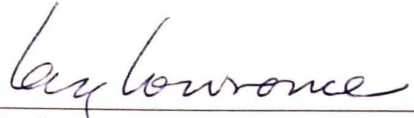


**A STUDY OF THE REPRESENTATION OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

BOBBI RAE HERRELL DEVERS

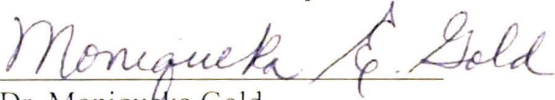
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I am submitting herewith a field study written by Bobbi Rae Herrell Devers entitled "A Study of the Representation of African American Students in Special Education." I have examined the final paper copy of this field study for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Education Specialist, with a major in Education.



Dr. Larry Lowrance, Major Professor

We have read this field study
and recommend its acceptance:



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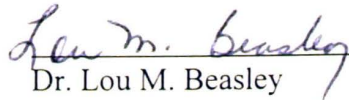
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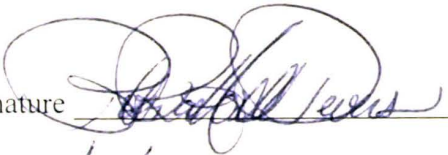
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A STUDY OF THE REPRESENTATION OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

A Field Study

Presented for the

Education Specialist

Degree

Austin Peay State University

Clarksville, Tennessee

Bobbi Rae Herrell Devers
May 2003

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DEDICATION

This field study is dedicated to my parents

Mr. and Mrs. Ray Herrell,

my husband

Lonnie Ray Devers, Jr.,

and my sister,

Billie Ann Shively

who have stood by, praised and supported me

throughout my educational endeavors.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank my major professor, Dr. Larry Lowrance, for his guidance and patience. I would also like to thank the other committee members, Dr. Moniqueka Gold and Dr. Lynnette Henderson, for their comments and assistance during this process. I would like to thank my student worker, Robert Trawick, for his extensive Microsoft Excel skills that helped me to complete this project. I would like to express my thanks to my husband, Lonnie for his understanding and patience during those times when I felt as though I could not go on, my parents Ray and Pat Herrell, my sister Billie Shively who have encouraged me and stood by my side during this process and the many other members of my family that gave me the strength and determination to reach out and touch the stars. Finally, I want to thank Makayla, Caleb and Shae for showing me what life is truly about.

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Abstract

This study examined the representation of African American Students in special education in a suburban Middle Tennessee county school system. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze and determine the percentage of students labeled learning disabled, mental retardation and emotional and behavioral disorder by ethnicity, age, gender and placement setting taken a database of census data, 1,788 entries, from the observed county's special education department. Further examination and analysis of the type of disability, gender, age and placement setting was studied and correlated with ethnicity to determine if there was a disproportionate representation of African Americans occurring in these areas. Correlations were then examined to determine if they were statistically significant by the use of chi-square. The null hypothesis, that there is no difference in the representation of African American and European American students labeled learning disabled, mental retardation or emotionally disturbed in special education by age, gender or setting was rejected, when tested using the chi-square test. Conclusions generated from this study suggest that African American students are significantly overrepresentation in comparison to European American students.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Importance of the Problem

The representation of African Americans in special education has been a growing concern for over three decades (Zhang & Katsiyannis, 2002). A review of literature indicated there may be an overrepresentation of African Americans in special education in general and particularly in high incidence disabilities (i.e. mental retardation, learning disabilities and emotional and behavioral disorders). Analysis of national data from the U.S. Department of Education (2000b) showed this exists to some degree across the country. Data from Tennessee was also consistent with the findings (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). This study proposed to examine the entire special education population (preK-12) from a public school during the 2001-2002 school year in a small suburban Middle Tennessee county and determine the representation of African American students in the entire special education population, including the categories of mental retardation, learning disabled and emotional and behavioral disorder. Also examined was the concern at what age are these students currently in special education and determine if there is a specific age range in which they are more likely to be in and if boys are being referred at higher rates than girls.

Problem

A particular ethnic group is considered overrepresented when the percentage in special education is significantly greater than the percentage in the total student populations (Zang & Katsiyannis, 2002). Examination of data from United States Census Bureau (2000) and United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System

(2000b) indicated that a higher percentage of African Americans are served in special education than the percentage of total student population in that specific minority group.

Relationship of your study to this problem

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that states provide a free and appropriate education to all students. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 1997 also requires states to collect census data based on race, disability and educational setting (Turnbull & Cilley, 1999). Review of the collected data was conducted to ensure no significant disproportion with respect to the identification of children with disabilities or the placement in a particular educational setting of these children existed. Current special education census data indicated that there are a disproportionate number of African Americans in special education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). A better understanding of the rates in which African American students are being referred for and labeled with mental retardation, specific learning disability or emotional and behavioral disorder, the type of educational setting and the age and gender at which they are being referred will assist in the future by highlighting the importance of appropriate prereferral intervention, referral procedures, diagnosis and educational setting placement.

Research Questions

To research this problem, a literature review exploring the current research regarding the representation of African Americans in special education was conducted. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent are African American students being identified with mental

retardation, specific learning disability or emotional and behavioral disorder across the US?

2. In what type of educational setting are African American students labeled with mental retardation, specific learning disability and emotional and behavioral disorder being placed?

3. To what extent does gender influence representation of African American students being identified with mental retardation, specific learning disability and emotional and behavioral disorder?

Research Hypothesis

This review's purpose and rationale was to find support and value for the following hypothesis:

There is no difference in the representation of African American and European American students labeled mental retardation, specific learning disabled or emotionally disturbed in special education by age, setting or gender.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this research:

1. African American: of or belonging to an American ethnic group descended from African peoples having darkened skin (The American Heritage College Dictionary, 2000, p. 143). Term may be used interchangeably with black.

2. European American: a member of a racial group of people having light skin coloration, especially one of European origin (The American Heritage College Dictionary, 2000, p. 1538). Term may be used interchangeably with white.

3. Mental retardation: significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior manifested during the developmental period, which adversely affects the child's educational performance (Overton, 2000, p. 65).

4. Specific learning disability: a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that manifests itself in the imperfect ability to listen, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations (Overton, 2000, p. 65).

5. Emotional disorder: a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree which adversely affects educational performance: (a) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, (c) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances, (d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression and/or (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (Overton, 2000, p. 65). Emotional disorder is the same as emotional and behavioral disorder or behavioral disorder and may be used interchangeably.

6. Representation: the proportion of a group of students that is the equivalent to the group as a whole.

7. Prereferral: prior to referring a student for a comprehensive evaluation, the teacher must clearly target with interventions the student's learning or behavioral difficulty.

8. Educational setting: the environment that a student with disabilities is primarily

placed to receive instruction. Terms used will be inclusion (students placed in general education classes with services from consulting teacher or direct services or related services totaling no more than 3 hours per week.), resource (students pulled out of general education classes for special education services from 4-22 hours per week.), self-contained (students in self-contained special education classes for 23 hours or more per week.), and Segregated/Separate School, Residential and Homebound (these are separate schools just for children with disabilities and children taught in 24 hour settings or children who have services delivered in their home.).

9. Least restrictive environment: students with disabilities must be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate and they can be removed for the general education environment only if they cannot be satisfactorily educated with the use of supplementary aids and services (Hosp & Reschly, 2002).

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made during research for this paper:

1. It has been assumed the data obtained from the special education secretary of the school system is valid and accurate.
2. The sample school district is representative of other suburban school districts.
3. Set rules for coding the census were followed by teachers.

Limitations

The following limitations were noted as possible problems in generalizing to the population:

1. Sample size was generally more than adequate; however, the sample was restricted to a suburban district and may not generalize to non suburban school districts.

2. Most of the studies researched were based on a limited population and region of distribution. Therefore, findings may not be generalized to other settings.

3. The expected distributions by gender, label, and setting are consistent with IDEA nationally collected reported data.

4. The expected distributions by age assume that there are an equal number of potential students for each of the ages studied.

Delimitations

The following delimitations were noted as possible problems in generalizing to a larger or different population:

1. Sample is derived from one suburban school district in the southwestern portion of Tennessee.

CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

Issues Surrounding Representation

“Disproportionate representation of minority students in special education has been an issue at the forefront of educational research and policy for over 30 years” (Hosp & Reschly, 2002, p. 225). Due to the consistent occurrence of this issue, it has become an important area of concern in for the United States Department of Education. Also, recognizing the complexity of the issue and the need for a better understanding of its causes and solutions, the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 1997) (Turnbull & Cilley, 1999) requires states to collect and report race/ethnicity data in order to document and address minority representation in special education.

Discussions of disproportionate representation most often center on African Americans and their overrepresentation in the high-incidence categories of mental retardation, learning disability and emotional and behavioral disorders. However, disproportionate representation in the identification of African American students is not the only area related to overrepresentation. The educational placement of these students is also of concern. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 1997 mandates that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities are to be educated with children who are nondisabled. Special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the general educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes

with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (Turnbull & Cilley, 1999). It is important that minority children are treated in the same way we treat students from majority groups.

A great deal of the blame for the overrepresentation of minorities in special education has been attributed to referral and evaluation practices. The amount of attention given to the assessment process may be due in part to IDEA's emphasis on nondiscriminatory assessment. The law clearly states educational agencies should use evaluation procedures that are not racially or culturally discriminatory. This can have many implications when assessing students who have linguistic differences and those who may come from culturally different backgrounds or deprived environments. According to Artiles, Aguirre-Munoz and Abedi (1998) conceptual vagueness and variability in identification and eligibility criteria have made identification and placement practices problematic. The following list of problems can cause bias in assessment (Overton, 2000):

1. Inappropriate content. Students from minority populations may lack exposure to certain items on the assessment instrument.
2. Inappropriate standardization samples. Ethnic minorities were not represented in the normative sample at the time of development of the instrument.
3. Examiner and language. White, English-speaking examiners may intimidate or not relate to students of color and students from different linguistic backgrounds.
4. Inequitable social consequences. As a result of discriminatory assessment practices, minority students may be relegated to lower educational placements, which may

ultimately result in lower-paying jobs.

5. Measurement of different constructs. Test developers who are white may design instruments assumed to measure academic or cognitive ability for all students. When used with minority students, however, the instruments may measure only the degree to which the minority students have been able to absorb imbedded white middle-class culture.

6. Different predictive validity. Instruments designed to predict the educational or academic outcome or potential for all students might not do so for minority students (p. 65).

Also a point of concern in regard to the disproportionate representation of African American students is that inappropriate placements may result in these students not receiving a quality education due to the lack of access to general education academic and social curricula.

Problems Encountered by Teachers Referring Minority Students

The overrepresentation may be due to the difficulty in constructing instructional programs that address individual needs, ineffective classification and diagnostic systems, misrepresentation due to lack of knowledge of the actual problem causing placement (referral), insufficient resources to serve minority children who are underachieving other than special education placement, and teachers with little to no special education knowledge and training.

Anderson (1988) states that a problem of great concern is teachers who “are not equipped to identify, interpret, and respond to the variant styles of multicultural populations” (as cited in Durodoyle & Hildreth, 1995, p. 244). General education teachers receive little to no

education or training on how to teach students with special needs or how to appropriately identify those students who may need additional services and those who are only experiencing some type of barrier (linguistically/culturally) that is inhibiting their performance. Yet, these teachers have been thrown into teaching students with disabilities who are placed in their classes and these teachers are expected to shape and mold students and teach them life long skills that will help them succeed in today's society. This is problematic because students are often expected to pursue courses that are college bound and graduate from high school with a general education diploma.

Today's teachers have many demands, both in and out of class and the amount of time it takes to modify their existing curriculum is a challenge in itself. The training in special education for general education teachers is just not sufficient for all demanded of them. The pressure and expectation that society puts on educators to integrate students with disabilities in to their classroom only builds on the challenges teachers face.

Representation of African Americans

Studies have shown that minority students tend to be overrepresented in special education programs in states or school districts with high proportions of ethnic/linguistic minority or poor individuals. In a nationwide study regarding the disproportionate representation of minorities in special education Zhang and Katsiyannis (2002) found that African Americans were the most represented group in the categories of mental retardation and learning disabled and were more heavily represented in emotional and behavioral disorders than would be expected. Overall, African Americans in each category appeared at significantly higher rates

than European Americans. Further, a study conducted, of 4,455 districts conducted by Oswald, Coutinho, Best and Singh (1999) indicated that African American students were about 2.4 times more likely to be identified as mild mental retardation and about 1.5 times more likely to be identified as seriously emotionally disturbed than non-African American students.

Data from the U.S. Department of Education (2000c) indicates that African American students were overrepresented in the special education population nationwide. National and state data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) and U.S. Department of Education (2000c), Office of Special Education Programs indicates nationally African Americans make up 12.3% of the general education population and 20.04% of the special education population. In Tennessee, African Americans make up 16.4% of the general education population and 24.92% of the special education population. This indicates that there is an overrepresentation of African Americans at both the national and state level.

Further, data from the St. Louis, Missouri area public schools indicates overrepresentation at the county level. Bowers' (2002) analysis of Rockwood, Missouri data collected by the U.S. Office for Civil Rights (2000) found in Rockwood, Missouri, African Americans made up 13% of the general education population and 35% of those were receiving services for emotional disturbance. In Alton, Illinois, African Americans made up 36% of the general education population and represented 76% of the population receiving services for emotional disturbance. In Edwardsville, Illinois, 9% of the general education population was African American and 23% of those labeled emotionally disturbed were African American. A pattern of overrepresentation of African American students in special education category of

emotional disturbance appears to be documented at the national, state, and local level.

The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) found African American students were referred more often for academic problems and were also more likely to be classified with mental retardation compared to white students who were more likely to be classified as learning disabled (U.S. Department of Education, 2000a). The Office of Civil Rights also found that African American students were more frequently placed in self-contained classes for those with mental retardation than white students. The Office of Civil Rights identified many African American and whites students who were being placed in self-contained special education classes that should not have been.

Identification Procedures

Ways in which students are identified in both general and special education and the expectations which are placed on them can have a positive or negative impact on their success in school. Minority children's motivation and interpretation of self-concept may be derived from how the teacher understands them and views their world (Obiakor, 1999). Therefore, the teacher's realistic or unrealistic expectations for the student affects their demonstrations of ability. For example, if the teacher views the student as intelligent and expects the student to do well, the student will perform to the best of their ability to meet those expectations. If the teacher views the student's ability as inconsistent with performing and achieving in the classroom, then the student performance reflects these expectations. The teacher holds a very powerful position in the classroom. Many students constantly seek the attention and approval of

the teacher (Obiakor, 1999).

Obiakor (1999) further identifies several issues that are factors in accuracy of placement of students into special education programs (the non italicized comments are this authors expansion of Obikar's comments):

1. *Obstacles in language serve as a basis for inappropriate treatment.* Students who are immigrants may have a difficult time adjusting to the language of their new country. Educators often misinterpret the language barriers as a sign of disability. Referring the student for services based on lack of ability to communicate in the new language, not based on the student's cognitive ability, sometimes happens.

2. *Teacher characteristics and tolerances are critical in determining appropriateness of behavior.* Teachers must have the ability to adjust and work with all types of behaviors from all students. If teachers cannot make these adjustments in their teaching, behavioral situations often arise which are preventable with more flexibility.

3. *Stereotyped, inappropriate expectations perpetuate myths regarding minority membership and serve as obstacles to development.* It is usually inappropriate for teachers to discuss with others many issues about the students they teach. This breach of confidentiality contributes to lowered expectations. Teachers must also form their own positive views of the students and not adopt less appropriate view others may have. Teachers' low behavioral and academic expectations often cause students to have low expectations for themselves.

4. *Culturally acceptable, appropriate behavior may be misjudged and serve as a*

basis for inappropriate referral to special education. Before educators assume the student has a disability and refer them for testing, they must first determine how, if at all, the student's background and culture relate to the perceived disability.

5. Individual differences create potential sources for discrimination and inappropriate treatment. Each student is different from others and with this in mind, teachers must foster peer relationships to ensure that all students feel they are apart of the classroom.

6. Transient personal and interpersonal problems create potential sources for misunderstanding, lowered expectations and less than optimal interactions. Teachers are responsible for communicating with their students. Communication can help teachers prevent situations before they arise and eliminate unwarranted referrals.

Students become stigmatized by their label (Blatt, 1987). With the increase of minority students in the classroom it is essential that school systems focus on creating more culturally diverse schools and providing teachers with training programs on different cultures, learning styles and teaching methods that relate to their diverse classroom. The goal for all educators should be to provide education to all students in the least restrictive environment, not label or remove them from the classroom with their peers.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Participants

The data studied was from the entire population of 1,788 public school students pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade who have been identified as having one or more disabilities and who had an Individualized Education Program during the 2001-2002 school year in a small suburban Middle Tennessee county. The students were diagnosed with one or a combination of the following disabilities: learning disabled, mental retardation, emotionally disturbed, speech impaired, language impaired, health impaired, physically impaired, deaf, hearing impaired, blind, visually impaired, deaf-blind, multi-disabled, functionally delayed, developmentally delayed, autistic or gifted. For the purpose of this study, the primary focus was on those individuals who have been identified with mental retardation, learning disabled, and emotional and behavioral disorder. In this district 798 students had these three diagnosis and constituted the participants of this study. Also closely examined was data regarding ethnicity, gender, age, and placement setting.

To ensure confidentiality and ethical safeguards for the students, permission for the study was obtained from a University's Institutional Review Board and the school system from which the data was obtained. Consent from subjects was not deemed necessary because this study was a post hoc review of district census records of these students. Obtaining consent from students would have compromised confidentiality by revealing identities to the researcher.

Instrument

In this study, the entire special education database, pre-kindergarten through twelfth

grade, from a small suburban Middle Tennessee county was downloaded by the special education secretary of the school system. During the downloading process the secretary removed all identifying qualifiers to ensure confidentiality of each student. Pertinent information which included: referral date, referral age, current age, gender, ethnicity, primary disability, admission date into special education and type of placement remained.

Procedure

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze and determine the percentage of students labeled mental retardation, learning disabled and emotional and behavioral disorder by ethnicity, age, gender and placement setting. The information found from this analysis was compared to federal and state data, to determine if African Americans are being overrepresented in high incidence disability (mental retardation, learning disabled and emotional and behavioral disorder) areas of special education. Further examination and analysis of the type of disability, gender, age, and placement setting were studied to see if there was a disproportionate representation of African Americans occurring in these areas. These relationships were examined to determine if they were statistically significant by the use of chi-square techniques using Statistics with Finesse (1992), a software program published by the Microsoft Corporation.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Revisiting the Hypothesis

This study was designed to examine the extent that African American students were identified as learning disabled, mental retardation and emotionally disturbed were identified in a suburban Middle Tennessee school system. Also studied was the type of educational setting where these students were placed, and the extent that gender influenced the representation of African American students in special education. The hypothesis examined was that of no difference in the representation of African American and European American students labeled mental retardation, specific learning disabled or emotionally disturbed in special education by age, setting or gender.

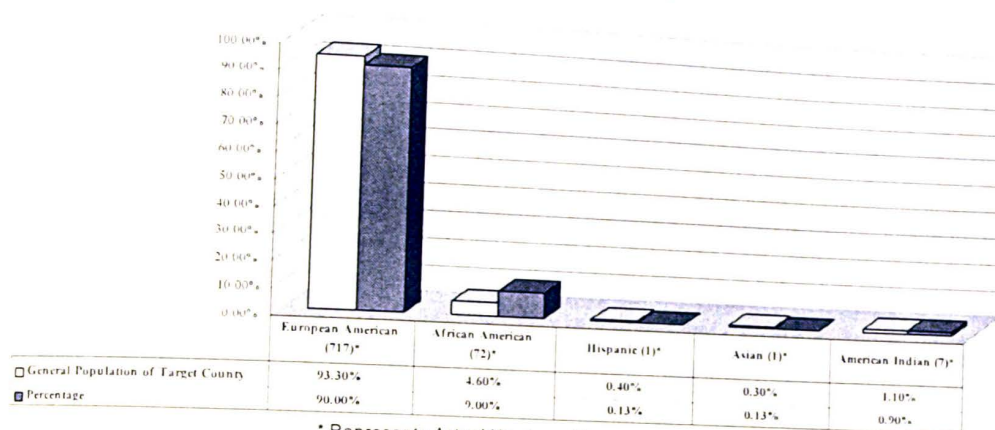
Findings and Data Analysis

When examining the data concerning ethnicity of all students labeled learning disabled, mental retardation and emotionally disturbed combined in the county wide school system, the following data was found:

The European American population of the county is 93.3% while the African American population is 4.6%, the Hispanic population is 0.4%, the Asian population is 0.3% and the American Indian population is 1.1%. However those students labeled learning disabled, mental retardation and emotionally disturbed had rates of European American 90%, African American 9%, Hispanic is 0.13%, Asian, 13%, and American Indian 9%. (See Figure 1a.). It is noted

that African American students are identified as having a high incidence disability at approximately twice their proportion in the general population (4.6% to 9%) with minor variations in the other ethnic categories.

Figure 1a. - A Comparison of the Ethnic Percentage of the Target County Population and the Ethnic Percentage and Population of Learning Disabled, Mental Retardation and Emotionally Disturbed Combined Students in the County



* Represents Actual Number of Learning Disabled, Mentally Retarded and Emotionally Disturbed Special Education Students used to determine the Percentage

Table 1a. - The Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test for Significant Relationships between the Ethnic Percent of Target County Population and the Ethnic Percent of Learning Disabled, Mental retardation and Emotionally Disturbed Combined Students in the County Wide School System.

Number of Observations	798				
Chi-Square	36.3419				
Degrees of Freedom	4				
Probability	0.0001				
	European American	African American	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian
Observed Frequency (LD/MR/ED)	717	72	1	1	7
Expected Frequency	745	37	3	2	9

When examining ethnicity of the students labeled learning disabled, mental retardation and emotionally disturbed in the county wide school district, it was noted that the population of

the county which this district school system serves is 93.3% European American, 4.6% African American, 0.4% Hispanic, 0.3% Asians and 1.1% American Indians (see Figure 1b.). Students labeled learning disabled were 90.39% European American, 8.46% African American, 0.86% Hispanic, 0.14% Asian and 0.14% American Indian. Students with a mental retardation diagnosis were 83.75% European American, 15% African American, 1.25% Hispanic and 0% Asian and 0% American Indian. Those students with labels of emotionally disturbed were 95.24% European American, 4.76% African American, 0% Hispanic, 0% Asian and 0% American Indian. In Table 1b, when examining the Chi-Square Goodness of Fit, it is noted that significant differences were found between the county population by ethnicity and the learning disabled and mental retardation populations of the county wide school system with more African American children placed in mental retardation and learning disabled than expected. Almost twice the number of learning disabled students were African American (8.6% were African American and 4.6% of the county population was African American) and over 3 times the mental retardation students were of this ethnic group (15% of mental retardation students were African American with 4.6% of the county being African American).

Figure 1b. - Comparison of the Ethnic Percent of the Target County Population and the Ethnic Percent of Learning Disabled, Mental Retardation and Emotionally Disturbed Students in the County Wide School System.

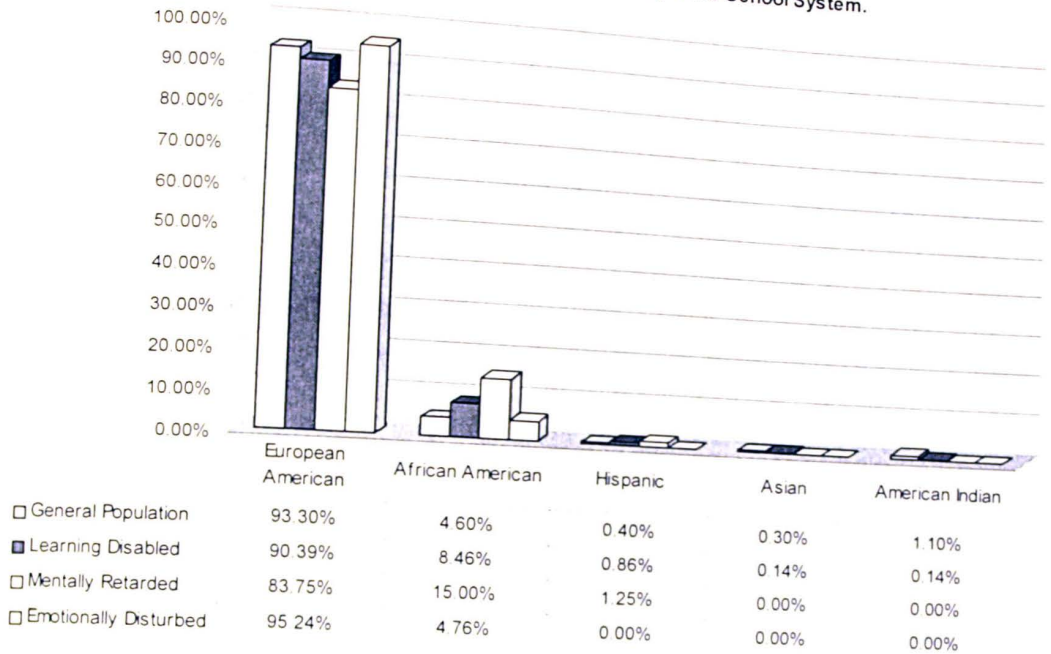


Table 1b(1). - The Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test for Significant Relationships between the Ethnic Percent of Target County Population and the Ethnic Percent of Learning Disabled Students in the County Wide School System.

Number of Observations	697				
Chi-Square	25.2627				
Degrees of Freedom	4				
Probability	0.0001				
	European American	African American	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian
Observed Frequency	630	59	1	1	6
Expected Frequency	650.301	32.062	2.788	2.091	7.667

Table 1b(2). - The Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test for Significant Relationships between the Ethnic Percent of Target County Population and the Ethnic Percent of Mental retardation Students in the County Wide School System.

Number of Observations	80				
Chi-Square	20.1076				
Degrees of Freedom	4				
Probability	0.0005				
	European American	African American	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian
Observed Frequency	67	12	0	0	1
Expected Frequency	74.64	3.68	0.32	0.24	0.88

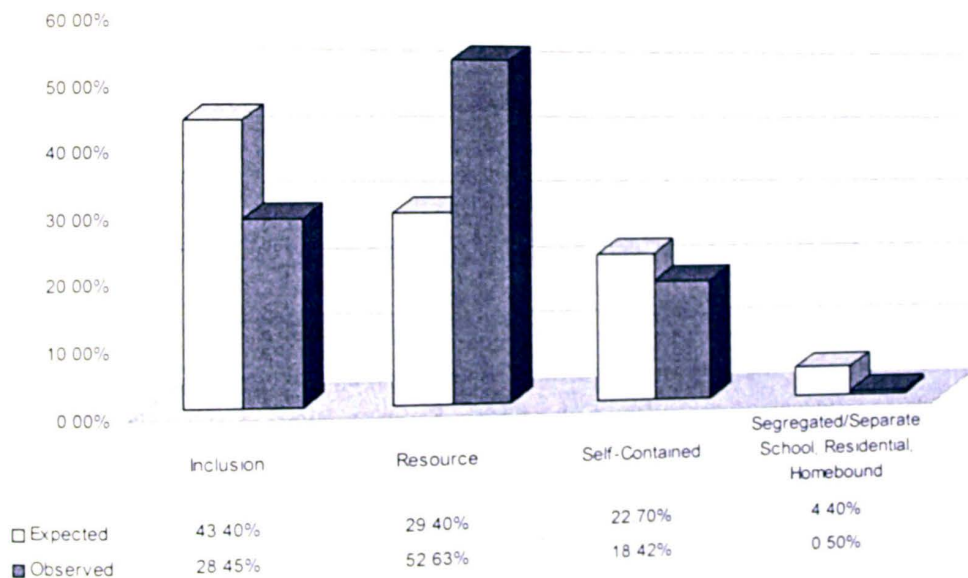
Table 1b(3). - The Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test for Significant Relationships between the Ethnic Percent of Target County Population and the Ethnic Percent of Emotionally Disturbed Students in the County Wide School System.

Number of Observations	21				
Chi-Square	0.3863				
Degrees of Freedom	4				
Probability	0.9836				
	European American	African American	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian
Observed Frequency	20	1	0	0	0
Expected Frequency	19.593	0.966	0.084	0.063	0.231

Looking at the settings in which the special education students with learning disabilities, mentally retardation and emotional disturbance were placed, according to the 18th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of IDEA (Smith, Tyler & McLean, 1998), it would be expected that 43.4% of students with disabilities would be found in inclusion settings, 29.4%

in resource settings, 22.7% in self-contained classes and 4.4% in Segregated/Separate School, Residential and Homebound. What was found in the county wide school system was 28.24% in inclusion classes, 52.63% in resource, 18.42% in self-contained and only 0.5% in Segregated/Separate School, Residential and Homebound (see Figure 2a.).

Figure 2a. - Comparison of the Expected Percent of Special Education Placement and the Observed Percent in the Target County Population labeled Learning Disabled, Mental Retardation and Emotionally Disturbed Combined in the County Wide School System.



In Table 2a(1), when examining the Chi-Square Goodness of Fit, it is noted that significant differences were found between the placements of learning disabled, mental retardation and emotionally disturbed students in this county school system and what is seen nationally in special education placements. It was noted that there is a 65% lower rate of students in inclusion than would be expected, greater than 50% more students in resource than would be expected, and only 11% of what one might think to find in segregated/separate school, residential and homebound in this county wide school system. There were some less than expected in self-contained, not as dramatic as these other numbers.

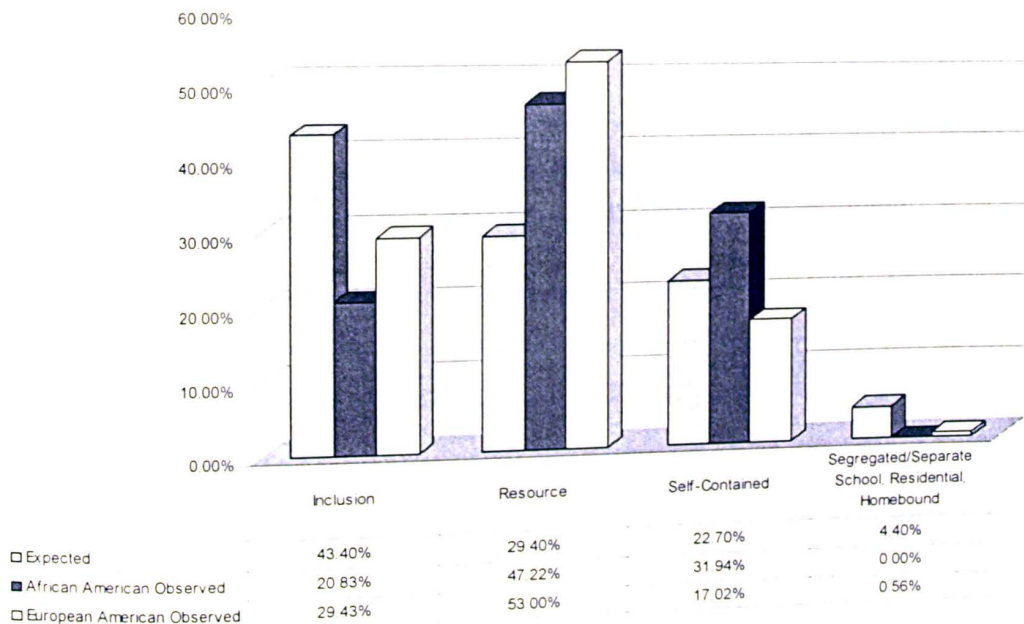
Table 2a(1). - The Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test for Significant Relationships between the Expected Percent of Special Education Placement and the Observed Percent in the Target County Population labeled Learning Disabled, Mental retardation and Emotionally Disturbed Combined in the County Wide School System.

Number of Observations	798			
Chi-Square	221.3904			
Degrees of Freedom	3			
Probability	0.0001			
	Inclusion	Resource	Self-Contained	Segregated/ Separate School, Residential, Homebound
Observed Frequency	227	420	147	4
Expected Frequency	346.68	234.85	181.33	35.15

As noted in Figure 2b, when examining the settings in which European American and African American students who are taught in the county wide school system, it is expected that 43.4% would be in Inclusion, 29.4% in Resource, 22.7% in Self-Contained and 4.4% in

Segregated/Separate School, Residential, Homebound (from the 18th Annual Report to Congress as cited by Smith, Tyler, & McLean, 1998). However it was noted that only 20.83% of African American were in Inclusion and 29.43% of European Americans were so taught. Looking at the resource class option with 29.4% expected, we see 47.22% African American and 53% European American. Students in self-contained classes in this study should have been 22.7% but we find 31.9% African Americans and 17% European American. It is noted that almost twice the percent of African Americans are in self-contained as are European Americans (approximately 32% of African Americans to 17% of European Americans).

Figure 2b. -Comparison of Expected Percent of Special Education Placement and Observed Percent by Ethnicity in the Target County Population labeled Learning Disabled, Mental Retardation and Emotionally Disturbed Combined in the County Wide School System.



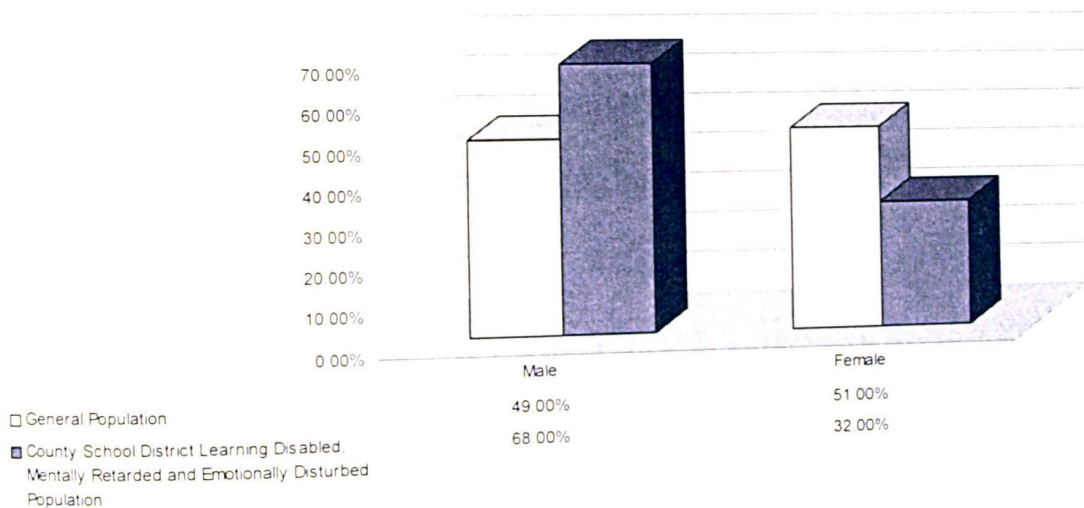
In Table 2a(2) and 2a(3) note that these results are statistically significant.

Table 2a(2). - The Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test for Significant Relationships between the Expected Percent of Special Education Placement and the Observed Percent in the Target County Population of African Americans labeled Learning Disabled, Mental retardation and Emotionally Disturbed Combined in the County Wide School System.				
Number of Observations	72			
Chi-Square	22.0836			
Degrees of Freedom	3			
Probability	0.0001			
	Inclusion	Resource	Self-Contained	Segregated/ Separate School, Residential, Homebound
Observed Frequency	15	34	23	0
Expected Frequency	31.28	21.19	16.36	3.17

Table 2a(3). - The Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test for Significant Relationships between the Expected Percent of Special Education Placement and the Observed Percent in the Target County Population of European Americans labeled Learning Disabled, Mental retardation and Emotionally Disturbed Combined in the County Wide School System.				
Number of Observations	717			
Chi-Square	202.1236			
Degrees of Freedom	3			
Probability	0.0001			
	Inclusion	Resource	Self-Contained	Segregated/ Separate School, Residential, Homebound
Observed Frequency	211	380	122	4
Expected Frequency	311.49	211.01	162.92	31.58

As the research focused on the gender of students labeled learning disabled, mental retardation and emotionally disturbed, the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) notes that 49% of the students identified with high incidence disabilities are male and 51% are female. When examining the gender of the county wide school system's students who were labeled learning disabled, mental retardation and emotionally disturbed, 68% of the students were male and 32% were female (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. - A Comparison of the Gender Percent of the US Population and the Gender Percent of Learning Disabled, Mental Retardation and Emotionally Disturbed Students Combined in the County School System.



In Table 3, when examining the Chi-Square Goodness of Fit it is noted that a significant difference was found between the U.S. population gender figure and the gender figure of the county wide school districts' population of learning disabled, mental retardation and emotionally disturbed students. Instead of an appropriate 50/50 split, it was found that over 2/3 of these identified students were male.

Table 3. - The Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test for Significant Relationships between Gender Percent of the U.S. Population and the Gender Percent of the Learning Disabled, Mental retardation and Emotionally Disturbed Combined Students in the County Wide School District.

Number of Observations	798	
Chi-Square	114.3062	
Degrees of Freedom	1	
Probability	0.0001	
	Male	Female
Observed Frequency	542	256
Expected Frequency	391.02	406.98

A further analysis of data looked at the ages of students, in groups of elementary aged children (3-11), middle school aged children (12-15) and high school aged children (16-21). It was assumed by this research that the children's ages would be evenly distributed by years (just as many 3 year olds as 4 year olds, etc.) with that in mind, it is expected that 47% of the students would fall in the 3-11 (elementary) age bracket, 21% would fall in the 12-15 (middle school) age bracket and 32% would fall in the 16-21 (high school) age bracket. Actually this districts' population of learning disabled, mental retardation and emotionally disturbed students was 31.83% elementary, 39.85% middle and 29.32 high school aged (see Figure 4).

In Table 4, when examining the Chi-Square Goodness of Fit, it is noted that a significant difference exists between the expected ages of students with learning disabilities, mental retardation and emotionally disturbed and what was found. Almost twice as many children were middle school aged, (21% expected to approximately 40% found), with elementary and high school students lower expectations.

Figure 4. - Comparison of the Expected Age Percent and the Observed Age Percent in the Target County Population labeled Learning Disabled, Mental Retardation and Emotionally Disturbed Students Combined in the County Wide School System.

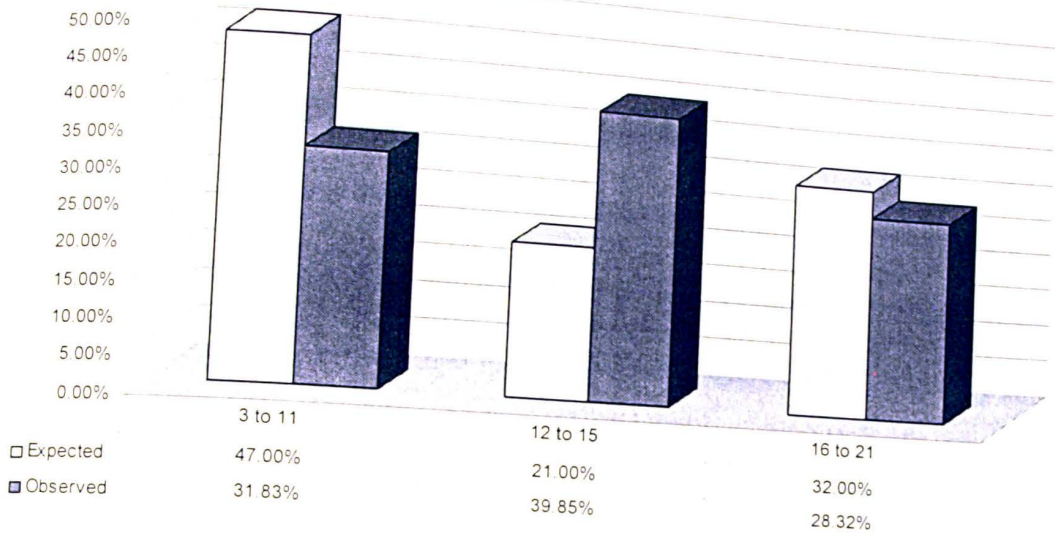


Table 4. - The Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test for Significant Relationships between the Expected Ages and the Observed Ages of the Learning Disabled, Mental retardation and Emotionally Disturbed Students Combined in the County School System.

Number of Observations	798		
Chi-Square	177.4680		
Degrees of Freedom	2		
Probability	0.0001		
	3-11 Elementary School	12-15 Middle School	16-21 High School
Observed Frequency	254	318	226
Expected Frequency	375.06	167.58	255.36

CHAPTER V

Discussion of Findings

Conclusion

This study showed that the number of students identified as learning disabled was almost twice the percentage of African American students in the population and over three times over the number of African Americans were identified with mental retardation than would be expected based on population figures. Of those students reported, African American children were less likely to be placed in the expected settings for their disability according to National data report. An important finding of this report relative to placement is that a disproportionately large number of students, regardless of ethnicity, were not placed in settings appropriate to their label, i.e. inclusion settings.

There was an overrepresentation of African American males labeled as learning disabled, mental retardation or emotionally disturbed, when compared to European Americans and all other groups, including African American girls; the disproportion was 2/3. This is inconsistent with the 50/50 gender split that is found in the U.S. general population as a whole.

It was expected that data would show that labeling or identification of learning disabled, mental retardation and emotionally disturbed would occur in the early grades and children would be placed in settings appropriate to their label resulting in fewer with these labels in middle school and high school grades.

Significant differences were also found between the placements of learning disabled, mental retardation and emotionally disturbed students in this county wide school system and

what is seen nationally in special education placements. It was noted that there is a 65% lower rate of students in inclusion than would be expected, greater than 50% more students in resource than would be expected, and only 11% of what one might think to find in segregated/separate school, residential and homebound in this county wide school system. There were some less than expected in self-contained, not as dramatic as these other numbers.

Recommendations

If one accepts that all children who are labeled learning disabled, mentally retardation and emotionally disturbed would be better served if placed in settings appropriate with their disability, then this particular county has yet to implement this best practice to the nationally expected level. In the best interest of all children with these labels, especially African American children in general and African American males in particular it seems crucial that early identification occur. When the disability is identified the most appropriate setting for their condition should be provided. This is an individual decision made by each multi-disciplinary team, but the system-wide culture may be less supportive of inclusive settings than the culture in other schools across the nation. The critical educational issue and an urgent public policy issue of implementation of inclusive practices seems to be an opportunity for growth for this county. Other school systems in the country may find similar trends reflected in their data as well. Children should get the appropriate care for their needs. Hopefully, this study will encourage school systems and educational professionals to engage in self-examination of the procedural and cultural practices and personal understandings and expectations which may be shaping local identification and placement patterns.

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APPENDICES

LETTERS OF APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Austin Peay State University Institutional Review Board

March 28, 2003

Bobbi Rae Harrell Devers
c/o Larry Lowrance
School of Education
APSU Box 4545

RE: Your application dated March 26, 2003 regarding study number 03-036: A Study of the Representation of African American Students in Special Education (Austin Peay State University)

Dear Ms. Devers:

Thank you for your recent submission. We appreciate your cooperation with the human research review process. I have reviewed your request for expedited approval of the new study listed above. This type of study qualifies for expedited review under FDA and DHHS (OHRP) regulations.

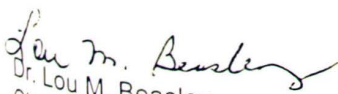
Congratulations! This is to confirm that I have approved your application through original submission. Informed consent is waived. This approval is subject to APSU Policies and Procedures governing human subjects research. These policies can be viewed at: www@apsu.edu/www/computer/policy/2002.htm. The full APIRB will still review this protocol and reserves the right to withdraw expedited approval if unresolved issues are raised during their review.

You are granted permission to conduct your study as described in your application effective immediately. The study is subject to continuing review on or before March 27, 2004, unless closed before that date. Enclosed please find the forms to report when your study has been completed and to request an annual review of a continuing study. Please submit the appropriate form prior to March 27, 2004.

Please note that any changes to the study as approved must be promptly reported and approved. Some changes may be approved by expedited review; others require full board review. Contact Lou Beasley (221-7414; fax 221-7641; email: beasleyl@apsu.edu) if you have any questions or require further information.

Again, thank you for your cooperation with the APIRB and the human research review process. Best wishes for a successful study.

Sincerely,



Dr. Lou M. Beasley
Chair, Austin Peay Institutional Review Board

REQUEST FOR ANNUAL REVIEW FOR CONTINUING STUDIES INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Please submit this report if your study involving human participants is not completed prior to the IRB annual review date and you require additional time for data collection. IRB approval is valid for one calendar year following the original submission date.

Principal Investigator(PI): _____ Faculty Advisor (if applicable): _____
Protocol #: _____ Title: _____

1. How many participants were tested? _____
2. Have there been any adverse effects? _____
If yes, please explain on a separate sheet.
3. Where are data stored? _____
4. Will there be changes to any aspect of the original study? _____
If yes, please detail these changes on a separate sheet.

Signature of PI or Faculty Advisor

Date

Return to: Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs
Browning Building, Room 212
PO Box 4517
Austin Peay State University
Clarksville, TN 37044

CLOSED STUDY REPORT

FOR STUDIES INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

37

Submit this report if your study involving human participants is completed prior to the annual review date or if you have decided not to conduct the study after having received approval.

Faculty

Advisor (if applicable):

Title:

Study is completed. Please close the file. (Answer questions below and sign form.)

Study was never conducted. Please close the file. (Sign form.)

Study was conducted but is now complete, please answer the following questions:

How many participants were tested? _____

Were there any adverse effects? _____

If yes, please explain on a separate sheet.

Where are data stored? _____

Signature of PI or Faculty Advisor

Date

Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs
Browning Building, Room 212
PO Box 4517
Austin Peay State University
Clarksville, TN 37044

03-036

ASTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (APIRB) APPLICATION FOR PROJECT APPROVAL

This form has been designed to provide the APIRB with the information it needs to evaluate your project. Please complete each item carefully. Items that sometimes cause difficulty are clarified on the reverse side of this form. You are NOT confined to the space provided under each item on the hard copy or electronic versions of this form.

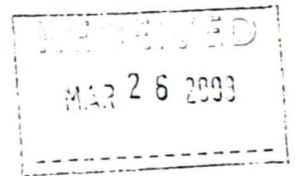
TITLE OF PROJECT: A STUDY OF THE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S) INFORMATION: (provide same information for all CO-PIs)

Name: Bobbi Rae Herrell Devers
Faculty ___ Staff ___ Graduate Student ☒ Undergraduate Student ___
Department: School of Education
Mailing Address (where you want correspondence about this project to be sent):
6156 Buckner Loop
Cumberland Furnace, TN 37051

OR

College of Graduate Studies, APSU
P.O. Box 4458
Clarksville, TN 37044
Phone #: 615-219-3006 (home); 931-221-7414 (APSU work)
Email Address: lbdevers@yahoo.com or herrellb@apsu.edu
FAX #: NA



FACULTY SUPERVISOR: (If PI is a student):

Name: Dr. Larry Lowrance
Department: School of Education
Campus Mailing Address:
School of Education
P.O. Box 4545
Clarksville, TN 37044
Office Phone #: 931-221-6153
Email Address: lowrancel@apsu.edu
FAX #: 931-221-7368

SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR THE PROJECT: (if any) NA

PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATION: (i.e., research topic and question(s))
The representation of African Americans in special education has been a growing concern for over three decades (Zhang & Katsiyannis, 2002). A review of literature indicates there may be an overrepresentation of African Americans in special education in general and in some disabilities, in particular, high incidence disabilities (i.e. mental retardation, learning disabilities and emotional and behavioral disorders). Analysis of national data from the U.S. Department of Education (2000b) shows this exists to some degree across the country. Data from Tennessee also is consistent with the findings. This study

proposes to examine the entire special education population (preK-12) from a public school during the 2001-2002 school year in a small suburban middle Tennessee county and determine the representation of African American students in the entire special education population, including mental retardation, learning disabled and emotional and behavioral disorder. Also examined will be the concern at what age these students are referred to determine if there is a specific age range in which they are being referred and if boys are being referred at higher rates than girls.

To research this problem, a literature review exploring the current research regarding the representation of African Americans in special education will be conducted. The study will address the following research questions:

1. To what extent are African American students being identified with mental retardation, specific learning disability or emotional and behavioral disorder?
2. In what type of educational setting are African American students labeled with mental retardation, specific learning disability and emotional and behavioral disorder being placed?
3. To what extent does gender influence representation of African American students being identified with mental retardation, specific learning disability and emotional and behavioral disorder?

A. THIS RESEARCH IS BEING CONDUCTED TO FULFILL REQUIREMENTS FOR A GRADUATE DEGREE. YES √ NO

B. THIS RESEARCH IS BEING CONDUCTED TO FULFILL REQUIREMENTS FOR A COURSE. YES √ NO ;

IF YES: DEPT EDUC COURSE # 6990 INSTRUCTOR Dr. Larry Lowrance

DESCRIBE WHO PARTICIPANTS WILL BE, HOW PARTICIPANT(S) WILL BE RECRUITED, THE NUMBER AND AGE OF THE PARTICIPANTS AND ANY PROPOSED COMPENSATION. (Indicate any special classes of participants which might be included in this study (e.g., prisoners, minors, mentally disabled, hospitalized individuals, etc...): This research will be a secondary data analysis review of special education census files from Dickson County. All the special education files in grades pre K - 12 during the 2001-2002 school year will be reviewed. There will be a maximum of 1,800 census files from Dickson County Special Education. This data base was obtained previously from Dickson County Schools for a study my Mary Annette Little, who completed her specialist study in July of 2002 at this university. Permission to use this data base was given to Ms. Little and her advisor, Dr. Larry Lowrance, Professor of Education at APSU by the Dickson County Schools. Further this school system has granted Dr. Lowrance and Ms. Little permission "to continue to analyze this data base after she finishes the study as they find it

necessary." (Please refer to Director(s) Approval from Dickson County Schools that is attached to this proposal.) The census files have been masked (names and personal identification were removed) and placed into a data based maintained in Dr. Larry Lowrance's office. I have his and Ms. Little's permission to use it for this study.

DESCRIBE THE RESEARCH PROCEDURES IN NON-TECHNICAL LANGUAGE:

The APIRB needs to know what will be done with or to the research participant(s). Each student has been assigned an identification number. This will ensure confidentiality of every special education student in the study. Data will be computed using disability codes, gender, race, special education services and activation date of special education services. This researcher will do nothing to any subject. In fact, I will only be examining archival data from these subjects.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND ANTICIPATED RISK: (If risk of physical, psychological or economic harm may be involved, describe the steps taken to protect participants). The potential benefits of this research are vast. The study will assist Dickson County in ensuring that the representation all students in Special Education is equal and appropriate; whether the hypothesis is supported or not. Assuming the Dickson County Special Education students are representative of the special education students across the nation, results can be easily generalized. It is hopeful that this study will generate additional research on the representation of African American students in special education across the state and nation.

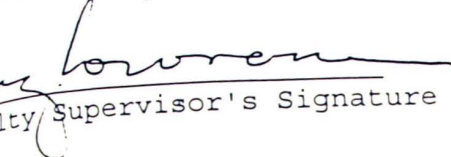
Participants will be exposed to minimal risk. The greatest could be possible breach in confidentiality, which cannot happen because all data has been masked prior to my accessing it.

4. DESCRIBE THE INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS. INCLUDE A COPY OF THE INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT (if applicable; include script(s) for any briefing or debriefing to be conducted). No consent process will be necessary for this study. This is a review of historical data of district census records of each student's placement that existed, during the 2001-2002 school year, by disability, gender, race, special education service hours, grade, age, transportation services and activation date of special education services with no manipulation of students or their educational programs. Dr. Lowrance and Ms. Little were given permission to use the data during a previous study. As noted earlier, they have permission to continue to analyze this database, and have granted me permission to use it for the purpose of this study.

This is to certify that the only involvement of human participants in this

arch study will be as described above. Application will not be
eviewed without appropriate signatures.


Principal Investigator's Signature


Faculty Supervisor's Signature (if appropriate)

Director(s) Approval

I have reviewed the Research Study Request for Mary Annette Little entitled Incidence Rates of Children with Emotional and/or Behavioral Problems in Various Special Education Settings.

She is being given access to post hoc records to create a database to study programming and census information for students with disabilities. She and her professor, Dr. Larry Lowrance, have permission to use this database in this study and to continue to analyze this database after she finishes the study as they find it necessary.

I agree/disagree (circle one) that my school will participate in this study. I also understand that given my approval, this research will be conducted ethically and according to federal guidelines.

Date: 3-06-02

Directors' Names: Linda G. Koellein - Director
Secondary Special Education
Thomas E. Lee - Director Elementary
Special Education

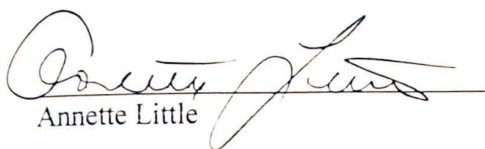
Directors' Signatures: Linda G. Koellein - Director Sp. Education
Thomas E. Lee - Director Elem Sp Education

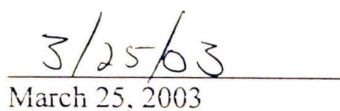
The following should be completed by the Directors.

If you disagreed above, please state your reasons below.

Approval to Analyze Data

Robbi Herrell Devers has been given permission to analyze the data collected by Dr. Larry Lowrance and Annette Little from a database of Dickson County Special Education records on March 06, 2002. She has my permission to use this database in her field study.


Annette Little


March 25, 2003

SAMPLE DATA SHEET

VITA

Bobbi Rae Herrell Devers was born in Clarksville, Tennessee on November 1, 1976. She attended elementary school at Montgomery Central and graduated from Montgomery Central High School in May 1995. The following August she entered Austin Peay State University and in May 2000 received a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Early Childhood. She reentered Austin Peay State University in June 2000 and in December 2001 received a Master of Arts in Education in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in Instructional Technology Specialization with honors and in May 2003 received an Educational Specialist degree in Education with a concentration in Elementary Education and Special Education Licensure.

She is presently employed as Assistant to the Dean in the College of Graduate Studies at Austin Peay State University. Beginning August 2003 she will be employed by the Clarksville-Montgomery School System where she has accepted a K-4 Resource teaching position.