (Hopfenberg et al, 1993) undermine the use of the IQ score as a fixed construct of human intelligence. Additionally, the Learning Styles Model provides an innovative approach geared towards utilizing the child's full capabilities, while minimizing or undermining perceptions that academic success is tied to a fixed IQ score (Dunn & Dunn, 1993). Multiple intelligence theory thus "provides a useful framework within which to consider the broad range of individual competencies" (Gardner, 1993, p.238). Accelerated schools have high expectations for utilizing the talents of all children (Hopfenberg et al, 1993). Dunn and Dunn (1993) posit that, since most individuals can learn in spite of varying degrees of strengths and weaknesses, instructional environments, resources, and approaches must respond to this diversity of learning styles.

The importance of psychometry in special education referral and placement thus dictates that any research in this field must be conducted within the conceptual framework of both formal and informal assessment, particularly as it relates to educational outcomes for minority or disadvantaged children. Grant (1992) specifically argues that, with passage of PL 94- 142 (now Individuals with Disabilities Act,1990) requiring placement of handicapped pupils in the least restrictive environment, the regular classroom teacher, who, traditionally has not been well trained in test construction and design, has increasingly more opportunities to make diagnostic decisions. If teachers are improperly trained in content area error detection and analysis, a vital tool in informal assessment procedures, then it can be argued that the resulting disproportionate number of African American children in general, and males in particular, can partly be attributed to this practice. However, in spite of the increasing role played by teachers in placement decisions, in practice, final decision to place does not rest with the teacher, but rather with a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT).

Social Skills

Kavale and Forness (1996) note that 75% of students with learning disabilities can be differentiated from their non learning disabled peers through measures of social competence. The pervasiveness of social skills deficits among students with learning disabilities implies that these deficits form an integral part of the learning disabilities construct. Formal and informal assessment of psychoeducational variables may therefore include teacher's ratings of students social skills vis a vis academic achievement (Gresham & Elliot, 1989). Research further shows that, not only are social skills related to academic achievement, but also to success in employment settings (Bursuck, 1989; Chadsey-Rusch, 1992). Essentially, social skills are goal oriented,

rule-governed learned behaviors which are situation specific, vary according to specific social situations, and involve observable and non-observable cognitive and affective elements. These in turn contribute to positive, neutral or negative feedback from others (Cartledge & Milburn, 1986). Gresham and Elliot (1989) identified three distinct categories of definitions of children's social skills. The peer acceptance definition identifies peer acceptance as a criterion for identifying a socially skilled child. Secondly, a behavioral definition of social skills identifies socially skilled behaviors as "those behaviors exhibited within specific situations that maximize the probability of reinforcement and minimize the probability of punishment contingent upon one's social behavior" (p.132). Thirdly, the social validity definition conceptualizes social skills as those specific behaviors which predict a child's standing on important social outcomes including (1) acceptance by peer group, (2) judgement of social skills by teachers, parents or significant others, (3) academic competence, (4) adequate self-concept/self-esteem, and (5) adequate psychological adjustment. Additionally, social skills may include behaviors related to (a) peer or social acceptance, (b) peer rejection, (c) perceived status, (d) aggression, (e) immaturity, (f) on-task behavior, and (g) social problem-solving (Swanson & Malone, 1992). Chadsey-Rusch (1992) suggests that any proper measurement of the social skills of children with disabilities must consider (1) the perceptions or judgements of significant others in work settings, (2) the perceptions and social goals of the targeted individuals and, (3) the performance of the social behaviors including whether the behavior was performed in the right context at the right time, with the appropriate person, and in an effective manner that might result in positive or neutral consequences.

Academic Competence

In addition to social skills deficits, students with learning disabilities are characterized by low academic competence (Carlisle & Chang, 1996; Henley et al, 1993). Academic achievement is concomitant with academic competence which refers to the degree to which students perform in reading and mathematics, their motivation, parental support as well as general cognitive functioning (Gresham & Elliot, 1990). Specifically, in the area of cognitive functioning, students with learning disabilities may exhibit low average to average to above average in cognitive function. In spite of the ability to achieve academically, behavioral problems, mental processing dysfunctions, poor self esteem and poor peer relationships may interfere with the academic performance and achievement of students with learning-disabilities (Henley et al, 1993; Gresham & Elliot, 1989; Tur-Kaspa & Bryan, 1995). A major determining factor in classifying students with learning disabilities is the perceived discrepancy between academic achievement and measured ability.

Teacher-Perception of Students' Behaviors

Teachers must constantly make judgements based on their perceptions of behavioral and social skills related to students' academic performance and school success (Cruz de la, 1995; Gresham & Elliot, 1990; Wright & Wiesc, 1988). Since they continually assess students' mastery of basic academic skills in reading and math, and make observations of other student behaviors, their role in placement decisions is crucial. The results of these assessments very often lead to referral for consultation or assessment for placement in special education (McIntyre, 1990). Soodak and Podell (1994) argue specifically that teachers seem to be particularly prone to referring difficult to teach students for evaluation which very often result in special education

placement. Research also suggests that teacher perception of student behaviors is influenced by their sense of efficacy (Allinder, 1995; Ashton, 1985; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Meijer & Foster, 1988; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Additionally, teacher perceptions may also be influenced by their standards, gender and race (Irvine, 1990; McIntyre, 1988; 1990;), as well as their attitude, belief system and bias (Parker, Gottlieb, Gottlieb & Davis, 1989). In spite of these influences on teacher perceptions, Wright and Weisc (1988) argue that teachers can make reasonably accurate direct predictions towards external criteria upon request, and can assign ratings that display moderate to high criterion-related validity.

Justification of the Study

The paucity of research on within-group differences among African American students with learning disabilities, justified the undertaking of this research. Much of the extensive research on students with learning disabilities compared students in this disability category with their non-disabled peers on important psychosocial variables such as social competence and motivation (Gresham, 1987); social skills, problem behavior and academic competence (Bramlett, Smith & Edmonds, 1994; Carlisle & Chang, 1996; Gresham & Elliot, 1989; Kavale & Forness, 1996). Others (McKinney,1987; Ysseldyke & Algozzine; 1984; Henley et al, 1993; Kavale & Fornesss, 1996) focused on the diversity within the population of students with learning disabilities. Vaughn and Hogan (1994) focused on within-group differences for social competence among students with learning disabilities, but did not focus exclusively on African American males. In contrast, this study looked at placement within placement. It focused specifically on whether or not differences in social skills, problem behavior and academic competence existed between African American males with learning disabilities placed in two

distinct diploma tracks. Given the widespread practice of tracking by diploma options in Florida, the findings of this study not only provide valuable information on important factors in the schooling of African American males (i.e. tracking), but offer empirically based knowledge to educators and policy planners concerned with making equitable placement decisions. In particular, policy-makers, legislators, school board members, school administrators, and teachers should find the information useful in the formation and implementation of policy, specifically as it relates to curriculum planning, pedagogy, and ensuring positive education outcomes for African American males with and without learning disabilities. Additionally, this research contributes to the development of an analytical framework within which further research on African American males with learning disabilities can be conducted.

Research Question and Hypotheses

This research investigated whether African American male students with learning disabilities who are classified as special diploma students and those who are classified as regular diploma students differed significantly in their social skills, problem behavior and academic competence as perceived by their teachers. In this study, African American referred to students of African ancestry, born in the United States, and not requiring placement in classes for students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). These included black students born in the United States of Haitian, Caribbean or Latin American parentage.

Variables investigated included: (1) teachers' ratings of students' social skills, as measured by the Social Skills Rating System, SSRS (Gresham & Elliot, 1990); (2) teachers' ratings of students' problem behavior, as measured by the SSRS; (3) teachers' rating of students' academic competence as measured by the SSRS; (4) socioeconomic status (SES) as estimated by students

receiving or not receiving free or reduced school lunch, and (5) IQ which referred to the measure of intellectual functioning usually determined by a standardized intelligence test, such as the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children, Revised (WISC-R). Diploma placement was the dependent variable, and referred to placement in either the regular or special diploma category within the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program.

Research Question

The main research question was: Do African American males with learning disabilities, placed in the regular diploma versus the special diploma track differ significantly in their social skills, problem behavior and academic competence as perceived by their teachers?

Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis #1: There are no significant differences between the regular diploma group and the special diploma group in their social skills.

Null Hypothesis #2: There are no significant differences between the regular diploma group and the special diploma group in their problem behavior.

Null Hypothesis #3: There are no significant differences between the regular diploma group and the special diploma group in their academic competence.

Definition of Operational Terms

African Americans. Students of African ancestry, born in the United States, and not requiring placement in classes for students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). These include traditional black Americans, as well as black students born in the U.S.A. of Haitian, Caribbean or Latin American parentage.

Diploma placement. The academic tracking of students with disabilities based on whether or not they will receive a special diploma or a regular diploma upon graduation from high school.

Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH). A mild disability category referring to students whose measured IQ (50-75) as well as adaptive behavior are considered below average.

Emotionally Handicapped (EH). A disability marked by "persistent and consistent maladaptive behavior which exists to a marked degree, which interferes with the student's learning process" (Dade County Public Schools (DCPS), 1994b, P.117).

Exceptional Student Education (ESE). Used synonymously with "special education". It refers to a specialized form of education that focuses on students with disabilities following federal and state guidelines for diagnosis, classification and placement.

Formal assessment. The use of standardized or norm-referenced tests that measure psychoeducational variables such as intelligence, achievement, aptitude or behavior.

High School Competency Test (HSCT). A state required test in Mathematics and Communication for students who wish to graduate with a regular high school diploma.

Informal assessment. Non-standardized tests. These are usually teacher-made tests that measure academic progress in class. The term is synonymous with criterion-referenced tests.

Intelligence Quotient (IQ). The score which results from the standardized measurement of intelligence.

Specific learning disabilities. A "heterogeneous group of psychological processing disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of language, reading, writing or mathematics" (DCPS, 1994b, p.132).

Psychometric Assessment. The measurement of psychoeducational variables (i.e., IQ) for the purpose of designing specific educational programs for students. It includes standard and non-standardized measurements.

Referral. The process whereby a written request is made for a formal evaluation of students who are suspected of needing special programs (DCPS, 1994b).

Regular Diploma. The high school diploma awarded to students in general and special education who have satisfied all course, credit, and minimum performance standards (including passing the HSCT) required by the state. It is also called a Standard Diploma.

Socioeconomic Status (SES). For this study, SES is indicated by students receiving or not receiving free or reduced school meals.

Special Diploma. The high school diploma awarded to students with disabilities (i.e. LD, EH, EMH) who have met limited course and credit requirements for graduation. The HSCT is not a requirement.

Organization for Remainder of the Study

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter two includes a review of the related literature. The methodology and research procedures are discussed in Chapter Three. Statistical analyses and findings are presented and discussed in Chapter Four. The summary, interpretation

of findings, limitations, conclusions, implications of this study for future research and policy making are presented in Chapter Five. Appendices and a bibliography are presented at the end of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Much of the research investigating differences among students with learning disabilities was done within the framework of special education research which highlights the diversity found among students in this population. Studies documenting this diversity (McKinney, 1987; Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1984; Henley et al, 1993) report that the problem of heterogeneity among students with learning disabilities has not only frustrated efforts to build a generalized body of knowledge, but has also contributed greatly to the present controversy over misidentification of students with learning disabilities, as well as to the ongoing debate over what constitutes appropriate special education placement for students with learning disabilities. Much of this research on students with learning disabilities have therefore focused specifically on comparisons of students in this population with other non-disabled students. In particular, multivariate studies investigating differences in social skills (Gresham, 1987; Kavale & Forness, 1996; Vaughn & Hogan, 1994), motivation and cognition (Pintrich, Anderman & Klobucar, 1994), sociometric status (Ochoa & Olivarez, 1995), academic and social competence (Bursuck, 1989; Carlisle & Chang, 1996), as well as differences in behavioral characteristics (Anderson, 1988; McKinney, 1989; Obiakor, 1994; Smith, Wood & Grimes, 1987) all reflect the diverse nature of students with learning disabilities, and the complex problems related to definition, achievement and education outcomes (Artiles & Trent, 1994). In looking specifically at differences between African American students and other school populations, many studies focused on perceived intellectual deficiencies, cultural and educational disadvantages, as well as

sociocultural factors. Of particular relevance to this study is the intellectual deficiency theory postulated by Jensen (1969), Hernstein and Murray (1994) who attributed differences in academic, social and economic achievement between African-Americans and European Americans to genetic factors. Other studies suggest however, that societal factors (i.e., educational opportunity, poverty, SES, economic opportunity) contribute to the widening gap in academic achievement between African and European Americans (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Harry, 1994; Irvine, 1990; Natriello, McDill & Pallas, 1990; Obiakor, 1992; Ogbu, 1986).

In order to provide a holistic view of factors associated with special education placement decisions, with particular reference to African American students, this literature review is presented in five parts. First, historical perspectives provide a brief glimpse into some of the social and legal forces which laid the groundwork for equality of educational opportunity for African Americans. Secondly, deficiency theories used to explain differences between African American students and other groups in cultural, biological and institutional terms is discussed. Three categories of deficiency theories (Ogbu, 1986, 1994) are specifically identified and discussed within the framework of intellectual deficiency theories (Jensen, 1969; Hernstein and Murray, 1994). Thirdly, the role of psychometric assessment (i.e., IQ scores) in relation to classifying, and tracking African American students in low ability classes is discussed. Fourthly, a presentation of current research on sociocultural, behavioral and psychosocial factors associated with placement of African American students in special education is done within the context of empirical and advocacy studies related to the schooling of African Americans. Lastly, prescriptive changes aimed at detracking, and improving the academic as well as social competence of African American males are discussed within the context of current literature.

Historical Perspectives

Traditionally, education has been the vehicle by which African Americans achieved some degree of upward social and economic mobility. The Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's, preceded by Brown vs the Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas in 1954, together provided the driving forces for change in educational opportunities for African Americans in the decades that followed. Specifically *Brown* helped to remove legally sanctioned barriers to education which had been put in place following the United States Supreme Court decision in the 1896 case, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (Donelan, Neal & Jones, 1994). These "Jim Crow" laws as they were called, perpetuated institutionalized inequities in educational and economic opportunities, and denied basic civil rights to African Americans. The Civil Rights Movement which began in the 1940's and gained momentum in the 1960's fought to maintain whatever gains were made by the *Brown* decision, in addition to continuing the struggle for basic civil rights, educational, economic, and social equality which European Americans had enjoyed for centuries. The passage of Civil rights legislation and court rulings during the 1960's and 1970's (most notably the Civil Rights Act of 1964) provided the legal framework within which African Americans continued the struggle for equal educational opportunity, and other civil rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution.

The struggle for equality of educational opportunity which became a pivotal issue during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations (Kantor & Lowe, 1995), also witnessed a number of empirical and advocacy studies which highlighted the disproportionate number of African American children in classes for the educable mentally handicapped, and other special education categories (Dunn, 1968; Mercer, 1973), as well as litigation by parent groups who questioned the efficacy of such placements. *Diana v State Board of Education* 1970, *The Pennsylvania*

Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (1971) and the *Larry P. v.. Riles, 1979* are among the most celebrated cases which effected changes in legislation pertaining to the education of minority children with disabilities. Taylor and Searl (1987) noted that, by 1973, political activism was reflected in thirty-one court cases on behalf of children with disabilities. Perhaps most significantly for African American children with disabilities was the *Larry P.* case, a class action suit brought by a group of African American parents in the San Francisco Unified School District. This action successfully challenged the use of IQ tests for identification and placement of disproportionate numbers of African American students in classes for the Educable Mentally Handicapped. It further helped to disprove the notion that African Americans were intellectually inferior, and resulted in the banning of the exclusive use of IQ tests for placement (Dent, 1987). Later, in *Marshall et al v. Georgia (1984),* Judge Edenfiel ruled that over representation of African Americans in special classes was not discriminatory, but was attributed to the low socioeconomic status of the students. Some researchers however, continue to offer different views on the persistent, and current problem of over representation in special education classes. (Harry, 1994; Obiakor, 1992; Serwatka, Deering & Grant, 1995).

Political activism gave way to progressive legislative changes following a series of litigious actions in the 1970's. The passage of Public Law 94-142 (1975) provided students with disabilities due process, protection in evaluation, individualized education and a least restrictive environment. Its subsequent revision (now PL 101-476 or Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 1990), as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), PL101-336, modeled after Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, now provide the legal framework for referral, classification and placement procedures in all public school special education programs.

Additionally, public accommodation, social work services, and rehabilitative counseling for all children with disabilities, as well as transition services for high school students exiting special education programs, must be provided if needed. A significant change in the Americans with Disabilities Act was the replacement of the term "handicap" with "disability".

Harry (1994) points out that by 1992, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) had already recognized the need to address policy issues relating to disproportionate representation of minorities in special education programs. She also noted that several options were being considered including developing a new policy statement, providing special training for OCR staff, and offering technical assistance to Local Education Agencies (LEA's) regarding placement of minority children in special education programs. However, in spite of these gains, research shows that, to date, referral, classification and placement of disproportionate numbers of African Americans in special education programs, remain problematic (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Boyd, 1996; Harry, 1994; Serwatka et al, 1995). Obiakor (1994) notes that 40 years after the Brown decision, and 30 years after the Civil Rights Act, issues pertaining to segregation, desegregation, quality and equity of African American learners still haunt educators and service providers. Specifically, the increasing number of African American students placed in classes for students with learning disabilities, particularly males, and the continued disproportionate placement in special education classes generally, constitute a matter of concern and urgency (Harry, 1994; Henley et al, 1993; Sleeter, 1990).

Deficiency Theories and Special Education Placement

The discovery of racial, ethnic, and class differences in academic achievement between African Americans and other ethnic groups in America's public schools gave rise to a number of

deficiency theories which attributed perceived differences in academic achievement between African and European Americans to genetic and sociocultural factors including, disparities in home environment, parental child-bearing practices, and differences in cultural backgrounds (Ogbu, 1986). In particular, theories of cultural deprivation (Reissman, 1962; U.S. Department of Labor, 1965) and genetic inferiority (Jensen, 1969) were offered during 1960's as explanations for the widening gap in academic achievement between African Americans and other ethnic groups. More recently, theories of economic and educational disadvantage (Natriello, McDill & Pallas, 1990; Pallas, Natriello, & McDill, 1989) added further to the debate. The deficit view assumes that African American children, because of cultural, environmental and social differences, lack the adaptations necessary for school achievement. Irvine (1990) notes that theories of cultural, economic and educational disadvantage posit that schools (1) exist primarily to transmit a body of prescribed knowledge, skills, values and norms that are essential for society, (2) de-emphasize the political nature of schooling (3) assume that schools serve their students equally, and (4) assume that schools are meritocratic and value free. These theories form the basis of reasons given for the continued low academic achievement of African American students in America's public schools (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Boyd, 1991; Irvine, 1990).

Categories of Deficiency Theories

Three categories of deficiency theories have been identified with the education of disadvantaged school populations, particularly African Americans (Boyd, 1991; Ogbu, 1986, 1994). Institutional deficiency theories focus on problems within the school system, as causes for wide gaps in achievement between African Americans and Anglos. Boyd (1991) notes that arguments which cite institutional deficiency as a principal reason for school failure point either to

dysfunctional organizational arrangements in the workplace, or to deficiencies in the authority, control, and incentive structures of the schools. The common element in both views on institutional deficiency is that schools generally have serious organizational problems, which act as barriers to success, particularly for African American students. Developmental deficiency theories posit that disadvantaged children fail in school because their parents do not teach them competencies necessary for school success. A difference in achievement and ability may therefore result from this lack of parental stimulation at an early age. These theories posit that differences between students from disadvantaged populations and other groups can be attributed to impoverished conditions which adversely affect school achievement. Consequently, according to these theories, compensatory programs like Head Start and Chapter One are needed to counteract the effects of impoverishment on school success. Kochanek, Kabacoff and Lipsitt (1990) found however that early identification models which focused on developmental delay or adverse medical events from birth to three years of age are inadequate in identifying children eventually judged to be developmentally delayed. They suggest the development of multivariate screening initiatives which are child and family focused. Lastly, cultural-discontinuities theories posit that minority children tend to fail because of variances between the child's culture, the culture of the school, and that of the larger society (Ogbu, 1986; Boyd, 1991). Ogbu, 1986) noted specifically that theories of cultural discontinuities are more serious than the other two theories, since they point to controversial human relations within the setting which may contribute to school failure. He concluded that, in order to reduce the culture gap between European and African Americans, for example, more trusting relationships are needed between the two groups in order to convince African Americans that social and economic opportunities are also accessible to them within the

institutional setting.

Tharp (1989) emphasized the link between culture and school success when he noted that improvements in basic skills, social skills and problem-solving abilities can only be realized when instructional practices in schools take into account culture patterns of the group to be served. Previous research by Escobedo and Huggams (1983; White, 1992) also suggested that, since students from different cultural backgrounds perceive experiences differently, their individual modes of learning might be affected by their own cultural experiences. In looking at patterns of intellectual differences of Black, Hispanic and White children, Taylor and Richards (1991) reported that overall, European Americans scored highest, with the African American children scoring higher than Hispanics on verbal subtests, and Hispanics scoring higher than African Americans on the performance subtests. Although this study took into account the IQ level of the participants, methodological problems relating to controlling extraneous variables which could have influenced the results of the tests, limited the external validity of the findings. Since placement in special education classes is predicated on a discrepancy between academic achievement and ability, it is necessary to look at the role of deficiency theories in the placement process.

Cultural, Economic, and Educational Disadvantage

Theories of cultural, economic, and educational disadvantage fall within the sphere of cultural-discontinuities theories used to explain why the achievement gap between African American students and other groups is widening (Ogbu, 1986). Given the disproportionate number of African Americans and other minority students from disadvantaged background who are placed in special education programs (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Harry, 1994; Mercer, 1973;

Serwatka et al, 1995), theories of cultural, economic and educational advantage (Natriello et al, 1994) are particularly relevant. The majority of these students come from populations which generally experience economic, cultural and educational disadvantages (Mercer, 1973), and are therefore perceived to be at risk for school and societal success (Duncan, 1994; Irvine, 1990; Obiakor, 1992). Moreover, the resulting decline in social capital among these populations, as well as the persistent problem of underachievement, particularly African American students, underscores the need to study multivariate factors associated with school success (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Coleman, 1987).

Ogbu's (1986) theory of cultural discontinuities thus have some relevance in any interpretation or examination of socioeconomic or cultural factors associated with disproportionality and placement of African American males in special education programs (Brosnan,1983), since minority/ethnic group status is perhaps the best known factor associated with being culturally deprived or educationally disadvantaged (Dunn 1968; Mercer, 1973; Pallas, Natriello & McDill, 1989; Taylor, 1994). Specifically, Pallas et al (1989) point to several factors such as living in a poverty household, living in a single parent family, having a poorly educated mother and having a non-English language background as multiple variables contributing to educational disadvantage. They pointed out however that these categories are not independent, since an individual may possess more than one of these attributes, and further concluded that these factors need not be barriers to academic achievement or success.

Research further suggests that theories which point to cultural deprivation as a factor in the achievement gap between African Americans and other ethnic groups look narrowly at the individual rather than to other external factors, including institutional factors which can and do

affect school achievement (Hilliard, 1992; Irvine, 1990; Ogbu, 1994). In fact, theories of cultural deprivation and educational disadvantage point to educational processes inside as well as outside of school as contributing to the academic failure of disadvantaged minority populations (Natriello, McDill & Pallas, 1990). Proponents of cultural deprivation theory therefore assume that children who are educationally disadvantaged "have been exposed to insufficient educational experiences" (Natriello et al, 1990, p.13) in either the home, school or community. These factors are seen then as contributing not only to educational disadvantage, but also to low academic achievement and subsequent placement in special education disability categories.

Whether the causes of academic underachievement rest within or without the school environment, any manifestation of cultural deprivation initially comes to light in the institutional setting of the school where student performance is evaluated. Since the source of the problem may rest with the school and/or family and the community in which the child is brought up, it becomes necessary to examine multivariate factors present in both environments, which may be associated with underachievement, and subsequent placement in special education classes (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Boyd, 1991; Harry, 1994; Irvine; 1994).

Arguments have been made however against the use of cultural deprivation theory as an explanation for lack of academic achievement in African American students (Ogbu, 1986; Samuda & King, 1989). Samuda and King (1989) specifically note that cultural deprivation is not possible since no individual is without a culture. Furthermore, culture can only be found deficient when the yardstick that is used to measure it is "basically ethnocentric in its gradations" (p.65). In spite of this counter argument to cultural deprivation theory, other research studies suggest that multiple factors linked to poverty (i.e., education level of parents) may be associated with success

in school, particularly in the case of African Americans (Irvine, 1990; McCullough, 1995; Melby, 1993). Since African Americans shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden of poverty and unemployment in the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1990; Winters, 1993), it is reasonable to assume that factors pertaining to economic hardship and poverty which affect not only family functioning, but also the nature of the family's living conditions, may consequently affect students' academic success, in spite of their ability to learn (Taylor, 1994). Socioeconomic problems of disadvantaged and minority populations might therefore be factors in low school performance, thereby making a disproportionate number of these students at risk for positive academic achievement, in spite of their ability to learn (Harry, 1994).

Closely aligned to developmental deficiency theory is the argument that children from disadvantaged homes succeed less because of poor socialization into dominant culture values and symbols (Jensen, 1984). Even though members of disadvantaged minority groups "straddle two and sometimes multiple worlds" (Winters, 1993, p.15), and arrive at school with different levels of linguistic, cognitive, motivational and social development (Boyd, 1991), there is no conclusive evidence that poor socialization of disadvantaged minority children, and concomitant indicators of poverty (i.e., low socioeconomic status) contribute to, or explain perceived intellectual deficiencies in African American children (Obiakor, 1992; Sameroff, 1993). Ginsberg (1986) pointed out earlier that empirical studies which supported the deficit view were fraught with methodological problems. According to him, researchers used rigid methodologies which were not based on any particular understanding of children in general or poor children in particular. Furthermore, other research suggests that in spite of the low socioeconomic level, parents acting

in the role of academic mentors was the single most important variable distinguishing low SES Hispanic and Anglo high school graduates from non-graduates (Trueba, 1988). Even though African Americans were not represented in this study, this study is relevant since it underscores the argument that low SES, and other conditions associated with poverty, need not be barriers to school success. However, research suggests that hunger and other conditions associated with impoverishment and low socioeconomic status might profoundly affect performance on psychoeducational tests which play a vital role in special education placement decisions. Resulting low scores from these tests may point to hunger rather than to deficits in intellectual or cognitive functioning (Sigmon,1990; Obiakor, 1992). Sigmon (1990) adds further that any fair and quantitative measurement of socioeconomically depressed students is attributed greater validity when such instruments are normed on local or comparable populations. Theories of cultural deprivation are therefore inadequate to explain not only the academic achievement gap between African-Americans and other groups, but are also inadequate to explain perceived differences in intellectual or cognitive abilities among ethnic groups (Nobles, 1987; Obiakor,1992).

Intellectual/Developmental Deficiency Theory

Closely aligned with theories of cultural deprivation and educational disadvantage, are theories of intellectual deficiency shaped largely by the work of Jensen (1969, 1976) who attributed differences in intellectual functioning between African Americans and European Americans to genetic factors. In his seminal work, Jensen (1969) argued that compensatory education programs like Chapter 1 and Head Start for disadvantaged minorities have had very little impact on the scholastic achievement, or on IQ scores of these populations, even though he

acknowledged that minority status was a factor in special education placement. He asserted that information processing deficits rather than cultural differences in knowledge base, are the major factors in poor scholastic achievement (Jensen, 1976, 1984). Furthermore, he asserted that 80% of the variance in IQ was due to genetic differences, and the remaining 20% to environmental differences. Hernstein and Murray (1994) later defended these arguments by their assertion that perceived differences in academic achievement between African-Americans and other ethnic groups are largely attributed to genetic factors.

However, other researchers (Ginsberg, 1986; Graves, 1995; Hernan & Feagin, 1995) countered these arguments by pointing out that they are rooted in theories of racial superiority, and furthermore lack the scientific foundation and empiricism necessary for sound research. Nobles (1987) argued earlier that "the establishment of the inferiority of Africans and African American peoples via psychometric assessment immediately replaced the shallow pseudo-religious theories of predestiny and Divine Curse" (p.46). He concluded that if psychometry is to become a tool of mental measurement which assesses the universality of mental functioning, then "the field of psychometry must free itself from the legacy of the subtle and the sublime, as well as the overt and intellectual European obsession with justifying its own superiority" (p.55). A further review of the literature revealed that there is no study which categorically shows that specific genes are linked to lower IQ in higher proportions among African Americans than among European Americans. Conversely, there is no research that links specific genes to abstract reasoning and problem solving, which Jensen argues are found in higher proportions among European Americans than among African Americans (Hilliard, 1992). Theories of intellectual inferiority failed to take into account the historical economic, political and other institutional disparities

which existed between African and European Americans for centuries, resulting in unequal and damaging educational, economic and social outcomes for the African American population (Donelan et al, 1994; Gougis, 1986; Ogbu, 1986). Theories of intellectual deficiency as well as theories of cultural discontinuities are thererfore inadequate to explain gaps in achievement between African Americans and other ethnic groups (Boyd, 1991; Hilliard, 1992; Kochanek, Kabacoff & Lipsitt, 1990).

Additionally, theories of intellectual deficiency failed to take into account inherent biases in IQ testing which often ignored cultural and/or linguistic differences (Bell, 1987; Gersten & Woodard, 1994; Hilliard, 1987; Nobles, 1987; O'Reilly, 1989; Ortiz & Polyzoi, 1988; Taylor & Lee, 1987). Furthermore, the preeminence given to standardized testing in Western school systems (Connell, 1993), focuses attention on the use of the IQ score as a predictor of academic and economic success for African Americans males - an issue which has figured prominently in the research and debate pertaining to the disproportionate placement of African Americans in special education (Hilliard, 1994). The notion of the IQ score as an index of normalcy is complicated by the fact that learning disabilities is a complex and multidimensional construct (McKinney, 1987), and cannot be easily identified in an IQ score (Hilliard, 1992). If IQ is a principal factor in classifying students with learning disabilities, Naglieri and Braden (1992) argue that notions of cognitive deficits which characteristically define learning disabilities, and measured by standardized IQ tests may be conceptually invalid.

Standardized testing of IQ and other psychoeducational variables (i.e., aptitude, achievement) thus becomes an important issue for African Americans placed in special education programs. McLeskey, Waldron and Wornhoff (1990) reported that when an IQ of 85 or above

was required for identifying students with learning disabilities, 41% of African American and 16% of European American students in that investigation were referred to specific special education programs. Additionally an examination of scores from WISC-R subtests also showed a disproportionate number of African American students being referred. These statistics are usually associated with society's perception of black intellectual deficits reflected in (1) white flight from desegregated schools, (2) the high premium placed on IQ and other norm-referenced tests as selecting and sorting mechanisms to discriminate against individuals and groups, (3) the numbers and proportions of blacks suspended or expelled from school, and (4) the emphasis on attaining excellence with minimum commitment to equality (Jones-Wilson, 1991).

Although compensatory programs (i.e., Head Start and Chapter I) have achieved partial success in closing the academic achievement gap between African Americans and Anglos, failure to realize high gains is not be attributed to intellectual inferiority as postulated by Jensen, but to certain misconceptions on which the programs are based. Ogbu (1986) specifically points to rehabilitation strategies involving early intervention, parental education and compensatory education programs and school integration for peer learning, which he argues have not been particularly effective in raising the academic achievement of African American students. If IQ is the principal predictor of academic achievement among African American students and other ethnic groups (Cartledge, Stupay & Kaczala, 1988; Green, Sap & Chissom, 1990; Johnson, 1994; Taylor, 1991; Vance & Sabatino, 1991), then there is need to examine the ramifications of test bias surrounding intelligence and other psychometric measurements used in special education placement decisions (Hilliard, 1994; Stone & Jeffrey, 1991; Taylor & Lee, 1987).

Institutional Deficiencies

The current disproportionate representation of African Americans in special education classes, and the concomitant under representation in classes for gifted and advanced learners may also be partially attributed to institutional deficiencies inherent in school policies. These institutional factors include the ineffectiveness of preplacement instructional programs (Deno, 1970), faulty curricula and pedagogy (Irvine, 1990) and subsequent tracking of students into low ability groups (Bateman, 1994; Hallahan & Kauffman, 1994; Oakes, 1992). Other research suggests that the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of screening instruments (Hilliard, 1994), as well as lack of understanding of gifted characteristics on the part of school personnel (Kofsky, 1992) may account for this disparity. Furthermore, individual differences in learning styles among a population as diverse as students with learning disabilities, not only point to the need for pedagogical reform, may also to the complexity and diversity found among students with learning disabilities (McKinney, 1987; Wang, 1990; White, 1992). Besides the failure of schools to recognize individual differences in learning styles, Irvine (1990) cites a litany of factors which might have a negative impact on school achievement, and subsequent placement in low ability classes. These factors point to institutional deficiencies within the school system. Specifically, she notes that black school failure can be attributed to (1) the hidden curriculum, particularly tracking, (2) teachers' lack of knowledge of students' cultural values, norms, styles or language, and (3) the school's endorsement of societal beliefs concerning equal educational opportunity and its implementation of practices which are in direct opposition to these beliefs.

Other factors in the institutional environment which may contribute to disproportionate representation of African American students in special education include insufficient preparation

and an unwillingness on the part of some teachers and administrators to accept and teach African American children (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Bell, 1987; Irvine, 1990; McIntyre & Pernell, 1985). Furthermore, the systemic placement of large numbers of African American students in low ability tracks or groups (i.e. special and regular diploma tracks) can be considered an institutional deficiency since research studies suggest that tracking and ability grouping is an education practice which mitigates against academic achievement (George & Rubin, 1992; Irvine, 1990; Oakes, 1992).

Psychometric Assessment and Special Education Placement

Deficiency theories may rely on results of psychometric measurement to provide a quantitative and scientific basis to their arguments. More specifically, and as previously argued, the referral and placement of students in special education rely largely on results of psychometric tests of ability, achievement, attitude and behavior. Such assessment tends to focus primarily on the imperfections of the child, and in large measures have "resulted in digging the educational graves of many racially and/or economically disadvantaged children by using a WISC or Binet IQ score to justify the label "mentally retarded" (Dunn, 1968, p.8). Carlson (1990) notes that there is the built-in assumption that these normative measurements are a superior means of data collection. Furthermore, studies provide corroborating evidence that psychometric assessment not only plays a crucial role in classifying and tracking students in special education programs (Dent, 1987; Hilliard, 1994; Nobles, 1987) but is also used to support and reinforce stereotypical notions of African American intellectual inferiority (Jensen, 1969; Hernstein & Murray (1994). The fact that some disability categories (i.e. EMH, LD) depend on the IQ score as a criterion for identification (Dent, 1987) lends supports to the argument that the IQ score is perhaps the single

most important piece of evidence collected in the placement process. Lassister and Bardos (1995) argue further that the IQ score plays an equally important role in determining academic outcomes for students placed in these programs, since placement may determine the level of access to high order academic skills. The fact that formal measurement of certain of psychoeducational variables precedes placement in special education placement decisions, therefore makes the issue of assessment one of fundamental concern for African American students not only in public schools, but also in post-secondary institutions (Harry, 1994; Hilliard, 1994; Irvine, 1990). Hilliard (1987) argues that the dramatic decline in the number of African American teachers, students in colleges and universities, and the dramatic reduction in the number of teachers being prepared at Black colleges, as well as the continuing disproportionate numbers of African American children in special education classes can be blamed on inherent biases in standardized testing. Kauffman (1989) too explained that African Americans may be performing below expectancy levels because of cultural differences which can impact the results of a standardized test normed on majority populations. Given the role of standardized assessment in public school and in special education placement decisions, the reliability and validity of these instruments in relation to African American school achievement must be assessed (Hilliard, 1987).

Reliability and Validity of Psychometric Assessment

In special education, the issue of reliability and validity of psychometric measurement is therefore particularly important in light of the fact that there is no definitive measurement of learning disabilities which are complex and multidimensional in nature (Henley et al, 1993; McKinney, 1987; Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1984). Furthermore, inherent biases in standardized tests may result in false assessments of minority populations (Hilliard, 1987; O'Reilley, 1989).

Research suggests that the critical deficiencies in standardized, norm-references tests are the absence of treatment validity and clear intervention strategies (Reschly, 1992). Anderson (1988) argues further that assessment procedures with low reliability and validity will increase the possibility of giving false positives. Not only are these assessment procedures based on the assumption that students have deficits, they also fail to take into account cultural attributes of children which might impact the results of these measurements (Cummins, 1986; Sugai, 1988). Carlson (1990) further questions the reliability of the data gathered from standardized measurements, and argues that (1) variations in the quality of standardized instruments may produce false or misleading information, whereas an alternative procedure might yield more accurate results and, (2) normative tests are designed to measure specific variables, and might therefore be unsuitable or useless when additional information is needed by an assessment team to reach a placement decision.

One of the major arguments questioning the reliability and validity of psychometric measurement is that related to inherent linguistic and cultural biases in test construction and design (Ortiz & Polyzoi, 1988; O'Reilly, 1989). Scales (1987) noted that the linguistic and cultural biases present in diagnostic or reading achievement tests are "ultimately the reflection of biases present in the teaching process and in society as a whole" (p.97). He concluded that African American children on most standardized tests, are faced with a two-fold challenge: (a) performing required tasks and (b) demonstrating abilities on these tasks by manipulating communicative and language codes which are frequently different from their indigenous systems. Other researchers (Hoover, Politzer & Taylor, 1987; Taylor & Lee, 1987) supported this view that African American children are severely disadvantaged because of linguistic and other biases

inherent in assessment procedures.

Reschly (1987) argues that the other important characteristic of a good classification system is its validity. Some research suggests that some of the instruments used specifically to measure intelligence are valid. In particular, it has been argued that the commonly used Wechsler Intelligence Scale -Revised (WISC-R) is a well constructed and well-standardized measure of intelligence in children (Cohen, Swerdlik & Phillips, 1996). It has also been suggested that the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale "possesses acceptable validity for assessing the intelligence of black males" (Greene, Sapp & Chissom, 1990). Other researchers (Stone & Jeffrey, 1991; Vance & Sabatino, 1990) support the above argument that standardized tests such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children -Revised (WISC-R) have construct and predictive validity, and are therefore non-biased when applied across ethnic and gender categories. Greene, Sapp and Chissom (1990) also reported that, when the standard age scores on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth Edition (SBIV) and WISC-R IQ's of 51 urban black males receiving special education services were compared, correlations between these two tests and the degree of correspondence between the respective means suggested that the test share a common conceptual background. Even though they reported that the SBIV have acceptable validity for assessing the intelligence of black males in other disability categories, they found that this could not be applied to students in the learning disability category. The small sample in that study however limited the generalizability to the African American male population.

On the other hand, the validity of these instruments was questioned when they were used to measure specific psychodeucational variables (Cartlege, Stupay & Kaczala, 1988; Hilliard, 1994; Taylor, 1991). These researchers reported that, on tests that measure specific components

of language and language skills (skills which are evaluated in the diagnosis of specific learning disabilities), inherent test biases may be revealed by a contrasting study of the speech variety of the examinee and the speech that is desired by the examiner. Specifically, Taylor & Lee (1987) noted that cultural differences in language use can, and often do, "interfere with the validity of behavioral evidence derived from test takers" (p.71). Questions relating to the validity of these instruments therefore remain. Of particular relevance is the assumption that standardized test scores are a fixed and true measure of one's intelligence. Gardner (1983) and Hilliard (1987) argue that intelligence is not a fixed entity. Hilliard (1994) pointed to the absurdity of assuming that a test like the Wechsler or the Binet can be used to serve such multiple functions as diagnosing learning disabilities, or developing individual educational plans (IEP's). He claims that long term consequences of using fixed constructs of intelligence have implications for students' educational opportunities. Furthermore, Lindle (1994) pointed to the instability of IQ scores, and noted that, depending on the specific IQ test administered, a person's intelligence, as indicated by the result, could vary as much as 40 points.

Compounding the problems associated with the validity of psychometric tests is the shifting nature of definitions associated with the various exceptionalities, particularly those associated with defining learning disabilities (Henley et al, 1993; Keogh, 1987; McKinney, 1987). Reschly (1987) noted that the current exceptional child classification developed gradually, haphazardly, and inconsistently over the past century. He surmised that "perhaps the greatest deficiency is the absence of finely graduated classification, placement, and instructional interventions" (p.54). This is particularly true in the diagnosis of learning disabilities which is fraught with conceptual difficulties. Keogh (1987) notes that "even when the psychometric

properties of tests and the expertise of teachers are adequate, a number of influences may lead to inappropriate conclusions or invalid inferences" (p.234). The use and abuse of a discrepancy formula to identify students with learning disabilities is also a cause for concern (Bateman & Chard, 1995). They note specifically that the continued use of the discrepancy formula by Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) to provide a quantitative rationale for learning-disability classification stems from (1) MDTs lack of knowledge and expertise about learning disabilities, (2) MDTs fear of the legal system - a fear which causes them to rely on a formula for "protection", and (3) the value placed on technical adequacy over professional judgement.

Given the importance that IQ and other psychoeducational variables play in placement decisions, and given the disproportionate numbers of African Americans placed in learning disability classes (Irvine, 1990; Scales, 1987), research shows specifically that there is a relationship between the use of standardized IQ test scores and the over representation of African American students in special education programs (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Cummins, 1986; Harry, 1994; Heller, Holtzman & Messick, 1982; Hilliard, 1992; Serwatka, Deering & Grant, 1995).

Alternatives to Standardized measurement

In an effort to redress biases associated with traditional assessment researchers have suggested alternatives to standardized testing procedures. Scales (1987) suggests multiple practices. These include (1) the use of more informal tests (2) analyzing standardized tests used in the classroom for assurance that they actually test reading skills (3) contrasting results of formal and informal tests, and (4) utilizing test results that are based on measuring reading performance to make educational decisions. He claims that these practices will all work towards alleviating the problem of inappropriate classification and placement. Gardner (1983, 1993) adds

support to this when he noted that Multiple Intelligences Theory has proven to be the catalyst in schools, since it not only allows for changes in traditional assessment, but also it has implications for curricular and pedagogical reform. He asserts that human intelligence is manifested in linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, body-kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, all of which are native to human beings, and can be developed to varying degrees. This theory thus undermines traditional assessment of intelligence testing of minorities. Levin (1994) also recognized the need to measure multiple intelligences in children if maximum outcomes of schooling are to be achieved. Even though he foresees problems with implementation of a multiple intelligence model in schools, most researchers agree that, in light of current constructs of intelligence, "we need to move away from a conception of intelligence as constituting a fixed set of abilities, regardless of the numbers, and towards a conception of intelligence as involving capitalization on strengths and compensation for and their remediation of weaknesses" (Sternberg, 1994, p.563). Eisner (1994) too supports the theory of multiple intelligences. He notes that it provides "a compelling corrective to the intellectually constipated conception of human ability that has characterized both public schools and perhaps especially universities" (p.358). Both institutions, he argues, have traditionally relied on standardized measurements in mathematics and language usage as narrow conceptions of human intellectual functioning.

Intelligence tests as currently constructed therefore need to be reconceptualized in order to increase validity and reliability, and must be based on sound theory (Naglieri & Braden, 1992). Reschly (1992) adds further that functional assessment must be regarded as superior to norm-referenced standardized measures of achievement and cognitive processes. In particular, the

literature suggests that the systematic observation of students over long periods of time and across broad cultural groups will eventually produce basic scientific knowledge, especially when the unique patterns of learners are observed, accounted for, and interpreted (Hilliard, 1987, 1992).

Tracking and Ability Grouping

One outcome of psychometric assessment is tracking or ability grouping which involves the placement of students into academic tracks based on formal test scores (i.e. stanines, IQ scores). The practice of tracking low ability students into specific academic programs may in effect have negative consequences for African American students (Lindle, 1994; Oakes, 1985 Ogbu, 1986; Payne, 1994). Tracking, or grouping students into low ability classes may therefore be identified as one of the institutional deficiencies (Ogbu, 1986) contributing to the academic failure of African American students in general, and males in particular (Irvine, 1990). Oakes specifically noted that:

> "tracking is accompanied by public labels, status differences, expectations and consequences for academic and occupational attainment... and becomes part and parcel of the struggle among individuals and groups for comparative advantage in the distribution of school resources, opportunities, and credentials that have exchange value in society" (p.13).

Tracking is therefore a major outcome of the labeling process in special as well as general education (Braddock & Dawkins, 1993; Donelan et al.1994; Irvine, 1990; Oakes, 1992; Ogbu, 1986; Wenning, 1992). Tracking students with learning disabilities into subgroups based on teacher perceptions or assessment of abilities is therefore one of the institutional deficiencies

associated with the education of African American students as long as these practices promote unequal education outcomes (George & Rubin, 1992; Irvine, 1990; Oakes, 1992; Sorenson & Hallihan, 1986). Research suggests that tracking is not conducive to positive education outcomes (Slavin, 1987).

Furthermore, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) reported that tracking and ability grouping is discriminatory and segregative when districts used as their primary methods of grouping (1) a single measure of ability (i.e. a reading subtest or a composite score from a standardized test) for assigning students to all or most academic classes, and/or (2) only subjective measures, such as teacher recommendations (Wenning, 1992). Segro (1995) identified several factors which might be impacted by tracking and low ability grouping of students. Among these are: lack of student mobility across ability groups, quality of instruction and teacher behaviors, student self-concept, lack of educational equity, student achievement and individualization. These factors may contribute to tracking a disproportionate number of African American male students in low ability classes, notably in special education low track classes. George and Rubin (1992) also point to several findings in their study on tracking and ability grouping in Florida, where the practice of tracking and ability grouping is widespread. They argue that tracking (1) delivers the school's learning resources in fundamentally unfair and inequitable ways, (2) leads to racial, ethnic and income isolation as a result of placing poor and ethnic minority in low academic tracks, (3) contributes to the destruction of a sense of community in and out of school, a phenomenon evidenced in the wider community, (4) relates to big differences in students' self-esteem, (5) inhibits rather than enhances academic achievement, (6) unnecessarily downplays the importance of student, teacher and parent effort, as well as unjustifiably emphasizing individual student

ability, and (7) erects barriers to equal educational opportunity and subsequent economic success. In Florida, students may be placed in lower or higher ability groups within the learning disabilities classification based on specific diploma options which offer different requirements for high school graduation.

Diploma Options

The two diplomas offered are (1) the regular diploma, which is offered to all students in the general education program, as well as regular diploma students in the special education program, and (2) the special diploma, which is distinct from the one offered to these students. The Special Diploma, created by the Florida Legislature (s.232.247,F.S) is designed to give students with varying disabilities (i.e., LD, EH, EMH), the option to graduate with a high school diploma if they are unable to meet the minimum academic and course requirement necessary for a regular Diploma. All regular diploma students must pass the state-required High School Competency Test for graduation. Special Diploma students do not have to meet this requirement. However, placement in specific diploma tracks may not be permanent, since requests for change of placement can be initiated by parents, students, or other advocates within the school system (e.g. counselors or placement specialists). Once they have graduated however, students cannot re-enter the school system to earn a Regular Diploma, but have the option of continuing in an adult education program to earn a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED). In spite of the post-secondary option which allows special diploma graduates to enroll in GED classes, special diploma graduates enter the labor force with limited marketing skills, and are therefore severely hampered in their chances for long term economic success (Edgar, 1987).

A Florida Department of Education Report (1989) reveals that, of the 2773 High School

Diplomas awarded to students in the mild disability categories exiting the special education program, 52% were Regular Diplomas, while 48% of the diplomas were Special Diplomas. Distribution of special and regular diplomas for LD and EMH are shown in Table 1. Since the majority of EMH students receive a special diploma, and 52% of the EMH population is African American, this table helps to explain the disproportionate number of African Americans placed in the special diploma track.

TABLE 1

PERCENT OF DIPLOMA GRADUATES FOR EMH AND SLD 1987-1988

Categories	Total	Regular Diploma	% of Total	Special Diploma	% of Total
EMH	691	30	4%	661	96%
SLD	1863	1292	69%	571	31%

Florida Department of Education Report, 1989

Not only may students not reach high levels of academic success in low ability tracks, studies show that these students may be at risk for economic success once they have exited these programs. A report conducted by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (1991) noted that 50% of special education exiters, including those with regular and special diplomas, continued to live with parents or relatives who were their major source of economic and moral support. Approximately 25% could not find employment. Furthermore, the negative effects of being labeled a special diploma student may be transferred to the workplace in the form of low self-esteem and low productivity (Leonard, 1985; Lilly, 1992). Rivers, Anderson, Jones and Ladner (1975) noted that in general "labels are not merely psychologically harmful badges which are attached to an individual at one point in time and later removed. For African American

children, they are highly functional in every sense. They often determine an individual's destiny" (p.215). A report from the International Institute for Advocacy for School Children (1993) also suggests that such labeling is tantamount to academic abuse and discrimination, since the outcomes are counterproductive to further success. In Florida where tracking and ability grouping is widespread (George & Rubin, 1992), and where tracking by diploma options is standard practice, statistics like these could be duplicated. Students in lower track classes who have exited these special diploma programs may therefore be ill-prepared for functioning in a highly literate and technologically-advanced society (McCabe, 1990).

Sociocultural, Behavioral and Psychosocial Factors Associated with Placement

In addition to tracking and low ability grouping, the literature is replete with studies investigating the impact of sociocultural variables (i.e., minority status, poverty, and SES and family structure) on the education outcomes of students in general, and African Americans in particular (Barona & Faykus, 1992; Cartledge, Supay & Kaczala, 1988; Irvine, 1990; Mercer, 1973; Obiakor, 1992). Specifically, studies found that low SES (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1981) and minority status (Argulewicz & Sanchez, 1983; Dunn, 1873, Gelb & Mizokova, 1986; Shinn, Tindall & Spira, 1987) predict placement in special education programs. Central to the referral and placement process are also issues involving the race and gender of the teacher (McIntyre, 1990; McIntyre & Purnell, 1985; Sleeter, 1992), teachers' perceptions of students' social skills, problem behavior, and academic achievement (Gresham & Elliot, 1989; Obiakor, 1994), as well as teacher efficacy (Allinder, 1995; Gresham & Elliot, 1988; Meijer & Foster, 1988; Soodak &

Podell, 1993; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Irvine (1990) noted specifically that African American males are generally at risk because of negative perception held by teachers. She also noted that obvious differences in cultural characteristics (i.e., dress, language, dress style) may contribute to reinforcing and cementing negative stereotypes. In addition to these factors, other sociocultural factors associated with placement decisions include teachers' belief system, misconceptions, and life experiences which may serve as important factors in influencing decisions in special education placement (Payne, 1994). Research further suggests that complex societal factors (i.e, class structure and institutionalized discrimination) contribute to the disproportionate numbers of African Americans and other minorities in special education (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Huebner, 1987; Mickelson, 1993; O'Connor, 1993; Ogbu, 1986, 1994).

In addition to sociocultural variables, assessment of certain behavioral variables (i.e., social skills, attentiveness, aggressiveness) may also impact placement in special education programs (Gresham & Elliot, 1989; Obiakor, 1994). Obiakor (1994) argues however that, identification of behavior problems in African American students from the teachers' perspective must be viewed within the context of the teacher's own belief system, since perceived problem behavior may at times be related to behavior which is at odds with the teacher's own perception of what constitutes acceptable behavior. Gresham and Elliot (1990) identified externalizing problem behaviors (i.e., aggressiveness, lack of self control) as behaviors counterproductive to school success. Regardless of the particular identification label, any behavior which acts against school success is perceived as problem behavior, and is addressed whenever placement decisions are made.

Additionally, psychosocial variables (i.e. peer acceptance, students' self-perceptions,

academic competence, self concept) were found to be important factors associated with the academic success of students with learning disabilities (Carlisle & Chang, 1996; Durrant, Cunningham & Voelker, 1990; Vaughn, Hogan, Kouzekanni & Shipiro, 1990). Specifically, Carlisle and Chang (1996) noted that students tend to rate themselves higher than their teachers do. Overall, students with learning disabilities are perceived as having lower peer acceptance, lower self-concept, and lower academic competence than their peers in higher ability groups (Carlisle & Chang, 1996; Ochoa & Olivarez, 1995; Widaman, McMillan, Hemsley & Little, 1992). Even though Barona and Faykus (1992) found that low socioeconomic status was not sufficiently a predictor or determinant of academic success in students with learning disabilities research suggests that other factors such as the ability of African American males to translate in-class academic participation and the interaction with teachers into academic achievement, diminishes when placed in situations where there is a majority of students from low SES backgrounds (Kennedy, 1992). He argues that this may create a situation of educational disadvantage which inevitably affects the academic achievement of these students.

The seminal works of Dunn (1968), Jensen (1969), Deno (1970) and Mercer (1973), laid much of the theoretical groundwork for these studies. The empirical nature of these studies support the argument that, given the multidimensional nature of learning disabilities, it is necessary to study placement, and disproportionate representation of minority groups, as well as within group variability from a multivariate perspective (Artiles & Trent, 1994). Sociocultural variables (i.e. SES, minority status and ethnicity), psychosocial variables (i.e. self-esteem, peer-perception) and behavioral variables (i.e, social skills, and problem behavior) therefore reflect the nature of multivariate studies which focused on the success or failure of African American

students in special education programs.

As noted, low social group/ minority status (Dunn, 1968; Mercer, 1973; Shinn, Tindal & Spira, 1987; Taylor, 1994) and low socioeconomic status (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1981) are sociocultural variables associated with high referral rates. Dunn (1968) specifically identified low social group status as a factor influencing minority over representation in special education. He noted that African Americans, American Indians, Puerto Rican Americans, in addition to "those from non-standard English speaking, broken, disorganized, and inadequate homes, and children from other non-middle class environments" (p.6) comprise the 60 to 70 per cent of students referred for special education services. Acknowledging that his work lacked empiricism, and that further research was needed, Dunn noted that the establishment of special classes was intended among other reasons, to alleviate pressures on regular teachers, in addition to serving as prescriptive measures for those deemed to be disadvantaged. He further identified faulty labeling procedures as factors associated with disproportionate placement of minority students in special education. Such procedures, he noted were intended primarily to label the child "mentally retarded, perceptually impaired, emotionally disturbed, minimally brain injured, or some other such term depending on the predispositions, idiosyncracies and backgrounds of team members" (p.8).

Dunn's research however failed to include persons with severe disabilities in the original sample, and failed to include provisions for improving competence in informal assessment - provisions which would have allowed for a more comprehensive approach to data gathering (Snell & Drake, 1994). Furthermore, Dunn's work "reawakened the tension between visionaries and pragmatists, a tension that fills the air with more rhetoric than scholarship" (Semmel, Gerber &

MacMillan, 1994, p.494).

Race, Ethnicity and Special Education Placement

Research further shows that the race and gender of the teacher are important sociocultural variables associated with teacher recommendations for special education placement of African American males (1993; Irvine, 1990; McIntyre, 1988; McIntyre & Purnell, 1985; Tobias, Cole, Zibrin & Bodlakova, 1982). Student's race was also found to be a factor in special education placement decisions in addition to the teacher's, race, attitutudes and belief system (McIntyre & Pernell 1985; Irvine, 1990). Closely aligned with race, is the minority status and low socioeconomic status of students which are also factors in special education referral and placement decisions (Mercer, 1973). She reported that Mexican Americans comprised 45.3% of placements in programs for the mildly retarded, even though they constituted 11% of the sample public school population. The number for African American students was three times greater than their numbers in the population. Meier, Stewart and England (1989) reported similar findings in their study of 174 U.S. school districts. When race and social class were examined as to their associative impact on educational outcomes, it was found that African American students were three times more likely to be placed in classes for students with mild disabilities. Like Dunn (1968), and Mercer (1973), Meier et al (1989) found that race, in addition to other sociocultural factors, are associated with disproportionately large numbers of minority students, particularly African Americans in classes for the students with mild disabilities. Mercer (1973) attributed this disproportionality to institutionalized anglocentricism in the labeling process which relied on formal diagnostic procedures based on constructs of normalcy as defined in an IQ score. She notes that "the diagnostic procedures used and the level of the norms applied by formal

organizations were clearly related to whether or not that organization was nominating a disproportionate number of non-Anglos" (p.122). Barona and Faykus (1992) later reported that socioeconomic status and ethnicity were also important variables in the disproportionate representation of African Americans in special education programs. In their study, they found a significant relationship between ethnicity, socioeconomic status, father absence and family size and special education eligibility. However, other sociocultural variables such as father absence from home, and family size did not contribute to special education eligibility.

Both African and European American teachers tend to refer for placement students who are not of the same race more often than they do students of the same race (McIntyre & Purnell, 1985). These findings were earlier supported by Tobias et al (1982), who used a fictitious case study approach to investigate the influence of student and teacher ethnicity on recommendations for referral to special education services. They concluded that teachers responded to the case history by recommending referral of students whose ethnic background was identical to their own less frequently than they did students of other ethnic backgrounds, although they caution that these teachers might have responded differently in a real life situation. This practice contributes to the disproportionate placement of African American males in special education programs (Harry, 1994).

Socioeconomic Status and Special Education Placement

In addition to teachers' attitude and bias in the referral and placement process, research further suggests that SES status is associated with referrals to special education (Barona & Faykus, 1992; Barona, Santos de Barona & Faykus, 1993; Brosnan, 1983; Lareau, 1989; Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1981; Zeller, 1990). In particular, Irvine argues that factors associated

with poverty which might impact the achievement of African American males and their placement in classes for the learning-disabled include teen parenthood, substandard housing conditions in addition to poor pre and postnatal care. Statistics on poverty continue to reflect these disadvantages. The 1992 Census revealed that 45.9% of African American, 40.4% of Hispanics and 16.8% of European American children live in poverty. Given these high numbers, factors associated with SES (i.e., parents' income, education) become relevant in any investigation into factors associated with the schooling of African American-students. In seeking to justify disproportionate placements in special education, Reschly (1991) also cited low SES, more so than IQ testing as the reason for disproportionate placement of minorities in special education programs. He argued however that such placements may be appropriately justified if the stigma, the ineffectiveness and the misconceptions applied to such special education labels such as EMH could be removed. Citing the disproportionate number of minority students served in compensatory programs like Head Start and Chapter I, he posits that no such stigma is attached to these programs, which seem to benefit the majority of the low SES populations they serve. Harry (1994) however points out two flaws in this argument. First, since enrollment in these programs is based on income criteria, it would be expected that a majority of students would be drawn from low SES populations; and secondly, enrollment in Head Start is voluntary with specific mandates for parental involvement. She also points out that, despite the current federal legislative mandate for informed parental consent, special education as is currently practiced, has no such provisions for parental influence, but tends, rather, to operate in an adversarial climate in which parents who disagree with professional judgements or recommendations must be prepared to engage in various legal confrontations.

The assumption that poverty and low SES translate into low academic achievement is however debatable . Obiakor (1992) acknowledges that African American students of low SES are at-risk, but cautions against the use of the poverty construct as a reason for academic failure. He notes that "the myth of socioeconomic dissonance is just a myth" (p 8), since children from low SES backgrounds can be receptive to learning. Furthermore, he notes that the tendency to equate poverty with low intelligence may well result in disproportionate numbers of minority students being placed in special classes. He notes further that, instead of focusing on the economically disadvantaged status of the children, special educators, and service providers should (1) refrain from subscribing to the archaic theory of biological determinism which prescribes that the worth of an individual can be known through single intellectual quantities, (2) discontinue use of instruments that lack validity and reliability for classification and placement (3) not assume that poverty is synonymous with poor self-knowledge, poor self-esteem or self-ideal, (4) not ignore the critical values and learning styles that students bring to school programs, and (5) not ignore students because of their SES status. By placing too much emphasis on the socioeconomic background of the child, little attention was paid to the special education procedures and programs which impact school failure and placement (Calabrese, 1991; Irvine, 1990; Knapp & Shield).

In spite of the low SES of adolescent African American males, other sociocultural factors associated with the academic achievement placement of African American males include, a close mother-son relationship, a family environment which facilitates a high degree of expressive language, and good family support (McCullough, 1995). Conversely, hostile and inconsistent parental behaviors were found to be strongly related to academic competence and success in

adolescents (Melby, 1993). Additionally, Johnson (1995) concluded that African American male students who had regular school attendance, exhibited the least disruptive behavior, had the fewest number of siblings, and earliest birth, experienced academic success. However, when studied within the context of parental achievement, family demographic variables such as parental level of education, occupation, employment status, had little or no impact on student achievement (Ford, 1993). Both McCullough (1993) and Melby (1993) supported earlier findings which pointed out that multiple, and complex factors contribute to the academic success of African American males (Artiles & Trent (1994; Brosnan, 1983).

In general, SES has been linked to the disproportionate placement of African American children in special education classes (Obiakor, 1992). A high concentration of African American students from low SES backgrounds were found in the disability categories of learning-disabled, emotionally handicapped, and educable mentally handicapped (Osmun, 1988). In this study, the over representation of low SES black students in special education was attributed to the high percentage of low socioeconomic students in the educable mentally handicapped category. She concluded that black students of a higher SES level were still over represented, while white students of the same SES level were under represented in all three disability categories. Using extant data from a moderately sized metropolitan school district to examine the relationship between race, academic performance, and special education label and placement, Zeller (1990) also found that student performance, teacher expectations, early development opportunities, family support and involvement in schools, school building norms, racial and SES bias, teacher capacity for accommodating student differences, the availability of other interventions, placement policies, and school organization and culture were all seen as potential influences on special

education labeling and placement of children from economically disadvantaged populations.

A strong link between SES and placement was also found by Barona and Faykus (1992) who examined the influence of ethnicity, SES, father absence and family size on special education eligibility. This study reported a significant link between ethnicity and SES on special education eligibility categories, and supported early findings by Dunn (1968) and Mercer (1973). Similarly, data from National Education Longitudinal Study showed that students residing in high-poverty districts required more special education resources (Anderson, 1988), thus linking the constructs of SES, cultural, economic, and educational disadvantage to the academic achievement of African American males.

Teacher Attitude and Belief System

Besides race, gender and socioeconomic status, teacher's attitude, belief system, and bias may also impact both formal and informal assessment (Gottlieb et al, 1991; Parker, Gottlieb, Gottlieb & Davis, 1989; Taylor, 1991). Through formal and informal assessment, teachers continuously gauge the academic and social achievement of students before referral or placement in low ability groups. Moreover, Gottlieb, et al (1991) point out that teachers have a broader based set of experiential norms on which to base a decision that a child is not functioning at an appropriate level. They are also in a position to compare the performance of one student with the rest of his or her classmates. Kastner and Gottlieb (1991) argue that teachers can successfully group students generally based on IQ score and the student's pre-evaluation file. Even though teachers may correctly assess students' academic performance based on results of criterion-referenced tests (Gottlieb et al, 1991), research suggests that their attitudes, perceptions, and negative stereotyping of African American males in particular may affect their decision to refer

these students to special education (Irvine, 1990; Soodak & Podell, 1994).

Specifically, the attitudes of teachers and school psychologists play a crucial role in the referral and placement of African American children in special education programs (McIntyre & Purnell, 1985; Parker et al, 1991). Studies show that general as well as special education teachers react differently to students placed in low ability tracks, the majority of whom may be from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Barona & Faykus, 1992; Hiebert, 1983; McIntyre & Purnell, 1985; Segro, 1995; Weinstein, 1976)). If educators speculate that low-income African American children bring to school a set of antisocial behaviors and traits that are concomitant with a life of poverty, this can further exacerbate negative feelings associated with tracking and low ability grouping (Irvine, 1990). Furthermore, stereotyping can occur when teachers perceive African American students, particularly black males, by virtue of their race, sex, and class, to be potential sources of classroom disruptions (Irvine, 1990). In addition to these factors, Carpenter (1996) points to patterns of praise and criticism, response time, proximity strategies, opportunities to participate, and differences in achievement and behavioral expectations as specific negative factors associated with the schooling of African American males. Closely associated with teacher attitude is teacher bias. Shinn et al (1987) examined teacher bias in their study in which 570 students were referred for special education placement. Students perceived as having a disability were accurately characterized by low achievement, but disproportionate numbers of blacks, and a greater percentage of males than females were referred from a population of low readers. Later studies also supported these findings (O'Reilly (1989; Gottlieb et al, 1991). Specifically, O'Rielley (1989) found extreme cases of teacher bias regarding assessment procedures. Results of his study indicated that the reasons given by a team of 40 psychologists for their placement

decisions resulted in significant charges of bias, charges so serious that students had to undergo reassessment and reclassification. Research further suggests that teachers may be ethnocentric in their approach to pedagogy. White (1992) specifically noted that the ineffectiveness of "using Caucasian teaching methods to educate African American students" (p.20), may be a factor in the widening achievement gap, since both groups process information in different modalities.

Teachers' attitudes towards minority students may therefore manifest itself in high referral rates, and in unfavorable perceptions of student behaviors (Irvine, 1990; Parker et al, 1991). Informal assessment of these behaviors thus falls within the general parameters of the assessment process which precedes special education placements. Classification and labeling may in effect be principal outcomes bias attitudes and negative stereotyping (Irvine, 1990). Adelman (1992) notes that classification is the "essence of special education", and argues that any effort to improve special education classification can play a central role in improving all education. Classification can also lead to such harmful consequences as low self-esteem, stereotyping and misidentification. It has also been argued that the special education system characteristics that flow directly from the label-based structure of the field, produce beliefs and practices that are out of step with the efforts to restructure America's public schools (Lilly, 1992). If teachers are improperly trained in the design and use of formal and informal assessment procedures, if the attitudes of teachers and test administrators are negative (Parker, Gottlieb, Gottlieb, & Davis 1989), and if parental involvement is inadequate (Harry,1995), then, minorities in general, and African American males in particular, can be negatively impacted by disproportionate classification and placement in special education classes (Irvine, 1990).

Social Skills and Achievement

Another important factor in the referral and placement process is teacher's assessment or perception of students' academic abilities, social skills and problem behavior (Gresham & Elliot, 1989; Chadsey-Rush,1992; de la Cruz, 1995). Kavale and Forness (1996) estimate that 75% of students with learning disabilities can be differentiated from their non learning-disabled peers through measures of social competence. Bender & Smith (1990) additionally point out that these students exhibit more problem behaviors in the areas of on-task behavior, conduct disorders, and distractibility. Specifically, in African American males, the lack of social skills have been linked to referral and placement of this population in special education programs (Clark, 1991; Reglin, 1992; Butler, 1993). Inadequate social skills was therefore reported as a contributing factor to the academic success or failure of learning-disabled students (Butler, 1993; Fad, 1990; Fad & Ryser, 1993). When students with learning disabilities were compared to their non-disabled peers, studies showed that they exhibited poorer social skills (Bursuck, 1989; Hazel & Schumaker; Schumaker, 1992; Swanson & Malone, 1992). Clarke (1991) concluded that the type of behaviors which lead to school competence among African American adolescents are related to those that build social support networks. Reglin (1992) added that African American males who were high achievers possessed a greater perception of academic and social competence than their lower achieving peers. Similarly, De la Cruz (1995) found that both regular and special education teachers ranked (1) accepting consequences of wrongdoing, (2) following written directions, and (3) completing assigned academic work as the three highest desirable social skills necessary for positive classroom success of learning disabled students. Similarly, they found that (1) ignoring distractions from peers when doing seat work, (2) finding productive use

of time while waiting for teacher assistance, and (3) continuing to work on a difficult task until it was completed, were the three behaviors given the highest difficulty ratings.

Elliot, Barnard and Gresham (1989) suggested earlier that sex, race, language, and family structure played a role in both teacher and parent's ratings of students' social skills, and possibly in the development of preschoolers' social behavior. However, Vaughn et al (1990) investigated teachers' perceptions of behavior and social skills acceptance, as well as academic achievement of a cohort of students followed longitudinally from kindergarten. Even though the sample consisted of a very small percentage of African American students (less than 1%), the study found that learning-disabled students as a group have lower peer acceptance ratings than their non-disabled peers. It was noted specifically that social skills deficits associated with learning disabled students, are not merely a function of their disability status, but also a function of recognition by peers of their low academic standing. It was later found that students with learning-disabilities did not differ significantly from other low achieving students in social skills and problem behavior deficits (Haager & Vaughn, 1995; Vaughn, Zaragoza, Hogan & Walker, 1993). However, both the LD and low achieving students differed significantly from the high-achieving students who exhibited better social skills, and fewer problem behaviors.

The importance of good social skills is not only relevant to academic success but also to economic success (Chadsey-Rush, 1992). Given the recognition by the Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities (ICLD) that social skills deficits be included as part of the learning disability construct it is important to investigate the role of teachers' perception of students' social skills deficits in the referral and placement process. Specifically, these multivariate factors provide a more comprehensive view of factors relating to the academic and social achievement of African

American males (Irvine, 1990).

Problem Behavior and Academic Achievement

In addition to social skills deficits and learning problems, research further suggests that students with learning disabilities may have more behavioral problems than students without disabilities (Bender, 1989; Bender & Golden, 1989; Bender & Smith, 1990). Moreover, these behaviors might be decisive factors in placement decisions (Bay & Tannis, 1992). Weishew and Peng (1993) specifically notes that large schools, public schools, more urbanized schools and schools with greater percentages of disadvantaged students had a greater percentage students with behavioral problems. Specifically, studies show that students with learning disabilities spend less time on task, and engage in more frequent interactions with the teacher, as well as high distractibility (Ritter, 1989). African American males in particular are generally perceived by their teachers as being more disruptive, and are more likely to be sent to the office for disciplinary action than any other group (Irvine, 1990). In a comparative study investigating the proportion of parent-initiated to teacher-initiated referrals, Gottlieb et al (1991) reported that 75% of the referrals were made by teachers. Of the 328 referrals, 15.5% were of white students, 42.4% of black students, and 42.1% of Hispanic students. When reasons for referrals were examined, it was further found that, even though 55% of the referrals were solely for academic reasons, 10.7% were for behavioral reasons and 34.1% were for a combination of academic and behavioral reasons. When compared with their non-learning disabled peers, peer relationships, coping skills and work habits were found to be crucial if students with learning disabilities were to survive in a mainstream environment (Fad, 1990; Fad & Ryer, 1993). Teachers' decision to refer students for special education placement may therefore be influenced by their perception of students as having

learning or behavioral problems related to these factors (Soodak & Podell, 1993). Furthermore, research suggests that students' social self-concept is linked to behavioral variables (Durrant, et al, 1990), which in turn has implications for teachers' referral to special education.

Given the widespread belief that African American males, particularly from low SES background exhibit a higher degree of problem behaviors, Obiakor (1994) argues that both general and special educators have fallen short in their efforts to educate African American children with problem behaviors or emotional disturbances. According to him, identification, assessment, placement in the least restrictive environment, individualized educational instruction or programming and adaption to change and reform, all reflect this problem. He concluded that teachers need to believe that African American students with behavior disorders can be educated, and furthermore that these students need teachers who believe not only in them , but in utilizing divergent techniques to manage their behaviors when necessary. In the absence of large-scale, full-time, empirically-validated mainstreaming strategies for students with behavior disorders, Fuchs, Fuchs, Fernstrom and Hohn (1991) suggested a case by case approach to move behaviorally disordered children to the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). With specific reference to African American children, Obiakor (1994) supports this view when he argues that any strategy designed to address behaviorally disordered African American students should be one that is situation specific, taking into account multivariate factors which may be the precursors problem behaviors.

Prescriptive Measures

There is no quick and easy solution to the problem of disproportionately placing African American males in special education programs. The Regular Education Initiative (REI)

advocates the unification of special education and regular education (Reynolds, Wang & Walberg, 1987). Proponents of this movement see the current special education system as cost inefficient, discriminatory and exclusive. Restructuring efforts now demand such initiatives as collaborative consultation (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1994; Walther-Thomas & Carter, 1993; West & Idol, 1990) which is envisioned to create a greater degree of cohesion and cooperation between special education and general education teachers, particularly in vocational settings. Additionally, reform efforts call for full inclusive schools (Salend, 1994). The Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 provides the moral and legal framework for restructuring efforts which strive for equity and excellence in education.

Specifically, advocates of school reform and educational restructuring have offered suggestions designed to solve or minimize the problems created by the inappropriate placement of African American males in special education classes (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Garibaldi, 1991; Harry, 1994, 1995; Irvine, 1990; Jones, 1991). Given the widespread practice of tracking in low ability classes, Gamoran (1993) suggests that tracking be adapted to specific situational controls which might make it work. He argues that these low ability tracks should characteristically include high expectations, an academic curriculum, oral interaction between teachers and students, great effort on the part of teachers, and the absence of a system of assigning weak or less experienced teachers to the lower tracks. Harry (1994) suggests a multivariate approach to the problem and argues that "we need to develop an encompassing reform agenda that will include actions in various domains: (a) concept refinement (b) a culturally-sensitive research agenda (c) systemic reform (d) personnel preparation reform and (e) advocacy and policy-making.

High in priority among these prescriptive changes is the issue of providing non-biased

assessment (Dent, 1987; Hilliard, 1987, 1992; Mercer & Rueda, 1991). Carlson (1990) calls for non-normative and informal assessment procedures which "are not only legitimate, but the only tools suitable for making most instructional decisions" (p.131. These researchers make recommendations aimed at alleviating the shortage of African Americans in the professions, and advocate the removal of standardized tests as prerequisites to higher education. Specifically, they conclude that if research and evaluation studies of school reform are conducted by racially diverse staffs so that the academic progress of students is studied comparatively, researchers would be more likely to investigate the experiences as unique to each population group, not as deviant and outside the mainstream.

In addition to changes in formal and informal testing procedures, Dent (1987) earlier offered a six-stage model for non-discriminatory assessment which still have relevance for special education. These include : (1) monitoring the special education referrals by ethnicity, age, sex, and handicapping condition in classrooms, schools, district areas and testers, (2) assessing the referral data as well as all other school data available on the particular student to see if in fact the "problem" has been pervasive across several settings, (3) modifying the instructional program of the student to see if the "learning problem" can be resolved through such modifications of the regular curriculum, (4) evaluating the student's present instructional program both as it affects all the students in that class and the particular student under consideration, (5) assessing the child's home curriculum and his/her learning ability within it, and (6) estimating the student's learning ability in the regular school program, and/or in a clinical learning situation to determine whether there is a learning handicap that will require special education.

In addition to radical changes in referral and classification procedures, restructuring

initiatives range from experimentation with all black male academies to complete dismantling of the current special education system (Harry, 1994; Hilliard, 1992; Irvine, 1990; Jones, 1991; Lemotey, 1992; Simmons & Grady, 1990). Parental involvement should be a top priority (Harry, 1995; Perry & Tannumbaum). In addition, Fox (1995) developed a model designed to improve the academic, interpersonal, and social skills of African American male adolescents. Specifically, the model is based on a collaborative effort among community, school, and family, and uses strategies that address an African American value system, identity, peer pressure, and parent involvement. Equity 2000, a pilot project designed to train teachers and counselors in dealing with poor and minority populations (Stewart, 1993) also promises to close the gap in academic achievement between African Americans and Anglos.

In addressing the problem of disproportionate representation of African American students in special education programs, Harry (1994) specifically outlines an eight point restructuring program encompassing (1) the collection and use of data on disproportionate representation, (2) disbanding the classification system in favor of "a system that designates and provides appropriate and intensified services for all students who need them, either by virtue of individual performance, or perceived likelihood of risk of failure" (p.67), (3) restructuring for a unified system of special and regular education, in which special education programs play a supportive rather than an alternative role, (4) restructuring for prevention of failure and the redress of disadvantage by the concentration of personnel, and funding in disadvantaged areas, (5) expanding formal and informal assessment to modify and improve services, using criterion based models of assessment, dynamic models of assessment, tandem testing of students using collaborative teams of psychologists, speech and language pathologists, teachers and other relevant personnel;

pre-referral strategies and inclusion of parents in on-going evaluation of students, (6) revamping the curriculum to include multicultural education, instruction in the basic skills, and instruction to non/limited English proficient students, (7) heterogenous grouping of students in grade clusters by abilities, as opposed to annual promotions, and (8) utilizing the school as a community resource base with adult literacy programs, and parent involvement in special education services.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research investigated whether African American males with learning disabilities (LD) who were classified as special diploma students, differed significantly from those who were classified as regular diploma students in their social skills, problem behavior, and academic competence, as perceived by their teachers. In other words, this study sought to establish whether these behavioral and academic variables differed significantly for African American males with LD in those two placement options.

Participants

Participants in this study were 90 students from four Dade County Public Schools with predominantly African American student populations. In this study, African American refers to students of African ancestry, born in the United States, and not requiring placement in classes for students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). These included also black students born in the United States of Haitian, Caribbean, or Latin American parentage. Parents of students with learning disabilities were asked to consent for their children to participate in the study. All students met the local and state eligibility criteria for special education, were classified in the specific learning disability category, and were placed either in the special diploma category or the regular diploma category. Fifty-two students (N=52) were in the regular diploma group, representing 58% of the total participants, while thirty-eight (N=38) were in the special diploma group, representing 42% of the total participants (see table 2).

TABLE 2

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION AND PERCENT OF STUDENT PARTICIPANTS BY DIPLOMA GROUP AND SCHOOL

School	Reg. Dip.	%	Spec.Dip.	%	Total
A	15	83	3	17	18
B	13	57	10	43	23
C	9	41	13	59	22
D	15	56	12	44	27
Total	52	58	38	42	90

Fifty-four percent of the participants were ninth-graders; 21% were tenth graders, 19% were eleventh graders; and 6% were twelfth graders. The majority of respondents (38%) were sixteen years of age. The age range of the respondents was 14yr. 10mo. to 19yr. 2mo. The mean age of the sample was 16yr. 5mo. with a standard deviation of 1yr. 2mo. Similarly, the mean IQ was 86.517 with a standard deviation of 11.768. By diploma group, the mean age of the regular diploma group was 16yr. 4mo. with a mean IQ of 90.288 and a standard deviation of 13.838. The mean age of the special diploma group was 16yr- 5mo. mo with a mean IQ of 81.216 and a standard deviation of 7.828. The SES of students was partially determined by looking at whether they received no lunch at all, and whether they received free or reduced-price lunch (0= no lunch; 1 = free lunch; 2 = reduced lunch). The mean SES of the regular diploma group was 0.346 with a standard deviation of 0.520. The mean SES of the special diploma group was 0.289 with a standard deviation of 0.460. The means and standard deviations for age and IQ and the percent listings for lunch status by diploma group are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR AGE AND IQ, AND PERCENT LISTINGS FOR LUNCH STATUS BY DIPLOMA GROUPS

Group	Age	IQ	SES		
			0	1	2
Regular (n =52)	16.385 (1.207)	90.288 (13.838)	67%	31%	2%
Special (n=38)	16.395 (0.974)	81.216 (7.828)	71%	29%	0%

The Schools:

The participating schools from which the sample was selected are comprised mostly of students from low SES background. Based on published data in Dade County, in School A, which recruits students from all regions in the school district, 85% of the students are eligible for a free or reduced-priced lunch. In Region X where School B is located, 56% are eligible, and in Region Y where School C is located, 67% of the student body are eligible. In School D, which is located in Region Z, 53% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch (Dade County Statistical Abstracts, 1995). The assumption of low SES status is therefore based on published data by the Dade County Schools, and location of the schools in the large metropolitan area.

Table 4 depicts the ethnic composition of the participating schools. In School A, 69.2% of the students are African American (Black), compared to 3.6% White and 27.1% Hispanic. In School B, 92.3% is African American compared to 2.4% White and 4.4% Hispanic. School C is 85.2% African American compared to 1.5% White and 13.2% Hispanic. Finally, School D has a 92.0% African American student body, compared to 0.5% White, and 7.4% Hispanic. School A

recruits students from all regions of the school district, while Schools B, C, and D are located in different district divisions or regions. However, all four schools are located within the same metropolitan area (Dade County Statistical Abstracts).

TABLE 4

ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

School	White	Black	Hispanic
A	3.6%	69.2%	27.1%
B	2.4%	92.3%	4.4%
C	1.5%	85.2%	13.2%
D	0.5%	92.0%	7.4%

Dade County Statistical Abstracts (1995)

The Teachers:

A total of 17 teachers participated in the study. Twelve of the teachers (71%) were European Americans; three were African American (18%); and two (11%) were Hispanics. A further breakdown by gender and ethnicity showed that 4 European American males, 8 European American females, 2 African American males, 1 African American female, and 2 Hispanic female teachers completed the ratings of students' social skills, problem behavior and academic competence. The majority of teachers (47%) who completed the ratings were European American females. Teacher participation by school and ethnicity is presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5

TEACHER PARTICIPATION BY SCHOOL AND ETHNICITY (N = 17)

School	Black	White	Hispanic	Total	%
A	1	2	0	3	18
B	0	4	1	5	29
C	2	2	0	4	24
D	0	4	1	5	29
Total	3	12	2	17	100

Instrument

Social skills, problem behavior, and academic competence were measured using the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) by Gresham & Elliot (1990), which measures these areas in individuals with and without disabilities from preschool through high school (ages 3-18 years). The SSRS provides a broad assessment of student social behaviors, with three different versions at the elementary and secondary levels for students, teachers, and parents. In this study the secondary level instrument was completed by the teacher only (see Appendix C).

The SSRS measures three domains: social skills, problem behavior, and academic competence. The scale assesses three dimensions of Social Skills - cooperation, assertion, and self-control, and also provides a total scale score. The Problem Behavior Scales measure behavior in three areas referred to as "externalizing" problems (including behaviors with observable impact and consequences, such as delinquent-type behaviors), "internalizing" problems (including problems such as fearfulness and inhibitions), and hyperactivity. Items on the Social Skills are rated on the basis of frequency (never, sometimes, or very often), and their importance (not important, important, critical), whereas the Problem Behavior Scales are rated on frequency

only (never, sometimes, or very often). The Third domain, the Academic Competence Scale evolved from the Teacher Rating of Academic Progress (TRAP), and is identical for all grades. This domain, as measured by the SSRS, consists of a small sample of relevant behaviors. Items are rated on a 5-point scale that corresponds to percentage clusters (1 = lowest 10%, 5 = highest 10%) of all students in a class. It also includes items measuring reading and mathematics performance, motivation, parental support, and general cognitive functioning.

The number of students with disabilities included in the standardization sample in the norming of this instrument was greater than in the U.S. population (17.3% versus 11.0%). The initial standardization sample was 73% White and 27% minority. Test-retest reliability of the SSRS was measured by having samples of teachers, parents, and students from the Elementary standardization sample rate the same students four weeks after their original standardization ratings. Test-retest correlations of .85 for Social Skills, .84 for Problem Behavior, and .93 for Academic Competence showed substantial evidence of temporal stability. Additionally, Social Skills Subscale reliability coefficients ranged from .75 to .88 for teachers, from .77 to .84 for parents, and from .52 to .66 for students. Problem Behaviors Subscale reliability coefficients ranged from .76 to .83 for teachers and .48 to .72 for parents (Gresham & Elliot, 1990).

Initial validity studies compared the SSRS with similar instruments, including the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), and produced moderate to high correlations (Cohen, Swerdlik & Phillips; Gresham & Elliot, 1989). The SSRS Externalizing and the CBCL Externalizing showed a high correlation (r = .75). Also the SSRS Problem Behaviors Total Score and the CBCL Total Score showed a high correlation (r = .81). Additionally, Gresham & Elliot (1990) reported moderate correlation between SSRS Internalizing Scores and the CBCL Internalizing Scores

(r=.59) ; and a high correlation between the SSRS hyperactivity score and the CBCL Externalizing Scores (r=.77). Research suggests that this instrument has predictive validity for measuring the social skills of African American students (Bramlett, Smith & Edmonds, 1994).

Procedure and Data Collection

Approval by the Institutional Review Boards of Barry University, Dade County Public Schools, as well as written consent from parents and students was secured before undertaking this study. The procedure for obtaining parental and student consent was the same as that followed by teachers for Individual Education Plan (IEP) staffings. Lists provided by participating schools contained the names, identification numbers, address and telephone numbers of students. After selecting eligible students (i.e, African American males with LD) from the lists provided by the participating schools, teachers distributed consent forms to eligible students in class to take home to parents or guardians.

One hundred and fifty African American male students with LD were invited to participate in this study. Consent forms were distributed to students by participating teachers during the last two weeks of the school term. After the first week, only 30 forms were returned (20% response rate). Following this response, approximately 120 consent forms were sent via U.S. mail to students who had not responded. Sixty (50%) were returned in the stamped envelope provided. Approximately 30 phone calls were made to remind parents to return consent forms. A total of 90 students (N=90) consented to participate (60% of those invited to participate).

Data from school records were collected by the researcher using a prepared data collection sheet. No standardized instrument was used for this part of the data collection process, only data sheets prepared by the researcher. Data from school records included (1) IQ scores,

(2) grade level, (3) age, (4) free/reduced lunch status, and (5) diploma status (see Appendix C).

Data on students' social skills, problem behavior and academic competence were collected with the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS), Secondary Level (Gresham & Elliot, 1990). Teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire on each student in the study. Ratings were completed by teachers who indicated that they were most familiar with the students who accepted to participate. Teachers participated on a voluntary basis, and were given proper oral instructions for completing the questionnaires. These instructions included a request that teachers fill out the questionnaires to the best of their knowledge and judgement. They were also instructed not to interview students while completing the questionnaires, and to complete them in an unobtrusive manner if possible. Additionally, teachers were asked to follow the written instructions provided on the questionnaires and were instructed to seek clarification from the researcher if necessary. Written instructions to the rater appear at the top of each subsection of the questionnaire (see Appendix D). Each questionnaire took approximately 5-8 minutes per student to complete. The completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher in the envelopes provided. Only teachers actively participated in the study by completing the instruments. No data were collected directly from students, who were not exposed to any known or foreseeable risks.

After all the data were collected from students files and from questionnaires, students' names were deleted, and the researcher assigned an I.D. number to each student. No names were then used on either the data collection sheet or on the questionnaire from that point forward, only the assigned I.D. All data collected were locked in the researcher's office.

Statistical Analysis

For the purposes of this research, the participants were classified into two distinct groups - the Special Diploma Group and the Regular Diploma Group. Descriptive and inferential statistical procedures were applied to the data using the computer program SYSTAT, 6.0 for Windows: Graphics (SPSS, 1996).

Preliminary Analyses

In order to determine whether the two groups (SDG, RDG) differed significantly on SES, age, and IQ, three preliminary t-tests were conducted. Although it was assumed that most students would be from low SES (given the fact that the participants were recruited from inner-city schools in an urban school district), the t-tests were carried out on SES to verify this assumption.

Main Analyses

Three analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) were conducted on social skills, problem behavior and academic competence, with IQ as the covariate. The first ANCOVA was conducted to investigate whether the Special Diploma Group differed significantly from the Regular Diploma Group in their social skills controlling for IQ. The second ANCOVA was conducted to see how the two groups differed in their problem behavior while controlling for IQ. Finally, the third analysis explored whether the two groups differed significantly in their academic competence controlling for IQ differences.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The main purpose and principal research question of this study was to investigate whether African American male students with learning disabilities who are placed in the special diploma track and those placed in the regular diploma track, differed significantly in their social skills, problem behavior, and academic competence, as perceived by their teachers and as measured by the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS, Gresham & Elliot, 1990). Specifically, three hypotheses were tested:

1. There are no significant differences between the regular diploma group and the special diploma group in their social skills.

2. There are no significant differences between the regular diploma group and the special diploma group in problem their behavior.

3. There are no significant differences between the regular diploma group and the special diploma group in their academic competence.

In this chapter, findings related to these hypotheses are presented. Data were gathered from four senior high schools in metropolitan Dade County in South Florida. Data on social skills, problem behavior and academic competence were collected using the SSRS (Gresham & Elliot, 1990). Data on IQ, age, lunch status, and grade were retrieved from the Dade County Public Schools records.

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary t-tests were conducted to determine whether differences between diploma groups on IQ, age, and SES were statistically significant. Results of these t-tests provided further descriptive information about the sample. Results of the first two-sample t-test on IQ by diploma groups are presented in Table 6. The results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$) between the groups, $t(87) = 3.926$. No statistically significant differences between diploma groups in age and SES were found when t-tests on these variables were conducted. As a result of these findings, a series of Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) were used in subsequent analyses to determine whether or not the two groups differed significantly on measures of social skills, problem behavior, and academic competence using IQ as the covariate. The use of covariates allows us to test for differences in the dependent variables "as if" the two diploma groups were similar on the demographic variables, and particularly in this case on IQ, which was significantly different between groups.

TABLE 6

T-TEST COMPARISONS BETWEEN DIPLOMA GROUPS FOR IQ, SES AND AGE

	Regular M (SD)	Special M (SD)	t
IQ	90.288 (13.838) n=52	81.216 (7.828) n=37	3.926***
SES	0.346 (0.520) n=52	0.289 (0.460) n=38	0.547
AGE	16.385 (1.207) n=52	16.395 (0.974) n=38	-0.044

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

Means and standard deviations were calculated on the outcome variables, social skills problem, behavior and academic competence as presented in Table 7.

TABLE 7

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR SOCIAL SKILLS, PROBLEM BEHAVIOR AND ACADEMIC COMPETENCE BY DIPLOMA GROUP

Groups	Social Skill M (SD)	Problem Behavior M (SD)	Academic Competence M (SD)
Regular	34.654 (n=52) (10.099)	4.882 (n=51) (3.814)	29.096 (n=52) (7.282)
Special	31.842 (n=38) (8.719)	5.684 (n=38) (3.953)	23.974 (n=38) (5.405)
Total sample	33.467 (n=90) (9.592)	5.225 (n=89) (3.972)	26.933 (n=90) (7.000)

Means and standard deviations of scales and subscales were computed using raw scores. Frequencies of students that would be identified with the SSRS as having social skills deficits and/or problem behaviors were computed by group. Since the problem behavior subscale assesses negative behaviors, a high score is undesirable. On the other hand, the social skills and academic competence subscales assess positive behaviors, and a high score is desirable on these measures. According to the SSRS Manual (Gresham & Elliot, 1990), students with standard scores below 85 on ratings of social skills or academic competence are considered below the normal range. On the problem behavior subscale, standard scores above 115 reflect a deficit in this area. In Table 8, interpretation of raw scores vis a vis standard scores is presented.

TABLE 8

INTERPRETATION OF RAW SCORES

Subscales	Below 85	Raw Score	85-115	Raw Score	Above 115	Raw Score
Social Skills	fewer	0 - 29	average	30 - 50	more	50+
Problem Behavior	fewer	0 - 1	average	2 - 10	more	10+
Academic Competence	lower	9 -23	average	24- 42	higher	42+

Source: SSRS Manual (Gresham & Elliot, 1990)

Based on these criteria, teacher ratings of social skills showed that 69% of the students in the regular diploma group and 58% of students in the special diploma group received scores in the normal range when compared to norms from the standardization sample. However, a substantial number in both groups, 29% in the regular and 37% in the special diploma groups received ratings in the deficit range. Only a small percentage (2% and 5% respectively) received above average ratings on social skills (see Table 9).

On teacher ratings of problem behaviors, 85% of the students in the regular diploma group and 92% of the students in the special diploma group received ratings in the average range. However, 15% of the students in the regular diploma group and 8% of the students in the special diploma group received ratings in the deficit range (see Table 9).

On teacher ratings of academic competence, 75% of the students in the regular diploma group, and 50% of the students in the special diploma group received average ratings on this measure. An equal number of special diploma students received below average ratings in academic competence, while a much higher percent (73%) in the regular diploma group received average ratings. Only students in the regular diploma group (6%) received above average ratings

in academic competence (see Table 9).

TABLE 9

SOCIAL SKILLS DISTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH SAMPLE

	Deficit	Normal/Average Range	Skilled
Social Skills			
Regular	29%	69%	2%
Special	37%	58%	5%
Problem Behavior			
Regular	15%	85%	-
Special	8%	92%	-
Academic Competence			
Regular	21%	73%	6%
Special	50%	50%	0%

Pearson r correlations were conducted to explore the relationships among social skills, problem behavior, and academic competence. There was a highly moderate significant positive correlation between social skills and academic competence ($r = .55$, $p < .001$), and a highly moderate significant negative relationship between social skills and problem behavior ($r = -.428$; $p < .001$) In addition, there was a moderate correlation between problem behavior and academic competence ($r = -0.38$; $p < .01$). The higher the problem behavior, the lower the social skills and academic competence, as perceived by the teachers. Similarly, the higher the academic competence, the higher the social skills. These results are displayed in Table 10.

TABLE 10

PEARSON CORRELATION MATRIX BETWEEN SOCIAL SKILLS, ACADEMIC COMPETENCE AND PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

	Social skills	Academic comp.	Prob.Behavr.
Social Skills	1.000		
Academic Comp.	0.551***	1.000	
Prob. Behavr.	-0.428***	-0.382**	1. 000

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

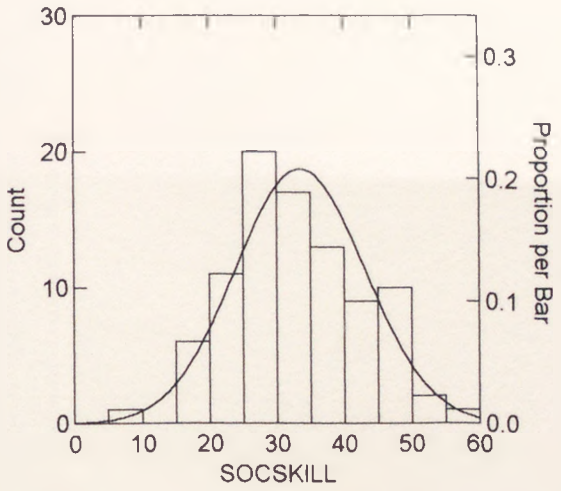
Main Statistical Analyses

Testing for Assumptions of ANOVA

Testing the assumption of "homogeneity of slopes" is unique to ANCOVA. To test this assumption, an analysis was performed to see whether the covariate (IQ) impacted the dependent variable with a similar linear slope for both diploma groups. All of the other statistical assumptions of ANCOVA were examined before testing the null hypotheses. Specifically, tests were conducted to see whether or not the dependent variables (social skills, problem behavior, academic competence) were more or less symmetrically distributed in the total sample with no gross outliers (see Graphs 1, 2, and 3). Additionally, box plots were examined to assure that all dependent variables had the same variance for each diploma group.

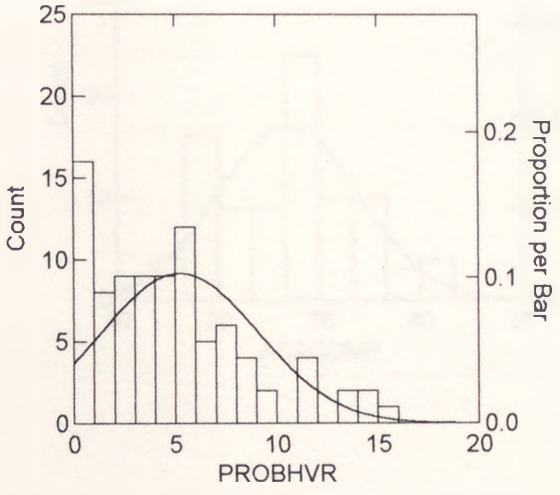
GRAPH 1

DISTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL SKILLS FOR TOTAL SAMPLE



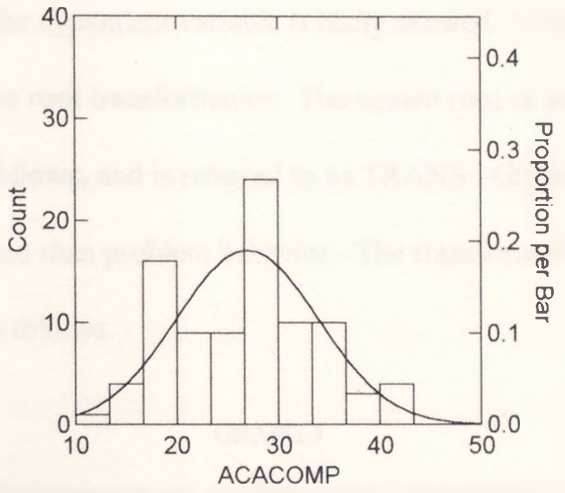
GRAPH 2

DISTRIBUTION OF PROBLEM BEHAVIOR FOR TOTAL SAMPLE



GRAPH 3

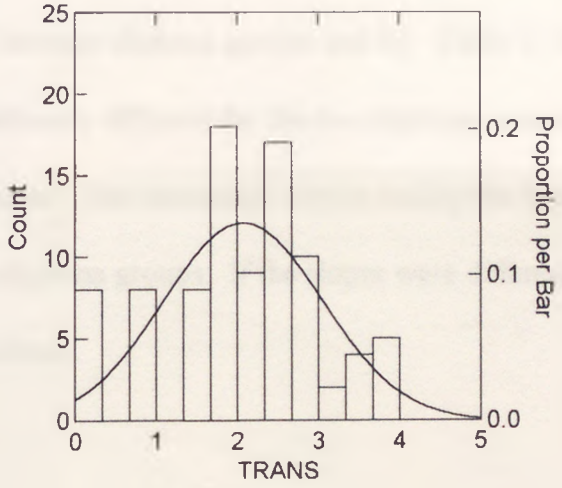
DISTRIBUTION OF ACADEMIC COMPETENCE FOR TOTAL SAMPLE



Preliminary examination of the problem behavior variable in the total sample showed that the original distribution was skewed (see Graph 2). The problem with a skewed distribution is that the mean is not as "representative" of the bulk of the data as it would be for a symmetrical distribution. Consequently ANOVA, which tests for differences in means, may give misleading results if the distribution of the dependent variable is badly skewed. The variable was made more symmetrical by using a square root transformation. The square root of problem behavior was then used in the ANCOVA that follows, and is referred to as TRANS. Graph 4 shows that TRANS is more symmetrically distributed than problem behavior. The transformed variable (TRANS) was then used in the analysis that follows.

GRAPH 4

DISTRIBUTION OF PROBLEM BEHAVIOR FOR TOTAL SAMPLE
AFTER TRANSFORMATION



Hypothesis Testing

The research hypotheses were tested using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). All of the hypotheses were tested using an alpha of .05. Each hypothesis (or question) was tested, and the findings reported in the following formats: (a) a restatement of the hypothesis in the null form, (b) a presentation or tabulation of the findings, and (c) interpretation of the test results.

Social Skills

Null Hypothesis #1. There are no significant differences between the special diploma group and the regular diploma group in their social skills.

Preliminary results of the t-test already reported, showed a significant difference between the diploma groups in IQ. Using IQ as a covariate allowed for testing the differences in the dependent variable between the two diploma groups "as if" the distribution of IQ was identical for both groups. First, a preliminary analysis was done to test the assumption that the covariate impacted the dependent variable with the same linear slope for both diploma groups. In order to test this assumption, the significance of the interaction term DIP*IQ was examined. DIP*IQ represents the interaction between diploma groups and IQ. Table 11 shows that the impact of the covariate IQ was not significantly different for the two diploma groups, since the interaction term was not statistically significant. The interaction term is testing the hypothesis that the slopes are homogeneous for the two diploma groups. If the slopes were different, then the interaction term would be statistically significant.

TABLE 11

ANOVA SHOWING SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERACTION TERM ON SOCIAL SKILLS

Dep. Var: SOCSKILL N:89 Multiple R: 0.151 Squared Multiple R: 0.023

Analysis of Variance

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean-Square	F-Ratio	P
DIP	23.844	1	23.844	0.253	0.616
I.Q.	17.148	1	17.148	0.182	0.670
DIP*IQ	12.902	1	12.902	0.137	0.712
Error	7995.358	85	94.063		

Based on these results, it was concluded that the covariate impacted the dependent variable similarly for both diploma groups, and that it was appropriate to conduct an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with IQ as the covariate.

The results of the ANCOVA are shown in Table 12. The results indicated that there were no significant differences between the special diploma group and the regular diploma group in their social skills after controlling for IQ, $F(1, 86) = 1.354$. We therefore fail to reject the null hypothesis.

TABLE 12

ANCOVA ON SOCIAL SKILLS BY DIPLOMA GROUP CONTROLLING FOR IQ

Dep. Var: Socskill N:89 Multiple R:0.146 Squared multiple R:0.021

Analysis of Covariance

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P
DIP	126.130	1	126.130	1.354	0.248
IQ	5.833	1	5.833	0.063	0.803
Error	8008.260	86	93.119		

Problem Behavior

Null Hypothesis # 2 There are no significant differences between the special diploma group and the regular diploma group in their problem behavior.

Again, a preliminary analysis was conducted to test the assumption that the covariate impacted the dependent variable (i.e. problem behavior,TRANS) with the same linear slope for both diploma groups. To test this assumption, the significance of the interaction was tested. Results are displayed inTable 13.

TABLE 13

RESULTS OF ANOVA INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF COVARIATE ON PROBLEM BEHAVIOR (TRANS)

Dep. Var: TRANSPROB	N:88	Multiple R: 0.136		Squared Multiple R: 0.018	
		Analysis of Variance			
Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F. Ratio	P
DIP	15.619	1	15.619	1.024	0.314
IQ	3.142	1	.3.142	0.206	0.651
DIP*IQ	12.893	1	12.893	0.845	0.360
Error	1280.958	84	15.249		

Results of this ANOVA indicated that the covariate (IQ) impacted the dependent variable with the same linear slope for both diploma groups. Based on these results, it was determined that an ANCOVA could be conducted in the second phase of the analysis to determine whether there were any significant differences between diploma groups in their problem behavior, controlling for IQ differences.

The results of the ANCOVA are displayed in Table 14. There were no statistically

significant differences between diploma groups in their problem behavior, controlling for IQ, F (1, 85) = 0.646. We therefore fail to reject the null hypothesis.

TABLE 14

ANCOVA ON PROBLEM BEHAVIOR BY DIPLOMA GROUP CONTROLLING FOR IQ

Dep. Var: Probvr N=88	Multiple R:0.075			Squared multiple R: 0.006	
	Analysis of Covariance				
Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P
DIP	0.453	1	0.453	0.646	0.498
IQ	0.134	1	0.134	0.137	0.712
Error	83.119	85	0.978		

Academic Competence

Null Hypothesis # 3. There are no significant differences between the special diploma group and the regular diploma group in their academic competence.

Again, a preliminary analysis was conducted to test the assumption that the covariates impact the dependent variable (ACACOMP) similarly for both diploma groups. Results of this analysis showed that the covariate impacted the dependent variable with the same linear slope for both diploma groups. The impact of IQ was not statistically significantly different for the two diploma groups (see Table 15). Thus it was concluded that the hypothesis could be tested using IQ as a covariate.

TABLE 15

RESULTS OF ANOVA INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF IQ ON ACADEMIC COMPETENCE

Dep.Var: ACACOMP N: 89 Multiple R: 0.391 Squared Multiple R:0.153

Analysis of Variance

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p
DIP	130.395	1	130.395	3.005	0.087
I.Q.	76.278	1	76.278	1.758	0.188
DIP*IQ	81.751	1	81.751	1.884	0.174
Error	3688.529	85	43.394		

An ANCOVA was conducted to see whether there were any significant differences in academic competence between the two diploma groups when IQ differences were controlled. The results of this analysis (see Table 16) indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two diploma groups in academic competence, F (1, 86) = 9.890. We therefore reject the null hypothesis.

TABLE 16

ANCOVA ON ACADEMIC COMPETENCE BY DIPLOMA GROUP CONTROLLING FOR IQ

Dep. Var: ACACOMP N:89 Multiple R:0.366 Squared Multiple R: 0.134

Analysis of Covariance

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p
DIP	433.600	1	433.600	9.890	0.002
IQ	15.212	1	15.212	0.347	0.557
Error	3770.280	86	43.840		

In addition to the main analyses, independent ANCOVAS were conducted on the subscales of Social Skills (cooperation, assertion, self-control), and for the subscales of Problem Behavior (internalizing behaviors, externalizing behaviors) with IQ as the covariate. These tests

were done to determine whether the two diploma groups differed on any of these variables controlling for IQ. Results showed no statistically significant difference between diploma groups on these variables.

Summary of Statistical Analyses

Preliminary t-tests were done to determine if the regular diploma group and the special diploma group differed significantly on IQ, SES, and age. Results of these tests showed no significant differences on SES and age, but showed a significant difference between the two diploma groups on IQ. Therefore, only IQ was included as a covariate in the subsequent analyses. The main analyses therefore focused on conducting Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVAS) to determine whether there were any significant differences between diploma groups on social skills, problem behavior and academic competence, controlling for IQ. All of the assumptions of ANOVA were examined before conducting the main analyses. Results of Pearson r correlations revealed a highly moderate positive correlation between social skills and academic competence, a highly moderate negative correlation between social skills and problem behavior, and a moderate negative relationship between problem behavior and academic competence.

Three ANCOVAS were conducted to investigate whether or not the two diploma groups differed in their social skills, problem behavior and academic competence with IQ as the covariate. The first ANCOVA showed that there were no significant differences between the two groups in their social skills. Similarly, the second ANCOVA showed that there were no significant differences between the two diploma groups in their problem behavior. The third ANCOVA showed a statistically significantly difference between the diploma groups in their academic competence, after controlling for IQ differences.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This research investigated whether there are differences between African American males with learning disabilities who are placed in special education regular diploma track and those placed in the special diploma track. Participants were ninety African American male students with learning disabilities from four Dade County Public Schools located within the metropolitan area. Students were rated by their teachers on their social skills, problem behavior and academic competence using the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) developed by Gresham and Elliot (1990). The main question focused on whether these two groups differed significantly in their social skills, problem behavior and academic competence. Preliminary t-tests showed that while the two groups were similar in SES and age, there was a significant difference between the two groups in IQ scores. Correlational analyses also revealed a highly moderate positive correlation between social skills and academic competence, and a highly moderate negative correlation between social skills and problem behavior. There was a moderate negative correlation between problem behavior and academic competence. As a result of the statistically significant difference in IQ between the two diploma groups, three separate ANCOVAS controlling for IQ differences were conducted to determine whether there were significant differences between the two groups in their social skills, problem behavior, and academic competence. Results of these analyses revealed that the two groups did not differ significantly in their social skills and problem behavior, but differed significantly in their academic competence.

Interpretation of Findings

Results of this investigation revealed that there were no significant differences between the two diploma groups in their social skills. The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected. Even though there were no statistically significant differences between the groups in their social skills, the regular diploma group showed higher scores in their social skills than the special diploma group. The majority of students in both groups were rated by their teachers as having adequate social skills, even though a considerable number of students in both groups were rated as having social skills deficits (29% of the regular diploma students and 37% of the special diploma students). This is consistent with previous findings showing that a significant number of African-American males with learning disabilities are generally perceived by their teachers as having social skills deficits, and are generally at risk for developing inappropriate prosocial behaviors (Taylor, 1993). However, the percentages shown in the findings of this study do not approximate to previous data showing that a higher percentage (i.e., 75%) of students with learning disabilities have social skills deficits (Kavale & Forness, 1996).

Additionally, results revealed that there was a positive correlation between social skills and academic competence, and a negative correlation between academic competence and problem behavior. Students with more adequate social skills were perceived by their teachers as having higher degrees of academic competence and students with more problem behaviors were perceived as having lower academic competence. These results are not surprising since students who exhibit problem behaviors tend to devote less time to on-task behaviors which make for academic success. Furthermore, these results are consistent with previous findings which suggest that teachers' perceptions of students' behaviors constitute a significant component of academic

judgements (Bennet, Gottesman & Cerrulo, 1993). Additionally, these findings support other research which suggest that teachers regard students with learning disabilities as being less able, less teachable, and more prone to inappropriate behaviors than their non-disabled peers (Bender & Smith, 1990). In particular, the development of citizenship skills, conformity to social rules and norms, cooperation and positive styles of social interaction are all perceived by teachers as relating to academic competence and achievement.

Results of this investigation further revealed that the two groups did not differ significantly in their problem behavior. The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected. Even though there were no significant differences between the two diploma groups in their problem behavior, students in the lower ability group (special diploma group) were rated by their teachers as having more problem behaviors than students in the regular diploma group when individual group means were compared. The mean for the regular diploma group was 4.882 with a standard deviation of 3.814, compared to a mean of 5.684 and a standard deviation of 3.953 for the special diploma group. Given the negative correlation between problem behavior and social skills, it is not surprising that students in the special diploma group were perceived by their teachers as having more problem behaviors since they were also perceived by their teachers as having fewer social skills than the regular diploma group. These results are consistent with research findings which suggest that lower ability groups are more prone to inappropriate behaviors than their more able peers (Bender & Smith, 1990). The special diploma group may therefore be at greater risk of developing not only prosocial skills, but also of achieving any great degree of academic achievement because of problem behaviors. Problem behavior deficits may therefore be a major factor in the academic success or failure of African American males with learning disabilities.

The most significant result of this investigation revealed that the two diploma groups differed significantly in their academic competence even when controlling for IQ differences. Preliminary analyses had shown that while the groups did not differ significantly in SES or age, they differed significantly in IQ. Descriptive statistics showed that students in the sample were drawn largely from the same SES background. Schools were located in the same metropolitan inner-city areas where the majority of students attending were eligible for free or reduced lunch according to published data from the school district. A combination of these two factors (i.e. school location and lunch eligibility) reflected the SES status of the research sample. It was therefore no surprise that SES did not explain any of the variance in the diploma groups. Similarly, the lack of a difference in age is hardly surprising considering that the students were drawn from the same grade levels.

The significant difference in IQ is surprising, however, since both groups were from the same disability category where a normal IQ score is a principal criterion for placement. As a matter of fact, McKinney (1987) argues that the lack of a consensus on the major topical markers of learning disabilities, and the failure of psychometric and etiological classification procedures, have led to an increased reliance on IQ discrepancy as the chief index of what constitutes a learning disability. IQ is therefore a criterion for identifying students with learning disabilities, but should not be a criterion for placement in the subgroup category of special diploma. However, results of this study suggest that IQ is a factor for placement in the special diploma category, when indeed it should not be. It may be argued further that, if IQ is a principal factor in classifying a disproportionate number of African American male students in the category of Educable Mentally Handicapped, then the use of IQ scores in diploma placement decisions may also

contribute to the overall disproportionate placement of African American students in specific special diploma programs, not only in Florida, but wherever subgrouping of disability categories occurs. Furthermore, given the fact that students with mild disabilities exhibit similar social, academic and behavioral characteristics, there is always the danger of misclassifying students at the lower end of the learning disabilities continuum, as educable mentally retarded and vice versa. Special diploma students are particularly at risk for this misclassification.

The fact that the special diploma group was rated as having more problem behaviors than the regular diploma group, even though there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups on this variable, may also help to explain the significant difference between the two groups in academic competence. Results from this study showed a negative correlation between problem behavior and academic competence. Academic competence and IQ factors, as well as problem behavior may therefore be important factors in special diploma placement of African-American males with learning disabilities.

Discussion

Within-Group Variability

This study specifically focussed on differences within the same disability group of students with learning disabilities. Results of the study support findings of earlier research which posit that students classified as learning-disabled comprise a heterogeneous group (Henley et al, 1993; Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1984). Within the same disability category, variations may exist on important variables. Even though the two diploma groups were similar in their social skills and problem behaviors, an examination of the data revealed that there were within group differences in academic competence, as stated already. Differences in academic competence were significant

enough to distinguish the regular diploma group from the special diploma group. Furthermore, initial IQ differences which are related to academic competence, were also significant enough to warrant analyses of covariance, controlling for IQ differences, as the main statistical analyses of this study. Students with learning disabilities therefore do not comprise a homogeneous group. Differences in social skills, problem behavior, academic competence and other variables not only reflect this heterogeneity, but also fuel controversy surrounding the need for a more precise definition of what constitutes learning disabilities (Gresham & Elliot, 1989). Even though students with learning disabilities have fewer social skills, more problem behaviors and less academic competence than their non-learning disabled peers (Kavale & Forness, 1996; Gresham & Elliot, 1989), significant differences in IQ and academic competence found in these two diploma groups suggest that, even within the same disability category, important differences may exist, resulting in placement by diploma option. Even though students within the same disability group might differ on important variables related to academic achievement, differences might be qualitative rather than quantitative, and furthermore such differences might not be great enough to justify distinct within group divisions for instructional purposes.

In this study, academic competence was based largely on teacher perceptions. Students in the special diploma group were perceived as being less able when compared to their peers in the regular diploma group. Given the fact that these students follow a less challenging curriculum than their peers in the regular diploma group, and given the widespread perception by teachers in both general and special education programs that special diploma students are at the lower end of the academic ladder, it is hardly surprising that such a significant difference was found between the two groups. Previous research suggests that placement in low ability tracks or groups is not

conducive to fostering a high degree of academic competence in students (George & Rubin, 1992; Oakes, 1985).

However, a comparison of mean IQ scores for both diploma groups suggests that the difference in academic competence may be qualitative rather than quantitative. Even though IQ, academic competence and problem behavior may be important factors in placement within disability category, studies show that institutional factors within the school may also contribute to low academic achievement (Boyd, 1991; Ogbu, 1986). The fact that regular diploma students are exposed to a more challenging curriculum geared towards their passing the High School Competency Test (HSCT), point to differentiation in curricula as a factor. This practice puts the regular diploma group at a better advantage for developing higher academic skills, and hence a greater degree of academic competence than their less able peers in the special diploma group. Therefore, any perceived differences in academic competence may not be reason enough to justify a policy of separating students within the same disability category into distinct groups with differing curricular and pedagogical considerations. Practical considerations might include the adoption of cooperative learning styles of teaching, since African American male students are more likely to use a cooperative learning style (Irvine, 1990), while at the same time de-emphasizing perceived differences within the same disability group. Perceived or measured strengths and weaknesses of both groups should therefore serve as the departure point from which to launch remedial strategies aimed at alleviating low academic achievement and problem behavior.

Even though students in this study did not differ in SES, previous research showed that SES is a factor in special diploma placement (Irvine, 1990; Obiakor, 1992; Ysseldyke &

Algozzine, 1981; Zeller, 1990). The purpose of this study was not to investigate a causal relationship between SES and special diploma placement. However, in spite of cultural and educational disadvantage postulated as theories for the academic failure of low SES inner-city children, SES is not of itself an indicator of intellectual or cognitive deficiency, since children in poor circumstances can benefit from schooling (Obiakor, 1992). Theories of intellectual deficits and cultural and educational advantage (Hernstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1969; Natriello et al, 1989) may therefore be inadequate to explain the variance in academic achievement not only between African Americans and other ethnic groups, but the variance in subgroups of African American males with learning disabilities.

When compared to norms derived from the initial standardization sample, between groups variability was also evident. Data from the standardization sample were used to construct norms for teacher ratings of male students at the secondary level (grades 9-12) in the SSRS (Gresham & Elliot, 1990). In the original standardization sample, African American students were adequately represented (15.5%). When looking at the means of the diploma groups on social skills and the norms from the standardization sample, the mean for the total research sample seemed to be lower than the mean in the standardization sample, although the significance of the differences between the sample and the norms was not calculated in this study. In problem behavior, the mean for the total research sample fell below the mean for the ninth grade in the standardization sample, indicating fewer problem behavior than ninth graders in the standardization sample. However, the total sample mean was higher than the means for tenth and twelfth graders, indicating that the research sample had more problem behaviors than students in these grade levels. On academic competence, the mean for the total research sample also seemed to be lower than the mean in the

standardization sample. The means and standard deviations of teacher ratings for the standardization sample and the means and standard deviations for the total research sample are presented in Table 17.

TABLE 17

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF TEACHER RATINGS FOR STUDY SAMPLE AND STANDARDIZATION SAMPLE

	Social Skills M (SD)	Problem Behavior M (SD)	Academic Competence M (SD)
		Total Sample (9-12)	
	33.5 (9.6)	5.2 (3.9)	27.0 (7.0)
		Norms from Standardization Sample by Grade Levels*	
Grade Levels			
9	39.3 (11.4)	6.9 (5.5)	31.2 (9.9)
10	40.6 (8.6)	3.1 (2.4)	34.2 (7.7)
11	-	-	-
12	52.5 (12.4)	4.0 (4.8)	34.0 (9.5)

*SSRS Manual (Gresham & Elliot, 1990)

Importance of Study For Special Education

This research provides important information relative to the field of special education. It provides information on differences which may exist among African American males with learning disabilities- information resulting from empirical research. Specifically, this study provides findings that support other research findings important to the field of special education. It suggests that (1) academic competence and IQ are important factors in low ability grouping

practices in special education and (2) problem behavior and social skills deficits may be related to low academic achievement in students with learning disabilities, particularly African American males. Even though social skills, problem behavior and academic competence were correlated, academic competence was found to be the only significant factor in differentiating the regular diploma group from the special diploma group. Furthermore, these findings suggest that IQ as well as academic competence may be factors in diploma placement decisions, suggesting that both IQ and academic competence may be important factors in within group placement of African American males with learning disabilities. More precisely, the findings of this study suggest that academic competence, after controlling for initial IQ differences, may still be a factor in placing African American males in the special diploma track. The findings of this research study should therefore be given important considerations whenever subgrouping of disability categories, in particular African American males with learning disabilities, is a matter of educational policy.

Limitations of the Study.

This study focused specifically on African American males with learning disabilities. The sample was therefore limited to this population only. Comparisons with other ethnic groups, as well as comparisons with female students with learning disabilities would have provided more comprehensive data on differences among and between African American males with learning disabilities. Additionally, this investigation did not employ a multirater methodology which might have provided a more comprehensive and balanced view of students' social skills, problem behavior and academic competence. The original standardization sample was rated by parents, teachers and students according to the SSRS (Gresham & Elliot, 1990). This methodology provided more comprehensive ratings of students' social skills, problem behavior and academic

achievement. In this study however, students were rated by their teachers only, and not by parents or by themselves. Limitations therefore include lack of multi-ratings in methodology, which would have provided triangulation of data collection.

The purpose of this study was not to generalize to all inner city African American male students with learning disabilities. Even though the sample was drawn from schools which were predominantly African American, situated in a large urban school district, the findings might not be generalized to all schools in these settings. However, generalizability can be afforded to large urban school districts recruiting African American students from low SES in special education programs.

Since data on IQ were retrieved from pre-existing files, any variations in procedures when tests were initially administered were unknown and could not be controlled. Students are usually administered intelligence tests (e.g., WISC-R) at their school site by a school psychologist. Additionally, since teachers' ratings of social skills, problem behaviors and academic achievement were largely subjective, and were based on teacher perceptions, rather than on more objective assessment, factors such as teacher bias could not be controlled in teacher ratings.

Practical Implications of The Study

Educators and school officials might find information relative to the education of African American males useful in planning educational programs to combat low academic achievement and problem behavior. Given the widespread perception that African American males, particularly from inner-cities have low academic achievement, and problem behaviors, intervention strategies aimed at counteracting these problems, could utilize findings from empirical research which focus on African American males and school success. Even though the practice of placing

African American male students into low ability tracks may be continued for some time, some practical suggestions arising from this research may in the short term work towards alleviating problem behavior and low academic achievement.

Since results indicate that the two diploma groups differed significantly in academic competence, primary consideration should be given to raising the level of academic competence in African American males by increasing the level and intensity of academic skills instruction. Research suggests that effective teaching skills which include maximizing the amount of time spent on academic tasks as well as clear presentations of goals and objectives, daily review, the use of models, demonstrations and corrective feedback in addition to guided and independent practice, all work towards increasing the academic achievement and competence of students in both general and special education (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1994; Smith Palloway & Dowdy, 1995). Concomitantly, implementing programs aimed specifically at improving social skills and decreasing problem behavior should be part of a comprehensive program aimed at increasing students' level of academic competence. This is particularly important since the results of this study also showed a positive relationship between social skills and academic competence, and a negative relationship between problem behavior and academic competence. More social skills indicated a higher degree of academic competence. On the other hand, more problem behaviors indicated a lesser degree of academic competence. Thus, based on the results of this study, practical implications suggest that, although more attention should be given to academic competence, the importance of students' social skills as well as targeting their problem behaviors should not be ignored.

Raising the level and intensity of academic skills taught to students in both diploma groups

should therefore be given top priority in any instructional initiative seeking to increase academic competence in African American male students with learning disabilities. As noted earlier, the significant difference in academic competence between the regular diploma group and the special diploma group might be partially attributed to the fact that the regular diploma group is generally exposed to a higher level and intensity of academic skills in mathematics and communication - skills which must be acquired in order to pass the state- required High School Competency Test. As a result of this state requirement, academic skills are emphasized daily, and tutoring sessions might be offered after school and on weekends in order to maximize students' chances of being successful on this test. Special diploma students are in effect excluded from this intensive academic training. As a result, these students might not develop the academic skills necessary to maximize their academic potential and build academic competence. Furthermore, a lack of challenge in daily routine academic activities might characterize some instructional programs offered to students in this diploma track, and in turn might be counterproductive to raising students' level of academic competence. If the significant difference in academic competence between the two groups is indicative of the difference in level and intensity of academic skills taught, then it can be argued that increasing the level of academic skills, as well as daily practice and exposure, are practical suggestions for raising the academic competence of low ability groups in general, and special diploma groups in particular.

Concomitant with raising the level and intensity of academic skills taught is the introduction of specific instructional programs which include culturally sensitive curriculum content material, as well as an appeal to different modalities of learning in the African American male student population. Both White (1992) and Green (1996) suggested that teachers should

appeal to different learning styles in order to increase academic competence in African American males. Green (1996) specifically suggested that, in shaping the learning styles of this group, career goals, self-perception and emotions play a prominent role. Practical implications of this research therefore entail de-emphasizing low level academic skills, and implementing curricular and pedagogical strategies geared towards increasing problem-solving and the acquisition of higher levels of academic skills. Specifically, in order to maximize students' academic achievement and competence, cooperative learning strategies appear to be more effective than traditional methods in increasing the academic achievement and competence of students from at-risk populations (Crosby & Owens, 1993). For African American males, the implementation of cooperative learning strategies in which students learn academic as well as good social skills might help to counter the negative effects of tracking and low-ability grouping (Irvine, 1990). Teacher use of effective cooperative learning strategies in which both groups reinforce learning within the same educational setting may therefore negate the need for division of students into two distinct groups for instructional purposes. This implies the training of teachers, parents and other educators involved in the education of African American children. In particular, teacher training would have to emphasize specific cooperative learning strategies which take into account different modalities of learning as well as cultural characteristics of minority groups in general, and African American males in particular. Furthermore, since the assessment of these behavioral variables has implications for special education referrals and placement decisions, the issue of within group variability, and the need to emphasize cooperative learning strategies in teacher training and practice, would have to be addressed whenever placement decisions affecting the academic achievement or further placement of African American males are considered.

Besides implementing effective cooperative learning strategies, other practical implications include both the development and implementation of inclusive models of instruction and learning in which special education teachers play a prominent role as consultants and support personnel. Inclusive models underscore special education initiatives aimed at maximizing academic achievement and building academic competence in students with disabilities generally (Salend, 1994). These teaching practices should benefit African American males, especially when language, culture and other sociocultural variables form part of the conceptual framework of curricular and pedagogical initiatives. Mastropieri and Scruggs (1994) caution however that inclusion is only a positive alternative if the acquisition of critical academic, social and life skills is maximized for students with disabilities. In order to increase the level of academic competence in African American males with learning disabilities, some practical implications of this study therefore include raising the level of academic skills taught; providing sufficient time for the practice and acquisition of these skills; introducing culturally-sensitive materials into the curriculum; appealing to the different modalities and learning styles of the African American male student population through implementation of effective and culturally-sensitive cooperative learning strategies as well as the adaptation of inclusive models of learning and instruction to current practice.

To further enhance the development of academic competence in African American male students, programs aimed at developing good social skills must also be implemented. Specifically, the results of this study support earlier research which advocates the incorporation of social skills development training as an early intervention strategy aimed at the long-term academic achievement of African American males, particularly those placed in special education lower-track

programs. This is consistent with Taylor (1993) who suggests early social skills development training for African American males. In that study, positive results were noted when an experimental program was implemented on a longitudinal basis. Results of this study further provide support for that type of training. Middleton and Cartledge (1995) also reported positive findings when social skills training coupled with parental involvement was applied to redress aggressive behaviors in African American males. The present emphasis on remediating problem behaviors rather than preventing them, needs to be shifted towards emphasizing the acquisition of prosocial skills and other positive behaviors which promote academic achievement and social competence. Additionally, the comprehensive assessment and evaluation of social skills, problem behavior, and academic competence would underscore the need for practical changes in curriculum and pedagogy.

Less emphasis on standardized scores and more emphasis on a " multiple intelligences " approach (Gardner, 1993; Levin, 1994) would help to ensure that students strive to reach their maximum potential socially and academically. Overall, three strategies for improving the school achievement of African American students advocated by Irvine (1990) also has practical implications for this study, since they address school, community and parental involvement:

1. Decrease the cultural discontinuity by attending to students' learning styles, their values, language, and history.
2. Increase teacher expectation by effective instruction in schools administered by effective school leaders, and eliminating rigid and inflexible ability groups and tracks.
3. Help parents and relatives to assist and reinforce school learning.

Conclusions

No single explanation may be given for the differences which exist between the two diploma groups in academic competence. However differences in curriculum and pedagogy, differences in cognition and motivation, students' self-perceptions, the role of teacher perceptions in placement decisions specifically as it relates to within group placement, as well as school failure to implement effective strategies for building prosocial skills aimed at combating problem behavior and improving academic achievement, may all account for some of the differences which may be found between the special and regular diploma groups (Boyd, 1991; Irvine, 1990; Payne, 1994; Pintrich et al, 1994; Vaughn et al, 1994). In this study, the significant difference between the two diploma groups in academic competence, after controlling for initial IQ differences, suggests that differences between the two groups may be attributed to some of these factors, as well as teacher perception of students' academic competence. Boyd (1991) argues that institutional deficiencies within the school environment mitigates against the school success of African American and other minority students. Given the hegemony which standardized testing plays in Western educational systems, the continued controversy surrounding the practice of using a single psychometric construct as a measure of one's intelligence may be far from over, even though research suggests that current tests fail to measure all of the cognitive characteristics relevant to special education due to (1) poor discriminant validity, as shown in the unreliable and inconsistent classifications of exceptionality produced by psychometric tests, and (2) poor treatment validity, as evidenced by the inability to link psychometric profiles or categories to differential educational responses (Naglieri & Braden, 1992). It can furthermore be concluded that if the academic competence of African American males with learning disabilities is negatively

impacted by problem behaviors and inadequate social skills, then there is a great need for interventive and preventive strategies aimed at counteracting problem behavior and low academic achievement. It is furthermore imperative that these factors be addressed in any comprehensive planning or implementation of academic or social programs designed to help African American males achieve any measure of long-term academic or economic success in American society. Social skills development training programs aimed at improving the academic and social achievement of African American males with learning disabilities must therefore be of utmost concern to educators, and should demand an urgency matched only by the magnitude of the problem.

Finally, any multivariate study of factors associated with the problem of disproportionate placement of African American males in special education programs, must take into account sociocultural, behavioral, psychosocial as well as academic variables that may impact achievement (Artiles & Trent, 1994). This study looked at some of these variables. Of particular importance is the IQ score, used in placement decisions. This issue has raised and continues to raise serious questions about the efficacy of relying on psychometric measurement of intelligence as a major criterion for special education placement. Given the multidimensional and complex nature of the learning disabilities construct, empirical studies which stress a multivariate approach to the study of factors associated with placement in and within disability categories, would provide valuable research information when planning intervention strategies for African American males with learning disabilities. Social, economic and educational problems facing the African American male all point to the demand for critical research into factors associated with these problems. This study reached further by looking at within group differences between African American males

with learning disabilities, thereby providing additional information for researchers who may wish to investigate other multivariate factors associated with special diploma placement. Further research needs to focus on the long term social and economic outcomes once African American males with learning disabilities have exited these special education programs.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further questions and concerns arise from the findings of this research. These findings point to the need for further multivariate studies of factors which might impact placement of African American males with learning disabilities. Since the nature of learning disabilities is complex, research suggests that no single factor or factors may account for this phenomenon. Prior to exiting the programs, experimental studies involving the application of social skills development programs could be attempted to determine whether or not any differences would exist after intervention. Research studies involving comparisons of special and regular diploma students to other ethnic groups, to general education students, and of males versus females would provide valuable data on factors which impact the education of this population. Further studies which look at differences between these diploma groups after exiting their specific diploma programs could be attempted. Follow-up studies to see the long-term, post-school outcomes for these participants or other participants in the regular and special diploma tracks would also provide valuable data in planning and implementing programs geared towards the transition of regular and special diploma students from school to the world of work.

REFERENCES

Adelman, H. (1992). The classification System. In W. Stainback & S.Stainback. Controversial issues surrounding special education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. 97-108.

Agada, J & Obiakor, F.E.(1994). The politics of education: imperatives for African American males in the twenty-first century. (Paper presented at the 22nd annual conference of the National Association for Ethnic Studies). Kansas City: MI (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 368 833)

Allinder, R.M. (1995). An examination of the relationship between teacher efficacy and curriculum-based measurement and student achievement. Remedial and Special Education. 16(4). 247-254.

Anderson, W.H. (1988). The behavioral assessment of conduct disorder in a Black child. In R.I. Jones (Ed.), Psychoeducational assessment of minority group children: A casebook (pp 192-223). Berkeley, CA: Cobb & Henry Publishers.

Argulewicz, E.N. & Sanchez, D. (1983). The special education evaluation process as a moderator of false positives. Exceptional Children. 49. 452-454.

Artiles, A.J. & Trent, S.C.(1994). Over representation of minority students in special education: A continuing debate. Journal of Special Education. 27(4). 410-437.

Ashton, P.T. (1985). Motivation and teacher's sense of efficacy. In C.Ames & R. Ames (Eds.), Research on motivation in education: The Classroom Milleu (2). 141-174. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Ashton, P.T. & Webb, R.B. (1986). Making a difference: teacher's sense of efficacy and student achievement. New York: Longman.

Barona, A., Santos de Barona, M. & Faykus, S.P. (1993). The simultaneous effects of sociocultural variables and WISC-R factors on MR, LD, and non placement of ethnic minorities in special education. Education and Training in Mental Retardation. 28(1). 66-74.

Barona, A. & Faykus, S.P. (1992). Differential effects of sociocultural variables on special education categories. Psychology in the Schools. 29(4). 313-320.

Bateman, B.D. (1994). Who, how, and where: special education's issues in perpetuity. Journal of Special Education. 27(4). 509-520.

Bateman, B.D. & Chard, D.J. (1995). Identifying students who have learning disabilities.

(ERIC Reproduction Services No. ED 385 019).

Bay, M., & Tanis, B.(1992). Differentiating children who are at risk for referral from others on critical classroom factors. Remedial and Special Education, 13(4), 27 - 33.

Bell, D. (1987). Are we not saved: The elusive quest for racial justice. New York: Basic Books.

Bender, W. (1989). Generalization and setting specificity of behavioral deficits among learning-disabled students. Learning Disabilities Research, 4(2), 96-100.

Bender, W.N. & Golden, L.B. (1989). Prediction of adaptive behavior of learning-disabled students in self-contained and resource classes. Learning Disabilites Quarterly,5, 45-50.

Bender, W.N. & Smith, J.K. (1990). Classroom behavior of children and adolescents with learning difficulties: A meta-analysis. Journal of Learning Disabilities,23, 298-306.

Bennet, R.E., Gottesman, R.L., Rock, D.A. & Cerullo, F. (1993). Influence of behavior perceptions and gender on teachers' judgements of students' academic skill. Journal of Educational Psychology, 85(2), 347-356.

Blackwell, J.E.(1991. Graduate and professional education for blacks. In W.E. Charles & W.L. Reed (Eds), The education of African Americans. Westport, CT: Alburn House.

Boyd, H (1996). Black males and the criminal justice system. Crisis, 103(1), 24-27.

Boyd, W.L. (1991). What makes ghetto schools succeed or fail? Teachers College Records, 92 (3), 331-362.

Braddock, J.H. & Dawkins, M.P. (1993). Ability grouping, aspirations and attainments: Evidence from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988. Journal of Negro Education, 63(2), 324-336.

Bramlett, R.S. , Smith, B.L. & Edmonds, J. (1994). A comparison of non-referred learning-disabled and mildly mentally retarded students utilizing the Social Skills Rating System. Psychology in the Schools, 31(1), 13-19.

Brosnan, F.L. (1983). Overrepresentation of low-socioeconomic minority students in special education programs in California. Learning Disability Quarterly, 6(4), 517-525.

Butler, D.M.(1993). Social skills development and special education placement of African American male students. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Texas, Austin.

Bursuck, W. (1989). A comparison of students with learning disabilities to low achieving and higher achieving students in three dimensions of social competence. Journal of learning Disabilities, 22(3), 188-194.

Calabrese, R. (1991). Public school policies and minority students. The Education Digest, 56, 17-21.

Carlisle, J.F. & Chang, V. (1996). Evaluation of academic capabilities in Science by students with learning disabilities and their teachers. Journal of Special Education, 30(1), 18-34.

Carlson, S.A. (1990). The use of non-normative procedures in the assessment of handicapped children: Rationale and guidelines. In S.B. Sigmon (Ed.) Critical voices on special education: problems and progress concerning the mildly-handicapped. Albany, N.Y. : State University of New York Press.

Carpenter, D.C. (1996). The indices of teacher interaction on the development of resilience in African-American male students. Dissertation Abstracts International, 56(9). (University Microfilm No AAC 96-00010).

Cartledge, G., Stupay, D., Kaczala, C. (1988). Testing language in learning disabled and non-learning disabled black children Learning Disabilities Research, 3(2), 100-106.

Cartledge, G. & Milburn, J.F. (1986). Teaching social skills to children. New York: Pergamon Press.

Chadsey-Rusch, J. (1992). Towards defining and measuring social skills in employment settings. American Journal on Mental Retardation, 96(4), 405-418.

Children Defense Fund (1990). A report card, briefing book and action primer. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Clark, M. (1991). Social identity, peer relations, and academic competence of African-American adolescents. Education and Urban Society, 24(1), 41-52.

Cohen, R.J., Swerdlik, M.E., & Phillips, S.M. (1996). Psychological testing and assessment: An introduction to tests and measurement. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Connell, R.W. (1993). Schools and Social Justice. Temple, PA: Temple University Press.

Coleman, J.S. (1987). Families and schools. Educational Researcher, 16(6), 32-38.

Conte, R. & Andrews, J. (1993). Social skills in the context of learning disability

definitions: A reply to Gresham & Elliot and directions for the future. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 26(3), 146-153.

Crosby, M.S. & Owens, E.M. (1993). The disadvantages of tracking and ability grouping: A look at cooperative learning as an alternative. (A Series of Solutions and Strategies, N0.5). Clemson, S.C.: National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson University.

Cruz, de la, R.E. (1995). Teacher perspectives of the social skills development of children with learning disabilities. (Paper presented at the Annual International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children), Indianapolis, IN: (ERIC Document Reproductive Service No. ED 385 091.

Cummins, J. (1986). Psychological assessment of minority students: Out of context, out of focus, out of control? Journal of Reading,Writing, and Learning Disabilities International, 2, 9-18.

Dade County Public Schools (1994a). District and school profiles,1994-1995. Miami, FL: Office of Educational Accountability.

Dade County Public Schools (1994b). Special programs and procedures for exceptional students 1994-1995. Miami, Fl: Bureau of Special Programs, Office of Exceptional Student Education.

Daniels, L.A.(1994, May). Targeting black boys for failure. Emerge, p.58

Dent, H. (1987). The San Francisco public schools experience with alternatives to I.Q. testing: A model for non-biased assessment. Negro Educational Review, 38(3-2), 146-162.

Deno, E. (1970). Special education as developmental capital. Exceptional Children, 37, 229-237.

Donelan, R.W., Neal, G.A., & Jones, D.L. (1994). The promise of Brown and the reality of academic grouping: The tracks of my tears. Journal of Negro Education, 63(3), 376-387.

Duncan, G.J. (1994). Families and neighbors as sources of disadvantage in the schooling decisions of white and black adolescents. American Journal of Education, 103(1), 20-21.

Dunn, L.M.(1968). Special education for the mildly retarded: Is much of it justifiable? Exceptional Children, 23, 5-21.

Dunn, L.M. (1973). Children with moderate and severe general learning disabilities. In L.M. Dunn (Ed.) Exceptional children in schools (2nd. ed). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Dunn, R. & Dunn, K. (1993). Teaching secondary students through their individual learning styles: Practical approaches for grades 7-12. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Durrant, J.E.,Cunningham, C.E. & Voelker, S. (1990). Academic, social, and general self-concepts of behavioral subgroups of learning disabled children. Journal of Educational Psychology,82(4), 657-663.

Edgar, E. (1987). Secondary programs in special education: Are many of them justifiable? Exceptional Children, 53(6), 555-561.

Eisner, E.W.(1994). Putting multiple intelligence in context: Some questions and observations. Teachers' College Record,95(4), 555-560.

Elliot S.N., Barnard, J., & Gresham, F.M. (1989). Preschoolers' social behavior: Teachers' and parents' assessment. Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 7, 223-234.

Escobedo, T.H. & Huggams, J.H. (1983). Field-dependence-independence: A theoretical framework for Mexican American cultural variables? In T.H. Escobedo (Ed.), Early childhood bilingual education: A Hispanic perspective. (pp.119-135). New York: Teachers College Press.

Fad, K.S. (1990). The fast track to success: Social behavioral skills. Interventions in school and clinic,26. 39-43.

Fad, K.S.& Ryer,G.R.(1993). Social/behavioral variables related to success in general education. RASE,14(1), 25-35.

Figueroa, R.A. (1989). Psychological testing of linguistic- minority students: Knowledge gaps and regulations. Exceptional Children, 56(2), 111-119.

Florida Department of Education (1989). Programs for exceptional stuidents: Annual Report 1987-88. Tallahassee, FL: Division of Public Schools' MIS.

Florida Department of Education (1993). Profiles of Florida School Districts, 1992-1993. Tallahassee, FL: Bureau of Education Information and Assessment Services.

Florida Department of Education (1994). Graduation requirements for certain students with disabilities. Technical Assistance Paper. Tallahassee, FL: Bureau of Education for Exceptional Children.

Ford, D.D. & Webb,K.S.(1994). Desegregation of gifted educational programs: The impact of Brown on underachieving children of color. Journal of Negro Education,63(3), 358 - 375

Ford, D.Y. (1993). Black students' achievement orientation as a function of perceived family achievement orientation and demographic variables. Journal of Negro Education,62(1), 47-63.

Fox, M.A.W. 1995). A model of a community program for African-American males. Dissertation Abstracts International,56(6). (University Microfilm No. AAC95-32528).

Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L.S., Fernstrom, P., & Hohn, M. (1991). Toward a responsible reintegration of behaviorally disordered students. Behavioral Disorders,16(2), 133-147.

Gamoran, A. (1993). Alternative uses of ability grouping in secondary schools: Can we bring high quality instruction to low-ability classes? American Journal of Education,102(1), 1-22.

Gardner, H. (1983). Frames of mind: the theory of multiple intelligence. New York: Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (1993). Multiple intelligences: A reader. New York, N.Y.: Basic Books

Garibaldi, A.M.(1991). Blacks in college. In C.V.Willie & W. L.Reed (Eds), The Education of African Americans. Westport, CT: Alburn House.

Gelb, S.A. & Mizokawa, D.T. (1986). Special education and social structure: The commonality of "Exceptionality". American Educational Research Journal, 23, 543-557.

George, P.S. & Rubin, K. (1992). Teaching and ability grouping in Florida: Educators perceptions. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services ED 353 683).

Gersten, R.L. & Woodard, J. (1994). The language-minority student and special education: Issues, trends, and paradoxes. Exceptional Children, 60(4), 310-322.

Gibson, S. & Dembo, M.H. (1984). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. Journal of Educational Psychology,76, 569-582.

Ginsburg, H.P. (1986). The myth of the deprived child: New thoughts on poor children. In U. Neisser The school achievement of minority children: New Perspectives. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Pub., 169-189.

Gotlieb, J., Gotlieb, E.W., & Trongone, S. (1991). Parent and teacher referrals for psychoeducational evaluation. The Journal of Special Education,25(2), 155-167.

Gougis, R.A. (1986). The effects of prejudice and stress on the academic performance of black Americans. In U. Neisser, (Ed), The school achievement of minority children: New perspectives: Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Pub., 145-158.

Grant, P. (1992). Using special education to destroy black boys. Negro Educational Review.43,(1-2). 17-21.

Graves, J.L. (1995). The pseudoscience of psychometry and the Bell Curve. Journal of Negro Education 64(3). 277-294.

Green, R.S. (1996). The preferred learning styles of four African-American males: A case study. Dissertation Abstracts International,56(9). (University Microfilm No. AAC96-01801).

Greene, A.C., Sapp, G.L., & Chissom, B. (1990). Validation of the standford-Binet intelligence scale: Fourth edition with exceptional black male students. Psychology in Schools.27. 35-41.

Gresham, F.M. (1987). Social competence and motivational characteristics of learning-disabled students. In M.C. Wang, M.C.Reynolds and H.J. Walberg (Eds.) Handbook of special education: Research and practice. Oxford: Pergamon. 253-281.

Gresham, F.M. (1993). Social skills and learning disabilities as a Type III error: Rejoiner to Conte and Andrews. Journal of Learning Disabilities. 26(3). 154-158.

Gresham, F.M., Evans, S., & Elliot, S.N. (1988). Self-Efficacy differences among mildly handicapped, gifted, and non-handicapped students. The Journal of Special Education,22(2). 231-241.

Gresham, F.M. & Elliot, S.N. (1989). Social skills assessment technology for LD students. Learning Disabilities Quarterly,12. 141-152.

Gresham,M., & Elliot, S.N. (1990). Social skills rating system. Circle P ines, MN: American Guidance Service,Inc.

Haager, D., & Vaughn, S. (1995). Parent, peer, and self-reports of the social competence of students with learning disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities. 28(4). 205-215.

Hallahan, D.P. & Kauffman, J.M. (1994). Towards a culture of disability in the aftermath of Deno and Dunn. Journal of Special Education. 27(4). 496-508.

Hallenbeck, B.A. & Kauffman, J.M. (1995). How does observational learning affect the behavior of students with emotional or behavioral disorders? A review of research. Journal of Special Education. 29(1). 45-71.

Henley, M., Ramsey, R.S. & Algozzine, R. (1993). Characteristics of and strategies for

teaching students with mild disabilities. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Harry, B. (1995). Communication versus compliance: African-American parents' involvement in special education. Exceptional Children, 64(1), 364-377.

Harry, B. (1994). The disproportionate representation of minority students in special education:themes and recommendations. (Final Report,National Association of State Directors of Special Education) Alexandria,VA:(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 374 637).

Hazel, J.S. & Schumaker, J.B. (1988). Social skills and learning disabilities: Current issues and recommendations for further research. In J.F. Kavanaugh & T.J. Truss, Jr. (Eds). Learning disabilities: Proceedings of the national conference (.293-344). Parkton, MD: York Press.

Heller, K.A., Holtzman, W.H., & Messick, S. (Eds). (1982) Placing children in special education: A strategy for equity. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

Hernan, V. & Feagin, J.R. (1995). Superior intellect? Sincere fiction of the white self. Journal of Negro Education, 64(3), 295-306.

Hernstein, R.J, & Murray, C. (1994). The bell curve: Intelligence and class structure in American life. N.Y. The Free Press.

Hiebert, E.H. (1983). An examination of ability grouping for reading instruction. Reading Research Quarterly,4, 213-255.

Hilliard, A., III, (1987). The ideology of intelligence and I.Q. magic. Negro Educational Review. 38,(2-3), 136-145.

Hilliard, A.,lll, (1992). Behavioral style, culture, and teaching and learning. Journal of Negro Education, 61,(3), 370-377.

Hilliard, A.G. (1994). What good is this thing called intelligence and why bother to measure it? Journal of Black Psychology, 20(4), 430-444.

Hollister, R.G. (1989). The black male youth:their employment problems and training programs (Background Paper No.11). Washington,DC: Commission on Workforce Quality and Labor Market Efficiency. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No.ED 317 678)

Hoover, M.R., Politizer, R.L., & Taylor, O. (1987). Bias in reading tests for black language speakers: A sociolinguistic perspective. The Negro Education Review, 38(2-3), 81-89.

Hopfenberg, W.S., Levin, H.M., Chase, C., Christensen, S.G., Moore, M., Soler, P., Brunner, I., Keller, B., & Rodriguuez, G. (1993). The accelerated schools resource guide.

San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Huebner, E.S. (1987). Teachers' special education decision: Does test information make a difference? Journal of Educational Research. 80. 202-205.

Hyllegard, D., & Lavin, D.E. (1992). Higher education and desirable work: Open admissions and ethnic and cultural differernces in job quality. (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Association). San Francisco, CA: American Educational Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 345 628).

International Institute for Advocacy for School Children (1993). Academic discrimination: Failure to recognize individual differences. Eugene, OR. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 351 429).

Irvine, J.J. (1990). Black students and school failure. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Jensen, A.R. (1969). How much can we boost I.Q. and scholastic achievement? Harvard Educational Review. 39. 1-123.

Jensen, A.R. (1976). Race and the genetics of intelligence: A reply to Lewontin. In N.J. Black & G. Dworkin (Eds). The I.Q. controversy: Critical readings. N.Y. Pantheon Books.

Jensen, A.R. (1984). Cultural deficit or information-processing deficit? (Paper presented at the Annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April 23-27). New Orleans, LA: American Educational Research Association (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 243 918).

Johnson, N.(1994). Use of the WISC-R with disadvantaged gifted children: Current practice, limitations, and ethical concerns. In D.P. Saccuzzo et al Identifying underrepresented disadvantaged gifted and talented children: A multifaceted approach (Volumes 1&2). (ERIC Document Reproductive Service No. ED 368 097).

Johnson, O.W. (1995). The relationship of selected personal variables and academic achievement of low socioeconomic status African-American male students. Dissertation Abstracts International.56(3). (University Microfilm, No. AAC 95-20890).

Jones, P.A. (1991). Educating black males - several solutions, but no solution. Crisis. 98(8). 8-29.

Jones-Wilson, F.C. (1991). School improvement among blacks: Implications for excellence and equity. In C.V. Willie, A.M. Garibaldi & W.C. Reed (Eds), The education of African-Americans. New York, N.Y: Auburn House.

Kantor, H. & Lowe, R. (1995). Class, race and the emergence of federal education policy: From the New Deal to the Great Society. Educational Researcher .24(3). 4-11, 21.

Kastner, J. & Gottlieb, J. (1991). Classification of children in special education: importance of pre-assessment information. Psychology in the Schools.28. 19-27.

Kauffman, J.M. (1989). Characteristics of behavior disorders of children and youth (4th.ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill Publishing.

Kauffman, J.M. (1993). Special problems in the inclusion of students with emotional or behavioral disorders in general education classrooms and schools. Special Education Perspectives,2(1). 23-28.

Kavale, K.A. & Forness, S.R. (1996). Social skills deficits and learning disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities. 29(3). 226-237.

Kennedy, E. (1992). A multilevel study of elementary male black students and white students. Journal of Educational Research. 86(2). 105-118.

Keogh, B.K. (1987). Learning disability: Diversity in search of order. In M.C. Wang, M.C. Reynolds & H.J. Walberg (Eds). Handbook of Special Education: Research and Practice (vol.2). Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Knapp, M., & Shield, P. (1991). Reconceiving instruction for the disadvantaged. Phi Delta Kappan.56. 9-13.

Kochanek, T.T., Kabacoff, R.I., & Lipsitt, L.P. (1990). Early identification of developmentally disabled and at-risk pre-school children. Exceptional Children,56(6). 0528-538.

Kofsky, G.E. (1992). Increasing the number of minority elementary students found eligible for placement in a gifted program by enhancing the quality of screening instruments and inservice training provided to school staff. Practicum Report, Nova University.

Lareau, A. (1989). Home advantage: Social class and parental intervention in elementary education. London: Falmer Press.

Lassister, K.S & Bardos (1995). Relationships between young children's academic achievement and measures of intelligence. Psychology in the Schools. 32(3). 170-177.

Leland, W., Blank, G., & Gruber, C. (1996). Desktop data analysis with SYSTAT. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Lemotey, K. (1992). Independent black institutions: African-centered education models. Journal of Negro Education, 61(4), 455-462.

Leonard, P.Y. (1985). Vocational theory and the vocational behavior of black males: An analysis. Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development,13(3), 91-105.

Levin, H.M. (1994). Multiple intelligence theory and everyday practice.Teachers College Record, 95(4), 570-575.

Lindle, J.C. (1994). Review of the literature on tracking and ability. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. 384 643.

Lilly, S.M. (1992). Labeling: a tired, overworked, yet unresolved issue in special education. In W.Stainback and S. Stainback (Eds), Controversial issues surrounding special education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Lloyd, G.R.(1992).The plight of black males in america: The agony and the ecstasy-a summary comment. Negro Educational Review, 43(1-2), 37-40.

Maheady, L., Towne,R., Algozzine,B., Mercer,J., & Yesseldyke,J. (1990). Overrepresentation: A case for alternative practices prior to referral. In S.B. Sigmon(Ed.) Critical voices on special education: Problems and progress concerning the mildly handicapped. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

Marks, M. (1994, November 13). Special ed: life skills or a trap for black kids? The Miami Herald, pp. A1, A18

Mastropieri, M.A. & Scruggs, T.E. (1994). Effective instruction for special education (2nd.ed.). Austin, Texas: Pre-Ed.

McCabe, R.H. (1990). Parents hold key to children's success. Miami Herald, 17A.

McCullough, Y.P. (1995). Motivators for success: Personal and Familial Drives among Black males. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Barry University, Miami, Florida..

McIntyre, L.D.,& Pernell, E. (1985). The Impact of race on teacher recommendation for special education placement. Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 13(3), 112-120.

McIntyre, L. (1988). Teacher gender: A predictor of special education referral? Journal of Learning Disabilities, 21, 382-383.

McIntyre, L.L.(1990). Teacher standards and gender: Factors in special education referral. Journal of Educational Research, 83(3), 166-172.

McKinney, J.D. (1987). Research on conceptually and empirically derived subtypes of specific learning disabilities. In M.C. Wang, M.C.Reynolds & H.J. Walberg (Eds). Handbook of special education: Research and practice. Oxford: Pergamon.

McKinney, J.D. (1989). Logitudinal research on the behavioral characteristics of children with learning disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities.22, 141-150, 165.

McLeskey, J., Waldron, N.L. & Wornhoff, S.A. (1990). Factors influencing the identification of black and white students with learning disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities 23(6). 362-366.

Meier, K.J., Stewart, J., & England, R.E. (1989). Race, class and education: The political of second generation discrimination. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Meijer, C.J.W., & Foster, S.F. (1988). The effect of Teacher self-efficacy on referral chance.The Journal of Special Education , 22(3), 378-385.

Melby, J.N. (1993). Family context of adolescent academic competence. (Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, March 25-28). New Orleans, LA: Center for Family Research, Iowa State University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service, No. ED 385 019).

Mercer, J.R.(1973). Labeling the mentally retarded. Berleley,CA: University of California Press.

Mercer, J.R. & Rueda,R.(1991). The impact of changing paradigms of disabilities on assessment for special education. Paper presented at the Council for Exceptional Children(CEC) Conference on "At Risk Children and Youth, New Orleans,LA.

Meyen, E.L. (1990). Exceptional children in today's schools (2nd ed.). Denver, Colorado: Love Publishing Company.

Mickelson, A.M. (1993). Minorities and education in plural societies. Anthropology and Education Quarterly.24(3). 269-276.

Middleton, M.B. & Cartledge, G. (1995). The effects of social skills instruction and parental involvement in the aggressive behaviors of African-American males. Behavior Modification 19(2)). 192-210.

Murnane, R.J. & Levy ,F. (1993). Why today's high school educated males earn less than their fathers did: the problem of an assessment of responses. Harvard Educational Review. 63(1), 1-19.

Naglieri, J.A. & Braden, J.P. (1992). Norm-referenced intellegence tests: What we have and what we need. In W. Stainback & S. Stainback (Eds.), Controversial issues confronting special education: Divergent perspectives. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Natriello, G., McDill, E.L., & Pallas, A.M. (1990). Schooling disadvantaged children: Racing against catastrophe. New York/London: Teachers College Press.

Nevi, C. (1987). In defense of tracking. Educational Leadership, 44, 24-26.

Nobles, W.W. (1987). Psychometrics and African American reality: a question of cultural antimony. Negro Educational Review, 38,(2-3), 45-55

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (1991). Status of special education exiters: A pilot study. Bismark, N.D: Division of Special Education (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 363 999).

Oakes, J. (1985). Keeping track: How schools structure inequality. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Oakes, J. (1992). Can tracking research inform practice? Technical, normative, and political considerations. Educational Researcher, 21(4), 12-21.

Obiakor, F.E.(1992). The myth of socioeconomic-economic dissonance:implications for African-American Exceptional students. (Paper presented at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).Topical Conference on culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional children).Minneapolis,MA: (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 352 756)

Obiakor, F.E. (1994). The education of African-American learners with behavior disorders: An unresolved issue for general and special educators. Position Paper. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services, No. ED 372 567.

Ochoa, S.H. & Olivarez, A. Jr. (1995). A meta-analysis of peer ratings, sociometric status of pupils with learning disabilities. Journal of Special Education ,29(1), 1-19.

Ogbu, J.U. (1986). The consequences of the American Caste System. In U. Neisser (Ed.)The school achievement of minority children. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Laurence Erlbaum Associates.

Ogbu, J.U. (1994). Racial stratification and education in the United States: Why inequality persists. Teachers College Record, 96(2), 265-297.

O'Reilly, C. (1989). The confirmation of bias in special education eligibility decisions. School Psychology Review, 18, 126-35.

Ortiz, A.A. & Polyzoi, E. (1988). Language Assessment of hispanic learning disabled and speech and language handicapped students (Paper presented at the Ethnic and Multicultural Symposia). Dallas, TX. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 298 703).

Osmun, G. (1988). The effect of race, gender, and economic status on the placement in special education high-incidence programs. Dissertation Abstracts International. (University Microfilm No.AAC88-12845).

Pallas, A.M., Natriello, G., & McDill, E.L. (1989). The changing nature of the disadvantaged population: Current dimensions and future trends. Educational Researcher. 18(15). 16-22.

Patterson, G.R., Reid, J.B. & Dishion, T.J. (1992). Antisocial boys. Eugene, OR: Catalia.

Parker, I., Gottlieb, B.W., Gottlieb, J. & Davis, S. (1989). Teacher behavior toward low achievers, average achievers and mainstreamed minority group learning disabled students. Learning Disabilities Research. 4.(2). 101-106.

Payne, R.S. (1994). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and sense of efficacy and their significance to urban low socioeconomic minority students. Journal of Negro Education .63(2). 181-196.

Perry, W. & Tannunbaum, M.D. (1992). Parents, power, and the public schools. In L. Kaplan (Ed.), Education and the family. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon

Pintrich, P.R. & Anderman, E.M. & Klobucar, C. (1994). Intraindividual differences in motivation and cognition with and without learning disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities. 27(6). 360-370.

Ready, T. & Nickens, H.W.(1991). Black men in medical education pipeline: past present,and future. Academic Medicine, 66(4). 181-187.

Reed, S., & Sautter, C.R. (1990). Children of poverty, the status of 12 million young children. Phi Delta Kappa. K1-K12.

Reglin, G. (1992). Self perception and achievement of black urban 10th graders (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the North Carolina Association for Research in Education). Chapel Hill, NC. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 343 976.

Reissman, F. (1962). The culturally deprived child. New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row

Reschly, D.J. (1987). Learning characteristics of mildly handicapped students: Implications for classification, placement and programming. In M.C. Wang, M.C. Reynolds, &

H.J. Walberg(Eds). Handbook of special education (pp 35-58). Oxford, England: Pergamon.

Reschly, D.J. (1991). The effects of placement litigation on psychological and educational classification. Diagnostique, 17(1), 6-20.

Reschly, D.J.(1992). Special Education decision-making and functional/behavioral assessment. In William Stainback and Susan Stainback Controversial issues confronting special education. Boston,MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Reschly, D.J. & Ward, S (1991). Use of adaptive behavior measures and Over representation of Blacks in programs for students with mild retardation. American Journal on Mental Retardation, 98(3), 257-268.

Reynolds, M.C., Wang, C., & Walberg, H.J. (1987). The necessary restructuring of special and regular education. Exceptional Children,53, 391-398.

Ritter, D.R. (1989). Teachers' perceptions pf problem behaviors in general and special education. Exceptional Children.55. 559-564.

Rivers, L.W., Henderson, D.M., Jones, R.L., Ladner, J.A. & Williams, R.L. (1975). Mosaic of labels for black children. In Nicholas Hobb (Ed) Issues in the classification of children(Vol.2). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Pub., 213-245.

Salend, S. (1994). Effective mainstreaming: Creating inclusive classrooms. New York: MacMillan.

Sameroff, A. (1993). Psychological testing of American minorities: Issues and consequences. New York, New York: Harper & Row.

Samuda, R.J. & King, S.L. (1989). Assessment and Placement of Minority Students. Lewiston, New York: Intercultural Social Science Publications.

Scales, A.M. (1987). Alternatives to standardized tests in reading education: cognitive styles and informal measures. Negro Educational Review, 38,(2-3), 99-106.

Schumaker, J.B. (1992). Social performance of individuals with learning disabilities: Through the looking-glass of KU-IRLD research. School Psychology Review, 21(3), 387-399.

Segro, G. (1995). Meeting the needs of all students: Making ability grouping work. National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), 79(568), 18-26.

Serwatka, T.S., Deering, S., & Grant, P. (1995). Disproportionate representation of African Americans in emotionally handicapped classes. Journal of Black Studies, 25(4), 492-506.

Semmel, M.I.; Gerber, M.M. & MacMillan, D.L. (1994). Twenty-five years after Dunn's article: A legacy of policy analysis research in special education. Journal of Special Education, 27(4), 481-495.

Shinn, M.R., Tindal, G.A., & Spira, D.A. (1987). Special education referrals as an index of teacher tolerance: Are teachers imperfect tests? Exceptional Children, 54,(1), 32-40

Sigmon, S.B. (1990). Black and male in special education: aA brief local/NJ state analysis. In S.B.Sigmon (Ed.) Critical voices on special education: Problems and progress concerning the mildly handicapped. New York: State University of New York Press.

Simmons,W. & Grady, M. (1990). Black male achievement:from peril to promise (Report of the Superintendent's Advisory Committee on black male achievement). Upper Marlboro,MD:Prince George's County Public Schools.(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No.ED 333 054)

Skritic, T.M. (1995). The functionalist view of special education and disability: Deconstructing the conventional knowledge tradition. In T.M. Skrtic (Ed.). Disability and democracy. New York, Teachers' College Press.

Slavin, R.E. (1987). Ability grouping and student achievement in elementary schools: A best evidence synthesis. Review of Educational Research, 57, 292-336.

Sleeter, C.E. (1990). Learning disabilities: The social construction of a special education category. In S.B. Sigmon Critical voices on special education: Problems and progress concerning the mildly handicapped. N.Y. : State University of New York Press.

Sleeter, C.E. (1992). Resisting Racial awareness: How teachers understand the social order from their racial, Gender, and social class locations. Educational Foundations, 6(2), 7-32.

Smith, C.R., Wood, F.H. & Grimes, J. (1987). Issues in the identification and placement of behaviorally disordered students. In M.C. Wang, M.C. Reynolds, & H.J. Walberg (Eds.), Handbook of special education: Research and practice (vol.2). Oxford, England: Pergamon Press.

Smith, T.E., Polloway, E.A., Patton, J.R., & Dowdy, C.A. (1995). Teaching students with special needs in inclusive settings. Boston, MA: Allyb & Bacon

Snell, M.F. & Drake, G.P. (1994). Replacing cascades with supported education. Journal of Special Education,27(4), 393-409.

Soodak, L.C. & Podell, D.M. (1993). Teacher efficacy and student problem as factors in special education referral. Journal of special education, 27(1), 66-81.

Soodak, L.C. & Podell, D.M. (1994). Teachers' thinking about difficult-to-teach students. Educational Researcher. 88.(1). 44-51.

Sorenson, A. & Hallihan, M. (1986). Effects of ability grouping on growth in academic achievement. Educational Research Journal. 4. 519-542.

Stainback, W., & Stainback,S.(1992). Controversial issues confronting special education:divergent perspectives. Boston,MA: Allyb & Bacon

Sternberg, R.J. (1994). Reforming school reform: Comments on multiple intelligences,the theory in practice. Teachers' College Record,95(4). 561-569.

Stewart, D.M. (1993). Education, race, and class: A new calculus for the 21st century. Journal of Negro Education. 62(2). 113-124.

Stewart, M. (1992). The educational status of black males in America. The agony and the ecstasy. Negro Educational Review. 43.(1-2). 28-30

Stone, B.J. & Jeffrey, S.L. (1991). Sex differences in special education placement are I.Q.tests sex biased? (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 354 674)

Sugai, G. (1988). Uducational Assessment of the culturally diverse and behavior disordered student: An examination of critical effect. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 298 706).

Sum, A. & Fogg, N . (1990). The changing economic fortunes of young black men in America. Black Scholar,21(1). 47-55.

Swanson, H.L. & Malone, S. (1992). Social skills and learning disabilities: A meta analysis of the literature. School Psychology Review. 21(3). 427-443.

Switzky, H. & Heal T. (1987). Research methods in special education. In R Gaylord-Ross (Ed). Issues and Research in Special Education. New York: Teachers College Press. 1-81.

Taylor, G. (1993). The relationship between social skills development, academic achievement and interpersonal relations of African-American males. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services, ED 390 819).

Taylor, L. & Lee, D. (1987). Standardized tests and African American children: communicative and language issues. Negro Educational Review. 38.(2-3). 67-80

Taylor, R.D. (1994). Risk and resilience: Contextual influences on the development of African-American adolescents. In M.C. Wang & E.W. Gordon, Educational resilience in inner-

city america: Challenges and prospects. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Pub.

Taylor, R.L. (1991). Bias in cognitive assessment: Issues, implications, and future directions. Diagnostique,17,(1), 3-5.

Taylor, R.L. & Richards, S.B. (1991). Patterns of intellectual differences of Black, Hispanic, and White children. Psychology in the Schools, 28, 5-9.

Taylor, S.J. & Searle, S.J. (1987). The disabled in America: History, policy and trends. In P.Knoblock (Ed.), Understanding Exceptional Children and Youth. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.

Tharp, R. (1989). Psychocultural variables and constants: Effects on teaching and learning in schools. American Psychologist, 44, 1-11.

Tobias, S., Cole, C., Zibrin, M. & Bodlakova, V. (1982). Teacher-student ethnicity and recommendations for special education referrals. Journal of Educational Psychology, 74(1), 72-76.

Trueba, H.T. (1988). Culturally-based explanations of minority students' academic achievement. Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 19, 270-287.

Tur-Kaspa, H., & Bryan, T. (1995). Teachers' ratings ofthe social competence and school adjustment of students with learning disabilities in elementary and junior high school. Journal of Learning Disabilities 28(1), 44-52.

U.S. Department of Education (1990). To ensure the free appropriate public education for all handicapped children: Twelfth annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Education of the Handicapped Act. Washington, D.C: Office of Special Education Programs.

U.S. Department of Education (1993).Youth indicators,1993. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (1990). Vital statistics of the U.S.,vol.11,Part A. Washington, D.C. : U.S. Government Printing Office.

U.S. Department of Labor (1965). The Negro family: The case for national action. Washington, D.C. : U.S. Government Printing Office.

Vance, B. & Sabitino, D. (1991). Identifying sources of bias in the WISC-R. Diagnostique, 17,(1), 40-48.

Vaughn, S. & Hogan, A. (1994). The social competence of students with learning disabilities over time: A within individual examination. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 27(5),

292-303.

Vaughn, S., Hogan, A., Kouzekanani, K., & Shapiro, S. (1990). Peer acceptance, self-perceptions, and social skills of learning disabled students prior to identification. Journal of Educational Psychology, 82(1), 101-106.

Vaughn, S., Zaragoza, H., Hogan, A., & Walker, J. (1993). A four-year longitudinal investigation of the social skills and behavior problems of students with learning disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 26(6), 404-412.

Wagner, M. (1991). Dropouts with disabilities: What do we know? What can we do? (A Report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students). Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 341 226).

Walther-Thomas, C.S. & Carter, K.L. (1993). Cooperative teaching: Helping students with disabilities succeed in mainstream classrooms. Middle School Journal, 33-37.

Wang, M. (1990). Programs that promote equity. In H.P. Baptiste, Jr., H.C. Waxman, J. Walker de Felix & J.E. Anderson (Eds.), Leadership, equity, and school effectiveness (pp.132-154). London: Sage Publication.

Weinstein, R.S. (1976). Reading group membership in first grade: Teaching Behaviors and pupil experience over time. Journal of Educational Psychology, 68(1), 1-8.

Weishew, N.L., & Peng, S.S, (1993). Variables predicting student problem behavior. Journal of Educational Research, 87(1), 5-17.

Wenning, R.J. (1992). The Characteristics of discriminatory ability grouping and evidence of its extent. (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association). San Francisco, CA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 345 356).

West, F.J. & Idol, L (1994). Collaborative consultation in the education of mildly handicapped and at risk students. Remedial and Special Education, 11(1), 22-31.

White. S.E. (1992). Factors that contribute to learning differences among African-American and Causcasian students. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 374 177).

Widaman, K.F., McMillan, D.F., Hemsley, R.E. & Little, T.D. (1992). Differences in adolescents' self concept as a function of academic level, ethnicity and gender. American Journal on Mental Retardation. 96(4). 387-403.

Williams, P. (1991). The special education handbook. Milton Keynes,PA: Open University Press.

Wilson, T.L. & Banks, B. (1994). A perspective on the education of African American males. Journal of Instructional Psychology. 21(1). 97-100.

Winters, W.G. (1993). African-American mothers and urban schools. New York, NY: Lexington Books.

Woolfolk, A.E. & Hoy, W.K. (1990). Prospective teachers' sense of efficacy and beliefs about control. Journal of Educational Psychology. 82(1). 81-91.

Wright, D., & Weisc, M.J. (1988). Teacher judgement in student evaluation: A comparison of grading methods. Journal of Educational Research. 82(1). 10-14.

Wright, W.J. (1992). The endangered black male child. Educational Leadership. 14-16.

Ysseldyke, J.E. & Algozzine, B. (1981). Diagnostic classification decision as a factor of referral information. Journal of Special Education. 15. 429-435.

Ysseldyke, J.E. & Algozzine, B. (1984). Introduction to special education. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Zeller, R.W. (1990). An investigation of influences on the patterns of special education placement for culturally and ethnically different students. Dissertation Abstracts International. (University Microfilms No. AAC90-25499).

APPENDIX A
PARENT/STUDENT CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent:

My name is Desmond B. Butcher and I am a graduate student in the School of Education at Barry University. You and your child are being invited to participate in a research project that may contribute to a better understanding of African-American male underachievement in society, although there will be no direct benefit to either you or your child.

If you agree to participate in this study, you and your child will not be directly involved in the gathering of information or any evaluations. Your consent is needed so that I can collect information from your child's school records concerning intelligence test scores (I.Q. scores), placement in high school diploma program, and information on subsidized or non-subsidized lunch status. In addition to gathering information from your child's school records, your child's teacher will also be asked to complete a standardized questionnaire about your child's social skills.

There are no known or foreseeable physical or psychological risks associated with this research project.

Your consent to participate is strictly voluntary. You or your child have the right to refuse to participate, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate, or should you decide to drop out of the study for any reason at any time, there will be no adverse effects on your child's public school education, progress in class or grades.

The information gathered from this study will remain confidential to the extent permitted by law. The raw data will be kept in a locked drawer in the researcher's office. Any data that are published will be in terms of group averages and no individuals will be able to be identified. On completion of the study, and at your request, you will be invited to a presentation of the findings.

Please have your child review this form and complete the assent statement below. I appreciate your help in this project. You may contact me at 399-9236 or my faculty sponsor, Dr. Clara Wolman, at 899-3700 anytime you have questions.

STUDENT'S ASSENT

I am doing research that includes students such as yourself. I have explained this study to you, and need to know whether you are willing to participate in my research project. Please check the appropriate box below and sign your name in the space provided so that I can determine whether you wish to be included in this research project. Your name will not be used in the published findings of this study, and you will not be asked to do anything other than to give your assent to participate. I will be looking at some information in your student records, and your teacher will complete a questionnaire describing your social skills.

_____ I am willing _____ I am NOT willing to be a participant in the research study that has been explained to me by Desmond B. Butcher, Doctoral Candidate, at the School of Education at Barry University.

_____ _____
Signature of Student Date

_____ _____
Signature of Parent Date

_____ _____
Desmond B. Butcher, Researcher Date

APPENDIX B
TEACHER CONSENT FORM

June 1, 1996

Dear Teacher:

My name is Desmond B. Butcher and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the School of Education at Barry University. I am conducting a research project to determine what factors are most related to placement of African-American males in Special and Regular Diploma programs. It is possible that this study may contribute to a better understanding of African-American male underachievement in school and society.

Consent to participate in this study has already been obtained from parents and certain students in one or more of your classes. (They are identified on the attached list). If you agree to participate in this study , you are being requested to complete a Social Skills Rating System (Gresham & Elliot, 1990) questionnaire for each identified student. This questionnaire is designed to rate students' social skills, problem behavior, and academic competence. It will take approximately 5-8 minutes for you to complete each questionnaire.

There are no known or foreseeable physical or psychological risks associated with this research project.

Your consent to participate in this study is strictly voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate, or should you decide to drop out of the study for any reason at any time, there will be no adverse effects on your employment in the public school system.

The information gathered from this study will remain confidential to the extent permitted by law. The raw data will be kept in a locked drawer in the researcher's office. Any data that are published will be in terms of group averages, and no individuals will be able to be identified. On completion of the study, and at your request, you will be invited to a presentation of the findings.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please check the appropriate box below and sign your name in the space provided. You may contact me at 688-1426 (home), or 399-9236 (pager), or my faculty sponsor, Dr. Clara Wolman, at 899-3700 anytime you have questions.

Sincerely,

Desmond B. Butcher
Doctoral Candidate

INFORMED CONSENT

_____ I am willing _____ I am NOT willing to be a participant in the research study being undertaken by Desmond B. Butcher, Doctoral Candidate, in the School of Education at Barry University.

_____ _____

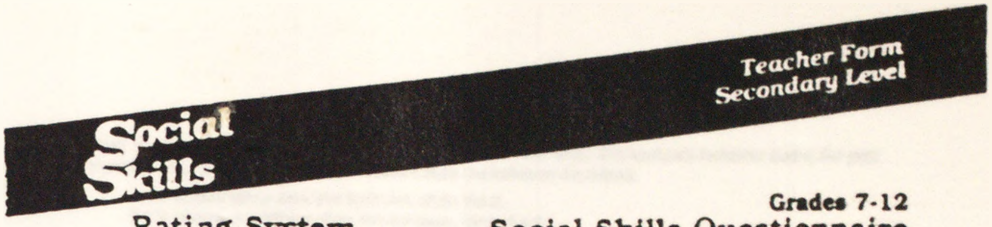
Signature of Teacher Date

APPENDIX C
SAMPLE DATA COLLECTION SHEET
SCHOOL_____

NO	NAME	ID	GR	DOB	LS	DIP	IQ	SS	PB	AC
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										
11										
12										
13										
14										
15										
16										
17										
18										
19										
20										

GR= Grade (9-12); DOB=Date of Birth; DIP=Diploma (regular/special); LS=Lunch Status(0,1,2);
SS=Social Skills; PB=Problem Behavior; AC=Academic Competence.

APPENDIX D



Grades 7-12

Rating System Social Skills Questionnaire

Frank M. Gresham and Stephen N. Elliott

Directions

This questionnaire is designed to measure how often a student exhibits certain social skills and how important those skills are for success in your classroom. Ratings of problem behaviors and academic competence are also requested. First, complete the information about the student and yourself.

Student Information

Student's name _____ Date _____
(First, Middle, Last; Month, Day, Year)

School _____ City _____ State _____

Grade _____ Birth date _____ Sex: ☐ Female ☐ Male
(Month, Day, Year)

Ethnic group (optional)

☐ Asian ☐ Indian (Native American)
☐ Black ☐ White
☐ Hispanic ☐ Other _____

Is this student handicapped? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If handicapped, this student is classified as:

☐ Learning-disabled ☐ Mentally handicapped
☐ Behavior-disordered ☐ Other handicap (specify) _____

Teacher's name _____ Sex: ☐ Female ☐ Male
(First, Middle, Last)

What is your assignment?

☐ Regular ☐ Resource ☐ Self-contained ☐ Other (specify) _____

Form: TS

A 10 9 8 7 6

Next, read each item on pages 2 and 3 (items 1 - 42) and think about this student's behavior during the past month or two. Decide how often the student does the behavior described.

If the student never does this behavior, circle the 0.
If the student sometimes does this behavior, circle the 1.
If the student very often does this behavior, circle the 2.

For items 1 - 30, you should also rate how important each of these behaviors is for success in your classroom.

If the behavior is not important for success in your classroom, circle the 0.
If the behavior is important for success in your classroom, circle the 1.
If the behavior is critical for success in your classroom, circle the 2.

Here are two examples:

	How Often?			How Important?		
	Never	Sometimes	Very Often	Not Important	Important	Critical
Shows empathy for peers.	0	1	(2)	0	(1)	2
Asks questions of you when unsure of what to do in schoolwork.	0	(1)	2	0	1	(2)

This student very often shows empathy for classmates. Also, this student sometimes asks questions when unsure of schoolwork. This teacher thinks that showing empathy is important for success in his or her classroom and that asking questions is critical for success.

Please do not skip any items. In some cases you may not have observed the student perform a particular behavior. Make an estimate of the degree to which you think the student would probably perform that behavior.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY How Often?			Social Skills	How Often?			How Important?		
C	A	S		Never	Sometimes	Very Often	Not Important	Important	Critical
			1. Produces correct schoolwork.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			2. Keeps his or her work area clean without being reminded.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			3. Responds appropriately to physical aggression from peers.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			4. Initiates conversations with peers.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			5. Volunteers to help peers on classroom tasks.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			6. Politely refuses unreasonable requests from others.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			7. Appropriately questions rules that may be unfair.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			8. Responds appropriately to teasing by peers.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			9. Accepts peers' ideas for group activities.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			10. Appropriately expresses feelings when wronged.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			11. Receives criticism well.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			12. Attends to your instructions.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			13. Uses time appropriately while waiting for your help.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			14. Introduces himself or herself to new people without being told to.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			15. Compromises in conflict situations by changing own ideas to reach agreement.	0	1	2	0	1	2
C	A	S							

Next, read each item on pages 2 and 3 (items 1 - 42) and think about this student's behavior during the past month or two. Decide how often the student does the behavior described.

- If the student never does the behavior, circle the 0.
- If the student sometimes does the behavior, circle the 1.
- If the student very often does the behavior, circle the 2.

For items 1 - 30, you should also rate how important each of these behaviors is for success in your classroom.

- If the behavior is not important for success in your classroom, circle the 0.
- If the behavior is important for success in your classroom, circle the 1.
- If the behavior is critical for success in your classroom, circle the 2.

Here are two examples:

	How Often?			How Important?		
	Never	Sometimes	Very Often	Not Important	Important	Critical
Shows empathy for peers.	0	1	(2)	0	(1)	2
Asks questions of you when unsure of what to do in schoolwork.	0	(1)	2	0	1	(2)

This student very often shows empathy for classmates. Also, this student sometimes asks questions when unsure of schoolwork. This teacher thinks that showing empathy is important for success in his or her classroom and that asking questions is critical for success.

Please do not skip any items. In some cases you may not have observed the student perform a particular behavior. Make an estimate of the degree to which you think the student would probably perform that behavior.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY How Often? C	A	S	Social Skills	How Often? Never	Sometimes	Very Often	How Important? Not Important	Important	Critical
			1. Produces correct schoolwork.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			2. Keeps his or her work area clean without being reminded.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			3. Responds appropriately to physical aggression from peers.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			4. Initiates conversations with peers.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			5. Volunteers to help peers on classroom tasks.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			6. Politely refuses unreasonable requests from others.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			7. Appropriately questions rules that may be unfair.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			8. Responds appropriately to teasing by peers.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			9. Accepts peers' ideas for group activities.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			10. Appropriately expresses feelings when wronged.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			11. Receives criticism well.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			12. Attends to your instructions.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			13. Uses time appropriately while waiting for your help.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			14. Introduces himself or herself to new people without being told to.	0	1	2	0	1	2
			15. Compromises in conflict situations by changing own ideas to reach agreement.	0	1	2	0	1	2
C	A	S	CLASS OF HOW OFTEN COLUMNS						

Academic Competence

The next nine items require your judgments of this student's academic or learning behaviors as observed in your classroom. Compare the student with other children who are in the same classroom.

Rate all items using a scale of 1 to 5. Circle the number that best represents your judgment. The number 1 indicates the lowest or least favorable performance, placing the student in the lowest 10% of the class. Number 5 indicates the highest or most favorable performance, placing the student in the highest 10% compared with other students in the classroom.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY		Lowest 10%	Next Lowest 20%	Middle 40%	Next Highest 20%	Highest 10%
	43. Compared with other children in my classroom, the **overall academic performance** of this child is:	1	2	3	4	5
	44. In **reading**, how does this child compare with other students?	1	2	3	4	5
	45. In **mathematics**, how does this child compare with other students?	1	2	3	4	5
	46. In terms of grade-level expectations, this child's **skills in reading** are:	1	2	3	4	5
	47. In terms of grade-level expectations, this child's skills in **mathematics** are:	1	2	3	4	5
	48. This child's **overall motivation** to succeed academically is:	1	2	3	4	5
	49. This child's **parental encouragement** to succeed academically is:	1	2	3	4	5
	50. Compared with other children in my classroom this child's **intellectual functioning** is:	1	2	3	4	5
	51. Compared with other children in my classroom this child's **overall classroom behavior** is:	1	2	3	4	5
AC	SUM OF COLUMN					

Stop. Please check to be sure all items have been marked.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

SUMMARY

SOCIAL SKILLS

HOW OFTEN? TOTAL — BEHAVIOR LEVEL (see Appendix A) — Fewer / Average / More

C + +

A + +

S + +

Total (C + A + S)

(see Appendix B) Standard Score — Percentile Rank

(see Appendix E) SEM ± — Confidence Level 68% 95%

Confidence Band (standard scores) to

PROBLEM BEHAVIORS

HOW OFTEN? TOTAL (items from page 3) — BEHAVIOR LEVEL (see Appendix A) — Fewer / Average / More

E

I

Total (E + I)

(see Appendix B) Standard Score — Percentile Rank

(see Appendix E) SEM ± — Confidence Level 68% 95%

Confidence Band (standard scores) to

ACADEMIC COMPETENCE

RATING TOTAL (sum from page 4) — COMPETENCE LEVEL (see Appendix A) — Below / Average / Above

Total AC

(see Appendix B) Standard Score — Percentile Rank

(see Appendix E) SEM ± — Confidence Level 68% 95%

Confidence Band (standard scores) to

Note: To obtain a detailed analysis of this student's Social Skills strengths and weaknesses, complete the Assessment-Intervention Record.