

The Impact of Implicit Bias on African American Students in Special Education and
Specifically the Labeling of African American Males as having Emotional Behavioral
Disorders.

Keary Wayne Saffold

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Topic Selection

Some people sometimes find it hard to believe that I have been employed since the tender age of thirteen. Most people however, find it hard to believe that I've only held two positions since that time that didn't relate to the betterment of our youth in some way. I have been an Educational Assistant, Mentor, Community Coach, Mental Health Practitioner, Dean of Students, and a host of different student focused positions.

Throughout my career, I have gained a solid foundation of best practices to engage all students and build positive impactful relationships.

It wasn't until my role as an African American Student Liaison with a local district, that I became deeply interested in with the topic of the overrepresentation of African American students in special education and in particular the over representation of African American males labeled with an emotional or behavioral disorder. This particular job appointment came with the obligated task to not only address the racial disparities within Special Education, but to also address the disproportionate suspension/expulsion rates of the African American students. This position demonstrated to me the power of professional opinions in shaping the overall trajectory of a student's life and future options. It also created a unique lens for me to determine the key issues behind the issues and see firsthand how they are rooted in implicit bias. In his book, *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion In Deciding the Fate of the Nation*, Professor Drew Westen states, "Irrespective of what we may feel and believe consciously, most White Americans- including many who hold consciously progressive values and attitudes- harbor negative associations towards people of color" (p.137). Implicit bias impacts the way that we view and associate with others from different groups. After all, there is no CAT scan or

X-ray that can prove or disprove that the detrimental labels such as emotional behavioral disorders (EBD) exists not the bias that determines it to exist. Johnson (2006) explained that how we think about African American men affects the way we respond to them. He went on to emphasize that much of the discourse in the psychological and educational literature that speaks to African American men or male youth are described in a pejorative manner, it becomes easier to society in general and teachers in particular to deny their intentional, creative and intellectual qualities, all qualities aligned with being a good student. It is imperative that the educational system begins to take a closer look at the overall impact implicit bias has on African American students and young black males in particular with regards to this issue. Within the evaluation process of determining if a student qualifies for special education placement there appears to be a lot of room for subjectivity and/or implicit bias especially when it comes to documenting challenging behaviors that may lead to the “diagnosis” or label of an emotional behavioral disorder. The goal of the screening process has been to identify students experiencing learning problems, developmental delays and/or behavioral challenges that are preventing them for learning, identify those areas and then provide early interventions and supportive assistance within the general education program or least restrictive environment (LRE.) The problem often begins with the reasons for the referral and the processes for student evaluation that results in not only special education placement but a label of EBD. The checklist for eligibility to determine this and EBD specifically are a construct of culture; primarily that of white culture. What has been considered “normal” or typical within one culture can be considered “abnormal” or atypical within another. Using culturally normative or biased criteria to deem African American students eligible and placed in

special education; it is also likely they will be deemed EBD and not necessarily placed in general education setting as the LRE. The U.S. Department of Education reports that an African American child is one and a half times more likely to be placed in a classroom for children with emotional disturbances than a white child (Children's Defense Fund, 2011). For example, when the evaluation team determines if a student has the ability to display appropriate types of behavior or feelings under "normal" circumstances. After centuries of oppression and racism, it has been difficult for some to fully understand the rationale behind this issue. However, when you take into consideration the overwhelming amounts of stereotypes and bias that we have inherited from past generations, it makes it easier to capsule (Cheryl & Staats, 2016; Fegan, 2013, Godsil & Rachel, 2015). As part of my purpose in life and personal legacy, I hope to build a sustainable nonprofit organization to effectively address this very issue of overrepresentation of African American students in special education and specifically reduce the number of African American males labeled as having an emotional behavioral disorder. I am truly grateful for every job opportunity I have had and especially the position as a cultural liaison, which was very instrumental in leading to the path of enrolling in this very educational leadership program. Overrepresentation of African Americans in special education programs has sparked much concern within the education community. This topic has been near and dear to my heart for years. I can vividly recall my second grade teacher attempting to refer me to be assessed for Special Education. This did not happen due to the parental advocacy that I had at the time. I often wonder how my life would have turned out had I been assessed and then placed in special education. Racial issues have been and continue to be quite difficult for people to openly discuss.

We have made huge gains as it relates to race relations in this country but there is still a major need for more improvements. Our educational focus in the 21. century must be directed at creating a safe place to have discussions around racial disparities and overrepresentation. Glen Singleton states, “Courageous Conversations is a strategy for school systems to close the racial achievement gap. By engaging in this strategy, educators develop racial understanding, conduct an interracial dialogue about race, and address racial issues in schools (p. 15-16). This paper will address how implicit bias impacts the overrepresentation of African American students in special education with an emphasis on the overuse of Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD) labels with African American males.

Research Question of the Literature Review

This Literature review will address the following questions:

1. How is implicit bias an issue within the Special Education evaluation process of African American Students?
2. How are African Americans impacted by their overrepresentation within Special Education?
3. What steps need to be taken in order to effectively address the overrepresentation of African American Males referred to special education?

Literature Review

According to the research, the number of students being labeled with a mental health disorder has been a concerning issue for some time (Hanley, Osher, & Quinn, 2002). This has been an issue since the creation of Emotional behavioral disorders in the early 1970's. According to the Individuals with Disability Act (IDEA),

Children with emotional and behavioral disorders exhibit one or more of the these five characteristics: An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (Hanley, Osher, & Qinn 2002).

These different characteristics were subjective and essentially the opinions of the professionals. They also placed the responsibility solely on the child to develop interpersonal relationships, which may not be possible if other peers and teachers are reciprocating with implicit bias. It did not take into account culturally, racially or historically what may also contribute to a student's general pervasive mood, physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems; all of which were likely to be out of child's control or scope of responsibility. The outcomes of the professional opinions were often times ill-informed and incorrect which taints the entire evaluation process which is filled with implicit bias (Johnson, 2012, p. 67).

Issues of implicit bias within the evaluation process of Special Education

Bean(2011)explained,

while African American students represented only 17% of school aged children, they represented one third of students identifies as experiencing mental retardation. The identification of disability alone did not cause students to be placed in special education classrooms. The decision to place a student in a regular education, special education, or part time resource classroom depended on the opinion of students, teachers, school principals, and students' families.

Implicit bias within education has been widely researched and evaluated to determine its impact on different ethnicities. Unlike authentic medical diagnoses like brain damage and cancer, Emotional Behavioral Disorder has never been proven with any level of absolute certainty (Johnson, 2012 p. 162). The National Center for State Courts defined implicit bias as, “the bias judgment and/or behavior that results from subtle cognitive processing that often operate a level conscious awareness or control (p. 34).” It went on to say, “the underlying implicit attitudes and stereotypes responsible for implicit bias are those beliefs or simple associations that a person makes between an object and its evaluation that are automatically activated by the mere presence of the object” (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hudson, 2010, p. 82). Godsil’s research stated,

Understanding implicit bias can help explain why a black criminal defendant charged with the same crime as a white defendant may receive a more draconian sentence, or why a resume from someone named Emily will receive more callbacks than an otherwise identical resume from someone named Lakeisha (2015, p. 123).

As implicit bias related to the classroom, Saats (2012) research concluded that teachers engage with many different ethnicities in many different situations, which makes it imperative for them to have an understanding of their own implicit bias. The author stated, “given that teachers encounter many, if not all, of these conditions through the course of the day, it is unsurprising that implicit biases may be contributing to teachers’ actions and decisions (2016, p. 93).” In a research study done by (Todd, Thiem, & Neel, 2016), they analyzed pervasive stereotypes or implicit bias connection to black males with violence and criminality and how that led to cognitive biases as well as misidentification. Their study concluded that these biases extended to even African American boys some as young as five years’ old. The Annual Report to Congress of the Implementation of IDEA in 2000 showed the over-representation of African American students in special education is a problem that undermines efforts to provide equitable education for all children in this country. In the 1998-1999 school year, African American students were: 2.9 times as likely as white students to be labeled mentally retarded, 1.9 times as likely to be labeled emotionally disturbed and 1.3 times as likely to be labeled as having a learning disability (U.S. Department of Education, p. 74, 2000). According to the annual report completed in 2015, the problem has gotten worst; “Black or African American students ages 6 through 21 were 2.14 and 2.26 times more likely to be served under IDEA, Part B, for emotional disturbance and intellectual disabilities, respectively, than were the students ages 6 through 21 in all other racial/ethnic groups combined.” (U.S. Department of Education, 2015 p. 77). In the annual report from 2000 it states that African American students account for 14.8 percent of the general population however they account for 20.2 percent of the special education population. It

has become easier to place African American students in Special Education via the EBD label over the last several years. This level of implicit bias that results in this placement has a direct impact specifically “on the overrepresentation of African American males labeled with an emotional or behavioral disorder” (Hanley, Osher, Quinn 2002).

The Impact on African Americans being overrepresented in Special Education

The presences of African American students being overrepresented in special education has proven to have an adverse impact on the underrepresentation of African American students in the Gifted and Talented Programs (Michael-Chadwell. 2011). Results from a study done at Liberty University's School of Education by Michael-Chadwell (2011) showed common emerging themes that included "misperceptions regarding a student's race and ability," and specific "issues related to testing and assessment instrumentation" (2011 p. 99). Both themes reinforced what research supported as it relates to implicit bias.

Multiple studies have placed a high level of emphasis on the impact of a self-profiling prophecy or even about the generational cycle of poverty (Johnson, 2012). Researchers found education impacts socio-economic status for the better and how lack of education can have detrimental effects. According to The State of Learning Disabilities report, black students with lower economic status were more likely to need special education services and those with disabilities experience much higher rates of school disciplinary actions, higher rates of dropout and lower rates of graduation (Cortiella, Candace, with Horowitz, & Sheldon, 2014 p. 16). Meritrdt stated,

For many students, getting labeled as having an emotional or behavioral disorder is devastating. About forty percent of Emotional Behavioral

Disorder students drop out of high school, according to federal statistics, a rate twice as high as any other disability category,” stated (2013,p3).

Not only did children labeled with EBD have a much higher dropout rate but they also fell far below other children in core subject areas. When students were identified as having an emotional or behavioral disorder (EBD) their overall academic achievement has been proven to be significantly lower than that of students identified with other disabilities (Nelson, Benner, Lane, & Smith, 2004). Children identified with EBD showed significant limitations in math and reading when compared to general education students (Nelson et al., 2004). Even more shocking, children identified with EBD typically score well below the twenty fifth percentile on reading, math as well as written expression, as measured by standardized testing (Lane, Barton-Arwood, Nelson, & Wehby, 2008), and these shortfalls persisted when children identified with EBD were compared to other special education students (Reid, Gonzalez, Nordness, Trout, & Epstein, 2004). If African American students were indeed showing such deficits in critical academic skills and other developmental domains, then they ought to meet alternative criteria and qualify to be receiving special education services that met those specific needs. The implicit bias that caused the initial placement apparently retains placement as well. According to Schimmel, “schools, like other institutions in American culture, have reflected widespread prejudice and minorities such as African Americans, Native American, Asians, and Latinos. Many social factors have interacted to influence the schools, including the courts and the law (p. 312). Codrington stated,

The consequences of special education disproportionality were profound. Despite possibly good intentions, children in special education were most often relegated

to learning environments with less academic rigor, as the focus is often on the management of emotional and behavioral issues, learning disabilities, and other impairments rather than on academic excellence, capacity development or preparing students to participate in the global market. Special education classes tended to be in the most restrictive environments, which retard academic achievement, stigmatizes students access to services (2012).

Necessary Steps to effectively address Implicit bias within special education?

A key strategy to addressing the disproportionate referrals of African American students to Special Education includes minimizing and recognizing bias via professional development and policies and procedures at district levels. According to the guide “Addressing Over-Representation of African American Students in Special Education: The Pre-referral Process, specific practices that shaped the processes before student are referred, evaluated and only placed if necessary are recommended” (National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), & ILIAD Project, 2002).

The pre-referral intervention process is a critical strategy because it prevents referrals by assisting teachers and students with the presenting problems in the context of the general education classroom. Although different pre-referral intervention approaches exist, they all have in common one important purpose: To provide supports necessary to maintain the student in general education or mainstream classrooms if at all possible. (National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), & ILIAD Project p. 5, 2002).

In a report from The Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment, Dr. Hope E. White states,

In addition, misclassification or inappropriate placement in special education is devastating for minority students, especially when the placement means removal from the regular education setting, the core curriculum, or both. Students facing such exclusionary practices almost always encounter a narrower curriculum and lower expectations compared to their peers. (2009. p.37)

According to state-by-state that were reported within the US. Department of Education's annual report much can be learned from the diverse districts that show different trends and because of that are in better position to be responsive to the challenges. In addressing the disproportion and representation issues, a concerted effort ought to be made to learn from and study schools that are implementing initiatives and policies that are effectively reducing the disparities and implicit bias (2015). According to new research from Penn State some schools have identified too few African American students for placement in special education (Morgan et al., 2015.) The study further outlined implications that the referrals and placement issues center around improperly identifying specific learning needs of students. Considering other research that showed the trend of emotional disturbance labels, it would beseech schools to ensure high quality staff are hired and retained to complete evaluations and make culturally informed determinations that are inclusive of parent and other professionals input (National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), & ILIAD Project, 2002). The American Psychology Association suggested,

Leadership and school culture strategies must optimize “transactional processes in classrooms [which] requires acknowledging that learning

exchanges are multidirectional, that is, between students and teachers, and between and among students themselves.”. This collaborative recommendation challenges the very definition of emotional behavioral disorder which perpetuates the myth that the student is at fault for not being able to skillfully mediate interpersonal skills within the classroom setting (2012).

Additionally, schools have not followed through on the recommended standards set forth by the Government Accountability Office and the Office of Civil Rights. Both have demanded assurances that consistently deliver an early intervening services and new standards that help define significant disproportionality (Government Accountability Office, 2013). Unless these recommendations and other unbiased standards are developed, implemented and evaluated for effectiveness on an ongoing basis through collaboration and accountability efforts we will continue to see this trend unfold as a national crisis much like existing education, health and economic disparities that have plagued our children along racial lines (Government Accountability Office, 2013). Dr. Kunjufu states,

We must develop programs and organizations to protect and develop African American boys because a conspiracy exists to destroy African American boys. The motive of the conspiracy is racism, specifically European-American male supremacy”. He goes on to say, “The conspiracy has become more and more complex when often times the perpetrators reside in the home and in the classroom” (p. 32)

Action Research Plan

The researcher provided surveys to the participants who were employed in Special Education. The researcher was aiming to determine how they viewed the impact of implicit bias on African American students in Special Education.

Background Information and Purpose of the Action Research Project

More than four percent of all African American students in Minnesota are identified as having emotional or behavioral disorders, a subjective, catchall label for thousands of children considered disruptive. That rate is more than three times the national average for black students and higher than any other state in the country, according to the most recent federal data available. The purpose of this study was to gain insight on the impact implicit bias has on African American students in special education.

Research Question of the Action Research Project

How does implicit bias impact African Americans in Special Education?

Definition of Terms

Special education- is the practice of educating students with special educational needs in a way that addresses their individual differences and needs. Ideally, this process involves the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, and accessible settings. These interventions are designed to help learners with special needs achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school and their community, than may be available if the student were only given access to a typical classroom education.

Implicit bias- also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable

assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Rather, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection.

Disproportionality- is over-representation of minority students identified with a learning disability or other type of disability under the IDEA. When a minority group's numbers in special education are statistically higher than they should be, they are considered disproportionate.

Cultural Competence-The ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with persons from cultures and/or belief systems other than one's own, based on various factors.

Sample

This study focused on individuals within the field of special education. The study included adult participant stakeholders identified by an equity specialist within a local school district. This particular Equity Specialist and has a vast network of Special Education educators across multiple school districts. He selected participants who have experience working in Special Education. The participants participated on a volunteer basis.

Instrumentation

The Instrument used for the action research was a survey with three demographic questions. Demographic questions were limited to gender, age, and ethnicity. The quantitative questions utilized a Likert scale. The questions focused on knowledge/impact of implicit bias, the Achievement gap, and staff development. The qualitative questions used a short answer format and focused on the experiences and opinions of special

education stakeholders who work directly with a diverse student population within special education. Effort was made to develop questions related directly to the research question and hypothesis of this action research project. The researcher piloted the survey with a colleague who just completed their Principals License with extensive classroom experience in special education. As a result of the professional feedback, the researcher clarified the purpose, content, order, and format of survey questions.

Procedures

1. Received permission from the RRB.
2. Sent out surveys to contact person to get completed with special education stakeholders.
3. Synthesize Data.
4. Delete all elements of collected data.
5. Present Literature Review and Data.

Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability could not be guaranteed entirely via the survey that was conducted as the primary research method. However, the researcher took necessary steps to increase reliability by remaining uniform in all questions used to inform the survey and being inclusive of all survey participants; with zero answers omitted. All consent forms, surveys, research procedures, and other components of the research protocol have been reviewed and approved by the cooperating participant/agency and adhered to it all. Completing a full analytical review of the data collection process also

increased the validity to the study. Triangulation of the literature review also assisted the researcher with the reliability and validity of the study.

Ethical Considerations

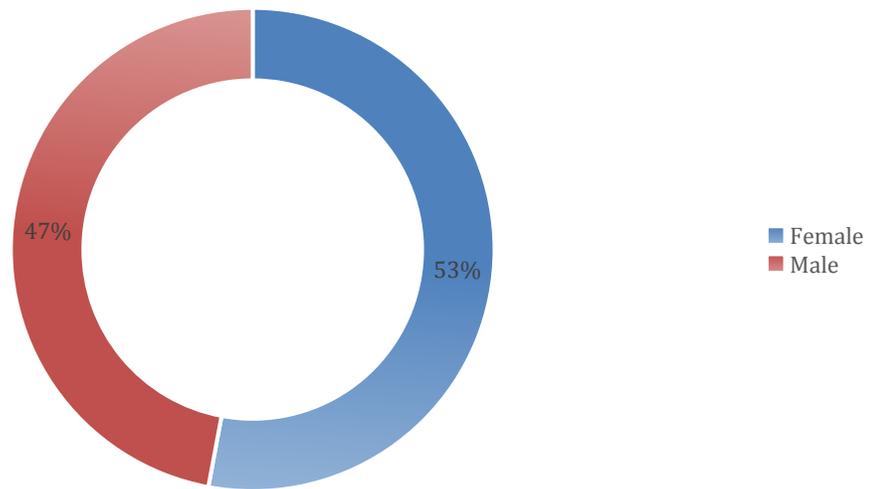
A variety of measures were compiled to ensure ethical standards were implemented. The study went through an approval process through the Research Review Board of Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. Passive consent was obtained from adults participating in the research. It was clearly communicated to all participants that their participation was absolutely voluntary with no repercussions at all. It was also communicated they may withdraw from the research study at any time. The results of the survey were kept completely confidential. All of the information gathered was stored on a removable drive that was securely stored in a locked file cabinet when not in use. The data was destroyed once the action research project was complete. The study was free of any manipulative or deceptive practices.

Results

Out of 17 people surveyed the majority of the stakeholders were Caucasian; 11 and six of them were people of color; four were African American and two were Latino (Figure 1.) Nine survey participants were female and eight were male (Figure 2.) 65% of the participants reported involvement in the special education field for over seven years. 17.5% of the participants reported involvement in special education for 4 or more years, and 17.5% reported 1 to 3 years of involvement with special education (Figure 3.)

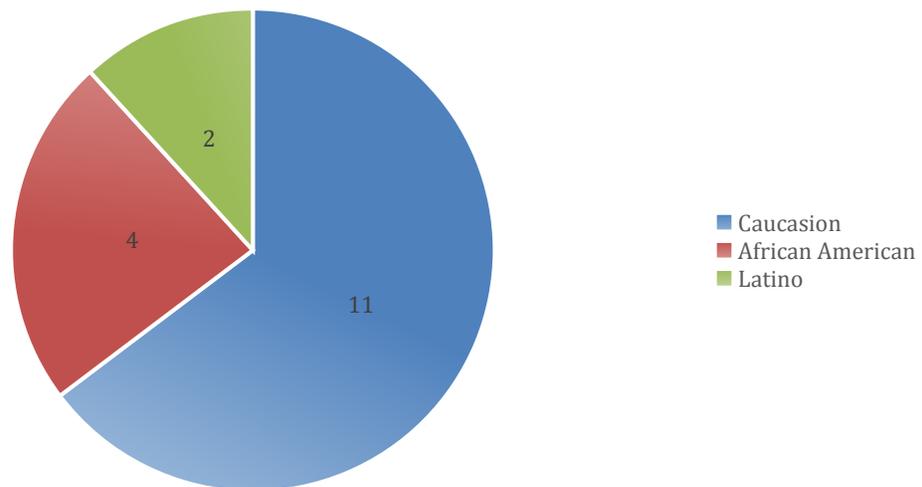
1. What is your gender?

Gender of Survey Participants N=17

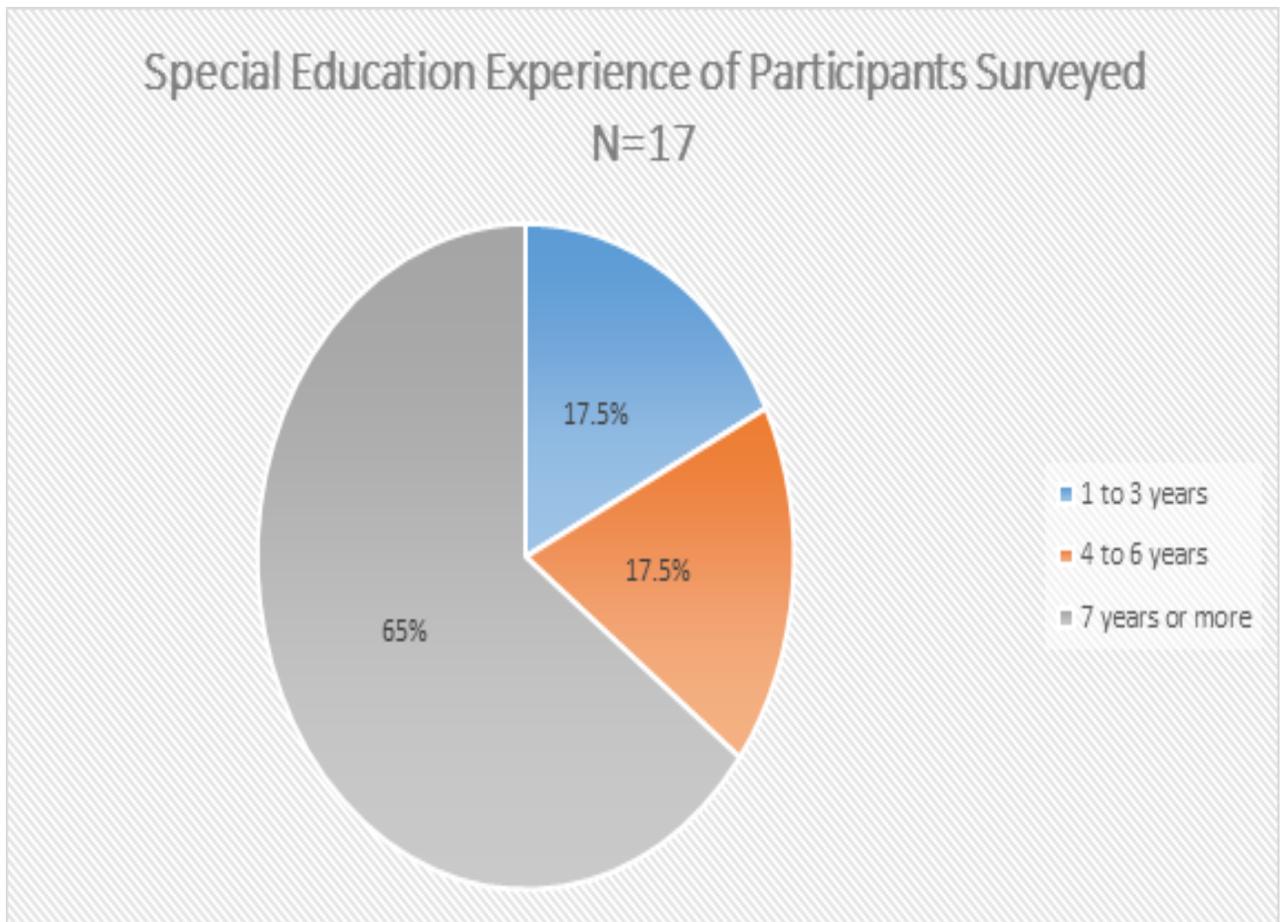


2. What Ethnicity do you identify as?

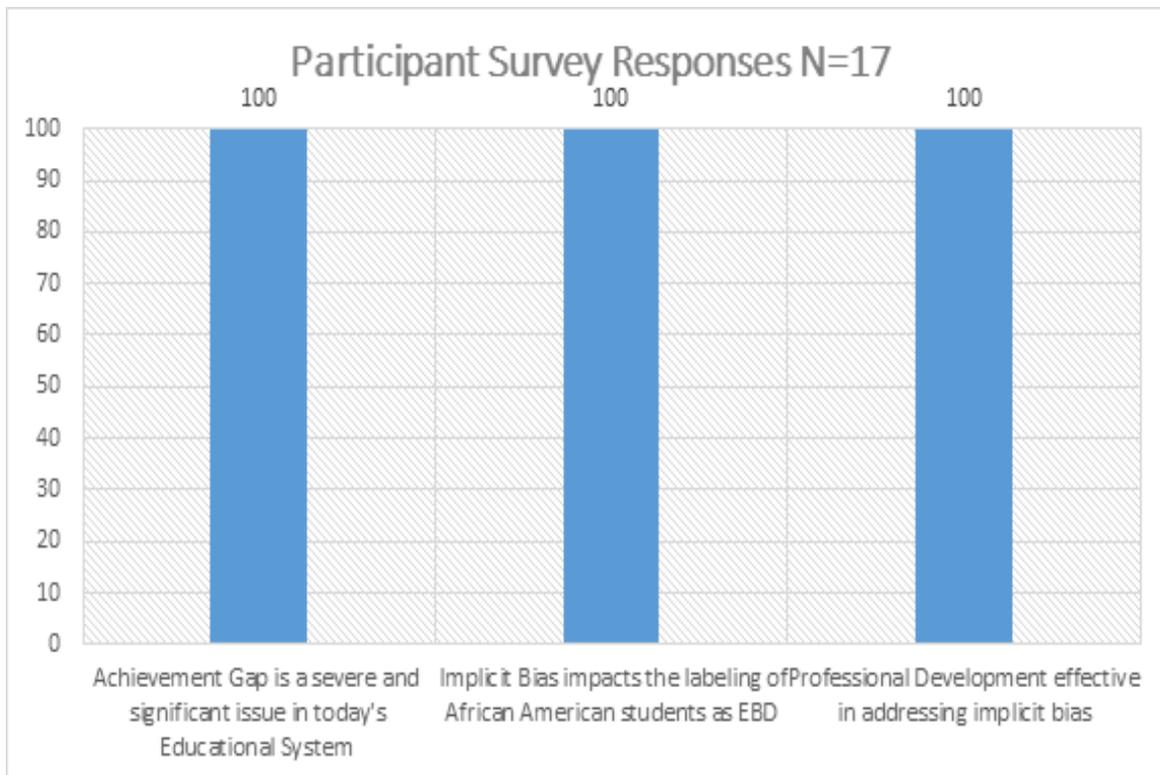
Demographics of Survey Participants N=17



3. How many years have you worked in Special Education?



4. On a scale from 1-10, with 1 being-not an issue at all, and 10 being-a very big issue. How would you rate the severity of the Achievement Gap here in Minnesota?
5. On a scale from 1-10, with 1 being-not an impact at all, and 10 being-a very big impact. How would you rate the impact of implicit bias on the achievement gap?
6. What is needed to effectively address the issues of overrepresentation of AA in Special education?



g. 4

Interpretation of Results

Overall, the finding described stakeholders' level of awareness of implicit bias and its impact on African Americans in special education, and what they feel needs to be done to effectively address the issue. Results indicated that the level of implicit bias did have an affect on how teachers view and interact with their students. Which then leads to the displacement and overrepresentation of African American in Special Education. The Literature review stated "the decision to place a student in a regular education, special education, or part time resource classroom depended on the opinion of students, teachers, school principals, and students' families (Bean2011).

The findings also indicated that participants had a firm understanding of what implicit bias and the achievement gap are and how they correlate with one another. One hundred percent of the participants demonstrated a clear comprehension of how implicit bias affects different people and influences decisions. As aligned with the literature review, the results also indicated that the individuals surveyed believed implicit bias had a negative impact on African American students and specifically males in special education (Kunjufu, 1995).

Based on the experiences and information reported it was very clear that implicit bias was a key factor in the disproportionate rate in which African American students enter into Special education and are labeled with an Emotional Behavioral Disorder (Johnson, 2012).

Also based on the diversity of the participants and the diversity in the student population that they serve, it was clear that implicit bias negatively impacted African Americans in special education. According to the data gathered, 100% of the participants saw the achievement gap as a severe and significant issue within our current education system. The literature review stated that implicit bias had an impact on African American students and the data in this study supports that reality. It has become easier to place African American students in Special Education via the EBD label over the last several years. This level of implicit bias that results in this placement has a direct impact specifically “on the overrepresentation of African American males labeled with an emotional or behavioral disorder” (Hanley, Osher, Quinn 2002).

Based on the question; what is needed to effectively address the issues of overrepresentation of AA in Special education? The responses varied but what

remained consistent were their feelings around more professional development on implicit bias. One Caucasian female reported “there also needs to be a high level of accountability for those educators who are unable to shift their thinking around this very critical issue in our school system”(Government Accountability Office, 2013).

Conclusion

I plan on using what I learned around the existence and impact of implicit bias on the overrepresentation of African American Students in special education to implement an initiative to eradicate it and in doing so improve equitable outcomes in education for all students. This study reinforced my understanding on the topic, as well as created a deeper passion within me to address this inequity issue that is impacting some many students locally and throughout the United States. I am deeply connected to this topic as I was once referred to be evaluated for Emotional Behavioral Disorder in elementary school. My connection also stems from my career in advocating for underprivileged and marginalized students in the Twin Cities and surrounding areas. I am currently starting the Kenneth W. Saffold Tailored Behavioral Development Foundation which will implement an effective model of coaching to close the achievement gap, improve high school graduation rates, and reduce the propensity of African American children being labeled with emotional behavioral disorder.

I also plan on sharing my findings of this study with different special education stakeholders within the educational community. I believe that sharing the findings of this study and the data from the literature review will be critical in supporting others who will be implementing initiatives to effectively address the issue. Implicit bias is clearly responsible for the overrepresentation of African American students in special education

and once this can be eradicated then the outcomes of these students will be improved for the better.

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Appendix A

1. What leadership and supervisory principles are most applicable relative to your topic?

Educational leaders must be aware of the impact that implicit bias has on special education and be proactive in their supervision and guidance to insure ethical and equitable education outcomes for all students. It's important for leaders to know themselves and be aware of their own biases and know the needs, strengths and challenges of their diverse staff. Managing staff collaboratively and the mastering the art of human relationships in a way that ultimately creates teacher leaders and builds unity is critical to the cultural consciousness required eliminating implicit bias. All of which can be done strategically and effectively via coaching and the development of professional learning communities that make cultural competencies a priority.

2. Can you propose a strategy or plan to address continuation of your topic, or propose changes relative to your topic?

I am currently starting the Kenneth W. Saffold Tailored Behavioral Development Foundation which will implement an effective model of coaching to close the achievement gap, improve high school graduation rates, and reduce the propensity of African American children being labeled with emotional behavioral disorder. The coaching provided would support children and parents who are likely to have suffered from the negative impact of implicit bias (or are at-risk to.) The coaching will also support the professional development needs of service providers and both administrative and teaching staff in district that have a disproportionate rate of African American children labeled with Emotional Behavior Disorder.

3. What political support or management skills must a leader mobilize to promote the change or the findings?

Participating in collaborative networks and advocating for change must be done on a local and national level via community and government agencies. However because there are multiple laws that mandate free and equitable education for all students (FAPE, IDEA, LRE, Brown vs. the Board of Education and others,) it's not so much about mobilization to create new laws to change the findings but rather, it's about supporting and enforcing the current ones.

4. Discuss the use of coaching and team building efforts related to the situation.

According to Robert Garmston, "Cognitive Coaching is a process during which teachers explore the thinking behind their practices. Each person seems to maintain a cognitive map, only partially conscious. In Cognitive Coaching, questions asked by the coach reveal to the teacher areas of that map that may not be complete or consciously developed." Years ago, a mentor of mine taught me the power behind "questioning people to my own understanding". I have found this approach to be very effective in building relationships, as well as conveying messages and teaching lessons. This technique reminds me a lot of the cognitive coaching process. The cognitive coaching process can be highly advantageous if administered the right way. The most difficult part of the overall process for me is not being able to jump right in and give my opinion or direct suggestions. Cognitive coaching is an effective operation that maintains the focus on a specific topic that creates an avenue for growth. I will use this coaching method as I continue to build on my organization.

5. Consider the use of effective public relations and community outreach strategies related to addressing your topic.

Participating in local collaborative networks and advocating for change via Generation Next, NAACP, Black Lives Matter, Governor and Mayoral cabinets and initiatives, MN Comeback, Disability Law Center, Legislative sessions and representatives, North side Achievement Zone, and The Monitors Foundation are critical to the theory of change regarding the implicit bias that continues to lead to the disproportionate rate of African American children labeled with Emotional Behavior Disorder. This must get on the collective radar of the community so together we can understand that the achievement gap will always exist if this issue of inequity is not fully addressed. Ongoing community outreach that is inclusive of parents and children will ensure their voices are heard and the impact of implicit bias comes to light. One innovative strategy to mobilize parents is to facilitate culturally specific affinity groups to educate parents on the impact of implicit bias has on African American males in Special Education and what they can do to hold schools accountable.

6. How might technology enhance your role as an effective change agent?

Use of social media, email, blogs, online newspapers and other forms of press to communicate a clear vision that is patient yet persistent and builds rapport and trusting relationships to be a catalyst for change. Using these forms of technology to ask tough questions that lead to courageous conversations and demonstrate my own passion about equitable education by showing others that I am a change agent and leading by example--not just talking about it but taking action daily.

7. Apply theories of adult learning to engage adults around your topic in your current workplace staff development meetings or another setting.

I will aim to utilize the following adult learning theories moving forward to engage and enhance the staff development of KWST Behavioral Development Foundation:

Knolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

Social Learning Theory

Wlodkowski and Ginsberg's Integrated Levels of Adult Motivation

Bloom's Taxonomy

Gordon's Ladder

8. How may diversity be leveraged for educational and organization growth around your research topic?

Diversity can be leveraged for the educational and organizational growth in a number of ways. One example is to facilitate more courageous conversations on the topic. The National Education Association website states that, "Cultural competence is having an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families." These conversations will begin to build cultural competence in all stakeholders within the organization. Also, being intentional about creating a culture of acceptance will be the aim for my organization.

9. Discuss budgetary, infrastructure, and systems implications as indicated in management principles and style.

In districts where the disproportionate rate of African American children labeled with Emotional Behavior Disorder is deemed a district wide issue the federal government

would need to implement mandates requiring changes and deadlines and the district will need to ensure the budget and staffing are equipped to be responsive accordingly. Where these inequities are seen in isolation within specific schools these districts will also need to hold them accountable to equity and integration plans but it may also be beneficial for schools to consider adopting a school-based management approach to decentralize control from central district offices to increase autonomy of individual school sites. Sometimes a more individualized solution is what's needed to address inequity. A school-based management system gives staff, parents and even students--more control over the implementation of a more culturally inclusive and responsive plan that would address implicit bias that leads to the disproportionate rate of African American children labeled with Emotional Behavior Disorder in that school.

10. What resources or project management skills are needed for the proposed course of action as defined in organizational change?

Addressing the implicit bias that leads to disproportionate rate of African American children labeled with Emotional Behavior Disorder will certainly not be an easy or simple change to make but rather a complex one. Leading complex change requires a clear vision, the collective talents and insights of staff and families and the money and resources to implement and sustain a viable plan of action.

11. Present any legal implications relative to the implementation of your topic in your setting.

As it relates to the disproportionate rate of African American children labeled with Emotional Behavior Disorders; it will be important to manage and leverage the new waves of accountability by The US Department of Education and the MN Department of

Education regarding the IDEA and the call for schools to be in full compliance of the law. While their evaluations and reports do not specify the root causes of disproportionate referrals and placement of children of color the non-compliance results and its legal implications speak for itself. The confirmed trend of disproportionate rate of African American children labeled with Emotional Behavior Disorder that also results in segregation and high school dropout rates should in itself motivate districts and communities to change.

12. What additional data would assist in the implementation, development, and/or change proposed while at the same time ensuring validity and reliability of data.

Reviewing additional local and national data collected about referral and placement rates from reports released by the US Department of Education would assist in decision making and ensure greater integrity with implemented changes. In fact just last week the The U.S. Department of Education made public its final regulations under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). According to its press release via email they are attempting to promote “equity by targeting widespread disparities in the treatment of students of color with disabilities. The regulations will address a number of issues related to significant disproportionality in the identification, placement, and discipline of students with disabilities based on race or ethnicity.” They will also be issuing additional letters to address prevalent racial discrimination. Evaluation of local surveys and reports that look at implicit bias and the referral and disciplinary practices of schools will be critical to implementing change and holding schools accountable to improved equitable practices and outcomes. Additionally, both internal and external evaluators are needed to ensure the validity and reliability of data and any individualized

observations and coaching of staff that may be required as a part of the solution to thoroughly address and eradicate implicit bias.