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Analysis of Elementary Teachers' Self-Reports of Variables Influencing Teacher Decisions
during the Special Education Referral Process

Bernard Charles Jones

A dissertation submitted to the College of Human Resources and Education at West Virginia
University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Education in Special Education

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Morgantown, West Virginia
2008

Key Words: Special Education, General Education, Teacher Preparation, African American
Male, Cultural Competency, Masculinity Competency

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ABSTRACT

Analysis of Elementary Teachers' Self-Reports of Variables Influencing Referral of Students for Special Education Services

Bernard Charles Jones

The purpose of this study was to analyze West Virginia teachers' decision making during the special education referral process. Specifically, the study examined how academic achievement, behavior, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, and gender impact the teacher's decision to refer students for special education services.

Elementary teachers completed a survey that consisted of questions that allowed them to report on the variables that most influenced their referral decisions. For each survey question, the Spearman Rho correlation coefficient was used to determine if a correlation existed between individual variables and the teacher's decision to refer a student for special education services. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to further analyze referral decision between female and male teachers.

The results of this study indicate that teacher referral decisions are influenced by certain variables. In particular, academic achievement, academic achievement concerns and behavior were most often cited by teachers as influential in their special education referral decisions.

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Chapter I

Introduction

In 1767, the forefathers of the United States of America wrote the Bill of Rights ensuring the right of every free person to have equal access to the pursuit of happiness. That pursuit of happiness involved the right to equal access to America's public educational system. Contrary to current practice, America's educational system was established to educate only the elite of this country, but the masses demanded equal access. Today, America's schools must prepare themselves for the influx of immigrants who are invading the shores seeking freedom and liberty. America's education system must prepare itself to educate the masses of its citizens at every ability level. How can a country afford to educate its citizens who face mental or emotional challenges? These challenges require different techniques to address the needs of individuals with disabilities.

It was not until the 1960's that the United States, through litigation and legislation, addressed the inequality of access to education of individuals with disabilities. Also during the 1960's, litigation and legislation addressed the inequality in the United States toward individuals who were not white or male. So, in 1975, Congress enacted the Education for All Handicapped Children Act Public Law 94-142 ("Education for All Handicapped Children Act," 1975). This law supports state education agencies and the local education agencies in protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities. It assists in meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities. The intent of Public Law 94-142 was to meet the needs and improve the developmental or educational results for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their families (Office Special Education, 1999).

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 was not just another special education law; it was what Galambos (2004) called an “outline of basic rights and mandated procedures for children with disabilities” (p. 164). Public Law 94-142 was to persons with disabilities what the Civil Rights Laws were to African Americans. Congress recognized that State Education Agencies (SEAs) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) directly violated federal and state laws by not meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities (Special Education, 2005). Public Law 94-142 mandated that children with disabilities receive the free and appropriate public education services that they needed. Writers of this law did not anticipate that teachers' subjective perceptions (MacMillan & Reschly, 1998) would over-load a national special education system with African American male students.

Since the 1960's, there have been numerous court cases involving school districts using special education as a segregation tool (Harry & Anderson, 1994). For example, Peter Mills et al., *Plaintiffs v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* ("Mills v. Board of Education DC," 1972) was a case that drew national attention not only for the civil rights implications, but also for the impact in changing the lives of students with disabilities. This class action case affected how SEA and LEA implemented special education services. This case involved the District of Columbia denying access to publicly supported education for seven black students who were receiving special education services, but were suspended or expelled from the school district. The African Americans and/or students with disabilities represented in these court cases were not only denied access to the educational process, but also denied their due process under the law guaranteed in the Fourteenth Amendment. Although legislation mandates equal access and equal educational opportunities, over the years there have been numerous flaws in the

system and in the ways in which professionals refer and place students in special education. This phenomenon may be due in part to teachers' mis-perceptions of their students' behaviors.

Teacher Perceptions and Teacher Expectations

Research has shown that a teacher's perception of a student has a great impact on the success of that student (Helwig, Anderson, & Tindal, 2001). Fortunately, research generally supports the connection between perception and reality (Helwig et al., 2001). These perceptions are anchored in particular cognitive schemas that individuals construct to make sense of their own experiences. Teachers with a middle class frame of reference are at times lowering their expectations of students who come from different value systems (Kunjufu, 2002, 2005a; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Teacher expectations are also known to impact teacher decision making and student behaviors. Henning and Stout's (1993) research demonstrates that low teacher expectation yields poor student performance. In this study, students were observed to behave according to the expectations of the teacher.

Overrepresentation of Males

Although litigation and legislation of the 1970's corrected some of the inequities, educators were confronted with a new phenomenon: the overrepresentation of male minorities in special education. The literature suggests many reasons for the overrepresentation of males, particularly African American males, in special education: (a) major discrepancy in tests and the procedures used during the testing (Bahr & Fuchs, 1991; Hosp & Reschly, 2003; McLesky, Waldron, & Wornhoff, 1990); (b) gender differences in students and teachers (Blake & Anderson, 2000; Epps, 1995; Garibaldi, 1992; Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003; Singh, Vaught, & Mitchell, 1998; Weaver-Hightower, 2003); (c) racial differences between

students and teachers (Cullinan & Kauffman, 2005; Drame, 2002; Epps, 1995; Herrera, 1998; MacMillan & Reschly, 1998; Skarbrevik, 2002; Tatar & Emmanuel, 2001); and (d) poverty (Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Simmons, Feggins-Azziz, & Chung, 2005). Losen and Orfield (2002) stated that in the early 1970's, the U.S. Department of Education reported persistent overrepresentation of minority students with mental retardation, specific learning disabilities, and emotional disturbances. MacMillan and Reschly (1998) stated that overrepresentation occurs in those disabilities (mental retardation, specific learning disabilities, and emotional/behavior disorders) that are characterized as "judgmental disabilities," and that "subjective judgments" influence what is supposed to be an objective decision of educators (p. 19).

Teacher Efficacy

When looking at the overrepresentation of males placed in the areas of learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disorder (EBD), one must begin to question the referral decisions made by elementary general education teachers. Teacher efficacy has become a concern when analyzing the impact of teacher decision making as it relates to special education referrals. Podell and Soodak looked at teachers' efficacy and the variables in special education referrals (Podell & Soodak, 1993). This study revealed that teachers judged the regular education placement to be significantly more appropriate for the student with either a learning problem or a behavior problem than for a student with both problems (Podell & Soodak, 1993). However, national data confirm that minority racial groups were more likely than whites to be placed in restrictive educational settings, and this disproportionate level of restrictiveness is most pronounced for African Americans and Hispanics (Fierros & Conroy, 2002).

Other researchers have questioned teacher efficacy when judging misbehaviors of boys when compared to the same behaviors displayed by girls, and also when judging those who are

labeled as difficult-to-teach (DTT). For example, Henning-Stout's (1993) research on gender behaviors school-wide revealed that teachers did show gender biases against boys when girls exhibited the same behaviors (Henning-Stout, 1993). Bahr and Fuchs (1991) asked the question, "Are teacher referrals biased based on DTT students and their racial make-up?" (p. 596) The results of their study revealed that when African American and white DTT students demonstrated the same off-task behaviors, African American students were considered off-task more so than white students (Bahr & Fuchs, 1991).

Statement of the Problem

The overrepresentation of male students with learning disabilities and/or emotional/behavior disorders continues to persist despite all the studying and redefining of this issue (Osher, Woodruff, & Sims, 2002). The Schott Foundation for Public Education reported that African American male student enrollment was 9 percent, but 21 percent of them were identified with mental retardation, 22 percent with emotional disturbances, and 13 percent with specific learning disabilities (as cited in Sen, 2006). Another report stated that white male student enrollment was at 31 percent, and 29 percent of them were identified with mentally retardation, 46 percent with emotional disturbances, and 40 percent with specific learning disabilities (Holzman, 2006).

An alarming number of minority and male students receive special education services throughout the United States. Some research says that it is due to racial, gender, cultural, and linguistic biases in the special education process (Harry & Anderson, 1994). Losen and Orfield (2002) reported in the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University that in the early 1970's, African American children represented 16 percent of the total school enrollment, but 38 percent of the classes for the mentally retarded. After twenty years, African American children constituted 17

percent of the school enrollment and 33 percent of those labeled mentally retarded. The United States Congress has also recognized the overrepresentation of African American students, specifically males, as a major problem. In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education reported that African American children represented 20 percent of the students referred into special education, and over 26 percent of the youth identified by schools were referred for emotional and behavioral disorders (as cited in Osher et al., 2002). In a 2002 report by Fierros and Conroy (2002), 33 percent of African American students spent 60 percent of their school day in a self-contained special education classroom. Salend, Duhaney, and Montgomery (2002) reported that African American males are overrepresented in categories of learning disabilities, mental retardation, and serious emotional disturbance (Cartledge, 2005; Coutinho, Oswald, & Best, 2002).

Given the perplexity of the overrepresentation of males in special education and the inability to identify effective strategies to reduce the number of males in special education, researchers must now closely examine this phenomenon so that research may offer measures to reduce the number of referrals of male students to special education. This research closely examined the decision making of elementary teachers when referring students to special education. The researcher hoped that examination would provide evidence to address the misdiagnosing and subjective decision making during the special education referral process.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was three-fold. Although there continues to be overrepresentation of African American students with mental retardation, this researcher's focus was on learning disabilities (academic achievement and academic achievement concerns) and emotional/behavioral disorders. The intention was to first examine the patterns of teacher

referral and placement across gender and race/ethnicity lines for specific learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disturbance. The second was to examine teachers' perceptions (self-reporting) of the variables that influence their decisions about referrals. This research focused on the critical operational variables elementary general education teachers' used during special education referral decisions. The third was to examine teachers' perspectives of their preparation and/or professional development related to the referral of male students.

Research Questions

1. What are the patterns of elementary general education teacher special education referrals across gender and race/ethnicity for learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disorders?
 - a. Which variables most often (academics achievement, behavior, gender, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status) influence teacher special education referral decisions?
 - b. When comparing referral decisions of female teachers and those of male teachers, are there differences in special education referral patterns?
2. Do teacher responses to the variables that influence their special education referral reveal disparate referral decisions across white and African American male students and across male and female students when using the variables academic achievement, behavior, and socio-economic status?
3. Do elementary general education teachers who attend professional development training related to special education have a lower referral rate of male students?

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the definitions for the following words were used:

1. Emotionally Disturbed (ED) students are defined by Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act ("Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act," 2004) as students who display one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time: a) inability to learn which cannot be explained by ability, health, vision, or hearing deficits, b) problems in relating to other children and adults, c) inappropriate behaviors or feelings (e.g. extreme anger reactions), d) severe depression or unhappiness and e) tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears about personal or school problems.
2. Overrepresentation and disproportionality is defined in Sec. 300.173 of IDEA P.L. 108-446 as inappropriate identification or disproportionate representation by race/ethnicity of children with disabilities. Losen and Orfield (2002) define overrepresentation as twice the risk of identification in relation to that for white students, with underrepresentation as one-half the risk.
3. Perception is the process of interpreting sensory information. The accurate mental association of present stimuli with memories of past experience (perceptions).
4. Race/ethnicity is used interchangeably to represent how members of a group divide themselves into categories and how they perceive themselves and how they are in turn perceived by others.
5. Referral is a process that occurs when a general educator or a parent submits a formal request for a student to be considered for a full and formal nondiscriminatory evaluation.

6. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004), is the federal law that governs services for students with disabilities.
7. Special education is a specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of a handicapped child, including classroom instruction, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions ("Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act ", 2004).
8. Specific learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written. This disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations (*Education for All Handicapped Children Act*, 1975).
9. NCLB is the No Child Left Behind Act, which is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act mandating higher standards for both students and teachers, including an accountability system.
10. Teacher efficacy is the belief in a teachers' ability to perform specific tasks in order to achieve desirable educational outcomes (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy Woolfolk, & Hoy, 1998).

Chapter II

Literature Review

Humans have sought to acquire a greater understanding of themselves and the world around them since the beginning of time. The literature review will show how individuals with disabilities sought out the same level of educational access that non-disabled individuals had to the United States education system through Civil Rights and special education legislation and litigation and through the modern day No Child Left Behind Act. The review will examine the disparate practices of special education; it will also examine teacher, cultural, and masculinity competency. Last, the review will look at how teachers' practices affect the education of students they teach.

Civil Rights and Special Education Legislation and Litigation

When talking about special education and the overrepresentation of African American males, it is important to address the civil rights laws and how special education is affected by those proceedings. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 laid the foundation for many legislative acts addressing race in the 20th Century. Unfortunately, the Civil Rights Act did not come without litigation influence. From the onset of the Plessy v. Ferguson separate-but-equal litigation by the Supreme Court to the admission of black students into the University of Maryland Law School in 1936 (as cited in Carter, 2004), individuals asserting their civil rights have been influential. The Civil Rights Act was a catalyst for many legal actions by the Department of Justice on state education agencies and local education agencies who failed to uphold the rights garnered by rulings outlawing desegregation (Daniel, 2005). The Civil Rights Act sought to grant all “persons a right to be free from discrimination or segregation on account of race/ethnicity, color,

religion, or national origin in the enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations of the public establishments" ("Civil Rights Act ", 1964, p. 2396). Daniel (2005) also pointed out that the Civil Rights Act brought unity among the three branches of government in an effort to fight injustice in America.

For children with disabilities, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 ("Education for All Handicapped Children Act," 1975) was comparable to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Blanchett, Mumford, & Beachum, 2005). The original intent of Education of All Handicapped Children Act or Public Law 94-142 was to require states

To establish a goal of providing full educational opportunities to all handicapped children; provide procedures for insuring that handicapped children and their parents or guardians are guaranteed procedural safeguards in decisions regarding identification, evaluation, and educational placement of handicapped children; establish procedures to insure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not handicapped; and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular education environment occurs only when the nature of severity of the handicapped is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactory; and, establish procedures to insure that testing and evaluation materials and procedures utilized for the purposes of classification and placement of handicapped children will be selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory. ("Education for All Handicapped Children Act," 1975, p. 1432)

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 was reauthorized in 1990 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments," 1990) which strengthened the civil rights of the disabled community (Turnbull, 2005). However, before the passage of IDEA, nearly half of America's four million children with disabilities were not receiving a public education (Losen & Orfield, 2002). Since the passage of IDEA, there have been great advancements with over "six million children with disabilities" (as cited in Losen & Orfield, 2002, p. XV) receiving free appropriate public education services. In 1998, an Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Compliance Report indicated that 1.5 million minority children were identified as having mental retardation, emotional disturbances, or specific learning disabilities, and over 876,000 of these were African American or Native American (as cited in Losen, 2002). The 2001 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) attempted to remedy the access crises to general curriculum in schools, and the unjustified segregation of students with disabilities regardless of race/ethnicity, gender and/or socio-economic status (Fierros & Conroy, 2002) by ensuring that students with disabilities were included in the statewide testing. In the initial implementation of IDEA, local education agencies were responsible for ensuring that students with disabilities gained access to school (Turnbull, 2005). This reauthorization of IDEA required schools to provide reports in the form of data of the continuum of educational services, so that students with disabilities could be educated with their non-disabled peers in a least restrictive environment. That least restrictive environment is measured by the percentage of the typical school day that a student with disabilities spends in the regular or "general" education classroom (Fierros & Conroy, 2002, p. 40). The concept of free appropriate public education in a least restrictive environment has not been interpreted the same for all students with disabilities.

The literature shows that African American and Hispanic boys have a greater probability than Whites and girls to be placed in a more restrictive educational setting during the regular school day (Blanchett, 2006; Cartledge, 2005; Fierros & Conroy, 2002; Hosp & Reschly, 2003, 2004; Lo & Cartledge, 2006; MacMillan & Reschly, 1998; McLesky et al., 1990; Murdick & Gartin, 1994; Salend & Duhaney, 2005). This more restrictive educational setting has led to limited exposure to the general education curriculum, but also the overrepresentation of males, specifically African Americans males in those high incident disabilities, like emotional/behavioral disorders and specific learning disabilities. Under IDEA, identifying a student as being eligible for special education services has been under scrutiny for years because of procedural subjectivity (Cartledge, 2005; Hosp & Reschly, 2003; Murdick & Gartin, 1994), and some think that special education is a place rather than a system of supports and services for students with special needs for which students are found eligible (Fierros & Conroy, 2002). Now, IDEA makes schools accountable not only for the overrepresented African Americans' academic success, but also for ensuring that those overrepresented minority groups meet the same academic standards that non-disabled peers must meet as set forth by the state education agency (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005) and implemented through the LEA. In 1997, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 97) was reauthorized. It required that states collect and monitor data from schools relevant to over-identification and restrictiveness by race/ethnicity and intervene when appropriate (Hehir, 2002). In the reauthorization of IDEA 97, accessibility was not the primary focus. This shift toward accountability of students with disabilities and aligning special education with the general education curriculum caused state education agencies and local education agencies to review the handling of special education services (Hardman, 2006). This alignment included two new tenets that were embedded in the law: (a) access,

involvement, and progress in a challenging general education curriculum; and (b) the need to make educational agencies accountable for students' learning (as cited in Hardman, 2006; Special Education, 2005).

In 2004, Congress reauthorized the Individual with Disabilities Education Act and renamed it the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 ("Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act ", 2004). The IDEA Improvement Act of 2004 (herein referred to as IDEA 2004) further strengthened the definition of its provisions in sections A through D ("Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act," 2004) and authorized national special education research ("Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act," 2004). The IDEA 2004's intent was to improve the academic readiness and academic results of infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities (*House Conference Report 108-779*, 2004). IDEA 2004 also attempted to strengthen its stance by ensuring that highly qualified teachers were teaching all students with disabilities, and that those teachers were accountable for state standards of learning set forth by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001(Hardman, 2006).

No Child Left Behind

The US Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) ("No Child Left Behind Act ", 2001). Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I was the largest financial component, and the original legislative intent of Title I was "to provide financial assistance to local educational agencies serving areas with high concentrations of children from low-income families to expand and improve their educational programs by various means" (as cited in Thomas & Brady, 2005, p. 52). However, NCLB has shown positive implications for students

with disabilities that can potentially address the institutionalized “segregative effects of placement” (Fierros & Conroy, 2002, p. 40) in the form of accountability of all students. The original intent of ESEA was to include greater academic accountability for students, to increase local control, to improve teaching methods, and to expand options for parents (Borman, 2005; Thomas & Brady, 2005); all these provisions still exist in NCLB. Thomas and Brady (2005) argue that the current accountability requirements under NCLB lacked an understanding of the complex issues involved in serving disadvantaged students in the public schools. The reauthorization of ESEA extended the provisions to include a high emphasis on accountability. This accountability ensured that students would make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward academic standards set forth by SEA, and that progress would directly affect federal funding. Adequate yearly progress included grade-level proficiency in reading, mathematics, writing, and science in grades 3rd through 8th and 10th through 12th by the 2013-2014 school years ("No Child Left Behind Act ", 2001; Thomas & Brady, 2005).

Adequate yearly progress applies to all students. Under NCLB, all students, which includes student without disabilities, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency and students from racial/ethnic groups are a part of local education agencies accountable for meeting the standards set by the state education agencies (Hardman, 2006; Thomas & Brady, 2005). Thomas and Brady (2005) report that in a national study of the achievement gap, 43 percent of African Americans, 36 percent of Hispanics, 35 percent of American Indians/Alaska Natives, and 25 percent of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders were below the basic level of competency in reading, in comparison to 17 percent of Whites (U.S. Department of Education, 1998 as cited in Thomas & Brady, 2005). Because of the reauthorization of NCLB, the Title I program for “Improving Academic Achievement of the

Disadvantaged” that ensured “that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education” (Thomas & Brady, 2005, p. 56) is now held accountable for its original intent. Under NCLB, 95 percent of all students within each subgroup must be tested in the school, and the school must make AYP, even for students who have been enrolled for only one year (“No Child Left Behind Act”, 2001). Students’ individual academic demands and academic deficiencies must be addressed by the general education teacher within the regular classroom. Teachers must have the developmental knowledge of a diverse student population to educate America’s school aged children.

Disparate Practices of Special Education

In Lloyd Dunn’s (1968) historic research, he offered explanations as to why overrepresentation exists among African American school age children (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006; Patton, 1998; Reschly, 1997). His explanation of overrepresentation consisted of a student’s socio-economic status. However, there continues to be no significant solution to this phenomenon. With Civil Rights legislation in place, there continue to be disparate practices in the education of African American youth. Discrimination in school discipline and special education is at an extreme high within this country. The Schott Foundation for Public Education (2006) reported that African American students comprise only 17 percent of the public school students, but 41 percent of special education placements, 85 percent of which are boys. America’s schools are graduating only 42 percent of the African American male students who enter the 9th grade. Edney (2004) reported that between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of white students at or above basic achievement levels in math was 72 percent; for African American, that number was 32 percent. According to the Advancement Project, African American students comprise 17 percent of the public enrollment, but account for

33 percent of the suspensions (p. 37). However, a Harvard University Civil Rights Project reported that African Americans represented 16 percent of the national student population, but made up 25 percent of the students labeled emotionally or behaviorally disturbed (EBD) (as cited in Tracking Urged, 2001).

The Schott Foundation for Public Education reported that African American male student enrollment was 9 percent of the general education population, but 21 percent of that 9 percent were identified with mental retardation. This report indicated that 22 percent of the 9 percent of African American male students have emotional disturbance, and 13 percent of the total 9 percent were identified with specific learning disabilities (Sen, 2006). This same report stated that white male student enrollment made up 31 percent of the general education population, 29 percent of the total 31 percent of White male students were identified with mental retardation. As well, 46 percent of the total 31 percent of White male student enrollment were identified as emotionally disturbed. Also, 40 percent of the total 31 percent of White male student enrollment were identified with specific learning disabilities (Holzman, 2006). Alarming rate of minority and male students receive special education services throughout America.

Some research says that this is due to racial, gender, cultural, and linguistic biases in the special education process (Harry & Anderson, 1994). MacMillan's research suggests that lack of student achievement is the cause of overrepresentation of minority students in special education (MacMillan & Reschly, 1998). The Office of Special Education seems to think that each state should track the number of minority students (non-white) who are receiving special education services (Office of Special Office Special Education, 1999). The problem with keeping such data is that once the data are collected, LEA's have no systematic plan to address the needs of minority students who fail to meet the educational standards. It is through recent IDEA and

NCLB reforms that teachers must use research based instructional practices to address students' learning needs of both disabled and non-disabled students. One particular instructional practice may not work for all learners regardless of gender, cultural, or socio-economic background. Educators must examine which of those instructional practices assist LEA's and SEA's in meeting the adequate yearly progress.

Teacher Competency

In classrooms across United States, there is a diverse population of students, but a less diverse population of educators (Kea & Utley, 1998; Nieto, 2000b, 2006; Sleeter, 1992a). The fabric of America has changed over the past decades, and the education system is no longer comprised of the traditional White, middle class classroom. Educators now step into classrooms filled with students from different ethnic backgrounds, different learning styles, and even different languages. Not only do classrooms have these differences, but classrooms are also integrated with students with special needs. These special needs can range from all levels of learning disabilities, emotional/behavioral disorders, and even high functioning mental retardation. Teachers are being asked to teach students who come to them cognitively underdeveloped and even culturally different from them. Gay (2002) calls it "cultural influences" that are variables in how individuals' learning and teaching occurs (p. 617). Garcia (1991) notes that

All classroom activities and features – classroom management techniques, instructional strategies, and, of course, self-concepts, operate on assumptions which are embedded in cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs. There is no such thing as a culturally neutral or culturally free teaching activity. Teaching activities spring from unconscious assumptions one makes; they are based on one's cultural perspectives. Likewise, their

cultural perspectives influence students' learning and behaviors. What students learn and what teachers teach are ultimately filtered and strained through their cultural sieves. (pp. 6-7)

Although many teachers in the classrooms across America take on their middle-class norms as universal (G. Gay, 2002; G. Gay & Kirkland, 2003), they teach students from different value systems. These presumptions of universality are the major causes of inequities in the educational opportunities provided to students from diverse cultural, gender, economic, and ability backgrounds (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2003). What effective instruction practices will teachers use to ensure that all students are meeting their full academic potential?

Cultural Competency

Murrell (2006) states that in pre-service teacher education programs, the notion of cultural competency is derived from multicultural education; however, he never offers a clear definition of cultural competence nor multicultural education. One researcher defines multicultural education as a reform movement designed to bring about educational equity for all students, including those from different race/ethnicities, ethnic groups, social classes, exceptionalities, and sexual orientations (Banks, 1992; Kea & Utley, 1998). Jokikokko (2005) defines cultural competence as an intercultural competence, intercultural sensitivity, cultural awareness, intercultural/cross-cultural/efficacy, expertise, or a cultural responsiveness (Bennett, 1995; Pedersen, Constantine, & Sue, 2006; D. W. Sue & Arredondo, 1992; Derald Wing Sue & Sue, 1990). McAllister and Irvine (2000) state that a teacher education program that is culturally competent is one that enables teachers to recognize and understand their own worldviews; only then are they able to understand the worldviews of their students.

It is further revealed through the literature that for teachers to interact effectively with their students, they must confront their own ethnic, language, cultural, and institutional differences (Banks, 1984; Gillette & Boyle-Baise, 1996; McAllister & Irvine, 2000). McAllister and Irvine (2000) give a more thorough explanation of cultural competence by reviewing three different models of cross-cultural development (as cited in Hoopes, 1977). They included Helms's Racial Identity Theory, which defined cultural competence as a development of one's racial or ethnic identity. The second framework/model is Banks's Typology of Ethnicity, which is not race/ethnicity specific and can be used with individuals of any ethnic or racial group (Hoopes, 1977). Within Banks's theory, there were six stages of development: ethnic psychological captivity, ethnic encapsulation, ethnic identity clarification, bi-ethnicity, multi-ethnicity and reflective nationalism, and globalism and global competency (Banks, 1995; Hoopes, 1977; McAllister & Irvine, 2000). In the final framework/model, Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity is broken down into two aspects. The first highlights a decrease in ethnocentrism by looking at denial, defense, and minimization; the second aspect increases ethno-relativism, i.e. cultural differences, through acceptance, adaptation, and integration (Hoopes, 1977; McAllister & Irvine, 2000). Each framework would add a great deal to the advancement of teacher competency as it relates to students from diverse backgrounds.

A 2004 national report about public school teachers found that 74 percent of the teaching force is white middle class women; however, the students whom they teach are 86 percent non-white (Statistics, 2006). Parsons (2005) stated that teachers who were successful with African American students engaged in culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy targets three areas: (a) achievement for all students; (b) the development of cultural competence

where students accept and affirm their cultural identities; and (c) the fostering of critical perspectives that challenge inequitable social structures (King, 1990; Parsons, 2005). Kea and Utley (1998) point out that the lack of personnel from diverse racial/ethnic groups creates conditions that distract from building a successful culturally competent school where all students experience academic success. Some teacher education programs offer pre-service teachers the opportunity to reflect on their experiences out in the field. However, this reflection failed to receive feedback from individuals of other diverse backgrounds (non-white) or those with experiences in urban areas of the country, and in turn leaves the prospective teacher less informed of the practical experience needed. Gay and Kirkland (2003; Genor, 2005; Vavrus, 2002) point out that this so-called reflection fails to address race/ethnicity, ethnic diversity, and social justice in classroom practices.

Teacher education programs are not preparing teachers to effectively address the needs of the culturally diverse classrooms in America today. For many prospective teachers, the notion of being culturally competent is a far-fetched ideology because many teachers work out of the mentality of the White, middle class American paradigm that is their own worldview (Lim & Ole-Boune, 2005; McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Scott, 2003). James (2002) points out that a teacher must understand that life experiences prior to formal teaching, including the experience of being a student, inform one's understanding of teaching as a career. It is this development that offers understanding of teaching without regard to race, gender or socio-economic status of a student. In other words, teachers understand each of the students with whom they come in contact. McAllister and Irvin (2000) further explain that teacher education programs should develop situations that allow pre-service teachers opportunities to not only reflect in a journal, but to also process forms of prejudice and discrimination through the development of appropriate

understanding, attitudes, and social and cognitive action skills (Bennett, 1995; Hoopes, 1977).

This is further asserted when researchers and scholars agree that teachers tend to make distinctive or subjective judgments about students' school and life successes and failures, especially when students and teachers come from different racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds (Festus E. Obiakor, Obi, & Algozzine, 2001; F.E. Obiakor & Schwenn, 1996; Rotatori & Obi, 1999).

Coutinho, Oswald, and Best (2002) attempted to link the overrepresentation of minority students and the lack of culture competence in teacher education programs across the United States. Oswald, Coutinho, Best, and Singh did a study in 1999 that identified patterns in special education, using socio-economic status and race/ethnicity as variables (as cited in Hosp & Reschly, 2004). The study concluded that poverty was a strong predictor, but race/ethnicity had a significant influence in both emotional disability and mental retardation referrals. Kea and Utley (1998) state that minorities have been represented disproportionately in the special education population for more than 25 years.

It has been stated that during the pre-Civil Rights era, schools became the gatekeepers to eliminate those who failed to assimilate into the mainstream of America (Boykin, 2000; Festus E. Obiakor, Utley, Smith, & Harris-Obiakor, 2002). As America's educators observe the cruel and deliberate aftermath of segregation on individuals with disabilities and African Americans, one can still witness the inequality in regular and special education (Festus E. Obiakor et al., 2001; Festus E. Obiakor et al., 2002). With NCLB placing major mandates on local education agencies to set and meet adequate yearly progress for "all students" enrolled in their schools (Public Law 107-110, 2001), it has become imperative that teachers enter the classroom equipped to teach all students. Now school systems are looking for new teachers who have the

ability to work in a more diverse system and effectively manage classroom behaviors and the pressure to meet the demands of state standards of learning or curriculum. Some suggestions have been made toward a comprehensive support model that focuses on pulling together the individual students, families, schools, communities, and governments to bring success to this student population (Festus E. Obiakor et al., 2002).

Another perspective in addressing the overrepresentation of African American male students is what Chamberlain (2005) calls Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) learners. This approach focuses on the overrepresentation of some cultural groups in specific special education categories, which include biased assessment practices that may lead to overrepresentation within the minority student population. Kea and Utley (1998) offer a solution to culturally disproportionate representation by (a) training of culturally and linguistically diverse teachers in teacher preparation programs, (b) including multicultural education perspectives in special education programs, and (c) implementing culturally responsive instruction in classroom settings (p. 44).

With the future of special education and its infusion into regular education under an extreme overhaul from IDEA to NCLB, students with special needs and students from culturally diverse backgrounds would look very different. Gay (2002) suggests that reform in teacher education programs should include critical cultural consciousness; culturally responsive classroom climates; learning communities; multicultural curriculum content and culturally congruent instructional strategies (G. Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Such improvements may prevent minorities and male students from being referred to special education and may assist in the transfer into the regular education settings.

Diversity in the Classroom

There is a growing diverse student population in schools across the United States (G. Gay, 2002; Kea & Utley, 1998; Nieto, 2000a; 2003; Sleeter, 1992b). With the litigation of *Brown v. Board of Education* ("Brown I," 1954) and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Civil Rights Act," 1964), African Americans have gained greater access to public education. Today classrooms are not only filled with students from different ethnic backgrounds, but also filled with students from different learning styles, languages, and even behavioral mannerisms. In addition to the differences cited above students with disabilities are also included in those classrooms. Because of student differences, teachers are asked to teach students who come to the classroom cognitively underdeveloped, culturally different, and even economically different. Although teachers are required to teach all students, teacher education programs do not prepare teachers effectively to teach students from diverse populations across the U.S., especially African American boys (G. Gay, 2002; Parsons, 2005; Skarbrevik, 2002).

Masculinity Competence

As early as biblical times, the discussion of manhood and/or masculinity has been a topic for understanding one's self. The Book of 1 Corinthians, the thirteenth chapter, verse 11, states, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (Paul, 1986 King James Version). To understand manhood or masculinity, one must first understand and reflect on a man's childhood experiences. Rob Gilbert and Pam Gilbert (1998) suggest that to see a boy's position of masculinity or his understanding of self, one needs to understand that boy's discourse. Connell (2005) states that masculinity is shaped by life's daily practices or experiences during boyhood. Another way of

saying this is that masculinity is manifested through a boy's or man's performances or responses to life experiences (Swain, 2006).

In defining masculinity, one must examine feminism and how feminism evoked change in researchers' approaches to effectively addressing the needs of girls (Sommers, 2000). Carol Gilligan (1990), studied the crisis of girls in America and in her study it was reported that girls were being "short changed" (as cited in Sommers, 2000) by a masculine curriculum that was developed for white male students (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998). Also from the feminist movement, Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley state that "feminism has relativized masculinity and man's claim to authority in all domains" (as cited in Henwood, Griffin, & Phoenix, 1998 p.156). The Feminist Movement has prompted special treatment and special programs (Connell, 1996) for girls in educational institutions across America that were once established for white male students (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998).

However, because of the success of the feminist movement and the advancements for girls in the area of education (Warren, 2003), boys have suffered greatly (Swain, 2006). Researchers have found that boys' and girls' academic performance is related to the differences in teachers' expectations, not to the students' ability (Clifton, Perry, Parsonson, & Hryniuk, 1986). Other research revealed that in the classroom, girls' and boys' performances in reading were equivalent. However, teachers referred almost twice as many boys as girls for help in reading (Henning-Stout, 1993). McIntyre and Tong (1998) noted that a majority of America's elementary classrooms are taught by female teachers with a passive style; however, the aggressive socialization of boys is different, which results in lower tolerance of male students' behaviors. The researchers also noted that female teachers' low tolerance of male students contributes to a special education referral. These academic gaps between boys and girls are

linked to masculinity issues in boys and ultimately can be a cause for misdiagnosing, over and under representation, and mis-education of males and specifically African American males (Kunjufu, 2005b).

White Male Masculinity

White male masculinity has been defined in numerous terms from middle class masculinity, working class masculinity (Archer & Yamashita, 2003; Connell, 1996; Whitehead, 2003), and even what Connell (1996) calls hegemonic masculinity. The middle class definition of a masculine man is a man who “exhibits a commitment to work and personal achievement, a high-status career within the professions, and recognition of his achievements” (Whitehead, 2003 p.289). Peggy McIntosh (as cited in Atkinson, 1998) defines this middle class masculinity as “White privilege” where White Americans experience advantages and entitlements to which other ethnic groups are not privileged (p. 16). Connell, Gilbert, and Gilbert described four areas of “masculinizing practice”: management and policy/organizational practices (including discipline), teacher and pupil relations, the curriculum, and sports/games (as cited in Swain, 2006).

Working class masculinity is characterized by manual labor, emphasizing toughness, aggression, and sexual prowess (Whitehead, 2003). Archer (as cited in Archer & Yamashita, 2003) stated that working class masculinity is conceptualized synonymous with white working class men. Arnot (2000) argued that the working class masculinity has shifted as a result of de-industrialist restructuring. Because of this shifting, White male masculinity is gravitating from the traditional values toward a hegemonic masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity is conceptualized by the characteristics of being culturally dominant or in a position of cultural authority and leadership (Connell, 2005). Hegemonic

masculinity has gained popularity among British, Australian, German, and even North American scholars (Bernard, Keefauver, Elsworth, & Naylor, 1981; Connell, 1996, 2005) in explaining how this masculinity affects the school fiber and the development of boys academically.

African American Male Masculinity

African American male masculinity is often defined by including what White male masculinity is not (Henwood et al., 1998; McClure, 2006, p. 157). Harris (1998) states that the African American male masculinity's emphasis is on physical strength, an expectation of both submissiveness and strength in women, and angry and impulsive behavior that is often violent (1998). Stephanie McClure (2006) characterizes black masculinity as dysfunctional when compared to the white model.

Another form of African American masculinity is the Africentric masculinity, which does not emphasize competitiveness, individuality, and emotional detachment like the white male masculinity (McClure, 2006). Africentric masculinity emphasizes community needs and cooperation among individuals (Akbar, 1991; McClure, 2006). Middle class African American men gravitate toward both the White ideal and the Africentric ideal (Akbar, 1991). However, African American men and boys of lower class environments associate male masculinity with sexual promiscuity, toughness, thrill seeking, and the use of violence in interpersonal interactions (Harris, 1998). Alternative masculine behaviors of African American boys and men consist of cultural adapting to structural societal constraints, leading to the "tough guy" (Harris, 1998) posturing in the classrooms and playgrounds. These alternative masculine behaviors consist of navigating between white male masculinity, black male masculinity, and Africentric masculinity (Harris, 1998). This attempt by African American boys to navigate these masculine expectations becomes stressful, and they exhibit inappropriate patterns of behaviors that are misunderstood

and misidentified by the classroom teacher (Harris, 1998; Mahalik, Pierre, & S.C., 2006 ; Swain, 2006). African American male students' pursuit of an education or being successful academically becomes irrelevant because of this battle of social acceptance and physiological understanding of their place within the fabric of the community expectations and the school expectations (Gordon et al., 2005; Howard, 1999). This can be a variable that leads to the misdiagnoses and mis-education of African American male students from disadvantaged situations.

Although masculinity within the school and classroom fiber has played a major role in the academic success of boys (Benjamin, 2001; Connell, 1996, 2005; Czopp, Lasane, Sweigard, Bradshaw, & Hammer, 1998; P. James, 1999; Renold, 2001; Warrington, Younger, & McLellan, 2003), it is imperative that teachers' inappropriate responses toward these actions do not perpetuate a defeatism mentality in these males, and educators need to find effective ways to educate them.

Teachers' Practices

Jones (1989) suggested that role modeling is not a random function of life, but rather a social characteristic of the individual, and others are influenced by the resources of that role model, that model being the classroom teacher. Teachers must effectively address the cultural and masculinity pedagogy that is needed in the classrooms. Connell (1996) suggests that schools have direct positive or negative influences on boys' development in school. Schools around the country have identities associated with academic competitive point-scoring, over-confident socialization, sporting activities, and career and status conscious versions of masculinity (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998, p. 115).

As early as preschool, boys are exposed to masculine images in the school as behavioral expectations. This masculine image is best described as “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell, 1996, p. 209), which can “offer a range of ways of being male but separately and together privilege some as superior” (Connell, 2005, p. 13). It can also be either stable/unstable, more visible/invisible, more passive/violent, and more conformist/resistant to the formal school authority (Connell, 1996; Swain, 2006) throughout the classroom or school culture. Teachers tend to reinforce feminine rather than masculine characteristics in their students through the delivery of instruction (Czopp et al., 1998), which deliberately emphasizes gender differences (Connell, 1996).

The pressure to perform at a hegemonic masculinity or traditional masculine level (Czopp et al., 1998) in most school settings can cause psychological imbalances during the developmental stages of male students, particularly African American males (Kunjufu, 2005a, 2005b). Sexton (as cited in McIntyre & Tong, 1998) states that schools attempt to feminize boys through passive and non-competitive curriculum instruction. The delivery method of instruction can cause African American male students to work against the teacher, causing poor readiness or academic development.

The confusion between school behaviors and masculinity characteristics is that the instructional environment is not conducive to male students' optimal learning during the primary school years (Daniels, Creese, Hey, Leonard, & Smith, 2001). It is this contradiction that causes confusion in masculinity identity, and males present themselves as less academically conscientious (Czopp et al., 1998). School aged boys turn to other means of attracting the attention of their teachers by what is called “emergent masculinity” in the form of disruptive behaviors or poor academic performance (Daniels et al., 2001, p. 113).

Often teachers misinterpret masculinity behaviors as defiant and uncooperative. Czopp, Lasane, Sweigard, Bradshaw, and Hammer (1998) describe individuals with these behaviors of *cool pose*, *swagger*, or *posturing* as being emotionless, extremely self-confident, and always in control of their surroundings. In a study by Renold (2001), boys who displayed this “cool pose” displayed disruptive and rule-breaking behaviors. Often these boys are considered high achievers; however, they avoid studious behaviors for fear of being ridiculed as geeks, nerds, and squares (Renold, 2001). According to Mickelson (as cited in Harris, 1998), African American males will devalue and even forego intellectual interest to avoid ridicule and shame from their peers for academic success (Harris, 1998). Because of the avoidance behavior of African American males, teachers are confronted with an enormous challenge. This also poses a serious question about teacher’s abilities to teach African American male students.

Gay (2002) cautions about accepting White American middle-class norms as universal because this approach causes inequalities in the educational opportunities of students from diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, socio-economic, and ability backgrounds. Gay (2002) also points out that racial and gender prejudices distort the learning process, and teachers must be aware of their own racial and gender prejudices before and during their teaching experiences.

Waxman, Huang, Anderson, and Weinstein (1997) give several examples of research on the effects of classroom instruction in effective schools and ineffective schools. Teachers’ understanding of differences in learning styles and curriculum scope and sequence are vital in achieving and sustaining academic success of all students (Gersten, Chard, & Baker, 2000), particularly males.

Teachers’ understanding of a student’s learning style is important; however, teachers must also have the knowledge to apply those learning styles through the delivery of instruction

(Pettigrew & Buell, 1989; Waxman et al., 1997). Farkas (2003) notes that the Dunn and Dunn Learning-Style Model, which has five major stimuli a) environment, b) emotional, c) sociological, d) physiological, and e) psychological. The Learning-Style Model has been found to “increase academic achievement and improve attitudes toward learning in urban, suburban and even in rural schools” (p. 44). Honigsfeld and Dunn (2003) studied the similarities and differences of learning styles of males and females and found that males tend to be more visual, tactile, and kinesthetic learners, and female students tend to be more auditory, parent-motivated, and self-motivated (Honigsfeld & Dunn, 2003). Gay (2002) states that if teachers know the attributes of diverse learning styles and how those styles manifest in study habits and readiness skills, they will be able to teach students from diverse backgrounds (Love & Kruger, 2005; Waxman et al., 1997).

However, teachers' understanding of multicultural competence and even male competence cannot be viewed as an educational reform but as an instructional tool that an educator must have to effectively reach all students (Brandon, 2003). Brownell and Walther-Thomas (1997) state that teachers either deny the role culture plays in the classroom or are unaware of its importance. If teachers are to be successful at teaching all students to a level that meets all the unique needs of students with disabilities or without disabilities, it is imperative that teachers build a learning community that would incorporate diverse learners regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, or socio-economic status (Lane, Mahdavi, & Borthwick-Duffy, 2003; Love & Kruger, 2005) in order to improve student academic success (Waxman et al., 1997).

As present and future teachers face an ever-changing classroom that continues to enroll students who have learning and emotional/behavioral disparities across gender, ethnicity, and even socio-economic status, teachers must prepare themselves to face the challenge. Teachers

must be prepared to teach all students who enter their classroom. The recent reauthorization of the Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act and No Child Left Behind Act are holding teachers accountable for the academic success of all students ages 3 through 21 ("Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act," 2004; No Child Left Behind Act", 2001). With all these changes in the U.S. education system, researchers must address the phenomenon of overrepresentation of male students in special education.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine how West Virginia teachers' perceptions influence their decisions during the special education referral process and how their perceptions may affect referral decisions across genders and race/ethnicity lines in special education in the categories of learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disorders. Specifically, the study examined variables such as academic achievement, academic achievement concerns, behavior, emotional/behavior concerns, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, and gender that teachers used when making special education referral decisions. This investigation aimed to provide insight into teachers' perceptions of variables involved in initiating a special education referral and how the effects of those perceptions leads to disparity of referrals of male students. As seen in the literature review, numerous studies have examined the overrepresentation of African American male students in the early years of special education. The goal for this study was to add to this body of work and further the understanding of the relationship between teacher perceptions during special education referral process and the actual percentage of male students in special education.

Research Questions

This study allowed the researcher to examine patterns of teacher referral across gender, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, academic achievement, and behavior. This study examined teachers' perceptions (self-reporting) of the variables that influence their decisions about referrals and teachers' perspectives of their preparation and/or professional development related to the special education referral.

The questions were as follows:

1. What are the patterns of elementary general education teacher special education referrals across gender and race/ethnicity for learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disorders?
 - a. Which variables most often (academic achievement, academic achievement concerns, behavior, emotional/behavior concerns, gender, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status) influence teacher special education referral decisions?
 - b. When comparing referral decisions of female teachers and those of male teachers, are there differences in special education referral patterns?
2. Do teacher responses reveal disparate referral decisions across white and African American male students and across male and female students when using the variables of academic achievement, behavior, and socio-economic status?
3. Do elementary general education teachers who attend professional development training related to special education have a lower referral rate for male students?

Participants

The teachers who participated in this study taught in one of the ten counties targeted by 2004 West Virginia House Bill 4669 ("Language Act," 2004), because of the number of enrolled "disadvantaged, minority and under-achieving students in each county, in which the number of African American students exceeded five percent" ("Language Act," 2004). House Bill 4669 identified 15 elementary schools within 10 counties, and 8 of those counties participated in this study. A total of 497 elementary teachers were given the opportunity to participate in this study. This study expected at least a ten percent return, for a sample size of $n = 49$ full-time elementary general education teachers. The following is a list of the ten counties and the number of schools

identified within the county. Berkeley has one school, Cabell has two schools, Fayette has zero elementary schools, Jefferson has two schools, Kanawha has two schools, Marion has two schools, Mercer has one school, McDowell has one school, Ohio has two schools, and Raleigh has two schools. A secondary source provided county demographics of students with disabilities by gender and race/ethnicity. See Appendix A for detailed demographics of each county and school targeted in this study.

Survey Instrument

A survey was developed by the researcher to assess teachers' perceptions of variables that may influence their decisions during the referral of male students, specifically African American males, for special education services. The survey had a total of 37 questions divided into three research questions and one demographics category. Twenty-four questions used an ordinal 5-point Likert scale with possible responses 1 = never, 3 = seldom, and 5 = always. Seven of the questions were open-ended, qualitative items to inform the researcher about teachers' responses or non-responses to particular variables (e.g., academic, race/ethnicity, or gender) that may affect their referral decisions. The demographic section consists of six questions that range from years of experience, earned degree, certification, county in which they teach, to gender and race/ethnicity.

In a 2007 pilot study, undergraduate teacher education majors and special education faculty were asked to complete the survey instrument online, for review of wording of questions to assist with making the language more understandable to all survey groups. Several items were taken out that did not directly answer the research questions. Once the pilot data were reviewed, several answer formats were changed from check boxes to radio buttons. The format of the

Likert style was addressed, and some of the drop down menus was changed. Refer to the survey in Appendix B of this document.

Design

The overall purpose of this study was to examine how teachers make special education referral decisions. To examine this phenomenon, a mixed methods expansion design was used. This design allowed the use of different methods for different inquiry components (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). The Spearman Rho correlation coefficient was used to transform raw ordinal scale data into ranked order. Those ranked data were used in the correlation of variables (L. R. Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006).

The following paragraphs outline the design and analysis for each research questions.

Question 1.a, asked which student variables (academic achievement, behavior, gender, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status) most often influence teacher special education referral decisions? To answer question 1.a., survey questions (SQ) were analyzed using the Spearman Rho correlation coefficient to determine the correlation between gender (SQ's 3, 4, 5, and 6), race/ethnicity (SQ 10), of students and variables teachers use during the special education referral decisions. See table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Spearman Rho Correlation Coefficient for Research Question 1.a

Research Question 1.a. Quantitative Analysis						
Race/ethnicity Gender	SES (SQ. 8)	Race (SQ. 10)	A.A. (SQ. 12)	A.A.C. (SQ. 13)	B.F.(SQ. 15)	EBDC (SQ. 16)
White Males (SQ. 3)						
African Am. Males (SQ. 4)						
White Females (SQ 5)						
African Am. Females (SQ. 6)						
Numbers in parentheses represent survey items. SES = socio-economic status, Race = Race, A.A. = Academic Achievement, A.A.C. = Academic Achievement Concern, B.F = Behavior Factors, EBDC = Emotional/Behavior Disorder Concerns						

The researcher used a constant comparative content analysis of research question 1.a. when examining open-ended survey items 9, 11, 14, 17, and 21 which represented variables teachers used during the special education referral process. The researcher utilized the triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative data to compare and contrast the results of the data to ascertain the special education referral patterns.

Question 1.b asked when comparing referral decisions of female teachers and those of male teachers are there differences in special education referral patterns. When analyzing question 1.b, the researcher used a Mann Whitney U test to examine if the differences between males and female teacher's (SQ 36) decision making during the special education referral process.

The researcher did constant comparative content analysis of research question 1.b. when examining open-ended survey items 9, 11, 14, 17, and 21 which represent a narrative of variables teachers used during the special education referral process. The researcher then utilized the triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative analysis to compare and contrast the results of the data to ascertain any differences in the pattern across teachers' gender.

Research question 2, asked if teacher responses revealed a disparate referral decision across white (SQ 3) and African American (SQ 4) male students and across male and female (SQ 5, 6) students when using the variables of socio-economic status (SQ 8), race/ethnicity (SQ 10), academic achievement (SQ 12), and behavior (SQ 15). The researcher used the Spearman Rho correlation coefficient to examine the correlation between factors teachers say influence their referral decisions of the number of white and African American males referred for special education services. See Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Student's Race/Ethnicity and Gender Correlation

Research Question 2 Quantitative Analysis						
Race/ethnicity Gender	SES (SQ. 8)	Race (SQ. 10)	A.A. (SQ. 12)	A.A.C. (SQ. 13)	B.F.(SQ. 15)	EBDC (SQ. 16)
Males (SQ. 3 and 4)						
Females (SQ. 5 and 6)						
Numbers in parentheses represent survey items. SES = Socio-Economic Status, Race = Race, A.A. = Academic Achievement, A.A.C. = Academic Achievement Concern, B.F = Behavior Factors, EBDC = Emotional/Behavior Disorder Concerns						

Finally, to answer research question 3 the Spearman Rho was used to analyze the data. The researcher examined the data for correlations between number of special education courses taken in their teacher preparation programs (SQ 22) or special education professional development training (SQ 28), and the change in special education referral rate (SQ 29). See Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Special Education Courses and Professional Development

Research Question 3 Quantitative Analysis				
Race/ethnicity Gender	Wht.Males (SQ. 3)	AA Males (SQ. 4)	Wht.Females (SQ 5)	AA. Females (SQ. 6)
No. of SPED Courses (SQ 22)				
No of PDS (SQ. 28)				
PDS vs. No. of Referrals (SQ 29)				
Numbers in parentheses represent survey items. Wht = White, AA = African American, SPED = Special Education, PDS = Professional Development Sessions				

An advantage to using a mixed method design is that it incorporates the entire scope of the study by increasing the validity of the numerical data and the descriptive content of participants. Mixed method design comes however, with limitations: inadequate studying of the phenomenon from two separate sources, and the difficulty in comparing the results of the two analyses using data from the same participants (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). For this particular study, survey questions yielding quantitative responses requiring teachers to respond by selecting the most appropriate answers based on a likert scale. Survey questions yielding a qualitative response allowed teachers the opportunity to further expand their thoughts through responding to open-ended survey questions.

Procedure

In the initial stages of the research, the researcher met in April 2008, with the director of the Achievement Gap House Bill 4669 (Gillespie, Ashbaugh, & DeFiore, 2002) to endorse the study. A letter was sent out to the teacher stating the purpose of the study via email. See

Appendix C. After endorsement of the study, permission from the West Virginia University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects was sought. The materials submitted to IRB included the endorsement letters from the director of the West Virginia Achievement Project, the survey, and information on the URL (http://community.wvu.edu/~bcj001/jones_question.html) for participants. A meeting was held with the director of the West Virginia Achievement Project HB and his team of coordinators who made initial contact with the teachers and distributed the survey via email. The researcher did a second and third email to all 497 teachers via email through six coordinators.

The site coordinators distributed the web address to the elementary regular education teachers to complete the online survey to examine the teachers' perceptions of the variables that affect their special education referral of male students. Upon completion, the survey data were automatically saved to the Simple Forms program. The participants had three weeks to access the survey. Within that three-week period, the researcher made checks to see if there were sufficient numbers of teachers completing the survey

To address non-responses, Smith and Glass (1987) suggest selecting an adequate sample size and reserving enough participants to address non-responses if the initial sample size does not reach at least ninety percent of the targeted sample size. The researcher examined the entire population of teachers (497 teachers) working out of 10 schools participating in the West Virginia Achievement Gap HB 4669. Once the data were in the researcher expected at least 10 percent of the teachers to complete the survey, forming a sample size of 49 teachers.

Data Analyses

The Spearman Rho correlation coefficient (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003) is used when transforming raw ordinal or nominal data into ranked order. Once the data are ranked, a

correlation can be examined. In this study, the researcher examined which variables (academic achievement, academic achievement concerns, behavior, emotional/behavior concerns, race/ethnicity, gender or socio-economic status) most often influence teacher special education referral decisions. A correlation between student's race/ethnicity and those variables that teachers use during special education referral decisions was analyzed. Survey item numbers 3, 4, 5, and 6 (represent the gender and race/ethnicity of the students) looked individually at any correlation between survey item numbers 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, and 16 individually (which represent the variables). See Table 3.1. Then a constant comparative analysis was done with survey items 9, 11, 14, and 17 (representing the variables in an open ended format). A triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative analysis was done to compare and contrast the results of the data to ascertain if there were any patterns in the variables teachers use during the special education referral process.

The researcher wrote research question 1.b. to compare referral decisions of female teachers and those of male teachers for differences in the special education referral patterns. The used the Mann Whitney U Test which is a nonparametric test to examine the differences between teachers' gender and the difference in the variables used during special education referral decisions. This test was used due to low response to this question. Survey item number 36 addressed the gender of teachers. A comparative analysis of the correlation was done individually with the participant's response to gender of students represented in survey items 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, and 16 (representing the variables). See Table 3.2. A convergence of analysis was also done individually with the constant comparative analysis done of survey items 9, 11, 14, and 17 (representing the variables in an open-ended format).

Research question 2, asked if teachers' responses reveal disparate special education referral decisions across white and African American male students and across male and female students when using the variables (socio-economic status, academic achievement, and behavior)? The researcher used the Spearman Rho correlation coefficient to examine the correlation between white and African American male students as represented in survey items 3 and 4. The researcher did a correlation between male and female students, represented in survey items 3, 4 and 5, 6. See Table 3.2.

Research question 3 analyzed the correlation between teachers who have taken special education courses and/or professional development with special education content and how that correlation affects special education referral rate. Correlation of survey items 3, 4, 5, and 6 was compared individually with survey items 22, 28, and 29. See Table 3.3.

The demographic information addressed on the survey was used to examine the make-up of teachers across counties within West Virginia. The demographic information was also used to eliminate elementary teachers who currently or previously taught special education.

Once the raw data were received, they were imported into SPSS from Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to do Spearman Rho correlation coefficient and Mann Whitney U analysis. The researcher examined significant relationships of the variables that elementary regular education teachers used to make special education referrals decisions. The researcher compared and contrasted the open-ended responses of teachers and their numerical responses for any disparity between quantitative and qualitative data. If there was significant relationship of the variables, then the correlation of variables and how those correlations show relationships with training of teachers was examined. This research can be used to inform regular education teachers, school administration, and state officials in best practices and policies of special education.

Chapter IV

Results

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings of this study. The chapter begins with a review of the research questions, analysis procedures, and description of the sample. The results of the data analysis are then presented to answer the research questions posed by this study.

Research Questions

1. What are the patterns of elementary general education teachers' decision to refer a student for special education services?
 - a. Which variables (academic achievement, academic achievement concerns, behavior, emotional/behavior concerns, gender, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status) most often influence teacher special education referral decisions?
 - b. When comparing referral decisions of female teachers and those of male teachers, are there differences in special education referral patterns?
2. Do teacher responses reveal a disparate referral decisions across white and African American male students and across male and female students when using the variables academic achievement, behavior, or socio-economic status?
3. Do elementary general education teachers who attend professional development training related to special education have a lower referral rate?

Data were collected via an online survey that the researcher developed using Simple Forms, a program developed at West Virginia University. The raw data were imported into SPSS from Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. The Spearman Rho was used to assess any correlations between a

student's race/ethnicity and those variables that teachers use during special education referral decisions. The data were analyzed to determine if a correlation existed between a student's ethnicity/gender and academic achievement, behavior, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic status. The results reported are from those tests that resulted in a significant finding with a Spearman Rho correlation coefficient value of at least the $p < .05$ level of significance. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine if there were significant differences in referral decision of female teachers ($n=39$) and male teacher's ($n=10$) referral decisions given there was a small sample size.

Description of Sample

The sample consisted of elementary teachers within 8 of 10 counties (one county did not have an elementary school participating in House Bill 4669, and one county wished not to participate in the study monitored by the West Virginia Department of Education under House Bill 4669. When examining the highest degree of those teachers who participated in the study: a) eight teachers received AB/BS, b) three teachers received M.A., c) 14 teachers received M.A. plus 15, d) six teachers received M.A. plus 60, e) 17 teachers received M.A. plus 45 and f) one teacher received a doctorate. When examining the years taught: a) three teachers taught 0 – 3 years, b) four teachers taught 4-6 years, c) three teachers taught 7-9 years, d) three teachers taught 10-12 years and e) 36 teachers taught 13 or more years in the classroom.

The 55 counties within West Virginia use the same criteria in the initial evaluation of a student who would potentially need special education services for either academic or emotional/behavior concerns. Out of the 8 remaining counties, 497 general elementary teachers were given the option to participate in the study. Of those 497 elementary teachers, $n = 49$ (9.9%) teachers chose to participate by completing the survey.

Results

Research Question 1.a:

Which variables (academic achievement, academic achievement concerns, behavior, emotional/behavior concerns, gender, race/ethnicity, or socio-economic status) most often influence teacher special education referral decisions?

To identify which variables most often influence teachers' special education referral decisions, the Spearman Rho test was used to determine if there was any significant correlation at the 0.05 level. A correlation distribution for each response on the survey was developed to determine the correlation coefficients presented in tables throughout this chapter.

When examining the results for research question 1a, the following was found as shown in table 4.1:

1. There was a significant large negative Spearman correlation found between elementary general education teachers' number of special education referrals and academic achievement (SQ12) of students referred for special education services [$r = -.41$, $df = 47$, $p < .05$]. Teachers who said academic achievement was more often a factor tended to make fewer referrals.
2. There was a significant large positive Spearman correlation found between elementary general education teachers' special education referral decisions and academic achievement concerns (SQ13) of the student referred for special education services [$r = .43$, $df = 47$, $p < .05$]. Teachers who said academic achievement concerns were more often a factor tended to make more referrals.
3. There was a significant large positive Spearman correlation between elementary general education teachers' special education referral decisions and

emotional/behavioral concerns (SQ16) of students referred for special education services [$r = .51, df = 47, p < .05$]. Teachers who said emotional/behavior concerns were more often a factor tended to make more referrals.

4. There was no significant correlation between elementary general education teachers' special education referral decisions and socio-economic status, or behavior of the students referred for special education services.

Table 4.1 Research Question 1.a Students Referred for SPED

Table 4.1 Research Question 1.a. Quantitative Analysis						
Total Number of Students	SES (SQ. 8)	Race (SQ. 10)	A.A. (SQ. 12)	A.A.C. (SQ. 13)	B.F.(SQ. 15)	EBDC (SQ. 16)
Total Students referred for SPED (SQ 2)	Correlation Coefficient = .023 Sig (2-tailed) = .876 n = 49 no significant correlation	Correlation Coefficient = Sig (2-tailed) = n = 49 Spearman Rho could not be computed because all responses were never =1	Correlation Coefficient = -.414 Sig (2-tailed) = .003 n = 48 Significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = .432 Sig (2-tailed) = .002 n = 49 Significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = -.053 Sig (2-tailed) = .721 n = 47 No significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = .513 Sig (2-tailed) = .000 n = 49 Significant correlation was found
Numbers in parentheses represent survey items. SES = Socio-Economic Status, Race = Race, A.A. = Academic Achievement, A.A.C. = Academic Achievement Concern, B.F. = Behavior Factors, EBDC = Emotional/Behavior Disorder Concerns						

The following results of analysis of elementary teachers' decision making when referring White male students are shown in table 4.2:

1. There was a significant large negative Spearman correlation found between teachers' decisions to refer students and academic achievement (SQ12) of White male students referred for special education services [$r = -.34, df = 46, p < .05$]. Teachers who said academic achievement was more often a factor tended to make fewer referrals of White male students.

2. There was a significant large positive Spearman correlation found between teachers' decisions to refer students and academic achievement concerns (SQ13) of White male students referred for special education services [$r = .29$, $df = 46$, $p < .05$]. Teachers who said academic achievement concerns were more often a factor tended to make more referrals of White male students.
3. There was a significant large positive Spearman correlation found between teachers' decisions to refer students and emotional/behavior concerns (SQ16) of White male students referred for special education services [$r = .31$, $df = 47$, $p < .05$]. Teachers who said emotional/behavior concerns were more often a factor tended to make more referrals of White male students.
4. There was no significant correlation between: 1) the number of White males being referred and socio-economic status, 2) the number of white males being referred and behavior.

Table 4.2 Research Question 1.a White Male Students

Table 4.2 Research Question 1.a. Quantitative Analysis						
Race/Ethnicity Gender	SES (SQ. 8)	Race (SQ. 10)	A.A. (SQ. 12)	A.A.C. (SQ. 13)	B.F.(SQ. 15)	EBDC (SQ. 16)
White Male Students (SQ 3)	Correlation Coefficient = -.240 Sig (2-tailed) = .096 n = 49 no significant correlation	Correlation Coefficient = * Sig (2-tailed) = * n = 49 Spearman Rho could not be computed because all responses were never =1	Correlation Coefficient = -.337 Sig (2-tailed) = .019 n = 48 Significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = .299 Sig (2-tailed) = .037 n = 49 Significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = -.101 Sig (2-tailed) = .500 n = 47 No significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = .317 Sig (2-tailed) = .026 n = 49 Significant correlation was found
Numbers in parentheses represent survey items. SES = Socio-Economic Status, Race = Race, A.A. = Academic Achievement, A.A.C. = Academic Achievement Concern, B.F = Behavior Factors, EBDC = Emotional/Behavior Disorder Concerns Correlation is significant at the 0.005 level. * correlation coefficient was not computed because all responses were "Never -1"						

The following results of analysis of elementary teachers' decision making when referring African American male students are shown in table 4.3:

1. There was a significant large positive Spearman correlation found between teachers' decisions to refer students and academic achievement concerns (SQ13) of African American male students referred for special education services [$r = .38, df = 47, p < .05$]. Teachers who said academic achievement concerns were more often a factor tended to make more referrals of African American male students.
2. There was a significant large positive Spearman correlation found between teachers' decisions to refer students and emotional/behavior concerns (SQ16) of African American male students referred for special education services [$r = .42, df = 47, p < .05$]. Teachers who said emotional/behavior concerns were more often a factor tended to make more referrals of African American male students.
3. There was no significant correlation between 1) the number of African American males being referred and the student's socio-economic status and 2) the numbers of African American males being referred and the students' behavior.

Table 4.3 Research Question 1.a African American Male Students

Table 4.3 Research Question 1.a. Quantitative Analysis						
Race/Ethnicity Gender	SES (SQ. 8)	Race (SQ. 10)	A.A. (SQ. 12)	A.A.C. (SQ. 13)	B.F.(SQ. 15)	EBDC (SQ. 16)
African American Male Student (SQ 4)	Correlation Coefficient = -.240 Sig (2-tailed) = .097 n = 49 no significant correlation	Correlation Coefficient = * Sig (2-tailed) = * n = 49 Spearman Rho could not be computed because all responses were never =1	Correlation Coefficient = -.007 Sig (2-tailed) = .993 n = 48 No Significant correlation	Correlation Coefficient = .384 Sig (2-tailed) = .006 n = 49 Significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = -.181 Sig (2- tailed) = .223 n = 47 No significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = .421 Sig (2-tailed) = .003 n = 49 Significant correlation was found
Numbers in parentheses represent survey items. SES = Socio-Economic Status, Race = Race, A.A. = Academic Achievement, A.A.C. = Academic Achievement Concern, B.F = Behavior Factors, EBDC = Emotional/Behavior Disorder Concerns Correlation is significant at the 0.005 level. * correlation coefficient was not computed because all responses were "Never -1"						

The following results of analysis of elementary teachers' decision making when referring White female students are shown in table 4.4:

1. There was a significant large positive Spearman correlation between teachers' decisions to refer students and academic achievement concerns (SQ13) of White female students referred for special education services [$r = .59$, $df = 47$, $p < .05$]. Teachers who said academic achievement concerns were more often a factor tended to make more referrals of White female students.
2. There was no significant correlation between 1) the number of White females being referred and the students' socio-economic status; 2) the number of White females being referred and the students' academic achievement; 3) the number of White females being referred and the students' behavior and 4) the number of White females being referred and the students' emotional/behavior concerns.

Table 4.4 Research Question 1.a White Female Students

Table 4.4 Research Question 1.a. Quantitative Analysis						
Race/Ethnicity Gender	SES (SQ. 8)	Race (SQ. 10)	A.A. (SQ. 12)	A.A.C. (SQ. 13)	B.F.(SQ. 15)	EBDC (SQ. 16)
White female Students (SQ 4)	Correlation Coefficient = -.143 Sig (2-tailed) = .327 n = 49 No significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = * Sig (2-tailed) = * n = 49 Spearman Rho could not be computed because all responses were never =1	Correlation Coefficient = -.112 Sig (2-tailed) = .449 n = 48 No Significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = .585 Sig (2-tailed) = .000 n = 49 Significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = -.108 Sig (2-tailed) = .468 n = 47 No significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = .275 Sig (2-tailed) = .056 n = 49 No Significant correlation was found
Numbers in parenthesis represent survey items. SES = Socio-Economic Status, Race = Race, A.A. = Academic Achievement, A.A.C. = Academic Achievement Concern, B.F = Behavior Factors, EBDC = Emotional/Behavior Disorder Concerns Correlation is significant at the 0.005 level. * correlation coefficient was not computed because all responses were "Never -1"						

The following results of analysis of elementary teachers' decision making when referring African American female students are shown in table 4.5:

1. There was a significant large negative Spearman correlation found between teachers decision to refer students and academic achievement (SQ12) of African American female students referred for special education services [$r = -.56, df = 40, p < .05$]. Teachers who said academic achievement was more often a factor tended to make fewer referrals of African American female students.
2. There was a significant large positive Spearman correlation found between teachers' decision to refer students and academic achievement concerns (SQ13) of African American female students referred for special education services [$r = .31, df = 41, p < .05$]. Teachers who said academic achievement concerns were more often a factor tended to make more referrals of African American female students.
3. There was no significant correlation between 1) the number of African American females being referred and the student's socio-economic status, 2)

the number of African American females being referred and the students' behavior, and 3) the number of African American females being referred and the students' emotional/behavior concerns.

Table 4.5 Research Question 1.a African American Female Student

Table 4.5 Research Question 1.a. Quantitative Analysis						
Race/Ethnicity Gender	SES (SQ. 8)	Race (SQ. 10)	A.A. (SQ. 12)	A.A.C. (SQ. 13)	B.F.(SQ. 15)	EBDC (SQ. 16)
African American female Students (SQ 4)	Correlation Coefficient = -.166 Sig (2-tailed) = .288 n = 49 No significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = * Sig (2-tailed) = * n = 49 Spearman Rho could not be computed because all responses were never =1	Correlation Coefficient = -.561 Sig (2-tailed) = .000 n = 42 Significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = .305 Sig (2-tailed) = .047 n = 43 Significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = -.119 Sig (2-tailed) = .460 n = 41 No significant correlation was found	Correlation Coefficient = .127 Sig (2-tailed) = .417 n = 43 No Significant correlation was found
Numbers in parentheses represent survey items. SES = Socio-Economic Status, Race = Race, A.A. = Academic Achievement, A.A.C. = Academic Achievement Concern, B.F = Behavior Factors, EBDC = Emotional/Behavior Disorder Concerns Correlation is significant at the 0.005 level. * correlation coefficient was not computed because all responses were "Never -1"						

Qualitative Analysis of Research question 1.a

The following discussion will provide a descriptive analysis of teacher responses to survey questions 9, 11, 14, and 17. Survey question 9 asked why socio-economic status is or is not a variable in an elementary teacher's decision to refer a student for special education services. Forty-one out of 49 teachers responded to this question. Eleven teachers stated that socio-economic status was a variable when making a special education referral decision. All eleven teachers stated that lack of prior education experience was a variable associated with students from low socio-economic background. The following are examples of teacher responses:

"Socio-economic status is a variable when referring students for Special Education services because of the assumed opportunities and experiences that students have had in their home lives.... On the other hand, there is often a wide gap between students from

low socio-economic backgrounds and those whose background can be defined as middle class.” Another teacher states, “Background knowledge and exposure to enhanced educational opportunities is somewhat hampered in the low socio-economic home. However, if a child comes to us with the ability to learn, it is up to us as educators to find a way to reach and teach them.” And another teacher states, “I believe it is a variable. Most of my students have parents who are unemployed and living off the state. This makes it hard for the kids because the parents don’t have motivation or knowledge to help their children. The students who have this as a variable are usually in the bottom quartile of standardized tests and at the top of special education referrals.”

Thirty out of the 49 teachers responded that socio-economic status was not a variable when making a special education referral decision making. Those 30 teachers related that students’ academic ability and mastery of content were concerns, about socio-economic status of the student was not a concern. See example responses below:

“I refer students based on academic need,” and another “I rely on student needs not socio-economics,” “Socio-economic status doesn’t make a student’s special education; performance and ability level is what I base that [special education] decision on.”

Another teacher states that “the child’s ability to master the content being taught is my major variable, not socio-economic status. All students I teach are low SES students.”

Survey question 11, asked why race/ethnicity is or why it is not a variable in a teacher referral decision to refer a student for special education services. Forty out of 49 teachers responded to this question. Teachers indicated that color (race/ethnicity) did not influence their decision to refer students for special education services. Teachers indicated that successful mastery of the content was the overall variable. The following are examples of the response:

"I don't pay attention to race." "Race has nothing to do with it. Children of all colors are a product of their homes and expectations of the people around them."

There was also a response that talked about how the community affects the student:

"The community in which I teach is considerably low socio-economic, and has a high population of minority students. No matter the race of these students, they all have similar resources, culture and family structure. Therefore, race is not a variable for me when considering a student for special education services."

Yet another teacher's view of why race/ethnicity is not a variable at the elementary level was this:

"This has never seemed to be a variable in any school I have worked for myself. It is of equal proportion in identification in elementary school. However, I have heard of many of my previous African American male students getting identified later in life when they get to middle school. Many of these boys were never a problem for me in fourth grade. There is a more structured environment in elementary though."

Survey question 14, asked why academic achievement is or why it is not a variable in your decision to refer a student for special education services. Forty-one out of 49 teachers responded to this question. Those 41 responded that academic achievement was the number one variable when referring a student for special education services. Teachers viewed low academic achievement as an indicator for special education referral. A sampling of the teacher responses is listed below:

"Whether we like to admit it or not, academic achievement is the driving force behind the public school system. If a student is not demonstrating a desirable level of academia, it is our responsibility to look into the variables surrounding his or her educational

opportunities and to meet the needs of every student so that they might achieve to their potential.”

And another teacher responded:

“It is a variable due to not meeting mastery of taught standards. Many times I feel academic variables are due to inappropriate instruction in lower grades before they get to me. Attendance is another academic variable. If they miss many days in a year, there are learning gaps that are hard to fill in.”

Survey question 17, asked why behavior is or why it is not a variable in your decision to refer a student for special education services. Forty-six out of 49 teachers responded to this question. Forty-six responded that behavior could be a variable for special education services. The pattern across those 46 responses revealed that behavior must interfere with the learning process. Responses are as follows:

“Behavior is a variable if it interrupts the learning environment.” “Depends on whether the emotional/behavioral concerns interfere with the child’s ability to achieve at his/her placement level in classroom.” “Behavior is a variable when it prevents the student from working, when it is destructive to self, and others students in the class.”

Summary of Quantitative and Qualitative Results for Research Question 1a

In analyzing both the quantitative and qualitative data, the following results were found. Quantitative data revealed that socio-economic status was not a factor during teacher’s referral decision making. However in the qualitative responses, some teachers (n=11) suggested that socio-economic status was an indirect influence in assessing the academic success or the academic failure of students. In regards to the variable race/ethnicity, both quantitative and qualitative results revealed that teachers felt they do not consider race/ethnicity when making the

decision to refer a student for special education services. In regards to academic achievement, both quantitative and qualitative results revealed teachers felt they do consider this variable when making the decision to refer students for special education services. When looking at the results regarding behavior, quantitative data revealed that teachers felt that behavior did not influence referral decisions, however qualitative data revealed that when behavior interrupted or impeded learning it may have influence teacher referral decision making.

Research Question 1.b

The following is a comparative analysis of the referral decisions by female teachers (n=39) and male teachers (n= 10) to refer a student for special education services. In reviewing the data, there were significant differences in female teachers who referred students for special education services and male teachers who referred for special education services. The differences in the referral decision making of female teachers and male teachers were calculated using the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test. The Mann-Whitney U test is a statistic test of significance between two means with unequal sample sizes.

The following are results of research question 1.b, comparing referral decisions of female teachers and those of male teachers special education referral patterns across variables.

1. There was a significant medium to large negative difference in referral decisions made by female teachers (n= 39, mean = 1.72, SD = 1.21) when compared to the referral decisions made by male teachers (n= 10, mean = 1.00, SD = .000) when considering socio-economic status as a variable [$z = -2.18$, $r = .31$, $p < .05$]. Female teachers (SQ 36) when compared to male teachers (SQ 36) tended to say socio-economic status (SQ 8) was more often a factor.

2. There was a significant large negative difference in referral decisions made by female teachers ($n=39$, mean = 1.85, SD = 1.08) when compared to the number of special education referrals made by male teachers ($n=10$, mean = .40, SD = .699) when considering academic achievement concerns as a variable ($z = -3.62$, $p < .05$, $r = .52$). Female teachers (SQ 36) when compared to male teachers (SQ 36) tended to say academic achievement concerns (SQ 13) were more often factors.
3. There was a significant median negative difference in referral decisions made by female teachers ($n=39$, mean = 1.79, SD = 1.10) when compared to the number of special referrals made by male teachers ($n= 10$, mean=1.10, SD = .316) when considering emotional/behavior concerns as a variable ($z = -2.12$, $p < .05$, $r = .30$). Female teachers (SQ 36) when compared to male teachers (SQ 36) tended to say emotional/behavior concerns (SQ 16) were more often factors.
4. There was no significant difference in the special education referral decisions of female teachers ($n=39$) and male teachers ($n=10$) when students' academic achievement (SQ 12), or behavior (SQ 15) was a variable.

The following are results of comparing referral decisions of African American teachers and those of White teachers' special education referral patterns across variables:

1. An analysis of the differences in the number of special education referrals made by African American teachers ($n=1$) when compared to the number of special education referrals made by White teachers ($n=48$) could not be analyzed due to the African American teacher sample size of one.

A Mann-Whitney U test could not be computed for survey question 10 comparing referral decisions of female teachers and those of male teacher's special education referral patterns across race/ethnicity of students because all the teachers responded "Never = 1" to this survey question. There was no qualitative analysis conducted on research question 1b.

Research Question 2

Do teacher responses reveal disparate referral decisions across White and African American male students when using the variables academic achievement, academic achievement concerns, behavior, emotional/behavior concerns, and socio-economic status?

The following are the quantitative results of research question two. See Tables 4.2. There was no qualitative analysis conducted on research question 2.

1. There was disparity in teachers' decision making when academic achievement was a variable. In other words, teachers treated these two populations differently when making special education referral decisions. For example, there was a significant large negative Spearman correlation between the number of White male students referred and academic achievement [$r = -.34$, $df = 47$, $p < .05$]; teachers who said academic achievement (SQ 12) was a factor tended to make fewer referrals of White male students (SQ 3). However, when looking at the results for African American males, teachers did not refer African American male students (SQ 4) when academic achievement (SQ 12) was the variable.
2. There was no disparity in teachers' decision making when academic achievement concerns were a variable because, both White male students [$r = .30$, $df = 47$, $p < .05$] and African American male students [$r = .38$, $df = 47$,

$p < .05$] showed significant medium to large positive Spearman correlation between teachers' decisions to refer and academic achievement concerns (SQ13). This means teachers who said academic achievement concerns were a factor tended to make more referrals of White male students and African American male students.

3. There was no disparity in teachers' decision making when emotional/behavior concerns were a variable, both White male students [$r = -.32$, $df = 47$, $p < .05$] and African American male students [$r = .42$, $df = 47$, $p < .05$] showed significant large positive Spearman correlation between teachers' decisions to refer and emotional/behavior concerns (SQ16). This means teachers who said emotional/behavior concerns were a factor tended to make more referrals of White male students and African American male students.
4. There was no disparity in teacher's decision when socio-economic status was a variable because there was no significant correlation between White male students or African American male students referred for special education services and socio-economic status (SQ 8).

Research Question 3

Do elementary general education teachers who attend professional development training related to special education have a lower referral rate?

The quantitative results are discussed in the following narrative see table 4.6. There was no qualitative analysis conducted on research question 3.

Survey question 28, asked over your teaching career how often has the professional development sessions involve pre-referral training as shown in table 4.8.

Teachers who said they attended professional development sessions about special education referral tended to make more referrals of White male students. There was a significant large positive Spearman correlation between the number of professional development sessions about special education referral training and the number of White male students referred for special education services [$r = .46$, $df = 46$, $p < .05$]. However, teachers who attended professional development training about special education showed no effect on the referrals of African American male students.

Survey question 29 asked how the professional development sessions on special education changed the number of special education referrals as shown in table 4.7.

Teachers who attended professional development sessions on special education revealed an increase in the number of referrals for White male students. There was a significant large negative Spearman correlation between teacher participation in professional development sessions and the number of special education referrals for White male students [$r = -.40$, $df = 43$, $p < .05$]. Teachers who attended professional development sessions on special education referrals showed no change in the number of referrals for African American male students.

Table 4.6 Research Question 3

Research Question 3 Special Education Courses and Professional Development Training				
Race/ethnicity Gender	Wht.Males (SQ. 3)	AA Males (SQ. 4)	Wht.Females (SQ 5)	AA. Females (SQ. 6)
No. of SPED Courses (SQ 22)	Correlation Coefficient = .239 Sig. = .098 N = 49	Correlation Coefficient = -.206 Sig. = .156 N = 49	Correlation Coefficient = -.171 Sig. = .241 N = 49	Correlation Coefficient = .335 Sig. = .028 N = 49
No of PDS (SQ. 28)	Correlation Coefficient = .457 Sig. = .001 N = 48	Correlation Coefficient = .281 Sig. = .053 N = 48	Correlation Coefficient = -.061 Sig. = .683 N = 48	Correlation Coefficient = .305 Sig. = .049 N = 42
PDS vs. No. of Referrals (SQ 29)	Correlation Coefficient = -.402 Sig. = .006 N = 45	Correlation Coefficient = -.184 Sig. = .226 N = 45	Correlation Coefficient = -.163 Sig. = .283 N = 45	Correlation Coefficient = -.351 Sig. = .029 N = 39
Numbers in parentheses represent survey items. Wht = White, AA = African American, SPED = Special Education, PDS = Professional Development Sessions Correlation is significant at the 0.005 level.				

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter contains the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for the study. The chapter is divided into four sections: (a) summary of purpose, (b) summary of findings, (c) conclusions, (d) limitations of the study, and (e) implications for teacher education programs.

Summary of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine how West Virginia teachers make special education referral decisions. Specifically, the study examined teacher decision making and variables such as academic achievement, behavior, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, and gender that influence teachers' decisions to refer students for special education services.

The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. What are the patterns of elementary general education teachers' decision to refer a student for special education services?
 - a. Which variables (academic achievement, academic achievement concerns, behavior, emotional/behavior concerns, gender, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status) most often influence teacher special education referral decisions?
 - b. When comparing referral decisions of female teachers and those of male teachers, are there differences in special education referral patterns?
2. Do teacher responses reveal disparate referral decisions across white and African American male students and across male and female students when using the variables academic achievement, behavior, and socio-economic status?

3. Do elementary general education teachers who attend professional development training sessions related to special education have a lower referral rate?

This study was presented in five chapters. In these chapters, the problem was identified, a comprehensive review of the literature was conducted, the methodology supporting the study was identified, the data were collected, analyzed, and reported, and conclusions were drawn.

Chapter 1 included a statement of the problem: the overrepresentation of males in special education. It also included an overview of litigation and legislation that impacted special education, specifically issues of race/ethnicity. Also, an analysis of current educational issues around masculinity, race/ethnicity, and gender differences that are variables in the overrepresentation of male students was presented.

The review of literature in Chapter 2 consisted of detailed information on the various themes. The following topics were included in the literature review: 1) Civil Rights and special education litigation and legislation, 2) No Child Left Behind' 3) Disparate practices of special education, 4) Teacher competency; 5) Cultural competency, 6) Masculinity competency, and 7) Teacher practices.

Chapter 3 included a section on the methodology, which consisted of a description of the participants and the demographics of the counties in which they worked. The online survey instrument was also introduced in this chapter along with the design of the study and the data analysis used in the study.

Chapter 4 included a complete analysis of the data and the results of the findings. Tables were included to further document statistical data.

Summary of Results

When looking at the results across gender and race/ethnicity there are several conclusions. First, teachers were more likely to report that they would refer White male students and African American male students when academic achievement concerns or emotional/behavior concerns were considerations. These findings support the literature, which states that male students are being overrepresented in high incidence disabilities categories (Blake & Anderson, 2000; Neal et al., 2003; Weaver-Hightower, 2003; Webb-Johnson, Artiles, Trent, Jackson, & Velox, 1998). However, teachers were more likely to report that they would refer White female students and African American female students when academic achievement or academic achievement concerns were consideration.

In comparing and contrasting the quantitative significance and the qualitative response data on behaviors, a strong correlation was only found between student gender (White male students and African American male students) and teachers' decisions to refer for special education services. The mean difference in female teachers' decisions to refer and male teachers' decision to refer a student for special education services revealed that female teachers have a greater probability of referring a student for emotional/behavior concerns than do male teachers. The notion of behavior being a factor was further supported through teacher qualitative responses that "behavior can reflect achievement goals," and behavior is a factor if it "interrupts the learning environment." The results of this study are supported by the literature that male students are overrepresented in the category of emotional/behavior disorders (Blanchett, 2006; Coutinho et al., 2002; Cullinan & Kauffman, 2005).

In comparing and contrasting the quantitative and the qualitative data results, teachers responded that race was "never = 1" a variable when making a decision to refer a student for

special education services. Although this was not a variable within the qualitative data, teachers' responses revealed an awareness of culture within the school population and how those diverse cultural differences affect academic achievement. For example, teachers responded that: "race has nothing to do with the students I select for referral," and "In some things race is a factor in as far as tendencies to health issues and dominant problems are prevalent." However, in relation to special education it [race] is not influencing [the decisions to refer]," and "Race has never been a factor in my decision to refer or not to refer a student for special education services."

Secondly, the results clearly suggest that special education referral decisions of teachers may be very different across female and male teachers. The data clearly showed that female teachers referred more students for special education services when socio-economic status, academic achievement concerns, or emotional/behavior concerns were the variable most considered during the referral of students. These results are similar to other findings on gender differences, which suggest that reasons for overrepresentation could be due to students' poverty or socio-economic status (Skiba et al., 2005), discrepancy in learning styles (Hosp & Reschly, 2003, 2004; McLesky et al., 1990), and behavior expectations of students (Bahr & Fuchs, 1991).

Thirdly, the results of research question three revealed unexpected findings. For example, teachers who took special education courses made more referrals of African American female students, although the reasons for this are not clear. While the findings suggested that there were no difference in the rate of referrals of White male students, African American male students and White female students when teachers took special education courses, teacher education programs may need to address the unique academic and behavior needs of male students with disabilities through special education course content. There was also an unexpected finding with respect to teachers who attended professional development training

session about special education referrals. These teachers tended to make more referrals for White male students and African American female students. This finding suggests that professional development training about special education referrals may need to be more specific in addressing the cultural and gender needs of students prior to special education referrals. These findings are consistent with other research showing that a special education referral decision is subjective (MacMillan & Reschly, 1998) and that special education referrals are more judgmental when learning problems or behavior problems are the variables most likely to be considered (Podell & Soodak, 1993).

Conclusions

This study was prompted by the researcher's personal career experiences with overrepresentation of White and African American male students in special education. To address this phenomenon of overrepresentation in West Virginia, WV House Bill 4669 addressed the overrepresentation of African American students and economically disadvantaged students in 10 counties across the state. This allowed the researcher the opportunity to analyze elementary teachers' decision making during the special education referral process.

The researcher discovered that there was a contradiction between fewer referrals made by teachers when academic achievement was most often the variable and more referrals when academic achievement concerns was most often the variable. The researcher speculated that the contradiction was due to teacher's interpretation of survey questions 12 and 13. The researcher intended meaning for SQ 12 was low academic achievement and for SQ 13 low readiness skills.

Further findings of this study revealed that female teachers had a higher referral rate than male teachers when socio-economic status, academic achievement concerns, or emotional/behavior concerns were most often considered. This finding also supports the current

literature about teachers making distinctive or subjective judgments about students academic and/or life success and failure. Obiakor, Obi, and Algozzine (2001) reported that subjective decision making most often occurs when race, SES, and culture were determinants (Festus E. Obiakor et al., 2001; Rotatori & Obi, 1999).

Data from research question three revealed that teachers who took special education courses tended to make more referrals of African American females. The results also showed that attending special education courses during their teacher education programs had no effect on the rate of special education referrals of white male students, African American male students, and White female students. As the researcher, I would have expected that teachers who took special education courses would have fewer referrals across all students because of a greater knowledge base of effective teaching strategies.

Those teachers who stated that they attended professional development training sessions in which special education pre-referral was the primary focus tended to refer White male students and African American female students at a higher rate. While the referral rate of African American male students and White female student showed no change, the LEA must continue to address gender and cultural differences of students with disabilities through professional development training. Once again there was an expectation that attending special education professional development training would have caused fewer referrals across all students. However, the data revealed greater referrals of only two sub-groups.

Implications for Practice

This study has implications in two areas: teacher (pre-service) preparation and professional (in-service) development. The data suggested that both White male students and African American male students were referred more for special education when academic

achievement concerns or emotional/behavior concerns were the variable. Because of this finding special education teacher education programs should consider including content that specifically include information that addresses the academic, developmental and social needs of male students and those students from diverse learning backgrounds. For example, teacher education programs could require students majoring in teacher education, to engage in practicum experiences in settings that offer exposure to students from various socio-economic levels and ethnic backgrounds.

The study also found a difference in the variables that influence the referrals of male students and the referrals of female students. Male students were referred for emotional/behavior concerns whereas female students were only referred for academic achievement and academic achievement concerns. Given this finding, faculty members in teacher education programs should examine the content of special education courses and how the content addresses gender differences and incorporate content that promotes less subjectivity or bias in the referral process.

As the data revealed differences between female teachers and male teachers in their decisions to refer, it became apparent that female teachers referred more students. These findings suggest that teacher education faculty members must ensure that pre-service teachers conduct a self analysis of their perceptions of male students. Also, these teachers must examine how their perceptions may impact their decision making before, during and after the referral of students for special education services.

The data revealed that teachers who attended professional development sessions were more likely to make referrals of White male students but were no more or less likely to make referrals of African American male students.

These findings suggest that professional development training sessions should be designed specifically to address gender and cultural differences and how those differences play out in the classroom. For example, presenters of professional development training must address topics such as learning style of students and , culturally competent academic interventions.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the limitations of this study and the complexity of the current research, this researcher would like to duplicate this study in an urban setting where there could potentially be a larger population more representative of African American students, African American teachers and male teachers. In extending this research, the researcher would design a survey that would include questions that address the final placement decisions of teachers, and the interventions teachers used before the special education referral. The researcher would also include questions that help identify the number of males students identified with learning disabilities and behavior disorders.

In continuing with this line of research, in the future this researcher would also look at aligning quantitative survey questions with qualitative survey questions to explore in more detail the nature of differences in variables teacher use during the referral of male students. Further research might also look for any correlations between a teacher's instructional style and gender or race/ethnicity of a student referred for special education services.

Because the data suggested that academic achievement and academic achievement concerns were variables during the decision to refer students for special education services, future research should look at academic achievement as it is related to specific strategies that improve the learning of male students and may prevent referrals to special education.

Given that the data revealed that emotional/behavior concerns were a variable during the decision to refer for special education services with respect to both White and African American male students, future research should also examine differences between behavioral interventions in promoting the academic success of male students and preventing referrals to special education. In the area of pre-services preparation and professional development, future research could study the effect of training sessions that target male cognitive and physical development and academic and behavioral interventions can lead to actions that improve male students' success in the classroom and prevent referrals to special education.

Limitation of the Study

The researcher identified four limitations of this study. First, this study fails to represent teachers from urban setting, so it is difficult to determine how those teachers may respond to the survey questions. The 9.9 percent that responded to the survey do not represent the total teacher population, so it is difficult to generalize the findings beyond the 49 teachers. Secondly, there were only 8 out of 10 counties identified by WV House Bill 4669 participated in this study resulting in a under-representation of the total population of West Virginia elementary general education teachers.

Finally, because West Virginia is a rural state and the African American population is less than four percent, the number of teachers from diverse backgrounds participating in this study was limited. Also, the results of the study showed that 99 percent of the teachers completing the survey were white and 80 percent female. Therefore, the results may not be a representation of male elementary teachers and teachers from more diverse backgrounds. This deficiency in African American teachers limited the Mann Whitney U test across gender and

impossible for race/ethnicity. The reader should be cautious when reading the results of the study and should refer back to participant demographics reported on page 47 and Appendix A.

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Appendix A

Counties and School Demographics

Demographics of Counties										
	Total Population	Gender		Race/Ethnicity			SPEC. ED	SES	AYP	
Counties and Elementary Schools		Male	Female	White	Black	Other		Low	Reading	Math
Berkeley	16868	12.9	48.9	97.5	11.3	6.5	17.1	40.3		
Eagle School Intermediate 04/05	434	52.1	47.9	67.5	24.5	8.1	23.3	57.1	87.25	83.15
Cabell	12346	1.3	48.2	89.3	8.8	1.9	15.6	50.3		
Peyton Elem. PK/OK/01/02/03/04/05	173	56.6	43.4	69.4	30.1	0.6	18.5	89.6	68.42	67.1
Spring Hill Elem. PK/OK/01/02/03/04/05	447	49	51	51	46.5	2.5	22.6	82.3	61.13	55.45
Fayette	6824	53.2	46.8	92.3	6.8	0.9	15.5	58.9		
Jefferson	8299	51.5	48.5	83.1	9.9	6.9	16.3	28.8		
Wright Denny Intermediate 03, 04, 05	355	51.8	48.2	81.7	11	7.3	14.7	23.4	87.3	81.08
North Jefferson Elem. PK/OK/01/02/03/04/05	355	51	49	80	12.7	7.3	24.5	53.8	73.33	68.14
Kanawha	28350	51.7	48.3	85.3	12.8	1.9	17.7	50.3		
Chandler Elem. PK/OK/01/02/03/04/05	178	63.5	36.5	33.7	64.6	1.7	25.8	97.8	72.58	80.64
Glenwood Elem. PK/OK/01/02/03/04/05	191	50.8	49.2	29.3	69.6	1	15.2	84.8	69.86	60.27
Marion	8116	51.4	48.6	92.6	6.2	1.2	17.3	48.8		
East Dale Elem. PK/OK/01/02/03/04/05/06	627	52.3	47.7	97.3	1.8	1	21.1	41.9	80.06	80.37
Watson Elem. PK/OK/01/02/03/04	393	48.9	51.1	75.3	20.9	3.8	21.4	63.1	79.41	76.47
Mercer	9484	50.8	49.2	89.9	9.2	0.9	15.4	57.9		
Bluefield Intermediate 03/04/05	310	52.3	47.7	63.2	36.8 *		21.9	71.9	81.65	83.12
McDowell	3778	52.3	47.7	88.5	11.3	0.2	18.1	81.2		
Fall River Elem. PK/OK/01/02/03/04/05	159	50.3	49.7	97.5	1.9	0.6	12.4	86.6	65.62	73.43
Ohio	5308	51.3	48.7	89.7	8.9	1.5	18	46.9		
Madison Elem. PK/OK/01/02/03/04/05	278	54.1	45.9	68.8	29	2.2	30.5	75.6	85.93	90.62
Ritchie Elem. PK/OK/01/02/03/04/05	261	51	49	82.8	17.2	0	22.6	88.5	78.74	85.03
Raleigh	12153	51.9	48.1	88	10.5	1.5	15.8	52		
Stratton Elem. PK/OK/01/02/03/04/05	284	51.4	49.6	44	54.6	1.4	21.5	82.4	70.32	82.6
Beckley Elem. PK/OK/01/02/03/04/05	360	50.3	49.7	46.4	51.9	1.7	13.3	76.1	69.44	77.08

Note. This table represents the student population within counties and within the elementary schools targeted by House Bill 4669. All data is in percentage except for total population both counties and schools. Fayette County was the only county that did not target an elementary school within the House Bill 4669 program. (Source of data West Virginia Department of Education, 2007)

Appendix B

Teacher Perception Survey

This survey is designed to measure various aspects of teacher perceptions of special education in order to assist in making referrals for services that would lead to special education placement. Please fill in each section below and then rate your perceptions of your classroom and the students that you have taught using the 5-point scale ranging from Never, Seldom or Always.

1. In a typical school year, how would you describe your student MALE population in a classroom of 20 students?

- ☒ 0 - 5
☐ 6 - 10
☐ 11 - 15
☐ 16 - 20

2. Of that number selected in question number 3, how many were referred for special education services?

3. Of the number of referrals made during the 2006-2007 school year, how many were White males?

4. Of the number of referrals made during the 2006/07 school year, how many were African American males?

5. Of the number of referrals made during the 2006/07 school year, how many were White females?

6. Of the number of referrals made during the 2006/07 school year, how many were African American females?

7. In a typical school year, how many students in your classroom are on free or reduced lunch?

- ☒ 0-5
☐ 6-10
☐ 11-15
☐ 16-20

8. How often is socio-economic status a variable in your decision to refer a student for special education services?

1 Never ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Seldom ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Always ☐

9. Why is socio-economic status a variable or why is it not a variable?

10. How often is race/ethnicity a variable in your decision to refer a student for special education services?

1 Never ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Seldom ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Always ☐

11. Why is race/ethnicity a variable or why is it not a variable?

12. How often is academic achievement a variable in your decision to refer a student for special education services?

1 Never ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Seldom ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Always ☐

13. In the 2006-2007 school year how many students did you refer with academic achievement concerns?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 or more

14. Why is academic achievement a variable or why is it not a variable?

15. How often is behavior a variable in your decision to refer a student for special education services?

1 Never ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Seldom ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Always ☐

16. In the 2006-2007 school year how many students did you refer with emotional/behavioral concerns?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 or more

17. Why is behavior a variable or why is it not a variable?

18. Looking at the gender make-up of your classroom, how often do boys make up the vast majority of low achievers?

1 Never ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Seldom ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Always ☐

19. How often do you adjust your instruction to accommodate students with academic achievement difficulties?

1 Never ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Seldom ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Always ☐

20. How often do you adjust your instruction to accommodate students with Emotional/Behavioral disorders?

1 Never ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Seldom ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Always ☐

21. How would you describe your teaching style?

22. In your teacher education program, how many special education courses informed you about the pre-referral process?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 or more

23. How often do you adjust your instruction to accommodate students of different genders?

1 Never ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Seldom ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Always ☐

24. How often do you adjust your instruction to accommodate different learning styles of students?

1 Never ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Seldom ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Always ☐

25. How often do you adjust your instruction to accommodate different cultural groups?

1 Never ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Seldom ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Always ☐

26. How often does your learning style as an educator reflect your instructional style?

1 Never ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Seldom ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Always ☐

27. Over your teaching career how many Professional Development sessions have you attended that involved special education referral trainings.

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 or more

28. Over your teaching career, how often have the Professional Development sessions involved pre-referral training?

- 1 Never ☐ 2 ☐ 3 Seldom ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Always ☐

29. How has the professional development sessions on special education changed the number of special education referrals?

- ☐ Increased
- ☐ Stayed the same
- ☐ Decreased

30. Please describe how your teacher education program prepared you for special education referral process.

31. Please describe how professional development has prepared you for the special education referral process?

DEMOGRAPHICS

32. What is your highest degree earned?

- ☐ A.B./B.S.
- ☐ M.A.
- ☐ M.A. + 15
- ☐ M.A. + 30
- ☐ M.A. + 45
- ☐ Doctorate
- ☐ Other

If 'Other' please specify:

33. How many years have you taught school?

- ☐ 0-3
- ☐ 4-6
- ☐ 7-9
- ☐ 10-12
- ☐ 13 or more

34. In what areas are you certified to teach?

- ☐ Elementary K-5
- ☐ Elementary + Special Education
- ☐ Elementary Education K – 6
- ☐ English Language Arts 5 – 9
- ☐ Multicategorical Special Education (grades K-6 and 5-Adult)
- ☐ Early Childhood (pre-kindergarten and kindergarten)
- ☐ Other

If 'Other' please specify:

35. In which county do you teach?

- ☐ Berkeley
- ☐ Cabell
- ☐ Fayette
- ☐ Jefferson
- ☐ Kanawha
- ☐ Logan
- ☐ Marion
- ☐ Mercer
- ☐ Monongalia
- ☐ McDowell
- ☐ Ohio
- ☐ Raleigh
- ☐ Other

If 'Other' please specify:

36. What is your gender?

37. What race/ethnicity are you classified as?

- ☐ American Indian
- ☐ Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hawaiian
- ☐ Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Latino
- ☐ White
- ☐ Other

If 'Other' please specify:

Appendix C

Department of Special Education

West Virginia University

College of Human Resources and Education

Dear Teacher,

I, Elizabeth A. Dooley, Professor at West Virginia University and Bernard Jones, a doctoral candidate are conducting research on teacher decision making during the special education referral process. We are looking at the elementary teachers within the twelve counties that are identified in the West Virginia Achievement Project. Teachers are asked to participate in an online survey (consisting of 37 items) that would allow us to examine various aspects of teacher decision making during the special education referral process. Teacher will be asked to access the following URL:

http://community.wvu.edu/~bcj001/jones_question

The purpose of this study is two-fold. The first is to examine teachers' perception (self-reporting) of the factors (race gender, socioeconomic status, academic achievement & behavior) that influence their decisions about referrals. The research focuses on the critical and/or operational factors in teachers' decisions, specifically at the elementary level. The second is to examine teachers' perspectives of their preparation and/or professional development related to the referral of male students. In order to effectively conduct my research, I need your help.

Your participation is voluntary and you will not be penalized if you decide not to participate in this study. Those who choose to participate in the study, all responses provided on the survey will be kept confidential. The study has been approved by the West Virginia University's Internal Review Board (IRB).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth A. Dooley'.

Elizabeth A. Dooley, Ed.D, Principal Investigator

Bernard Jones, MA, Co-Principal Investigator

BKAAN 2 - Protocol Actions - WVU IRB https://ecomp.wvu.edu/Protocols/TaskDetails.aspx?ActivityId=297

Elizabeth Dooley
WVU IRB

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[My Personal Info](#)

PI

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Research Team

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IRB PROTOCOL - Details

Tracking #
H-20888

PI
Dooley, Elizabeth

Title
Analysis of Elementary Teachers' Perceptions used during the Referral of Students for Special Education Services

Version
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