

THE INFLUENCE OF COLOR BLINDNESS ON TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND  
STUDENTS' BEHAVIORAL AND ACADEMIC FUNCTIONING

A DISSERTATION

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RACHEL GREENROY, B.S., S.S.P.

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## DEDICATION

Without hesitation, this dissertation is dedicated to my children, Nicholas, Ashleigh, and Matthew. It has been a personal goal of mine to show my children that if you dream it, you can achieve it. Additionally, their trust in me as their parent provided me with the energy and support that I needed to complete this degree. I hope that they find it within themselves to follow their own dreams with an equivalent passion and persistence. Thank you to my Nicholas, Ashleigh, and Matthew for hanging in there and trusting the process.

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## ABSTRACT

RACHEL GREENROY

### THE INFLUENCE OF COLOR BLINDNESS ON TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND STUDENTS' BEHAVIORAL AND ACADEMIC FUNCTIONING

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This study explored teachers' level of color blindness, teacher race, student race, and the level of intervention teachers recommended for students with perceived academic or behavioral difficulties. In an effort to support the field of early childhood education, this research focused on the responses of teachers of children in the kindergarten through third grades (ages 18+). The two hypotheses tested were as follows: 1) White teachers that differ from the students' race and who score high on the color blindness scale will perceive minority students as engaging in problematic behaviors and 2) Teachers with race that differ from the students' race and who score high on the color blindness scale will be more likely to refer minority students to special education for an evaluation due to a suspected Specific Learning Disability (SLD) or an Emotional Disturbance (ED). For Hypothesis 1, it was found that teacher race and level of color blindness scale did not impact perception of minority students as engaging in problematic behaviors at a higher rate than white students. For Hypothesis 2, significant relationships were found between the Black boy with an "ethnic" name, teacher race, and the referral to special education and the White male with a "mainstream" name, teachers' level of color blindness, and the referral to special education.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Statement of Problem**

“When I look at my students, I don’t see color,” is a statement often used by teachers in an attempt to proclaim their ability to accept students of all races as being equal. Using this statement while unconsciously engaging in behaviors that counteract the claim exemplifies the term, ‘color blindness.’ Though the statement may be used in an attempt to facilitate a nondiscriminatory classroom environment by implying the teacher has compassion for all students, it counters the trending argument that people do see color and further, people who can acknowledge seeing color are more open to change (LaCroix & Kuehl, 2019).

Color blindness, or the purported ability to see beyond color, is a term that transpired from years of individual racism, institutional racism, and systemic oppression and is most likely to be endorsed by White Americans (Neville et al., 2013). Additionally, the term is arguably a by-product of the study conducted by Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (Myrdal, 1944, as cited in Grant et al., 1997). It was determined that the American Dilemma was “the contradiction between the American Creed of justice, equality of opportunity, fairness, civil rights, civil liberties, a free press, and democratic decision making” (Grant et al., 1997, p. 17). Essentially, the dilemma is embodied within the concept of racism, as well as the difficulties in acknowledging, or rather the inability to acknowledge, its existence. According to Sue et al. (2008), color blindness is frequently an unconscious microaggression. While racism is multifaceted, racism in the educational setting seems to contradict the goal of an education, or

perhaps the goal of being educated. Further, what many believe to be at the heart of educators is the belief that all children should be provided access to an equitable education. Racism is so deeply rooted in American history and culture, that while many previously held perceptions of Black Americans have been deemed unconstitutional, the middle-class, White American mentality continues to influence the educational system in ways that impact student learning outcomes including standardized testing and curriculum (Grant et al., 1997; Kumar et al., 2015). Further, teachers who continue to adhere to the claim that they are color blind are adhering to a set of outdated understandings and are less likely to integrate current understandings of racism because they are less likely to be open to change.

### **Statement of Purpose**

This study explored teachers' level of color blindness, teacher race, student race, and the level of intervention teachers recommended for students with perceived academic or behavioral difficulties. In an effort to support the field of early childhood education, this research focused on the responses of teachers of children in the kindergarten through third grades (ages 18+).

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Critical Race Theory**

This study is grounded using the theoretical framework and constructs of the critical race theory. The educational setting is a social and political institution with a rich history known for its whiteness and majority views as dominating the school and classroom cultures (Awokoya & Clark, 2008). Since culture is a learned concept that includes a set of rules for behavior, language, values, and world beliefs of groups, it is believed that prejudices are learned through

overt and covert messages (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2020). Prejudices reside deep within the culture, including within ideas about education, and are observed at the surface level in areas such as the actions of the teachers in regards to handling diversity. This theory supports the belief that these prejudices may inadvertently influence the teachers' perceptions of students' abilities.

The critical race theory suggests that institutional racism is one type of covert racism (Awokoya & Clark, 2008). According to the theory, institutional racism impacts the lives of people of color in that it normalizes whiteness, which ultimately devalues people of color. The devaluing of people of color is centered on the idea that racism is at the core of social structures, including educational settings. According to Zom (2018), The critical race theory was extended in an attempt to explain the achievement gaps in “color students” and their White peers. Ultimately, it was argued that color blindness systematically underserved students of color and that learning problems are a result of being victimized through White supremacy.

### **Research Questions**

The study explored teachers' race, teachers' level of color blindness and student race; specific to what teachers believe is hindering a student's functioning and to what level of intervention the teachers recommend for students with academic or behavioral difficulties. The following research questions were used to guide this study:

- 1) Do teacher race, teacher level of color blindness, teacher participation in cultural awareness trainings, or student race influence teacher perceptions related to students' behavioral and/or academic difficulties?

2) Do teacher race, teacher level of color blindness, teacher participation in cultural awareness trainings, or student race influence the type of academic or behavioral intervention a teacher recommends?

### **Research Hypotheses**

**H<sub>1</sub>:** White teachers that differ from the students' race and who score high on the color blindness scale and will perceive minority students as engaging in problematic behaviors.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Teachers with race that differ from the students' race and who score high on the color blindness scale will be more likely to refer minority students to special education for an evaluation due to a suspected Specific Learning Disability (SLD) or an Emotional Disturbance (ED).

### **Definition of Terms**

In order to facilitate the purpose of this study, terms were defined as follows:

*At-risk* is a term used to identify students that are deemed as being likely to fail at a particular subject and/or school, in general (O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006).

*Color blindness* is a racial attitude that refers to the belief that race should not and does not matter (Neville et al., 2000).

*Cultural Competency* is "The capacity to function effectively in cultural settings other than one's own. This usually involves a recognition of the diversity both between and within cultures, a capacity for cultural self-assessment, and a willingness to adapt personal behaviors and practices," (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.)

*Emotional Disturbance* is a special education eligibility condition in which a child exhibits one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects their educational performance:

- A. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors
- B. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers
- C. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances
- D. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
- E. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act [IDEA], 2004, A-7).

*Institutional Racism* is a form of racism embedded as normal practice within society or organizations, such as education (Turner, 2006).

*Racism* is an enduring, salient aspect of social and global structures that is distinct from prejudice (Jones, 1997).

*Response to Intervention (RTI)* is “a systematic and data-based method for identifying, defining, and resolving students' academic and/or behavioral difficulties” (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005, p. 2).

*Special Education Evaluation* is the method, or process, of evaluating students with suspected disabilities to determine special education eligibility (Konrad, 2008).

*Specific Learning Disability:*

A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. It does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage (IDEA, 2004, Sec. 300.8 (c) (10)).

CHAPTER II  
LITERATURE REVIEW

**Special Education**

The public schooling system is composed of students from diverse backgrounds with diverse needs. Despite the diversity within the system, disproportionality within the special education programming exists, and this is problematic for racial minorities. In an effort to minimize discrimination by including all students within the public school setting, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 was developed to ensure students with disabilities enrolled in public school settings were provided a free and appropriate public education (FAPE; Jacob et al., 2011; Sullivan & Bal, 2013). In 1990, this act was reauthorized and termed the IDEA; the most current policy is referred to as the IDEIA of 2004 (IDEA, 2004; Sullivan & Castro-Villarreal, 2013). Under the IDEA, youth and children ages 3 through 21 years are provided FAPE in the least restrictive environment and state monitoring of disproportionality (Sullivan & Bal, 2013).

Federal law, specifically the IDEA, recognizes and defines 13 special education disability eligibilities: Orthopedic Impairment (OI), Other Health Impairment (OHI), Auditory Impairment (AI), Visual Impairment (VI), Deaf-Blindness (DB), Intellectual Disability (ID), Emotional Disturbance (ED), Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Speech Impairment (SI), Autism (AU), Developmental Delay (DD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and Non-Categorical Early Childhood (NCEC). Of the 13 eligibilities, the most frequently identified, or high incidence

disabilities, include OHI, ID, ED, SLD and SI (Eagleton, 2018; Sullivan & Bal, 2013). The National Center for Education Statistics (2018) found that 33.6% of students were served in SLD, 20% for SI, 14% for OHI 10% for AU, 6% for ID, and 5% for ED.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2019), nearly 7 million students, ages 3 to 21 years, were receiving special education services during the 2017-2018 school year. At that time, 233,866 were identified with a SLD, 1,018,462 with a SI, 970,002 with an OHI 616,234 with AU, 46,522 with an ID and 334,977 with an ED. White people represented 2,886,362, Hispanic/Latinx represented 1,643,436, and Black people or African Americans represented 1,113,944 of the total. Despite active monitoring at the state and local levels, racial disproportionality in special education has been an issue for more than four decades (Bollmer et al., 2013). Research consistently supports its existence among the high-incidence disabilities, specifically among ID, ED, and SLD (Sullivan & Bal, 2013).

Cullinan and Kaufman (2005) and Osher et al. (2004) called for the need for more research related to the race disproportionality, specific to students identified with an ED. Sullivan and Bal (2013) found that Black and Native American students were more likely to be identified with a disability compared to White students. Specifically, Black students were more likely to be identified ED and ID, and Native Americans are more likely to be identified as SLD and ID. Through years of research dedicated to understanding the concept of disproportionality, Hibel et al. (2010) and Shifrer et al. (2011) reported that social differences rather than learning problems may actually create the disproportionality because of the influence of nonacademic factors in risk of identification. Nonacademic factors may include individual psychosocial



factors, such as motivation and self-regulation, and family factors, such as level of familial and personal involvement, and attitude toward education. While racial disproportionality may be more pronounced in some states, disproportionality exists across the country (Bollmer et al., 2013).

Disproportionality is addressed at the state level through active monitoring of what are called “indicators” (Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, 2010). In order to address the indicators, states must monitor district rates in special education and therefore, a threshold was developed to determine whether districts meet the measure of racial/ethnic disproportionality. As a result of active monitoring and research, causes of disproportionality were identified.

According to the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, one of the common causes includes poor and racial/ethnic minority students viewed as not being “ready” for school. Continuous professional development related to culturally responsive school environments was identified as the primary remedy.

Disproportionality within the special education population is of great concern because it suggests that inequality within the educational system exists. Another concern is the concept of least restrictive environment, or a student’s educational placement setting. Specifically, schools are to ensure that students with disabilities participate in classrooms with nondisabled peers as much as possible, or the least restrictive environment (Hicks-Monroe, 2011). Parrish (2002) observed that Black students were likely to be placed in the most restrictive settings and also more likely than white students to be referred to the juvenile justice system. That is, in addition to an increased chance of being identified as a minority student with a high incident disability,

Black students are also likely to receive more restrictive placements. A more restrictive placement may mean either a specialized academic classroom, behavior classroom, or alternative placement setting. While all students with disabilities continue to be disciplined according to the school's code of conduct, the disciplinary gap indicates that Black students are three times more likely to be suspended than white students (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). The National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI; 2009) developed a database using data collected from the Office for Civil Rights and reported that in Texas, of the students with and without disabilities, 15% of Black students were at risk for suspension, whereas 3% of White students, and 7% of Hispanic students were at-risk for suspension. Regarding students with disabilities, 25% of Black students were at-risk for suspension, whereas 8% of White students, and 13% of Hispanic students were at-risk for suspension (NBCDI, 2009). In Dallas, TX, 11,295 Black students with and without disabilities received out of school suspensions, whereas 675 White students and 10,495 Hispanic students received out of school suspensions. Regarding students with disabilities, 2,075 Black students received out of school suspensions, whereas 165 White students and 1,225 Hispanic students received out of school suspensions. Additionally, Black students tend to have poorer achievement outcomes in less integrated schools; however, White students' achievement outcomes do not appear impacted by the number of Black students in the school (Scott et al., 2018).

### **Teacher and Student Characteristics in Public School Settings**

Teachers play an important role in identifying students that are at-risk for school failure and in referring students for special education evaluations. Unfortunately, qualified public school

teachers are difficult to acquire for reasons such as a decline in teacher preparation enrollments, increasing student enrollments, and high teacher attrition (Carothers et al., 2019; Sutchter et al., 2016). Further, the shortage of qualified teachers in specific instructional fields, including special education is projected to continue due to the high rates of employee turnover (Carothers et al., 2019).

In addition to the teacher shortages, recent data suggest that teacher ethnicities are disproportionate with White female teachers dominating the profession (Lynskey, 2015; Sleeter, 2008). Simultaneously, students of color represent a majority of the student body in multiple states including Texas, California, New York, and Florida (Aydin et al., 2017). The demographic makeup of the teacher and student bodies in the public school system supports a mismatch in racial and cultural identities. Subsequently, cultural values and expectations that teachers bring to the classroom may not align with the students they support (Kahn et al., 2014). Unfortunately, according to Jacinto and Gershenson (2019):

Children of teachers are more than twice as likely as others to enter the teacher profession, which indicates that the racial/cultural mismatch between teachers and students is unlikely to improve unless more people of color are brought into the teaching profession. (p.41)

Based on the aforementioned projection and coupled with the theory that daughters of Black and Hispanic mothers are twice as likely to enter the field of teaching if their mother is a teacher, and that White teachers dominate the field, it is anticipated that the shortage will be predominately the Black male teachers.

## **Cultural Competency**

Provided that students' racial and ethnic backgrounds do not typically align with their classroom teachers' racial or ethnic background, creating culturally inclusive environments is an essential component of the school and classroom settings. Culturally inclusive teachers not only create inclusive environments, but are in a better position to view and interpret students' learning styles, behaviors, and tend to hold higher expectations of students and parents (Kahn et al., 2014). Conversely, teachers who are not culturally competent create exclusive learning environments, and are more likely to hold some students and parents to low expectations, implement biased assessments, and misinterpret students' needs. Dee and Henkin (2002) developed a study that assessed dispositions of cultural diversity using a sample population of pre-service teachers ( $N = 150$ ). Cultural diversity was defined as, "perceived deviations from White, middle-class, monolingual backgrounds" (Dee & Henkin, 2002, p.25). When compared to the pre-service general education teachers, pre-service special education teachers reported lower comfort levels with cultural diversity.

Ensuring teachers are culturally competent and equipped to support their students through a culturally responsive pedagogy is typically a process that extends beyond attending a multicultural course (Kahn et al., 2014). Culturally responsive pedagogy is an area highly researched with recent studies suggesting that cultural competence is an ongoing and thoughtful process that requires teachers to reflect on their own positionality (Howard, 2003). This includes reflecting on their own personal, professional, and educational experiences (Kahn et al., 2014).

The task of successfully training culturally competent teachers is widely debated, with varying opinions between researchers. While some researchers recommend preparing pre-service teachers through multiple multicultural education courses, other researchers recommend cross-cultural field experiences for preservice teachers (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006). Ultimately, it is the beliefs of the teachers that needs to be examined since their beliefs will influence responsiveness to the cultural competency courses and experiences.

According to Henfield and Washington (2012), White teachers who integrate cultural awareness into their classrooms contribute to the success of Black students by confronting institutional and systemic practices “which disempower students of color” (p. 149). Therefore, White teachers are urged to incorporate an orientation towards social activism within their classrooms in an effort to rid color blindness from the education systems. One method of ridding the deficit thinking related to the skills of Black children is to help White teachers understand their racial privileges. This does not come without trepidation, however, as biases are not always acknowledged, especially by White teachers who have a difficult time understanding how ‘whiteness’ contributes to the undermining of minority students (Leonardo, 2002).

### **Parent-Student-Teacher Relationships**

#### **Parent-Student Relationships**

Young children enter the school setting with skills that they have acquired primarily while in their home setting. Although not all children enter the school setting with the same skill sets, what is deemed highly beneficial is the child’s ability to adjust and acquire new skill sets upon entering the school setting. Therefore, parental involvement in the early years is an

important component to student outcomes for children of all ages, as parental involvement contributes to school adjustment (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Thijs & Elibracht, 2012). According to Bryce et al. (2019), “When parents are directly involved with children’s school, they not only bolster academic learning, but also affirm the importance of education” (p. 493).

When parents are involved in their children’s education, children tend to perform better on academic assessments, and they have more positive feelings about school (Dearing et al., 2008). While parental involvement is recognized as being beneficial, research acknowledges that various levels of parental involvement do exist. According to Epstein (2001), six types of parenting involvement exist: parenting, communication, volunteering, home tutoring, involvement in decision making, and collaboration with the community. With similarities likened to Urie Brofenbrenner’s process, person, context and time model, Epstein recognized the overlapping of influences and necessity for optimal development of children (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Parental involvement is influenced by multiple factors including, but not limited to, parental beliefs and perceptions (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). For example, parents may believe that their only obligation is to ensure their children attend school, and therefore, their level of involvement is limited to enrolling their children and securing transportation. For other parents, parental involvement may be influenced by the belief that they are unable to help their child due to either time constraints, beliefs related to their own intellectual abilities, or beliefs related to the child’s abilities. Regardless of the parents’ reasoning for their level of involvement, it has been

reported that parental level of education does influence parental involvement (Green et al., 2007).

In addition to parental involvement, the parent and teacher relationship is one of significant importance as it also influences school adjustment and learning outcomes. Further, teachers' perceptions of parent involvement are key predictors of student academic achievement (Herman & Reinke, 2017).

### **Parent-Teacher Relationships**

The parent-teacher relationship is a direct way for children to connect their home and school experiences. Interestingly, teacher perceptions of parental involvement are oftentimes influenced by the teacher's perceptions of the student (Herman & Reinke, 2017). That is, a student making expected progress both academically and behaviorally, is more likely to have a teacher who develops positive perceptions of the parent(s). Conversely, for a student with academic and behavioral difficulties, the teacher is more likely to develop negative perceptions of the parent(s). In either scenario, the parent-teacher relationship impacts the relationship between teachers and students and can help alleviate any student-teacher conflicts that may arise (Thijs & Elibracht, 2012; Wyrick & Rudasill, 2009). Despite the relationship's ability to establish and maintain connectedness, the parent-teacher relationship is often influenced by teacher bias and ethnicity (Herman & Reinke, 2017).

Parental involvement can be a sensitive topic for some parents and for multiple reasons. Some parents may feel regret for their inability to participate in school related events due to their own job requirements, whereas some parents may simply feel misunderstood by the teacher and

school and therefore choose to refrain from participating. Parental involvement, however, is necessary for students with serious academic and behavioral difficulties as their involvement aids in averting long-term negative student outcomes (Wagner et al., 2005). Pathways that hinder involvement exist, such as teacher and staff biases and negative perceptions (Herman & Reinke, 2017). Herman and Reinke reported that for children with academic or behavioral difficulties, and those who are culturally diverse from the majority of their school's population, parental involvement decreases.

### **Student-Teacher Relationships**

The student-teacher relationship within the public education setting is critical to student learning outcomes and success, and this is especially true during early childhood (Zimmerman, 2018). For young children, the classroom environment can prove challenging due to the increase in demands, such as having to sit for a longer period of time and having to engage in academic tasks (Bryce et al., 2019). Given the increase in demands and their underdeveloped cognitive capacity and social skills, students tend to experience elevated levels of conflict with their teachers from kindergarten through the fifth grade.

A positive student-teacher relationship that includes encouragement is associated with engaged students who are better able to learn how to be self-directed learners (Pianta et al., 1995). A negative student-teacher relationship that includes emotional disconnectedness is associated with poor student behavioral engagement in the classroom setting. Unfortunately, the emotional disconnectedness is often not within the student's control, and thus, researchers have



studied factors that contribute to this relationship including teachers' efficacy and students' grade level (Tournaki & Podell, 2005).

The student-teacher relationship is said to be closely related to the teachers' sense of efficacy, or the teachers' belief in their teaching skills (Andreou & Rapti, 2010). Andreou and Rapti examined the relationship between years of experience teaching and behavior problems in the classroom and found that experienced teachers tend to look to external factors, including the educational system, to explain persistently misbehaved students in an effort to protect their sense of efficacy. Another study by Phillips and Downer (2017) found that years of teaching experience was significant for reporting of behavior problems when taking the adult to student ratio into consideration, with larger classes being more problematic. This means that years of experience in teaching do not necessarily contribute to student success, rather the years of experience changes how the behaviors are perceived by the teacher.

During the elementary years, teachers seem to attribute students' behavior problems to external factors, or forces outside of the students' control, including parental level of education and familial factors (Andreou & Rapti, 2010). A teacher who believes the behaviors are outside of the student's control is more likely to seek support for the student rather than punishment. Conversely, a teacher who attributes behaviors to factors within the student's control is more likely to implement harsher disciplinary measures.

According to O'Connor and Fernandez (2006), schools also socially construct disabilities through institutional processes (e.g., teacher biases, school culture), by determining who is more likely to be deemed as disabled. That is, it is not poverty, but "the normative culture of school

that places poor children at risk by privileging the developmental expressions more likely to be nurtured among white middle class children” (O’Connor & Fernandez, pp. 8-9).

### **Teacher Referral of Students**

Educational settings are responsible for not only serving students with special needs, but identifying those students deemed at-risk, or rather students who may potentially require services that only special education can provide due to a suspected educational disability. Given that teachers interact with their students each school day, it is reasonable to assume that teachers are at the frontline of their students’ academic and behavioral interventions and are therefore accountable for referring students for additional academic or behavior support when deemed necessary. Subsequently, if teachers are held accountable for identifying students who may have an unidentified educational disability, then accurate interpretation of students’ academic and behavioral progress by teachers is essential. Various referral methods by which educational settings and teachers abide exist within the educational setting.

In many public school districts, when teachers have ongoing concerns about a general education student, they will generally refer them to the school’s RtI committee. RtI is a three-tiered model that is "a systematic and data-based method for identifying, defining, and resolving students' academic and/or behavioral difficulties” (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005, p. 2). The RtI committee reviews the student’s data and then implements interventions to support goals aligned with the area(s) of concern.

To ensure quality, the RtI is systematic in its approach and involves a multi-tiered process to providing services and interventions to struggling students at an increasing level of

intensity (Canter, 2006). The RtI model consists of two main components: the systematic and the data-based activities that together establish the framework for the model's three tiers (Brown-Chidsey & Seege, 2005). The three tiers have been defined as follows: tier one is defined as universal, meaning it includes all of the students within the general curriculum; tier two is targeted in its curriculum and is directed to the students who require a more intense approach to their instruction; and tier three includes intensive, targeted interventions and is comprised of the students from tier two who have failed to respond to the evidence-based strategies. Not all students receiving tier three interventions will receive an evaluation for special education services, and likewise, not all students presenting with academic or behavioral challenges will receive interventions.

Data collection by teachers is completed through obtaining informal data, which includes teacher observations, work samples, and assessments such as state, district, and in-class tests. Although critical to the data collection process, informal measures are highly influenced by teacher perceptions. In fact, current empirical data suggests that racial biases influence teachers' perceptions of student work and behaviors (Glock, 2017). Therefore, why a student is referred to RtI and what level of intervention is recommended may be influenced by biases in teacher perceptions.

In some instances, teachers have lower expectations and evaluate ethnic minority students more negatively (Glock et al., 2019). According to the inter-informant discrepancies in ratings of behavior problems research re-reported by Lau et al. (2004), using the parent, teacher, and self-reports of the Achenbach (1991) Child Behavior Checklist show that teachers rated Black

students as having more problems in the areas of attention problems, aggression, and delinquency scales than white students compared to the parent and self-reports. McGrady and Reynolds (2012) found that White teachers perceived Asian students more positively and Black students more negatively compared to White and Hispanic students. Similarly, when compared to minority children, White children are more likely to be provided gifted education services, and schools are more likely to medicalize the behavioral challenges of White children while criminalizing the same struggles in minority children (Ramey, 2015). Such standards are said to be related to a teacher's own biases and attitudes. Conway and Bethune (2015) reported that teachers in their sample held preconceived expectations for students in their classrooms that were based on group membership, such as race, ethnicity, and gender.

### **Color Blindness**

After the Civil War, the United States' educational system underwent a reformation and entered an era referred to as the "post racial era;" an era defined by color blind mentalities (Kreamelemeyer et al., 2016). Color blind individuals claim to "not see color" in others, thus inferring that they are not racially biased. However, research suggests that color blind individuals may actually have stronger negative attitudes towards racial minorities. Studies related to immigrants, minorities, and White teachers indicate that a majority of teachers use color blindness as a means to deal with their own personal fears related to racism (Kumar et al., 2014). Color blindness is said to be problematic as it supports discriminatory behavior; however, it must be recognized as problematic prior to being reversed (Boutte et al., 2011). In addition to discussing color blindness, Boutte et al. discussed two types of racism that are related to color

blindness and that can be damaging regardless of whether they are intentional or unintentional: institutional racism and individual racism. Both types of racism influence judgement and influence a teacher's level of color blindness, which may be especially problematic for the minority student population in an educational setting.

Teacher expectations are powerful contributors to the success of students, and unfortunately, the interpersonal judgements of teachers may unconsciously determine the learning outcomes for the majority and minority student populations (Glock et al. 2019). Research suggests that the interpersonal judgements, or stereotypes and attitudes including explicit and implicit racial biases, do influence how teachers perceive student behaviors (Zimmerman, 2018). Explicit biases are the conscious beliefs one holds whereas implicit biases are the unconscious beliefs one holds (Conway & Bethune, 2015).

Years of research aimed to understand the discrepancy that exists between teachers' self-reports versus their observable behaviors has been conducted. Glock et al. (2019) used the statement from Festinger's 1957 theory of cognitive dissonance, "people strive to resolve discrepancies in thinking and behavior" (p. 626), in an effort to aid in understanding the discrepancy. Conway and Bethune (2015) found a discrepancy between the way teachers say they feel and how they actually feel. In measuring the explicit and implicit biases of teachers and their impact on teaching, Glock et al. (2019) were able to support previous research in concluding that implicit attitudes are of particular relevance in predicting teacher behaviors and their responses regarding students' learning and behaviors. Using correlation analyses, they found that teachers from more culturally diverse schools only held less negative implicit attitudes

and were only more enthusiastic about teaching minority students when compared to teachers from less culturally diverse schools. A study led by Kumar et al. (2015) explored the relationship between the implicit biases and explicit attitudes towards the students in their classrooms and found that teachers' classroom behavior results from a combination of conscious and unconscious processes.

Implicit biases are socially constructed, and they influence how teachers interpret the behaviors of others and situations within the context of their classroom. Although not always aware of their biases, teachers' ways of perceiving others and situations can influence instructional practices. While most educational settings take place in a traditional face-to-face setting, research has been conducted to explore the relationship between first names and racial or ethnic implicit biases in an online instructional forum. Using the Brief Implicit Attitudes Test (BIAT), researchers used three categories of stereotypical names (e.g., Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American) to measure 147 online instructors' implicit responses and found a relationship between implicit bias and student names (Conaway & Bethune, 2015). Compared to Caucasian names, teachers reported a stronger implicit bias against African American names. This finding suggests that teachers' observable behaviors may not align with how they genuinely perceive a student.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study explored early childhood teachers' race, teachers' level of color blindness, and student race; specific to what teachers believe is hindering a student's functioning and to what level of intervention the teachers recommend for students with academic or behavioral difficulties. The following research questions were used to guide study: 1) Do teacher race, teacher level of color blindness, teacher participation in cultural awareness training, or student race influence teachers' perceptions related to students' behavioral and/or academic difficulties? and 2) Do teacher race, teacher level of color blindness, teacher participation in cultural awareness training, or student race influence the type of academic or behavioral intervention a teacher recommends?

#### **Participant Population**

##### **Protection of Human Subjects**

This study complied with the policies and procedures outlined by the Texas Woman's University (TWU) research guidelines. An expedited application was submitted to and approved by the TWU Institutional Review Board (IRB). Expedited applications are reserved for studies that involve no more than minimal risk, meaning that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations of tests.

An informed consent (see Appendix A) was presented to participants prior to their completion of the survey. The informed consent indicated to participants that by completing the survey, they were agreeing to participate. It stated that participation was voluntary and that participants may discontinue participation at any time and without penalty. Potential risks were provided and included loss of confidentiality, loss of time, and emotional discomfort.

### **Participants**

Participants consisted of 97 general education teachers from urban and rural areas, ages 18+. Although participants initially included only teachers in Texas, it was expanded to include teachers within the United States in order to obtain the required number of participants. There were no exclusions based on teacher sex or teacher race. The teacher participants ranged in age from 20 years to 60 years ( $M = 33.4$ ,  $SD = 9.9$ ). Approximately two-thirds of the participants were female (71%), and a majority were White/Caucasian (76%) with the remaining 24% coded as “persons of color (POC).” The fact that males and POC were underrepresented in the sample may be problematic; however, this representation supports the research showing teacher ethnicities are disproportionate with White and female teachers dominating the profession (Lynskey, 2015; Sleeter, 2008).

All participants identified as a general education teacher of kindergarten through third grade in a public-school setting (including magnet and charter schools). A little over one quarter of the participants reported themselves as kindergarten teachers (27%). First grade teachers made up the smallest percentage of the sample (9%), second grade teachers made up 14%, and one-half were third grade teachers (50%).



Teaching experience ranged from 1 year to 34 years ( $M = 8.0$ ,  $SD = 6.4$ ). Descriptive statistics for the participants' demographic variables including gender, race, and grade level teaching are displayed in Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the participants' demographic variables including teacher age and teaching experience are displayed in Table 2.

**Table 1**

*Frequencies and Percentage for the Demographic Variables of Teacher*

Demographic Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Teacher Gender		
Female	69	71%
Male	28	30%
Teacher Race		
Person of Color	23	24%
White	74	76%
Grade Level Teaching		
Kindergarten	26	27%
First Grade	9	9%
Second Grade	14	14%
Third Grade	48	50%

**Table 2**

*Means and Standard Deviations for Teacher Age and Years of Teaching Experience*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Teacher Age	33.4	9.9	20	60
Teaching Experience	8.0	6.5	1	34

Participants were recruited using Prolific. Prolific is an online survey site developed specifically for academic research. The recruitment process began by creating a Prolific account specific to the research project. A script outlining the research topic as well as informed consent were then posted on Prolific. Participants choosing to participate were instructed to click on a link to the survey; indicating their consent to participate (see Appendix B). The online survey was housed in PsychData. After completing the survey, participants had the option to request an executive summary of the results by clicking on a link at the end of the survey. That link then took them to a separate survey also housed on PsychData, where they could enter their email address. They were assured that the two surveys were not linked, and therefore, their contact information would not be linked to their answers. At the end of the original survey, there was also a survey completion link (provided by Prolific), which linked them back to Prolific's website for survey completion verification and compensation. Participants were compensated approximately \$3.00 upon completion of the survey. Payment was rendered by Prolific, and the amount was determined by Prolific's payment rules and was based on the estimated amount of time it takes to complete the survey.

## **Materials**

### **Teacher Demographic Questionnaire**

The teacher demographic questionnaire was developed specifically for this study. It included questions about the participant's age, gender, race, length of time teaching, number of cultural diversity trainings completed, and self-reported level of understanding of the special education process specific to the eligibilities of a SLD and an ED (see Appendix C).

## **Vignettes**

Vignettes with visual cues describing a student's academic and behavioral functioning in a classroom setting were developed specifically for this study. A total of eight vignettes, each including a picture of a student and name, were presented in a random order to participants. The pictures of students were stock photos and included children similar in age. The following were depicted in the vignettes: Black male with an "ethnic" name and description, Black male with a "mainstream" name and description, Black female with an "ethnic" name, Black female with a "mainstream" name, White male with an "old-fashioned" name, White male with a "modern" name, White male with an "old-fashioned" name, and a White male with a "modern" name. Each vignette included a description of the child's learning characteristics and classroom behaviors. Severity of behavior and academic struggles were counterbalanced across gender and race. Participants were asked how they perceived the child's level of functioning (e.g., difficulties due to underdeveloped language skills, behavioral challenges, cognitive differences, or academic difficulties) and what they recommended as the next line of intervention (e.g., maintain in general education, refer to RtI, or refer to special education; see Appendix D).

## **Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale**

The Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS; Neville et al., 2000) is a 20-item, self-report scale that is designed to measure the extent to which people believe that race should not and does not matter. Using a 6-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with each statement. The scale includes three factors related to racial issues: Unawareness of Racial Privilege, Institutional Discrimination, and Blatant Racial

Issues. The total score is comprised of all three factors and was used for the purpose of this study. Higher scores on the total score are interpreted to suggest greater levels of color blindness or unawareness (Neville et al., 2000; see Appendix E).

### **Procedures**

In order to begin the study, approval from the IRB for Human Subjects of the TWU was obtained. To aid in data collection, all material pertaining to the research project (i.e., teacher demographic survey, rating scale, student vignettes) was housed in PsychData. When participants clicked on the link from the Prolific site, they were sent directly to the online survey, with the related material, stored in PsychData. Upon proving completion of the survey (a completion link was provided by Prolific linking participants back to the Prolific site from PsychData), participants received a monetary compensation. The amount of monetary compensation was determined by Prolific using their payment rules and based on the amount of time it took them to complete the survey.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS

The data were gathered from 97 participants from rural and urban areas located in the United States, and all data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Data were analyzed in order to explore teachers' race and teachers' level of color blindness, specific to the level of intervention they recommended for Black and White students with perceived academic or behavioral difficulties. To address the primary research questions, the hypotheses tested were as follows:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** White teachers that differ from the students' race and who score high on the color blindness scale will perceive minority students as engaging in problematic behaviors at a higher rate than White students.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Teachers with a race that differ from the students' race and who score high on the color blindness scale will be more likely to refer minority students to special education for an evaluation due to a suspected SLD or an ED.

#### **Preliminary Analysis**

Missing data, or missing values, can be problematic to the research (Kang, 2013). Prior to running the analyses, all of the data were assessed for missing values. After a careful review, including an item analysis, it was determined that out of the 97 surveys returned, 97 surveys were returned with 100% completion. Therefore, out of the 97 participants, 97 participants provided a response that was consistent with task expectations for each item within the survey. As a result, all of the data obtained were included in the analyses.

## Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed for the teacher experience, training, and competency variables obtained from the Teacher Demographic Questionnaire, including measures of central tendency, measures of variability, and frequencies. When asked to provide a perceived level of competency regarding their understanding of the special education process for students with suspected learning or emotional disabilities, a majority of participants endorsed feeling somewhat competent (45%) with others feeling very competent (30%), and only one participant feeling incompetent (1%). When asked on what they based their level of competency, the majority (63%) reported experience. Almost half (46%) indicated specific training, and 36% mentioned their education. A small minority (9%) indicated that their perception of competence was based on lack of experience or training, and two teachers mentioned personal experiences, such as having a family member who had gone through the process. Percentages for the demographic variables of the teachers are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics Frequencies and Percentages for Competency Levels of Teachers*

Demographic Variable	<i>N</i>	%
Competency Level		
Incompetent	1	1%
Not very Competent	12	12%
Not sure	11	11%
Somewhat Competent	44	45%
Very Competent	29	30%
Basis for Competency Level		
Experience	61	63%
	30	

Training	45	46%
Education	35	36%
Lack of experience or training	9	9%

The continuous demographic variables, cultural diversity training sessions for the 2019-2020 school year and the number of diversity training sessions the district or administrator required them to complete for the 2019-2020, were computed using means and standard deviations. The number of cultural diversity training sessions completed for the school year ranged from 0 to 12 ( $M = 1.49, SD = 1.63$ ). The number of cultural diversity training sessions the district or administrator required them to complete ranged from 0 to 10 ( $M = 1.22, SD = 1.56$ ). The descriptive statistics for these continuous demographic variables are displayed in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Means and Standard Deviations for the Cultural Diversity Trainings*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Cultural Diversity Trainings in 2019-2020	1.5	1.6	0	12
Cultural Diversity Trainings required	1.2	1.6	0	10

## Main Analyses

### Color Blindness Total Score and Teacher Race

The CoBRAS Total score ( $n = 97$ ) ranged from 20 to 104 ( $M = 50.11, SD = 21.50$ ). An independent samples  $t$ -test was conducted to compare the total score as the dependent variable

and teacher race as the independent variable. White teachers reported higher CoBRAS scores ( $M = 52.37$ ,  $SD = 22.16$ ) compared to teachers of color ( $M = 41.95$ ;  $SD = 16.94$ ), and the difference was statistically significant,  $t(40.87) = 2.32$ ,  $p = .03$ .

### ***Teacher Perceptions of Students' Academic and Behavioral Functioning***

Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the demographic variables included in the eight student vignettes. The eight vignettes included two Black males, one with an “ethnic” name and one with a “mainstream” name; two Black females, one with an “ethnic” name and one with a “mainstream” name; two White males, one with a “modern” name and one with an “old-fashioned” name; and two White females, one with a “modern” name and one with an “old-fashioned” name. Data were collapsed across name variations, and the teachers’ perceptions of what was hindering the students functioning and are presented in Table 5.

When participants were asked to endorse what they believed was hindering the student’s functioning, they selected academic difficulties most often for Black males (41%) and Black females (37%). About one third also indicated that cognitive differences could be the reason (29% and 30%, respectively). On the other hand, for the White males and females, a majority of participants endorsed that behavioral challenges were believed to be hindering their functioning (45% and 47%, respectively). Almost half (46%) also believed that adverse home conditions could be hindering the functioning of the White female students.

Data were collapsed across name variations and the teacher’s recommended level of intervention based on the student’s perceived level of functioning is presented in Table 6. When asked to provide their recommendation for general education versus intervention or referral, a



majority of participants (45%) recommended referring the Black male students to special education for an evaluation due to a suspected SLD. Black female students were recommended either to remain in general education with Tier 1 or Tier 2 intervention (29%) or referred to special education due to a suspected SLD (29%). For the White students, a majority of participants recommended referring to special education for an evaluation due to a suspected ED (56% for White males and 39% for White females). The percentages for each student vignette are reported in Table 7.

**Table 5**

*Teacher Perceptions of What is Hindering Student's Functioning; Collapsed Across Name Variations*

Variable	%
<b>Black Males</b>	
What do you believe is hindering the student's functioning?	
Adverse home conditions	15%
Behavioral challenges	15%
Cognitive differences	29%
Academic difficulties	41%
<b>Black Females</b>	
What do you believe is hindering the student's functioning?	
Adverse home conditions	17%
Behavioral challenges	16%
Cognitive differences	30%
Academic difficulties	37%
<b>White Males</b>	
What do you believe is hindering the student's functioning?	
Adverse home conditions	26%
Behavioral challenges	45%
Cognitive differences	16%
Academic difficulties	12%

White Females

What do you believe is hindering the student's functioning?

Adverse home conditions	46%
Behavioral challenges	47%
Cognitive differences	18%
Academic difficulties	12%

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**Table 6**

*Teachers' Recommended Level of Intervention; Collapsed Across Name Variations*

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Variable	%
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Black Males

Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning:

Remain in Gen Ed, Tier 1 or 2	24%
Refer to RTI/Tier 3	19%
Refer to Special Education/SLD	45%
Refer to Special Education/ED	11%

Black Females

Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning:

Remain in Gen Ed, Tier 1 or 2	29%
Refer to RTI/Tier 3	25%
Refer to Special Education/SLD	29%
Refer to Special Education/ED	16%

White Males

Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning:

Remain in Gen Ed, Tier 1 or 2	10%
Refer to RTI, Tier 3	16%
Refer to Special Education/SLD	18%
Refer to Special Education/ED	56%

White Females

Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning:

Remain in Gen Ed, Tier 1 or 2	17%
Refer to RTI, Tier 3	22%
Refer to Special Education/SLD	22%

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Refer to Special Education/ED	39%
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**Table 7**

*Teacher Perceptions and Recommendations for Each Student Vignette*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Black Male, Ethnic name</b>		
What do you believe is hindering the student's functioning?		
Adverse living conditions	24	30%
Behavioral challenges	20	21%
Cognitive differences	18	29%
Academic difficulties	35	36%
Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning:		
Remain in Gen Ed, Tier 1 or 2	31	32%
Refer to RTI, Tier 3	22	23%
Refer to Special Education/SLD	29	30%
Refer to special Education/ED	15	16%
<b>Black Male, Mainstream Name</b>		
What do you believe is hindering the student's functioning?		
Adverse living conditions	6	6%
Behavioral challenges	9	9%
Cognitive differences	38	39%
Academic difficulties	44	45%
Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning:		
Remain in Gen Ed, Tier 1 or 2	16	17%
Refer to RTI, Tier 3	15	16%
Refer to Special Education/SLD	59	61%
Refer to special education/ED	7	7%
<b>White Male, Old-Fashion Name</b>		
What do you believe is hindering the student's functioning?		
Adverse living conditions	22	23%
Behavioral challenges	55	57%
Cognitive differences	15	16%
Academic difficulties	5	5%

Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning:

Remain in Gen Ed, Tier 1 or 2	7	7%
Refer to RTI, Tier 3	19	20%
Refer to Special Education/SLD	18	19%
Refer to special education/ED	53	55%

White Male, Modern Name

What do you believe is hindering the student's functioning?

Adverse living conditions	28	30%
Behavioral challenges	33	34%
Cognitive differences	17	18%
Academic difficulties	19	20%

Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning:

Remain in Gen Ed, Tier 1 or 2	12	12%
Refer to RTI, Tier 3	13	13%
Refer to Special Education/SLD	17	18%
Refer to special education/ED	55	57%

Black Female, Ethnic Name

What do you believe is hindering the student's functioning?

Adverse living conditions	7	7%
Behavioral challenges	12	12%
Cognitive differences	36	37%
Academic difficulties	42	43%

Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning:

Remain in Gen Ed, Tier 1 or 2	36	37%
Refer to RTI, Tier 3	20	21%
Refer to Special Education/SLD	32	33%
Refer to special education/ED	9	9%

Black Female, Mainstream Name

What do you believe is hindering the student's functioning?

Adverse living conditions	26	27%
Behavioral challenges	19	20%
Cognitive differences	22	23%
Academic difficulties	30	31%

Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning:

Remain in Gen Ed, Tier 1 or 2	21	22%
Refer to RTI, Tier 3	28	29%
Refer to Special Education/SLD	25	26%
Refer to special education/ED	23	24%

White Female, Old-Fashion Name

What do you believe is hindering the student's functioning?

Adverse living conditions	34	35%
Behavioral challenges	37	38%
Cognitive differences	18	19%
Academic difficulties	8	8%

Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning:

Remain in Gen Ed, Tier 1 or 2	26	27%
Refer to RTI, Tier 3	17	18%
Refer to Special Education/SLD	20	21%
Refer to special education/ED	34	35%

White Female, Modern Name

What do you believe is hindering the student's functioning?

Adverse living conditions	9	9%
Behavioral challenges	55	57%
Cognitive differences	17	18%
Academic difficulties	16	17%

Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning:

Remain in Gen Ed, Tier 1 or 2	7	7%
Refer to RTI, Tier 3	25	26%
Refer to Special Education/SLD	23	24%
Refer to special education/ED	42	43%

**Relationship Between Teacher Race, Teacher Color Blind Total Score, Student Race, and Teacher Perceptions and Recommendations**

Hypothesis 1 predicted that teachers with race that differ from the students' race, and who score high on the color blindness scale will perceive minority students as engaging in problematic behaviors at a higher rate than white students. Hypothesis 2 predicted that teachers

with race that differ from the students' race and who score high on the color blindness scale will be more likely to refer minority students to special education for an evaluation. These hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression and logistic regression analyses.

A simple linear regression was run in order to further analyze the relationship between the two dependent variables, teachers' perceptions of the students' level of functioning and teachers' recommended level of student intervention, and two independent variables, Color Blindness Total score and teacher race. Results from the four regression analyses were not significant ( $ps < .05$ ). The dependent variables could not be predicted by Color Blindness Total score or teacher race.

A new variable was computed for the number of Black students selected as having behavioral difficulties. A multiple linear regression was run using the Black students selected as having behavioral difficulties as the dependent variable and the Color Blindness Total score and the teacher's race as independent variables. Results from the regression analysis were not significant,  $F(2, 94) = 1.28, p = .28$ , with an  $R^2 = .006$ .

A similar analysis was run using the White students selected as having behavioral difficulties as the dependent variable and the Color Blindness Total score and the teacher's race as the independent variables. Results were not significant,  $F(2, 94) = 1.09, p = .34$ , with an  $R^2 = .02$ . Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

A logistic regression analysis was conducted on each of the eight student vignettes in order to investigate whether or not students were referred to special education for an evaluation based on the teacher's race and the Color Blindness Total score. For all analyses, the -2LL value

for the model was lower than the initial -2LL model, suggesting an accurate prediction, and all models demonstrated a good fit ( $ps > .05$ ).

For the Black male with an “ethnic” name, less than one half of participants (46%) referred this student to special education for an evaluation. Results were significant, and teacher race and Color Blindness Total score did predict the referral of this student to special education for an evaluation,  $X^2(2, n = 97) = 6.24, p = .04, R^2_{CS} = .046$ . Specifically, the predictor variable, teacher race was found to be a significant predictor: Wald = 4.11,  $p = .04$ ,  $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 2.93$ , meaning that teachers of color were 2.93 times more likely to refer this student to special education compared to white teachers.

For the Black male with a “mainstream” name, a majority of participants (68%) referred this student to special education for an evaluation. Results indicated there was not a significant association between teacher race, Color Blindness Total score, and the referral of this student to special education for an evaluation,  $X^2(2, n = 97) = 2.05, p = .36, R^2_{CS} = .02$ .

For the White male with an “old-fashioned” name, a majority of the participants (74%) referred the student to special education for an evaluation. Teacher race and Color Blindness Total score did predict this referral,  $X^2(2, n = 97) = 1.44, p = .49, R^2_{CS} = .02$ .

For the White male with a “modern” name, a majority of the participants (75%) referred this student to special education for an evaluation. Results indicated that there was a significant association between teacher race, Color Blindness Total score, and the referral of this student to special education for an evaluation,  $X^2(2, n = 97) = 9.81, p < .001, R^2_{CS} = .10$ . The predictor variable, Color Blindness Total score, was found to contribute to the overall model in that for

every one unit increase in the score, a teacher was 1.04 times more likely to refer this student to special education for an evaluation, Wald = 6.28,  $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 1.04$ ,  $p = .10$ .

For the Black female with an “ethnic” name, less than half (42%) referred the student to special education for an evaluation. Teacher race and Color Blindness Total score did not predict this referral,  $X^2(2, n = 97) = .13$ ,  $p = .94$ ,  $R^2_{CS} = .001$ .

For the Black female with a “mainstream” name, one half of participants (50%) referred the student to special education for an evaluation. Teacher race and Color Blindness Total score did not predict this referral,  $X^2(2, n = 97) = 1.48$ ,  $p = .48$ ,  $R^2_{CS} = .02$ .

For the White female with an “old-fashioned” name, a majority (56%) referred the student to special education for an evaluation. Teacher race and Color Blindness Total score did not predict this referral,  $X^2(2, n = 97) = .71$ ,  $p = .70$ ,  $R^2_{CS} = .007$ .

For the White female with a “modern” name, a majority (67%) referred the student to special education for an evaluation. Teacher race and Color Blindness Total score did not predict this referral,  $X^2(2, n = 97) = 1.77$ ,  $p = .41$ ,  $R^2_{CS} = .02$ . Thus, aside from the Black male with an “ethnic” name and the White male with a “mainstream” name, Hypothesis 2 was not fully supported.

### **Follow Up Analyses for Teacher Perceptions and Recommendations**

Based on the descriptive statistics for the vignettes collapsed across name variations (see Tables 5 and 6), select follow-up analyses including paired samples *t*-tests and MANOVAs were run to further explore the differences in teacher perceptions and recommendations.



A paired samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the difference between Black and White students endorsed by participants as presenting with adverse home/living conditions impeding their overall progress. Results show participants endorsed significantly more White students ( $M = 1.07, SD = 1.19$ ) than Black students ( $M = .80, SD = .99$ ) as having adverse home/living conditions,  $t(66), = 2.21, p = .03$ .

A paired samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the difference between Black and White students endorsed by participants as presenting with behavioral challenges impeding their overall progress. Results show participants endorsed significantly more White students ( $M = 1.83, SD = .99$ ) than Black students ( $M = .72, SD = .81$ ) as having behavioral challenges,  $t(66) = 7.40, p < .001$ .

A paired samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the difference between Black and White students endorsed by participants as presenting with cognitive differences impeding their overall progress. Participants endorsed significantly more Black students ( $M = 1.33, SD = 1.02$ ) than White students ( $M = .72, SD = .84$ ) as having cognitive differences,  $t(66) = 4.24, p < .001$ .

A paired samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the difference between Black and White students endorsed by participants as presenting with academic difficulties impeding their overall progress. Participants endorsed significantly more Black students ( $M = 1.15, SD = 1.02$ ) than White students ( $M = .37, SD = .52$ ) as having academic difficulties,  $t(66) = 5.93, p < .001$ .

A paired samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the difference between Black and White students referred by participants for an evaluation due to a suspected SLD. Participants

referred significantly more Black students ( $M = 1.50, SD = 1.03$ ) based on a suspected SLD compared to White students ( $M = .80, SD = .90$ ),  $t(96) = 5.07, p < .001$ .

A paired samples  $t$ -test was conducted to compare the difference between Black and White students referred by participants for an evaluation due to an ED. Participants referred significantly more White students ( $M = 1.90, SD = 1.23$ ) based on a suspected ED compared to Black students ( $M = .56, SD = .83$ ),  $t(96) = 10.43, p < .001$ .

Separate variables were computed for the number of Black students and White students endorsed as presenting with adverse home/living conditions, behavioral challenges, cognitive differences, and academic differences. Then, a MANOVA was run in order to determine whether there was a difference in the number of Black students and White students and teachers' endorsements regarding what they believe is hindering the student's functioning based on the teacher's race. The number of Black students endorsed as presenting with adverse home/living conditions was significantly impacted by teacher race  $F(6, 60) = 5.91, p = .02$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .083$ , with White teachers perceiving fewer Black students as having adverse living conditions ( $M = .65, SD = .90$ ) compared to teachers of color ( $M = .133, SD = 1.11$ ) Similarly, the number of White students perceived to have adverse home/living conditions was significantly impacted by teacher race,  $F(6, 60) = 4.49, p = .04$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .07$ , with White teachers perceiving more White students to have adverse living conditions ( $M = 1.39, SD = 1.31$ ) compared to teachers of color ( $M = .82, SD = .98$ ). Additionally, the number of Black students endorsed as presenting with cognitive differences was significantly impacted by teacher race  $F(6, 60) = 4.14, p = .046$ , partial

$\eta^2=.06$ , with White teachers perceiving more Black students to have cognitive differences ( $M = 1.45$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) compared to teachers of color ( $M = .87$ ,  $SD = .92$ ).

An additional MANOVA was run in order to determine whether there was a difference in Black and White students referred to special education for an evaluation due to either a suspected SLD or an ED. The overall model was not significant,  $V = .10$   $F(4, 92) = .99$ ,  $p = .41$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .04$ .

### **Effect of Teacher Participation in Cultural Awareness Trainings**

Separate variables were computed for the number of Black students and White students, respectively recommended for referral to special education. Then, a two-way MANOVA was run in order to determine whether there was a difference in the number of Black students and White students being referred to special education based on the teacher's race and their participation in a cultural diversity training during the 2019-2020 school year. In order to include the cultural diversity training variable, their participation was recoded into a dichotomous variable (i.e., having participated in training in the past year versus not having had any training in the past year). The overall model was not significant,  $V = .90$ ,  $F(2, 92) = .10$ ,  $p = .90$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ .

## CHAPTER V

### IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study explored early childhood teachers' race, teachers' level of color blindness, student race, teacher perceptions, and the level of intervention teachers recommended for students with perceived academic or behavioral difficulties. In addition, this study collected data regarding teachers' perceived level of competency regarding their understanding of the special education process for students with suspected learning or emotional disabilities, as well as their participation in cultural diversity training/s.

Data was collected from 97 general education teachers in rural and urban districts who reported teaching in the kindergarten through third grade levels. The interest in the early childhood teacher population centered on the special education process and factors including color blindness, race, and cultural awareness training. Anderson-Irish (2013) reported that the assessment process is a factor in the racial disparity that exists in special education, which has historically resulted in African American males, primarily, being referred more often than their peers for an evaluation due to cognitive and behavioral impairments. Therefore, gauging the teachers' perceptions of understanding the special education process was deemed necessary for the current study. Overall, a majority of teachers endorsed feeling somewhat competent, with others feeling very competent, and only one teacher feeling incompetent regarding their understanding of the special education process for struggling students. Provided that the special education process is highly influenced by social and cultural factors, the current study explored teachers' participation in culturally diversity training.

According to Chao (n.d.), participation in multicultural or cultural diversity training significantly contributes to cultural competency levels, with the quantity of training mattering. Specifically, the type of training such as a workshop or course work, and the amount of training were found to enhance multicultural knowledge. When asked about cultural diversity training previously attended for the 2019-2020 school year, teacher responses varied; ranging from 0 to 12, respectively. When asked to report the number of cultural diversity training sessions the district or administrator required them to complete for the 2019-2020, teachers' responses ranged from 0 to 10, respectively. Ultimately, the amount of training teachers reported as having participated in and required by their district was inconsistent between respondents.

Quinn and Stewart (2019) found that when compared to Black Americans, White educators held different perceptions regarding racial stereotypes for intelligence and work ethic in that blacks were perceived as somewhat less intelligent than whites. The descriptive statistics for the current research supports the aforementioned findings in that they revealed that teachers perceived Black students as having cognitive and academic differences that were impeding their overall progress more frequently whereas White students were perceived by teachers as having adverse home/living conditions or behaviors that were impeding their overall progress more frequently.

To further analyze the data, we began the analyses by comparing the relationship between the White teachers and Black teachers' Color Blindness Total Score. The American Psychological Association (1997) reported that individuals cannot be color blind and that despite one's intent to refrain from engaging in biased behaviors, the underlying beliefs remain.

Consistent with the literature conducted by Neville (2000), White teachers in the current study reported higher Color Blind Total scores than the Black teacher teachers.

According to Pollock (2004), White teachers, in general, are uncomfortable acknowledging race. Therefore, the importance of measuring the teachers' color blindness was based on the research that shows unacknowledged implicit biases do exist and they influence how teachers interpret the behaviors of others and situations, specifically, within the context of their classroom. This is due to the idea that subtle forms of racism, such as color blindness, although not intentional nor blatant, perpetuate racial inequity and impact student outcomes (Soble et al., 2011). Provided the abundance of research, as well as insights from the current study, color blindness appears to remain an important factor in student outcomes.

Zimmerman (2018) found that teacher race and student race are related to teachers' evaluations of students' classroom behaviors. Hypothesis 1 predicted that White teachers who differ from the students' race, and who scored higher on the color blindness scale would perceive minority students as engaging in problematic behaviors at a higher rate than White students. Unexpectedly, results show that teacher race and level of color blindness scale did not impact perception of minority students as engaging in problematic behaviors at a higher rate than White students. This finding contradicts studies showing Black students receive more negative feedback for behaviors such as disruptive and off-task behaviors from teachers (Scott et al., 2019).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that teachers with race that differ from the students' race and who score high on the color blindness scale would be more likely to refer minority students to special

education for an evaluation. Again, an unexpected finding occurred in that results showed teacher race and level of color blindness did not impact referrals to special education for an evaluation based on student race. However, interestingly enough, a significant relationship was found between the Black boy with an “ethnic” name, teacher race, and the referral to special education. That is, teachers of color were more likely to refer this student for an evaluation. Additionally, a significant finding was found between the White male with a “mainstream” name, teachers’ level of color blindness, and the referral to special education. Specifically, the teachers’ level of color blindness increased, so did the likelihood of referring that student for an evaluation. Current findings provide evidence to support the research that shows decisions regarding special education services are dependent on student ethnicity (Baker, et al., 2015). According to a recent study completed by Teasdale et al. (2019), students are more likely to be analyzed through external factors including behavior and student characteristics rather than through the lens of instruction.

Research related to behavioral expressions and racial socialization of Black students has demonstrated that Black students with certain mannerisms and behavioral styles are perceived, in general, by teachers to be lower in academic achievement (Thomas et al., 2009). Consistent with the research, results for the teacher perceptions and levels of recommendations suggest similar findings. Specifically, results from the descriptive statistics and follow up analyses found a significant difference between teachers’ perceptions regarding White and Black students as having adverse living conditions and behaviors that were impeding their progress. Specifically, more White students were perceived as having adverse living conditions and behavior challenges

than Black students. Further, this perception of adverse living conditions was influenced by teacher race in that White teachers perceived fewer Black students and more White students as having adverse living conditions compared to teachers of color. Additionally, more White students than Black students were perceived as having behavioral challenges, although this was not influenced by teacher race. Teachers also perceived more Black students than White students as having cognitive challenges and academic difficulties impeding their progress, and the perception of cognitive challenges was impacted by teacher race in that White teachers perceived more Black students to have cognitive differences compared to teachers of color.

Scott et al. (2019) reported that Black students are more likely to be perceived as engaging in problematic behaviors or referred to special education for an evaluation due to a suspected ED. Results of the current study regarding the type of intervention the teacher endorsed based on the student's perceived functioning revealed slightly different results. Compared to White students, teachers referred more Black males to special education for an evaluation due to a suspected SLD. On the other hand, teachers referred White students to special education for an evaluation due to a suspected ED more frequently than Black students.

For years, teacher and student race have been reported as contributing factors related to student learning outcomes and achievement. The results of the current study illustrate that teachers' perceptions of student functioning and the type of intervention recommended by the teacher may be related to the teachers' color blindness level as measured by the CoBRAS Total Score, teachers' race, or student race. Although the results of this study were not as expected, they do provide current data related to the relationship between early childhood teachers' race,



student race, teachers' perceptions of students, and the level of intervention recommended for students with difficulties that are hindering their progress.

### **Implications of the Results**

Grounded using the theoretical framework and constructs of the critical race theory, which supports the belief that prejudices may inadvertently influence the teachers' perceptions of students' abilities, the current study addressed factors related to early childhood teachers' race, teachers' color blindness levels, and perceptions of student functioning, with particular interest in the referral of Black and White students to special education. The findings of this study may contribute to the evidence that the perceptions of Black and White students' classroom functioning may be altering, albeit at a slow pace, rather than supporting the evidence that Black students are more likely to be perceived as engaging in problematic behaviors or referred to special education for an evaluation due to a suspected ED (Scott et al., 2019).

While some findings of the current study do not support literature regarding teacher perceptions of student behaviors, particularly among Black males, the study did reveal significant differences in how teachers perceived the White students compared to the Black students, and for some of the results, the perceptions were impacted by teacher race. The fact that students of differing races are perceived differently continues to be an area of interest, especially for the growing student population of students of color, who are still being taught by primarily White teachers. Additionally, following up with the teachers' perceptions regarding what they perceived as hindering the students' classroom functioning. Specifically, the current study asked teachers to follow-up with their perception of the students' functioning by then endorsing what

they believed should happen as a result of the students' functioning, such as referral to special education. However, the current study did not assess for was the type of punishment that a student should receive for their perceived behaviors. Assessing for the type of punishment would be an important component to address as research has shown that teachers tend to feel more offended by Black students' behaviors, and therefore, are more likely to recommend stricter punishments (Gilliam et al., 2016). This may help to shed light on the current findings.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), in 2017 and for the first time in history, students of color composed the majority of enrollments in elementary schools. Provided that the majority of teachers are White, this mismatch in demographics continues to be problematic as research has shown that students perform academically and behaviorally better when being taught by a teacher that shares in their own culture, race, and linguistic background (Hopson, 2013). For example, Gershenon et al. (2017) reported that elementary-aged Black males taught by a Black male show a reduced likelihood of dropping out of high school. For these reasons, it is suggested that pre-service and certified teachers participate in ongoing, multimodal cultural awareness trainings. Such trainings should be interactive and require time for individual reflection and group discussions.

Hopson (2013) suggested that rather than continuing the racial divide by stating that a mismatch in teachers is problematic, it would be proactive to actively engage the teachers in reflexive type trainings. Such trainings could be provided within a workshop; allowing time for teachers to reflect on past events that have occurred within the context of their classrooms, including interactions with students, staff, and parents. After being allowed time to reflect on the

interactions, teachers would then be asked to challenge their own thoughts and biases within those interactions. Outside of a workshop setting, these trainings, or activities, may also be done at the end of the workday, or during team meetings. The National Association for the Education of the Young (2009) believes in culturally and individually responsive practices within the early childhood educational settings. Therefore, policy makers are urged to address the implementation of an anti-bias approach in all classrooms through public policies and funding. Implementing an anti-bias approach in all classrooms would potentially offset the negative emotions that students may experience from the teacher and student mismatch. Additionally, an anti-bias approach is one way to ensure that all students in the classroom setting are represented and feel accepted.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

Several factors may have influenced the results of this study. As indicated in the participants' demographics section, persons of color were greatly underrepresented in the teacher sample. Additionally, the sample included teachers from districts all over the states, including rural and urban areas, making it difficult to develop a general understanding regarding districts' cultural awareness training expectations and any environmental factors that may influence teacher perceptions.

This study obtained participants from Prolific, which predominantly uses convenience sampling. Although Prolific attempts to offset biases, ultimately, the results cannot be generalized to the targeted population. Though the results of the study are not generalizable to

the targeted population, they do provide potentially interesting insights related to student race and teacher perceptions for this specific sample.

Future research needs to include the specific types of behaviors that teachers perceive for Black and White students as engaging in most frequently. Provided that the teachers in the current study attributed adverse living conditions as hindering white students functioning more frequently than Black students functioning, and teachers perceived Black students as having cognitive challenges and academic difficulties more frequently than White students, future research should aim to understand teachers' perceptions regarding external factors, or forces outside of the students' control, versus internal factors. This is important as previous work has shown that a teacher who believes the behaviors are outside of the student's control is more likely to seek support for the student rather than punishment. Conversely, a teacher who attributes behaviors to factors within the student's control is more likely to implement harsher disciplinary measures.

Additionally, the research should evaluate the types of cultural awareness training that districts are now requiring and how the participation in such training may influence teachers' level of color blindness, as well as their perceptions and recommendations for students.

### **Conclusion**

This study analyzed multiple factors related to the referral of young Black and White students for special education evaluations; primarily contingent upon the teachers' race, teachers' color blindness levels, and student race. With the understanding that in education there is a mismatch between teacher race and student race, as well as the fact that the special education

evaluation process is highly dependent on cultural factors, this study also gathered data related to teachers' participation in cultural awareness trainings. Additionally, teachers were asked to rate themselves in terms of how competent they believed they were regarding the special education evaluation process.

Data provided by the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that despite active monitoring at the state and local levels, racial disproportionality in special education exists and has been an issue for more than four decades (Bollmer et al., 2013; National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). The variables included in the current study were used in an attempt to better understand the disproportionality that continues to exist. Overall, teachers endorsed White students more frequently as experiencing adverse home/living conditions and as having behavioral difficulties, whereas they endorsed Black students more frequently as experiencing cognitive differences and academic difficulties. Ultimately, teacher and student race do appear to be factors related to teacher perceptions and recommendations. The results of this study shed light regarding the importance of monitoring student outcomes through teacher feedback. Additionally, although results from the current study did not find a significant relationship between the number of Black students and White students being referred to special education based on the teacher's race and their participation in a cultural diversity training during the 2019-2020 school year, provided that teachers' race is disproportionate to the general student population across the United States, with White female teachers dominating the profession, (Lynskey, 2015; Sleeter, 2008), the current study acknowledges the importance of providing and requiring teacher participation in cultural awareness trainings.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY (TWU)  
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: The Influence of Color Blindness on Teachers' Perceptions and Students' Behavioral and Academic Functioning

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

Rachel Greenroy, S.S.P.

Human Development, Family Sciences, and Counseling Department

Email: Rsehon@twu.edu

Faculty Advisor: Brigitte Vittrup, PhD

Email: Bvittrup@twu.edu

Dear Participants:

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Rachel Greenroy, a doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, as part of her dissertation. The purpose of the study is to analyze the association between teachers' level of color blindness and student race/ethnicity, specific to what level of intervention teachers recommend for students with behavioral or academic difficulties. Participants must identify as a general education teacher for either kindergarten, first grade, second grade, or third grade in the public school setting (including magnet and charter schools) because the research questions focus on their experiences. Therefore, 4th through 12th grade general education teachers, special education teachers, administrators, counselors, assistant teachers, teacher aides, secretaries, and janitorial staff are excluded from participating.

Private schools are run independently and adhere to their own curriculum and funding. For these reasons, this study does not include private school teachers within its sampling frame.

**STUDY PROCEDURES**

A teacher questionnaire has been developed for this study. This questionnaire contains questions for teachers about color blindness, cultural awareness, and the special education process. By filling out this survey, you will agree to participate in the study.

Participation is voluntary. A decision not to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with Texas Woman's University. You may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.

Potential Risks include: loss of confidentiality and emotional discomfort.

By filling out the survey, you allow the Principal Investigator to use the results in conference presentations and/or research compilations. All survey responses will be collected anonymously, and their answers will not be linked to personal information. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings and internet transactions. To minimize this risk, the survey data will be housed on PsychData, which is a secure, confidential survey site, and only the principal investigator and faculty advisor will have access to the data. All data will be destroyed three years after the study is closed. The results of the study may be reported in scientific magazines or journals, but your name or any other identifying information will not be included.

To minimize the risk of emotional discomfort, participants can fill out the survey in the privacy of their own home and have the opportunity to elaborate and explain their perceptions. Should you feel emotional discomfort or distress due to the topics covered in this survey, you may use the links below:

\* American Psychological Association Psychologist Locator: <http://locator.apa.org>

\* Psychology Today Find a Therapist: <http://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms>

It is estimated that it will take approximately 30 minutes to fill out the survey. You have up to 40 minutes to complete it for Prolific credit and compensation. Prolific users will receive \$3.00 upon completion of the survey.

#### Questions Regarding the Study:

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the Principal Investigator or faculty advisory, whose contact information is provided above. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the TWU Institutional Review Board at [irb@twu.edu](mailto:irb@twu.edu).

By clicking on the “Continue” button below, you are indicating your consent to participate in the study.

APPENDIX B

Prolific Recruitment Script

## Prolific Script

Prolific is a self-service method of gathering research data using online surveys.

Participants who choose to participate will access the survey via Prolific. When they access the survey, the first screen will present information about the survey (for the purposes of informed consent). When they choose to continue (by clicking on a survey button), they will be taken to the survey. After completing this survey, Prolific will award participants a small monetary gift. Additionally, at the end of the survey, they will be given the option to receive results. To do so, they will need to click on a link to access a separate survey (also housed on PsychData) where their contact information will be collected for the purpose of sending the results. They will be assured that the two surveys are not linked, and therefore, their contact information will not be linked to their answers.

APPENDIX C

Demographic Questionnaire

**Teacher Demographic Questionnaire:**

**Personal Information:**

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Race: \_\_\_\_\_

**Teaching Experience:**

Teaching Experience (in years): \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level Currently Teaching: Choose from one of the following

- Kindergarten
- First Grade
- Second Grade
- Third Grade

School District currently employed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Cultural Diversity trainings completed for the 2019-2020 school year: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Cultural Diversity trainings the district or your administrator requires you to complete each school year: \_\_\_\_\_

How competent do you believe you are in understanding the special education evaluation process for students with a suspected Specific Learning Disability or Emotional Disturbance?

Rate your competency:

- 1 = Incompetent
- 2 = Not very competent
- 3 = Not sure
- 4 = Somewhat Competent
- 5 = Very Competent

On what do you base your perceived competency level in understanding the special education evaluation process (e.g., education, training, experience)?

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APPENDIX D

Vignettes 1 – 8



**Directions:**

Please read the following statement carefully and then answer the questions:

This is Treyvon



Treyvon is a 7-year-old boy currently enrolled in your 2nd grade class. Treyvon presents as an outgoing student that enjoys recess time, and at times he is described as being disruptive. He struggles with making and keeping friends because he is demanding of others' attention and time. Currently, Treyvon is struggling to acquire the basic reading and math skills (e.g. struggles with phonemic awareness and is unable to count to 100). Additionally, Treyvon's specials teachers (e.g., PE, Art, and Music) describe him as being disruptive to their classroom setting (e.g. talks during instruction, struggles with transitions in the hallway, and doesn't keep his hands to himself). When working one-to-one with Treyvon, you have noticed that he makes self-defeating comments and gives up easily. His mom is a single parent and works two jobs. She responds to your emails, but follow-up is inconsistent.

1. What do you believe is hindering this student's functioning?
  - A. The student presents with adverse home/living conditions; impeding their overall progress
  - B. The student presents with behavioral challenges; impeding their progress
  - C. This student presents with cognitive differences; impeding their processing skills and overall academic and behavioral progress
  - D. This student presents with academic difficulties in reading, math, and/or writing; impeding their overall academic and behavioral progress
2. Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning,
  - A. Have the student maintain in general education with Tier 1 and/or 2 interventions
  - B. Refer to the student to the Response to Intervention team for Tier 3 interventions
  - C. Refer the student to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, Educational Diagnostician) for a special education evaluation due to your suspecting a Specific Learning Disability.
  - D. Refer to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed School Psychologist) for a special education evaluation due your suspecting an Emotional Disturbance (social-emotional functioning concerns).

**Directions:**

Please read the following statement carefully and then answer the questions:

This is Colin



Colin is a 6-year-old student in your 1<sup>st</sup> grade class. It is January, and Colin has been receiving tier three interventions since the start of the school year to support his letter identification skills. Specifically, Colin continues to confuse the letters b, d, p, and q when reading and writing. When working with Colin one-to-one and you point out his mistakes in either reading or writing, Colin’s feelings are easily hurt and he will stop working/shutdown. He says he “hates reading and it is stupid”. He has also become physically aggressive (e.g., hit his fist on the table and broke his pencil with his hands). In your class, Colin has many friends, enjoys being the leader, and you have noticed that he is verbally expressive during unstructured times. Conversely, he is less likely to volunteer answers during structured times (e.g., teacher

led discussions). Colin's parents emailed you letting you know that they are not worried about his progress. This was the only time you have heard from Colin's parents.

1. What do you believe is hindering this student's functioning?
  - A. The student presents with adverse home/living conditions; impeding their overall progress
  - B. The student presents with behavioral challenges; impeding their progress
  - C. This student presents with cognitive differences; impeding their processing skills and overall academic and behavioral progress
  - D. This student presents with academic difficulties in reading, math, and/or writing; impeding their overall academic and behavioral progress
  
2. Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning,
  - A. Have the student maintain in general education with Tier 1 and/or 2 interventions
  - B. Refer to the student to the Response to Intervention team for Tier 3 interventions
  - C. Refer the student to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, Educational Diagnostician) for a special education evaluation due to your suspecting a Specific Learning Disability
  - D. Refer to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed School Psychologist) for a special education evaluation due your suspecting an Emotional Disturbance (social-emotional functioning concerns)

**Directions:**

Please read the following statement carefully and then answer the questions:

This is Shekeia



Shekeia is a 6-year-old girl currently enrolled in your 1<sup>st</sup> grade classroom. Shekeia presents as a disorganized (e.g. frequently missing materials, messy backpack) and withdrawn individual (e.g. prefers to work alone). As her teacher, you have noticed that she frequently engages in scribbling on her worksheets during instruction time and she is unable to answer questions when called on. When required to work in groups, Shekeia will either shutdown or have a meltdown. The PE teacher does not have concerns, but the Art and Choir teachers share in your concerns, noting Shekeia is disorganized and withdrawn. Academically, Shekeia demonstrates strong letter knowledge, but is struggling to grasp the letter sounds. Her math number sense is on grade level, but it has taken a lot of repetition for her to learn her numbers, and she is struggling with basic addition and math facts. Shekeia's mother is a single parent and

reports doing the best she can to help Shekeia. The mother shared that Shekeia dislikes school and so getting her to read at night is a struggle. They don't really work on math.

1. What do you believe is hindering this student's functioning?
  - A. The student presents with adverse home/living conditions; impeding their overall progress
  - B. The student presents with behavioral challenges; impeding their progress
  - C. This student presents with cognitive differences; impeding their processing skills and overall academic and behavioral progress
  - D. This student presents with academic difficulties in reading, math, and/or writing; impeding their overall academic and behavioral progress
  
2. Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning,
  - A. Have the student maintain in general education with Tier 1 and/or 2 interventions
  - B. Refer to the student to the Response to Intervention team for Tier 3 interventions
  - C. Refer the student to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, Educational Diagnostician) for a special education evaluation due to your suspecting a Specific Learning Disability
  - D. Refer to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed School Psychologist) for a special education evaluation due your suspecting an Emotional Disturbance (social-emotional functioning concerns)

**Directions:**

Please read the following statement carefully and then answer the questions:

This is Grace



Grace is a 5-year-old girl currently enrolled in your kindergarten class. It is March and by now all other students are reading on Level C or above; however, Grace is still at level A. In addition to her reading skills being behind her same-aged peers, Grace refuses to participate in math problems that require adding or subtracting. When required to work on math, Grace hisses at you. Twice, when asked to work on math, Grace threw her pencil across the classroom. During other subjects, you have noticed that she spends a lot of time doodling on her papers and that she takes extra care when cutting and gluing. Grace's specials teachers report that Grace doesn't participate in class, but that does respond to verbal redirections, although this doesn't mean that she will sustain her level of participation. She has hissed at the specials teachers, too. You have emailed and called parents to let them know about her behaviors and share your academic concerns. Dad responded to an email and set up a time to meet, but didn't show. Grace tells you that her mom is too busy.

1. What do you believe is hindering this student's functioning?
  - A. The student presents with adverse home/living conditions; impeding their overall progress
  - B. The student presents with behavioral challenges; impeding their progress
  - C. This student presents with cognitive differences; impeding their processing skills and  
Overall academic and behavioral progress
  - D. This student presents with academic difficulties in reading, math, and/or writing;  
impeding their overall academic and behavioral progress
  
2. Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning,
  - A. Have the student maintain in general education with Tier 1 and/or 2 interventions
  - B. Refer to the student to the Response to Intervention team for Tier 3 interventions
  - C. Refer the student to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, Educational Diagnostician) for a special education evaluation due to your suspecting a Specific Learning Disability
  - D. Refer to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed School Psychologist) for a special education evaluation due your suspecting an Emotional Disturbance (social-emotional functioning concerns)



**Directions:**

Please read the following statement carefully and then answer the questions:

This is Charles



Charles is a 6-year-old boy currently in your 1<sup>st</sup> grade class. Charles is on a behavior system due to his disruptive behaviors (e.g. making noises during instruction, yelling across the classroom, and being verbally and physically aggressive towards classmates and school staff). Charles has a mentor in the school setting that has lunch with him every Monday. Charles reports hating his mentor and everyone else. Academically, Charles is on grade level in reading and math, but he is still learning how to write his first name. He really struggles with handwriting and constructing simple sentences. You have noticed that he tends to break his pencils easily due to pressing too hard, but any redirection will set him off. He lives with both parents. Parents shared that at home, Charles refuses to do any homework or chores. They generally let him get away with this as his behavior would be too upsetting to his youngest sister, otherwise.

1. What do you believe is hindering this student's functioning?
  - A. The student presents with adverse home/living conditions; impeding their overall progress
  - B. The student presents with behavioral challenges; impeding their progress
  - C. This student presents with cognitive differences; impeding their processing skills and overall academic and behavioral progress
  - D. This student presents with academic difficulties in reading, math, and/or writing; impeding their overall academic and behavioral progress
  
2. Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning,
  - A. Have the student maintain in general education with Tier 1 and/or 2 interventions
  - B. Refer to the student to the Response to Intervention team for Tier 3 interventions
  - C. Refer the student to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, Educational Diagnostician) for a special education evaluation due to your suspecting a Specific Learning Disability
  - D. Refer to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed School Psychologist) for a special education evaluation due your suspecting an Emotional Disturbance (social-emotional functioning concerns)

**Directions:**

Please read the following statement carefully and then answer the questions:

This is Noah



Noah is a 7-year-old 2<sup>nd</sup> grade student in your class that exhibits significant physically and verbally aggressive behaviors towards others. Noah once threw a chair across the classroom and he yells at his classmates when they “bother him” nearly every day. Noah will break down and cry when asked to do any classwork, but will occasionally work for rewards such as stickers or pencils. You have been able to assess Noah and his reading and math skills are on-grade level, but he struggles with making sense of what he is reading and one-step math word problems even with visual supports. Noah’s mother is a single parent that is currently in college. She shared that Noah sees his dad on weekends, but that it is not consistent. At home, Noah tells his mom that he doesn’t know how to read like his classmates.

1. What do you believe is hindering this student's functioning?
  - A. The student presents with adverse home/living conditions; impeding their overall progress
  - B. The student presents with behavioral challenges; impeding their progress
  - C. This student presents with cognitive differences; impeding their processing skills and overall academic and behavioral progress
  - D. This student presents with academic difficulties in reading, math, and/or writing; impeding their overall academic and behavioral progress
  
2. Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning,
  - A. Have the student maintain in general education with Tier 1 and/or 2 interventions
  - B. Refer to the student to the Response to Intervention team for Tier 3 interventions
  - C. Refer the student to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, Educational Diagnostician) for a special education evaluation due to your suspecting a Specific Learning Disability
  - D. Refer to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed School Psychologist) for a special education evaluation due your suspecting an Emotional Disturbance (social-emotional functioning concerns)

**Directions:**

Please read the following statement carefully and then answer the questions:

This is Karen



Karen is an 8-year-old girl in your 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class. In class, Karen talks excessively. Her specials teachers note that the excessive talking is disruptive, as well. When provided visual cues to stop talking, Karen will respond by becoming angry and defiant. She once left the school building after her teacher asked her to stop talking. Academically, Karen is able to independently complete the reading and math work, but she takes a long time to complete her work and most of the time she doesn't finish. And she seems to be getting further behind. You have tried breaking assignments up for her and giving her extra time, but Karen still struggles to get the work done. At this point, you are unsure of her skills because her academic performance is inconsistent. Karen lives with both parents. Both parents report not knowing how to help Karen as they are unable to get her to complete the work at home, as well.

1. What do you believe is hindering this student's functioning?
  - A. The student presents with adverse home/living conditions; impeding their overall progress
  - B. The student presents with behavioral challenges; impeding their progress
  - C. This student presents with cognitive differences; impeding their processing skills and  
Overall academic and behavioral progress
  - D. This student presents with academic difficulties in reading, math, and/or writing;  
impeding their overall academic and behavioral progress
  
2. Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning,
  - A. Have the student maintain in general education with Tier 1 and/or 2 interventions
  - B. Refer to the student to the Response to Intervention team for Tier 3 interventions
  - C. Refer the student to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed Specialist in School  
Psychology, Educational Diagnostician) for a special education evaluation due to your  
suspecting a Specific Learning Disability
  - D. Refer to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed School Psychologist) for a special  
education evaluation due your suspecting an Emotional Disturbance (social-emotional  
functioning concerns)

**Directions:**

Please read the following statement carefully and then answer the questions:

This is Madeline



Madeline is an 8-year-old in your 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class. Madeline is motivated primarily by rewards and is constantly trying to figure out how to get more prizes. When she is not rewarded for her work, Madeline gets very upset and will engage in tantrums. You have found other student's pencils and snacks in Madeline's backpack. When questioned about taking the items, Madeline will deny any wrongdoing. Academically, Madeline is unable to read grade level material, she is two grade levels behind. In addition to reading difficulties, you have to remind her to use her words to communicate. Madeline tends to remain quiet and provided that she steals, you could describe her as sneaky. Madeline lives at home with her two Dads. Madeline's Dads shared that at home, Madeline gets angry when denied her way. They report that Madeline is oppositional and so they struggle with implementing rules. They said they will do anything to help her in school, but that they are unsure of what to do.

1. What do you believe is hindering this student's functioning?
  - A. The student presents with adverse home/living conditions; impeding their overall progress
  - B. The student presents with behavioral challenges; impeding their progress
  - C. This student presents with cognitive differences; impeding their processing skills and overall academic and behavioral progress
  - D. This student presents with academic difficulties in reading, math, and/or writing; impeding their overall academic and behavioral progress
  
2. Based on your perceptions of this student's functioning,
  - A. Have the student maintain in general education with Tier 1 and/or 2 interventions
  - B. Refer to the student to the Response to Intervention team for Tier 3 interventions
  - C. Refer the student to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, Educational Diagnostician) for a special education evaluation due to your suspecting a Specific Learning Disability
  - D. Refer to your schools' evaluation specialist (e.g. Licensed School Psychologist) for a special education evaluation due your suspecting an Emotional Disturbance (social-emotional functioning concerns)



APPENDIX E

Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scales (CoBRAS)

### Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale SCORING INFORMATION

Neville, H. A., Lilly, R. L., Duran, G., Lee, R. M., Browne, L. (2000). Construction and Initial Validation of the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS). *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 47, 59-70.

**Directions.** Below is a set of questions that deal with social issues in the United States (U.S.). Using the 6-point scale, please give your honest rating about the degree to which you personally agree or disagree with each statement. Please be as open and honest as you can; there are no right or wrong answers. Record your response to the left of each item.

- |     | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                 |
|-----|----------------------|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
|     | Strongly<br>Disagree |   |   |   |   | Strongly<br>Agree |
| 1.  | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 2.  | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 3.  | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 4.  | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 5.  | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 6.  | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 7.  | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 8.  | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 9.  | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 10. | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 11. | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 12. | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 13. | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 14. | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |
| 15. | ___                  |   |   |   |   |                   |

16. \_\_\_\_ Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people.
17. \_\_\_\_ **It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities.**
18. \_\_\_\_ Racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.
19. \_\_\_\_ Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.
20. \_\_\_\_ **Race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison.**

**The following items (which are bolded above) are reversed score (such that 6 = 1, 5 = 2, 4 = 3, 3 = 4, 2 = 5, 1 = 6): item #2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 15, 17, 20.** Higher scores should greater levels of “blindness”, denial, or unawareness.

Factor 1: Unawareness of Racial Privilege consists of the following 7 items: 1, 2, 6, 8, 12, 15, 20

Factor 2: Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination consists of the following 7 items: 3, 4, 9, 13, 14, 16, 18

Factor 3: Unawareness to Blatant Racial Issues consists of the following 6 items: 5, 7, 10, 11, 17, 19

Results from Neville et al. (2000) suggest that higher scores on each of the CoBRAS factors and the total score are related to greater: (a) global belief in a just world; (b) sociopolitical dimensions of a belief in a just world, (c) racial and gender intolerance, and (d) racial prejudice. For information on the scale, please contact Helen Neville ([hneville@uiuc.edu](mailto:hneville@uiuc.edu)).