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ABSTRACT

This publication is designed to address new paradigms such as research, policies, and daily school practices which tend to reduce or perpetuate inequities in educational opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse individuals with disabilities and/or gifts and talents. This particular issue includes articles that discuss referrals of language minority students, transition services, and critical educational issues and possible solutions to deal with problems confronting Asian/Pacific Islander students. Articles include (1) "School Psychologists' Perspectives on Referrals of Language Minority Students" (Salvador H. Ochoa and others); (2) "Transition for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Youth with Disabilities: Closing the Gap" (Gary Greene and Phylis Nefsky); (3) "Written Communication in Special Education: Meeting the Needs of Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Families" (Rosalie S. Boone and others); (4) "Review of The McIntyre Assessment of Culture (MAC)" (Gwendolyn Webb-Johnson and Mary Anderson); (5) "Focus on Critical Issues in the Education of Asian and Pacific Islander Exceptional Learners" (Helen Bessent Byrd); (6) "Enhancing Verbal Skills of African-American Students with Disabilities through Poetry: A Valuable Tool for Speech Pathologists" (Stacey Pryor); (7) "Debunking the Myths in Ethnic Minority Publications: A Rebuttal to Spooner, et al." (Laura Zionts); and (8) "Professional Publications of Ethnic Minority Scholars: Setting the Record Straight" (Festus Obiakor and others). Each article includes references. (CR)

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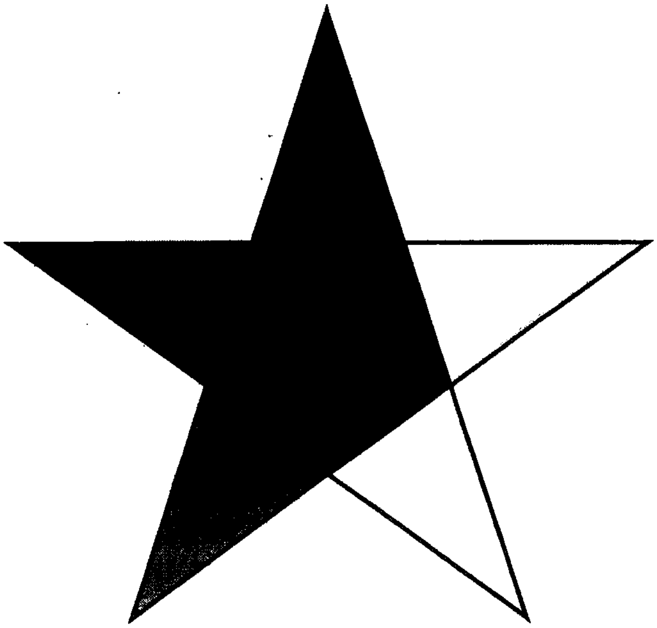

MULTIPLE VOICES

FOR ETHNICALLY DIVERSE EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS

1999

BRIDGIE ALEXIS FORD
EDITOR

EC 307257

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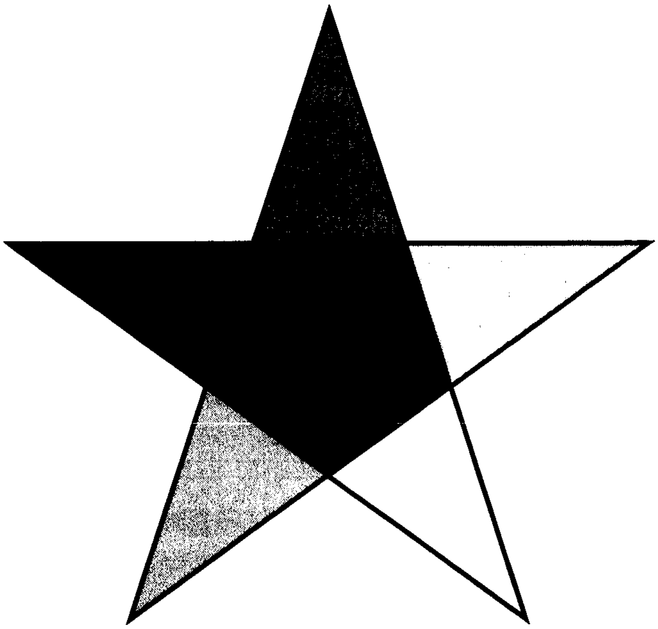

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PREVIEW

BRIDGIE ALEXIS FORD
Editor, *Multiple Voices*

As we continue the monumental countdown into the new millennium, it is important that the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners (DDEL) assesses its accomplishments of the past in order to chart its direction for the future. DDEL and its members have consistently addressed the issue of quality educational services to students from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) backgrounds. They have also been at the forefront in dealing with issues related to disproportionate representation of CLD students, faculty, and staff in educational programming. For instance, DDEL and CEC united with former Congressman Louis Stokes to secure the inclusion of language for a comprehensive study of the disproportionate number of students from minority backgrounds in special educational program in the U.S. House of Representatives Conference Report on the 1998 Appropriations bill. DDEL continues to be vigilant in its advocacy role to foreshadow to the day when appropriate changes will be implemented to optimize educational services for CLD children and youth.

One of DDEL's mission has been to disseminate research findings and best practices for serving CLD youth with disabilities and/or gifts and talents. *Multiple Voices, DDEL Newsletter,* and DDEL topical conferences have been wonderful outlets. The most recent (November 1998) CEC/DDEL Symposium appropriately titled, "Beyond the Rhetoric: Celebrating Successes and Confronting Challenges" provided avenues for scholarly presentations on issues pertinent to CLD learners. Given our changing demographics, DDEL has painstakingly documented and made available to its readership the latest research and strategies for the successful education of CLD learners with disabilities and/or gifts and talents.

DDEL's *Multiple Voices* publishes articles that focus on new paradigms, research, policies, and daily school practices which tend to reduce or perpetuate inequities in educational opportunities for CLD individuals with disabilities and/or gifts and talents. This issue of *Multiple Voices* contains articles that address an array of critical issues including: School psychologists' perspectives on referrals of language minority students, transition services for CLD youth, written communication and CLD families, a critical analysis of the McIntrye Assessment of Culture (MAC), and a speech pathologist's use of poetry to enhance verbal skills of African American youth with disabilities. The "In the Oral Tradition" section interviews three Asian/Pacific Islander professionals about critical educational issues and possible solutions to deal with problems confronting Asian/Pacific Islander students. In addition, this issue contains a rebuttal to an article published in the 1997 issue and a reaction to the rebuttal by the authors of the former article.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On behalf of DDEL, I congratulate the authors of the articles in this issue of *Multiple Voices* and invite submission of manuscripts for forthcoming issues. I thank the associate editors and Editorial Board members for their continuous commitment to quality and willingness to provide detailed, constructive critiques of manuscripts to aid authors in their revisions, resubmissions, or reconceptualizations of their works.

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Manuscripts may focus on one or more areas: effective classroom or postsecondary practices, assessment, family or community empowerment techniques, research, material or test reviews, recruitment, and other issues pertaining to culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional populations.

Manuscripts should be on 8½ x 11 paper and must conform to APA style (4th ed.) Manuscripts must not exceed 20 pages.

Authors should submit four copies of their manuscript to the editor. One copy of the manuscript must include a title page that contains the manuscript's title, each author's name and professional title, telephone numbers, fax numbers, and institutional affiliation. E-mail addresses should be included if possible. In order to facilitate a blind review, the first page of the manuscript's text for three of the four copies should include only the manuscript's title (no author names).

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DDEL's policy on the use of copyrighted material is quite strict. Please obtain official permission from appropriate sources and include it along with the submitted manuscript.

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If accepted for publication, authors will submit two hard copies and one disk copy to the editor.

Editor, *Multiple Voices*
Bridgie Alexis Ford, Ph.D.
Coordinator of Special Education
Department of Counseling and Special Education
The University of Akron
Akron, Ohio 44325-5007
(330) 972-6734 or 972-8150 (office) (330) 972-5292 (fax)
E-mail: alexis2@uakron.edu.

Teachers are especially encouraged to submit work about proven practices for students with disabilities and/or those with gifts and talents.

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SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS' PERSPECTIVES ON REFERRALS OF LANGUAGE MINORITY STUDENTS*

SALVADOR HECTOR OCHOA and REBECCA ROBLES-PINA
Texas A&M University

SHERNAZ B. GARCIA
University of Texas at Austin

NANCY BREUNIG
Texas A&M University

ABSTRACT
This study is one component of a broader, multistate survey of 1,507 school psychologists that focused on assessment practices related to language minority students. In this article, we present findings related to referral, including factors associated with ensuring appropriate referrals for second language learners. Survey participants were asked to identify and rank primary reasons for the referral of culturally and linguistically diverse students to special education, and to provide information about prereferral committees. Results suggest that the most frequently cited referral reasons can be plausibly associated with second language acquisition and/or cultural factors, and that prereferral committees reflect limited participation of professionals with the necessary expertise in these areas. These findings are discussed with respect to implications for practice and future research.

Historically, Hispanic and African-American students have tended to be disproportionately represented in special education (Chinn & Hughes, 1987; Mercer, 1973; Ortiz & Yates, 1983; Wright & Cruz, 1983), and underrepresented in programs for students with gifts/talents (U.S. Department of Education, 1992). While the overrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in special education continues to be a problem (Artiles & Trent, 1994), more recent data suggest that placement rates for CLD students also reflect underrepresentation in selected special education categories and that rates vary by factors such as district and ethnic group (Robertson, Kushner, Starks, & Drescher, 1994). These patterns serve to emphasize that while some students are inappropriately placed in special education, others who may need these services are not receiving them. Therefore, a key issue related to placement of CLD students in special education is the validity of the referral as well as the appropriateness of the identification and eligibility processes (García & Ortiz, 1988; Heller, Holtzman, & Messick, 1982; Ortiz & Maldonado-Colón, 1986).

The validity of referrals can become particularly complex when students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are involved. Because language minority students who are acquiring English as a second language may exhibit academic and/or behavioral symptoms which are often associated with a learning disability, teachers who are unfamiliar with the process of second language acquisition may be unable to distinguish between the two factors. The referral and assessment processes must be able to document and distinguish characteristics related to language differences from a learning disability or other disorder (Ortiz & Polyzoi, 1986).

Much of the research literature related to referral with this population was conducted in the 1980s. Few studies since then have specifically examined referral issues pertaining to CLD students. Since the available data are old, it is important to continue to examine these issues given the increasing number of CLD students. To do this, we highlight the major themes addressing concerns about inappropriate referrals of CLD students to special education.

This study was funded by the Program to Enhance Scholarly and Creative Activities Grant at Texas A&M University

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO REFERRAL OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS

One possible explanation for the misplacement of children in special education programs is that teachers are referring many pupils and that their referrals may be arbitrary, if not biased" (Fuchs, 1991, p. 243) by factors such as minority status, gender, and family history in special education. It is important to emphasize that students who are referred are usually placed in special education. Previous research (e.g., Foster, Ysseldyke, Casey, and Thurlow, 1984) has demonstrated that 72% of students who were referred were identified as having a disability. Similarly, Algozzine, Christenson, and Ysseldyke (1982) found that 92% of students referred were tested, of whom 73% were placed in special education. With respect to CLD students, high referral rates have contributed to their overrepresentation in special education; in fact, language minority students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are at higher risk of being referred compared to students from other groups (Arguelewicz & Sanchez, 1983). Additionally, Rueda, Cardoza, Mercer, and Carpenter (1985) found that 86% of the referred Hispanic students in their study were placed in special education.

Several factors contribute to the referral of CLD students to special education. First, the number of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the United States has increased dramatically and is expected to continue (Carrasquillo, 1991). Simultaneously, the number of teachers from CLD backgrounds has decreased (IDEA, 1990; Justiz & Kameen, 1988). Moreover, lack of adequate training related to the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate interventions limits teachers' ability to effectively serve students whose backgrounds are different from their own. Tobias, Cole, Zibrin, and Bodlakova's (1982) study found that "...teachers responded by referring students from ethnic backgrounds other than their own for specialized educational services more frequently than students identified as belonging to their own ethnic group" (p. 74). Lack of understanding of the influence of culture, language and socioeconomic factors (among others) can lead to misinterpretation of student performance and inappropriate attribution of student difficulties to a disability.

Second, characteristics associated with learning disabilities are quite similar to behaviors exhibited by students who are in the process of acquiring a second language (Hoover & Collier, 1985; Ortiz & Maldonado-Colón, 1986). Teachers who are unaware of these similarities may believe that limited English proficient (LEP) students who are experiencing academic difficulties have learning disabilities and subsequently initiate a referral. Under these circumstances, it is important to establish problem-solving procedures and teacher support systems (e.g., teacher assistance teams and child study teams) to develop alternative instructional interventions that are more effective for CLD students. If some of these students are ultimately referred to special education, these efforts will help to ensure that the data gathered during the referral and assessment process include evidence that the difficulties are primarily the result of a disability rather than other factors (García & Ortiz, 1988). Available research suggests that this type of information is not systematically gathered and available as part of referral, evaluation, and placement processes (García & Ortiz, 1988; Matuszek & Oakland, 1979; Ortiz & Polyzoi, 1986).

Third, many LEP students tend to experience higher rates of underachievement and failure because their instructional programs are not appropriate for their linguistic needs. Two major issues frequently have an impact on inappropriate referrals of language minority students to special education: (a) very few LEP students are receiving instructional services that simultaneously promote acquisition of academic content as well as English language proficiency; and (b) many of these students are prematurely exited from bilingual education programs. The Council of Chief State School Officers (as cited in McLeod 1994 reported that, "Title VII bilingual education programs serve only 5-7 percent of eligible students...and many [LEP students] are inappropriately placed in special education classes" (p. 11). When student failure results from the inability of the system to adequately respond to relevant learner characteristics, it is inappropriate to refer such students for special education. Instead, "efforts... should focus on modifying or creating more effective instructional programs" (García & Ortiz, 1988, p. 4). Even when students do receive bilingual and/or ESL instruction, there is a tendency to exit them from bilingual education when they have mastered Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) (Cummins, 1984). LEP students who have acquired BICS can understand and communicate in English in social situations (i.e., communicate on playgrounds, give greetings, and communicate with their teachers) but may not have the language skills to complete independent class assignments in English. However, this level of proficiency in English, which is developed in 1-2 years, does not adequately support academic success in their second language (Cummins, 1984). On the other hand, development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1984) takes approximately 5-7 years, and is critical to academic success in English. Failure to make this distinction can result in referrals to special education because teachers may believe that these "former LEP" students have sufficient English skills to perform academically and that the difficulty is therefore a result of an intrinsic learning disability (Ortiz & Maldonado-Colón, 1986).

ADDRESSING INAPPROPRIATE REFERRALS OF LANGUAGE MINORITY STUDENTS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

Prereferral intervention has been helpful in reducing the number of students referred for special education testing (Graden, Casey, & Bonstrom, 1985). It has also been recommended (see Baca & Almanza, 1991; Ortiz & Polyzoi, 1986) and shown to be effective with language minority students (Ortiz, 1990). Various guidelines have been formulated on how to establish prereferral teams and/or procedures for language minority children (García & Ortiz, 1988; García & Yates, 1986; Hoover & Collier, 1991; Ortiz & Wilkinson, 1991). Ortiz's (1990) study reported that the "Aim for the BESt" model for culturally and linguistically diverse students was effective in reducing the number of referrals to special education. Results of this project revealed that 78% (year 1) and 69% (year 2) of cases considered by the Student/Teacher Assistance Teams were not referred for a comprehensive evaluation as a result of prereferral intervention.

Very little empirical research has examined the referral process with CLD students. Two heuristic studies (Ortiz & Polyzoi, 1986; Rueda et al., 1985) have examined this area. Both studies, however, were limited in scope and generalizability. Ortiz and Polyzoi (1986) only examined referral practices in three urban districts in Texas, while Rueda et al. (1985) investigated referral practices in four urban districts in California. Even though the findings of these two studies complement each other, they cannot be said to represent rural districts or a national scale. Finally, few studies have examined the role of assessment personnel (e.g., school psychologists, educational diagnosticians, and speech-language pathologists) in the identification process related to CLD students. Considering the likelihood of inappropriate teacher referrals, the collaborative role of assessment personnel in validating the referral and in conducting appropriate assessments becomes even more critical to preventing misdiagnosis of CLD students. By virtue of their assignments across schools, assessment personnel may be in a better position to identify district-wide patterns and issues associated with identification of students with disabilities. This broader perspective may be helpful in identifying effective referral practices as well as locating areas of concern. In such instances, their input can be instrumental in targeting key areas of staff development and intervention pertaining to CLD students in general and special education.

Given the record of (a) the disproportionate racial/ethnic representation in special education, (b) the greater likelihood of referral for this population, and (c) the impact of prereferral intervention in reducing the number of referrals of language minority students, many questions related to the identification of CLD youngsters with disabilities need to be examined further. This article presents the results of a study which is part of a larger investigation that examined the following assessment practices and issues involving LEP and bilingual pupils: (a) interpreter usage and training (Ochoa, Gonzalez, Galarza, & Guillemard, 1996); (b) the extent of training received to conduct bilingual evaluations (Ochoa, Rivera, & Ford, in press); (c) methods school psychologists used to assess language proficiency (Ochoa, Galarza, Gonzalez, 1996); (d) instruments used by school psychologists to assess intellectual functioning, achievement and adaptive behavior (Ochoa, Powell, & Robles-Pina, 1996); and (e) factors used by school psychologists to comply with the exclusionary clause (Ochoa, Rivera, & Powell, 1997). In this study, we focused on four broad questions pertaining to referral: (a) What are the reasons given for referral of CLD pupils?; (b) Are the reasons for referral for CLD students different from those cited for monolingual English speaking students?; (c) What is the prevalence of prereferral committees on campuses where CLD students are referred on a state-by-state basis?; and (d) How often are bilingual education representatives included as members of the prereferral committee when CLD pupils are being considered for referral?

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

School psychologists were used in the larger study because they are familiar with reasons for referral of students, and they are often being required to state the reason for referral in their assessment report. The sample consisted of the members of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) (n=5,192) from the following eight states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida,

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New Jersey, New York, and Texas. These states were selected due to their high Hispanic populations. Eighty-five percent of the Hispanic population in the United States resides in these eight states (Carrasquillo, 1991). Approximately two-thirds of the LEP population in the United States speaks Spanish (McLeod, 1994).

The membership list most current (May, 1993) at the time the study was conducted was obtained from the NASP national office. A total of 1,507 surveys (29.03%) were completed and returned; the return rate of usable surveys in this study is similar to other published studies conducted with NASP members; for example, Anderson, Cancelli, and Kratochwill (1984) had a return rate of 36%, and Stinnett, Havey, and Oehler-Stinnett (1994) had a return rate of 31%. Of these 1,507 subjects, 859 (57%) indicated that they had conducted bilingual psycho-educational assessment. Another 69 surveys (.33%) were returned uncompleted primarily by subjects who were retired or no longer providing direct services as school psychologists.

Four marker variables were obtained on the sample: state, ethnicity, gender, and level of training. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the subjects by state. The return rate by state varied from 25.4% for New Jersey to 32.4% for Texas. NASP members from New York and California comprised over half of the respondents (54.8%). Table 2 displays the gender and ethnicity composition of the sample. The sample was predominantly White (n= 1,288, 87%) and Female (n=1,058, 71%). Individuals from CLD backgrounds comprised 13% of the sample with Hispanics being the largest of this group (n=108, 7%). These proportions are comparable to the representation within NASP. The NASP national office indicated that 86% of the members in the eight states surveyed are White, 70% are female, and CLD members comprise 14% of the NASP membership in those states.

Data on level of training was provided by 1,445 of the respondents. Approximately, 50% of the sample had a Masters degree (MA, MS, or M.Ed.) in school psychology; 23 percent had doctoral level training. Twelve and one-half percent had earned an educational specialist certificate. The remaining sample consisted of: (a) 6.5% (n=94) with a degree in a field other than school psychology; (b) 3.2% (n=46) as "other"; and (c) 5.3% (n=77) as students in school psychology programs. In comparison, data provided by the NASP national office reveals that in the eight states surveyed, 55% of the members have Masters level training, with 27% having doctoral level training. Ten percent of the NASP membership in those same states have educational specialist training.

INSTRUMENTATION

The data were collected through the completion of a ten-page survey entitled "Bilingual Psycho-Educational Assessment Survey." The survey was used for a series of studies examining issues concerning (a) training, (b) testing practices, and (c) referral-to-placement factors for students who are LEP. Respondents were also asked to provide personal data. In order to establish content

TABLE 1

SURVEY RETURN RATES BY STATE

State	*Surveys Mailed*	*Surveys Returned Completed*	*Return Rate Surveys*	*Percent of Total Surveys Received*	*Percent of Total Mailed*
Arizona	338	109	32.3	7.2	6.5
California	1,076	342	31.8	22.7	20.7
Colorado	242	75	31.0	5.0	4.7
Florida	602	169	28.1	11.2	11.6
New Jersey	631	160	25.4	10.6	12.2
New Mexico	78	21	26.9	1.4	1.5
New York	1,771	484	27.3	32.1	34.1
Texas	454	147	32.4	9.8	8.7
Unspecified	–	–	–	–	–
Total	5,192	1,507	29.0	100	100

TABLE 2

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS BY ETHNICITY AND GENDER

	Female		*Male*		*Total*	
Ethnicity	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
Asian/Pacific Islander	13	0.87	1	0.07	14	0.94
African-American	19	1.28	7	0.47	26	1.75
Hispanic	82	5.50	26	1.75	108	7.25
Native-American	8	0.54	4	0.27	12	0.81
White	904	60.71	384	25.79	1,288	86.50
Other	25	1.68	7	0.47	32	2.15
Ethnicity not specified	7	0.47	2	0.13	9	0.60
TOTAL	1,058	71.00	431	29	1,489[a]	100.0

[a] *Eighteen subjects failed to provide data.*

validity, the survey was developed after reviewing the research and best practice literature in the area (see Barona & Santos de Barona, 1987; Caterino, 1990; Esquivel, 1988; Figueroa, Sandoval, & Merino, 1984; Hamayan & Damico, 1991; Nuttall, 1987; Ortiz & Polyzoi, 1986; Rueda, Cardona, Mercer, & Carpenter, 1985; Wilen & Sweeting, 1986; Willig, 1986). The section of the survey most relevant to this study was the section pertaining to issues involving prereferral activities and committees (see Appendix 1). Rather than provide subjects with a predetermined list of reasons to check off, an open-ended question was used to ascertain the reasons for referral of culturally and linguistically diverse pupils. In this manner, respondents were not limited to a preconceived set of reasons. This strategy was used because Dillman (1978) suggests that open-ended questions are an excellent alternative for developing new questionnaires especially when the researchers cannot accurately "anticipate the various ways in which people are likely to respond" in a new or difficult area of inquiry (p. 87). Moreover, their use is most appropriate when the intent of questionnaire design is to solicit free thought, to avoid predetermined responses, and to clarify all valid positions (Dillman, 1978).

PROCEDURE

A membership list of the NASP membership in eight states was obtained in May 1993. The following materials were mailed to 5,192 NASP members in July 1993: (a) a letter explaining the purpose and need for the study; (b) a survey; (c) a consent form; and (d) a business reply envelope. A follow-up mailing was conducted in September 1993.

RESULTS

Four critical questions concerning the referral of CLD students were raised in the introduction section of this paper. The results of the study will be examined in the context of these issues.

REASONS FOR REFERRAL OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE PUPILS

School psychologists participating in this study were asked to list in order of frequency of occurrence the three most common reasons given in the referral packet of culturally and linguistically diverse pupils. The responses were transcribed to an index card and labeled as first, second, or third with respect to frequency of occurrence. Following the guidelines in Labaw (1980) and McNamara (1994), the reliability and validity of analyzing open-ended questionnaire responses was established by using (a) intercoder reliability procedures, (b) concept rather than word coding, and (c) researchers (coders) who already had the professional expertise to understand the wide array of concepts shared by respondents.

A total of 3,215 index cards were produced. All cards were read by researchers who had school psychology training related to assessment issues of culturally and

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TABLE 3

INTERRATER RELIABILITY BY CATEGORY

	2 Judges Agreed	*3rd Judge Used to Reach Consensus*	*4th Judge Used to Reach Consensus*
Category	*Number of Responses*	*Number of Responses*	*Number of Responses*
Poor/Low Achievement	648	30	6
Behavioral Problems	521	15	2
Oral Language Related (ie., acquisition-delay)	394	45	11
Reading Problems	305	42	1
Learning Difficulties	191	54	3
Socio-Emotional Difficulties	123	26	1
Diagnosis for Particular Disabling Condition	67	20	4
Written Language	87	3	-
Low Attention Span	76	12	-
Unable to Understand and/or Follow Directions	46	-	-
Math Problems	30	1	-
Absent	22	2	1
Low Motivation	17	-	-
Family Problems	15	2	-
Physical Problems	12	4	-
Spelling Problems	5	2	-
Immaturity	4	1	-
Unclassifiable	93	96	52
Unaware	123	-	-
Total	2,779	355	81
Percent	86.43	11.05	2.52

linguistically diverse students. Twenty categories of reasons for referral emerged from the data. Table 3 provides information about interrater agreement of the responses on an overall basis and by all 20 categories. Two researchers independently classified the 3,215 responses into one of the 20 categories. The judges reached agreement as to the classification of 2,779 cards (86.4%) across the 20 categories. A third judge was used to reach consensus on the classification of 355 responses (11.1%). A fourth judge was employed to reach consensus on the remaining 81 responses (2.5%).

Table 4 provides the reasons given for the referral of culturally and linguistically diverse pupils by rank and in order of occurrence. A total of 2,851 (88.7%) index cards were categorized into one of 18 reasons. The remaining 364 cards were sorted into the "unclassifiable" category (n=241, 7.5%) (i.e., responses that were not discernible) or the "unaware" category (n=123, 3.8%) (i.e., school psychologists stating that s/he was "unaware" of the reasons for referral). Thus, only 1,384 (91.8%) of the 1,507 school psychologists provided reasons for referral of culturally and linguistically diverse students. A weighted scoring procedure was used according to the following scale: 3 points for the most common reason for referral; 2 points for the second most common reason for referral; and 1 point for the third most common reason for referral. The use of this weighted scoring procedure allowed for the identification of the most common reasons for referral given across the sample.

When using this procedure, the most frequently cited reasons for referral of culturally and linguistically diverse pupils were: (a) poor achievement, (b) reading problems, (c) behavioral problems, and (d) oral language related factors. Eight of the following referral reasons cited in Table 4 have a plausible linkage with language and/or culture. These include: (a) behavioral problems; (b) oral language related (i.e., acquisition-delay factors); (c) reading problems; (d) socio-emotional difficulties; (e) written language problems; (f) low attention span; (g) unable to understand and/or follow directions; and

TABLE 4

REASONS GIVEN FOR REFERRAL OF BILINGUAL AND/OR LEP STUDENTS

	Rank In Order of Occurrence				
	1	*2*	*3*		
Category	*Number of Responses*	*Number of Responses*	*Number of Responses*	*Total Number of Responses*	*Total Points*
Poor Low Achievement	515	113	56	684	1,827
Behavioral Problems	54	279	205	538	925
Oral Language Related (i.e., acquisition-delay)	130	215	105	450	925
Reading Problems	238	85	25	348	934
Learning Difficulties	121	80	47	248	570
Socio-Emotional Difficulties	11	47	92	150	219
Diagnosis for Particular Disabiling Condition	38	29	24	91	196
Written Language	3	52	35	90	148
Low Attention Span	9	39	40	88	145
Unable to Understand and/or Follow Directions	7	28	11	46	88
Math Problems	–	10	21	31	41
Absent	1	12	12	25	39
Physical Problems	5	5	7	17	32
Low Motivation	2	8	7	17	29
Family Problems	1	3	13	17	22
Spelling Problems	1	2	3	6	10
Immaturity	1	1	3	5	8
Unclassifiable	75	79	87	241	–
Unaware	–	–	–	123	–
Total	1,212	1,087	793	3,215	–

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(h) low motivation. These eight factors accounted for 53.7% (n=1,727) of all responses provided by the subjects. Approximately 33% (n=450) of the school psychologists reported that oral language related factors were one of the three most common reasons for referral.

COMPARISON OF REASONS FOR REFERRAL BETWEEN CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE PUPILS AND MONOLINGUAL ENGLISH SPEAKING STUDENTS

Eighty-six percent (n=1,306) of the respondents answered the following question: "Are the primary reasons for referral for monolingual English-speaking pupils different from culturally and linguistically diverse pupils?" Approximately, 19% (n=244) of the sample stated "yes" while nearly 70% (n=911) responded "no." Another 11.5% (n=151) checked "not applicable."

PREVALENCE OF PREREFERRAL COMMITTEES OR TEACHER ASSISTANCE TEAMS

Of the 1,278 subjects who provided information on this topic, approximately 80% (n=1,020) reported that their campus had a prereferral committee. The presence of a prereferral committee by state in ascending order was: New York = 69.8% (n=284); Texas = 73.5% (n=75); New Jersey =76.4% (n=94); Colorado = 82.3% (n=51); Arizona = 84.2% (n=80); Florida =84.8% (n=128); New Mexico =88.2 (n=15); and California = 91.2% (n=292).

PRESENCE OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVE ON PREREFERRAL COMMITTEES WHEN CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE PUPILS ARE BEING CONSIDERED FOR REFERRAL

The presence of a bilingual education representation (i.e., school personnel trained in understanding educational issues related to linguistic diversity) on prereferral committees when culturally and linguistically diverse pupils are referred was examined in the 1,020 aforementioned cases where respondents stated that their campus had a prereferral committee. Approximately 52% (n = 534) of the respondents stated that a bilingual education representative was included as a member of the prereferral committee in these situations; whereas, 41.2% (n = 420) indicated that they were not. Seven percent (n = 66) did not provide information. Table 5 provides information about the presence of bilingual education representation on prereferral committees by state. The percentages across states varied considerably with a low of approximately 35% in Colorado and New York to a high of 82.5% in Arizona.

TABLE 5

PRESENCE OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION REPRESENTATION ON PREREFERRAL COMMITTEE WHEN CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE PUPILS ARE PREFERRED BY STATE

	Yes		*No*		*Did Not Specify*		
State	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*Total*
Arizona	66	82.5	10	12.5	4	5	80
California	182	62.3	91	31.2	19	6.5	292
Colorado	18	35.3	29	56.9	4	7.8	51
Florida	65	50.8	56	43.7	7	5.5	128
New Jersey	38	40.4	49	52.1	7	7.5	94
New Mexico	11	73.3	3	20	1	6.7	15
New York	102	35.9	164	57.8	18	6.3	284
Texas	52	69.3	18	24	5	6.7	75
Total	534	–	420	–	65[a]	–	1019[a]

[a] *One subject did not specify the state where he/she worked. Thus, the total is one subject short.*

DISCUSSION

LIMITATIONS

The results of this study must be reviewed in light of the following limitations. One limitation is the response rate of 29 percent; however, the obtained sample of 1,507 appears to be representative of the overall NASP membership in the eight states surveyed, with respect to gender, ethnicity, and level of training. As mentioned earlier, this response rate is similar to other survey studies of NASP members. A second limitation of this study is that the results are based on subjects' self-report and perceptions. The degree to which self-reported information is consistent with what actually occurs when culturally and linguistically diverse pupils are referred for special education must be considered. Finally, the study relies solely on school psychologists' input, even though their involvement in the referral process is relatively limited in some districts.

RELATIONSHIP OF FINDINGS TO PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In spite of the above limitations, the reasons for referral of bilingual and LEP pupils obtained in this study corroborate previous research conducted in a more limited number of settings by Ortiz and Polyzoi (1986) and Rueda et al. (1985). The five referral reasons Ortiz and Polyzoi (1986) identified were among the 18 found in the present study. Interestingly, Ortiz and Polyzoi's (1986) study revealed that the most common reason for referral was attention-behavioral problems. While attention and behavior were considered as two separate categories for the purpose of this study, their combined frequencies would also place them as the single most common reason for referral. Poor general academic progress was Ortiz and Polyzoi's (1986) second most common reason for referral, while it was the most common reason in this study and in Rueda et al.'s (1985) study. It is possible that oral language-related problems may be a major reason for the referral of culturally and linguistically diverse pupils. This study as well as Rueda et al.'s (1985) study found that poor oral skills were the fourth most common reason for referral. Twenty two percent of the students in the latter study were referred for this reason, while 33% of the school psychologists in the survey reported that oral language-related factors were one of the three most common reasons for referral.

VARIATIONS IN REASONS FOR REFERRAL BY STUDENTS' LANGUAGE STATUS

An interesting finding of this study was that 70% of the school psychologists stated that the reasons for referral did not differ between CLD pupils and monolingual English-speaking students. The presence of cultural and linguistic differences does not necessarily preclude the concurrent existence of a learning disability. However, the apparent similarities in the academic and behavioral characteristics associated with learning disabilities and those associated with second language learners suggest that school psychologists and others involved in the referral and assessment process must be able to distinguish between CLD students with learning disabilities from those whose difficulties reflect the second language acquisition process. Results from the larger study (Ochoa, Rivera, & Ford, in press) revealed that school psychologists in this sample have received limited training related to second language acquisition factors and their relation to assessment of CLD pupils. In the absence of this knowledge, it is less likely that the data required to distinguish language differences from learning disabilities would have been gathered.

RELATIONSHIP OF REFERRALS TO STUDENTS' CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC CHARACTERISTICS

As discussed earlier, symptoms related to learning disabilities are often similar to those demonstrated by second language learners or students adjusting to a new culture. The accuracy of a diagnosis then requires consideration of data which can effectively differentiate between these two underlying factors associated with students' difficulties. Of the identified 18 primary reasons for referral of CLD students, several can plausibly be associated with second language acquisition and/or adapting to a new culture. They tend to fall into two major categories: reasons related to behavioral/affective difficulties and those related to academic performance. In particular, the following reasons are highlighted below because of their potential to be misinterpreted for LEP students: (a) behavioral problems; (b) unable to understand and/or follow directions; (c) low attention span; (d) socio-emotional difficulties; (e) oral language; (f) reading problems; and (g) written language difficulties.

Behavioral/affective difficulties. On the surface, it is difficult to determine whether behavioral problems are different for bilingual/LEP students in comparison to monolingual English-speaking students. For example, when manifested by CLD students, behavior problems such as "withdrawn," "defensive," and "disorganized" may be characteristics related to the process of acquiring a second language and/or adapting to a new culture (Hoover & Collier, 1985). In contrast, when demonstrated by native English-speaking students, these behaviors have traditionally been associated with learning disabilities or attention deficits. Similarly, bilingual and/or LEP students' inability to understand and/or follow directions must be interpreted carefully. A lack of understanding as exhibited by the monolingual English speaking student as well as the LEP student can be attributed to an inherent processing disorder. For the LEP student, however, language factors also need to be considered. Moreover, "a child with some English proficiency may appear to understand directions or rules but in reality lacks enough conceptual knowledge to sufficiently comprehend certain ideas" (Hoover & Collier, 1985, p. 508). Low attention span and interpersonal/ social difficulties are also characteristic of students who are acquiring a second language; low motivation can also be attributed to difficulties in adapting to school due to cultural differences (Ortiz & Maldonado-Colón, 1986).

Academic difficulties. The most common reason for referral was poor achievement. In particular, reading problems were cited 17 times as often, and written language difficulties three times as often as math problems as a reason for referral. The former two academic areas are directly related to language while math is not. A strong foundation of oral language skills is essential to the development of literacy in general. For LEP students, high levels of proficiency in the native language are strongly associated with developing high levels of proficiency in English (Cummins, 1984). What cannot be determined from the present study is whether these academic difficulties were present in the first language, in English, or in both. Also, it would be important to consider students' performance in light of their academic and schooling history. Unless it can be determined that the student's general education program was responsive to his or her cultural and linguistic needs, it is inappropriate to conclude that the difficulties are primarily a result of intrinsic deficits. As emphasized by Cummins (1983), "many (but by no means all) of the difficulties minority students experience in school are the result of both inappropriate pedagogy and misconceptions about the nature and effects of bilingualism among educational professionals." (p. 384).

PREREFERRAL PROCEDURES AS A RESPONSE TO REFERRAL

With respect to prereferral teams, the results of this study indicate that they exist on 80% of the campuses of the school psychologists who responded to this survey. There appears to be about a 10% variance from this figure across the eight states included in the study. Given that school psychologists generally receive limited training in the area of second language acquisition factors and that several referral reasons cited in this study have a direct or possible linkage with language and culture, the composition of prereferral committees appears to be critical. Ortiz and Polyzoi (1986) emphasize the importance of having a bilingual representative who is knowledgeable about appropriate interventions for LEP students. The results of this study indicated this occurs only about half of the time. Across the eight states, the bilingual education representation on prereferral committees varied considerably. The role of a bilingual education representative on these committees can be critical; without such participation the quality of prereferral interventions for LEP students may remain questionable. Given the limited availability of bilingual educators in certain geographical areas and across language groups, alternatives may include English-as-a-second-language (ESL) professionals or other individuals who are trained and knowledgeable about cultural and linguistic influences on the teaching-learning process.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This large-scale survey has identified patterns related to referral of language minority students to special education which can serve to generate themes for further, in-depth inquiry at the state, regional, and local levels. Quantitative analyses that involve large numbers of students as well as qualitative, ethnographic studies at the individual classroom, school, and community levels are needed in order to better understand the underlying factors which influence the referral process for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Considering existing variations in service incidence rates by region, district, special education categories, and ethnicity of students there is a need for studies at the local level in addition to large-scale aggregations of data. Some preliminary research questions based on the results of this study are discussed below. They fall into at least two broad, interrelated categories: research that promotes our understanding of student and family characteristics, and studies that shed more light on the school-related, systemic factors associated with referrals to special education.

Studies of school-related and systemic factors. First, because the results represent school district practices based on perceptions of school psychologists, it is important to validate these perceptions by examining school practices using a variety of approaches and by involving other participants who are actively involved in the referral and prereferral processes. Though existing studies that have relied on *ex post facto* analyses of the referral process have been helpful in beginning to establish a data base, they are limited, by virtue of the design, in their ability to capture the dynamics of the decision-making process surrounding referrals. Other studies are needed which focus on questions related to: (a) the characteristics of referring teachers, including (but not limited to) their training/experience related to cultural and linguistic diversity, use of appropriate interventions and modifications for CLD students, and their assumptions related to cultural/linguistic influences on academic and behavioral performance of CLD students; (b) the nature and quality of alternatives attempted prior to referral, including the use of approaches that are known to be effective with CLD learners; (c) the impact of the presence and role of bilingual education, ESL, or other language personnel on prereferral committees; and (d) the types of data gathered during the prereferral and referral process that improve educators' ability to distinguish linguistic differences from disabilities. Finally, more studies are needed which examine the effectiveness of prereferral interventions with language minority students, including replication studies related to existing models of prereferral intervention (e.g., García & Ortiz, 1988; Hoover and Collier, 1991) as well as assessment and intervention (e.g., Ortiz & Wilkinson, 1991). Given the demographic characteristics of large, urban school districts, it can almost be assumed that other studies which have examined prereferral intervention in such settings necessarily involve the participation of CLD students. However, failure to include relevant information about students' cultural and linguistic profiles and limited (if any) discussions of these variables in the analysis of data severely limits our ability as a field to extend the current knowledge base about these interrelationships.

Studies of student- and family-related factors. As noted by Johnson (1994), educational risk is created by a lack of fit between instructional interventions provided by the schools and the learning needs and characteristics of the students in such programs. Efforts to change the system to be more responsive to the needs of CLD students must be based in a deeper and better understanding of the students themselves; their cultural and linguistic characteristics; and the family, community, and societal contexts which influence them. For example, the striking contrast between overrepresentation of Hispanic and African American students, and the underrepresentation of Asian American students in special education challenges the assumption that cultural or linguistic differences, in and of themselves, place students at educational risk. Rather, it becomes necessary to examine the specific relationship between these factors and the contexts in which students experience success or failure. Greater understanding is needed of the relationships between reasons for referral of language minority students and their ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds; their language proficiency in English and in their native language; their academic/experiential backgrounds; and the type(s) of language interventions provided LEP students. Additionally, comparisons of these profiles with those for similar students who are typically not referred for special education may be helpful in identifying student, family, and school variables which promote academic success.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study are similar to other previously discussed research which suggest that the most common reasons for referral of bilingual and LEP students can plausibly be linked to characteristics associated with second language acquisition and/or cultural differences. As discussed earlier, the academic and behavioral/affective difficulties manifested by this group of students often overlap with symptoms that have typically associated with learning disabilities among monolingual populations. Given the resulting potential for false-positive identification of disabilities, deeper levels of analysis and problem solving are necessary to differentiate between the two factors. This differentiation would ensure a more effective match between student difficulties and the instructional programs and services designed to address them. Use of prereferral intervention represents one approach to problem solving. While the available research on prereferral intervention is positive, more research is needed that is targeted toward identifying the factors that are conducive to successfully addressing the educational needs of language minority students. Without adequate consideration of cultural and linguistic variables involved, there is a risk that the recommendations generated by team members may not be effective in addressing students' difficulties, thereby resulting in the students' eventual referral and placement in special

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education. As with any student, successful problem solving assumes not only effective implementation of procedures, but also adequate knowledge and understanding among team members of relevant learner characteristics and skillful implementation of recommended alternatives by the teacher(s) requesting support. In the case of CLD students, these assumptions would be difficult to fulfill without concerted collaborative efforts to ensure that the personnel involved are individuals with the necessary expertise related to culture and language.

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APPENDIX 1

SURVEY ITEMS

REFERRAL DATA

When culturally and linguistically diverse pupils are referred, what are the three most common reasons given in the referral packet? ***(List in order of frequency of occurrence.)***

1.

2.

3.

_____ I am unaware of the reasons.

Are these primary reasons different from those given for monolingual English-speaking pupils who are referred?

_____Yes _____No _____Not Applicable

Does your campus have a prereferral committee or teacher assistance team?

_____Yes _____No

If **Yes,** is a bilingual education representative included as a member of this committee or team when culturally and linguistically diverse pupils are referred?

_____Yes _____No

TRANSITION FOR CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES: CLOSING THE GAPS

GARY GREENE
California State University, Long Beach

PHYLIS NEFSKY

ABSTRACT

Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study indicates that poorer quality postschool outcomes are achieved by minority youth with disabilities compared to other youth with disabilities and youth in the general population. Potential explanations for these findings are offered, as well as suggestions and strategies for transition team members on how to close the gap between the transition outcomes of culturally and linguistically diverse youth with disabilities and their nonminority peers with disabilities.

Transition from school to a quality adult life for youth with disabilities has been a major focus for special educators for well over a decade (Halpern, 1985; 1989; Will, 1984). Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) indicates strong gains in employment, wages, postsecondary education, and residential independence for up to five years after high school graduation for youth with disabilities (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Despite these positive trends, however, the NLTS shows substantial gaps between all youth with disabilities and their peers in the general population with respect to levels of educational attainment and long-term economic future. This gap is even greater, however, for minority (e.g., African-American, Hispanic) youth with disabilities; they fare less well on measures of effective transition in the early years after high school and in the subsequent three years compared to their white peers. White youth with disabilities, according to the NLTS data, were both employed at higher rates and received higher wages than did minority youth with disabilities. "These findings suggest that minority status may present further obstacles to successful transitions beyond those that youth experience because of disability alone" (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996, p. 410).

A potential explanation for the poorer transition outcomes of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) youth with disabilities is a lack of specialized knowledge and skill in special education personnel for how to effectively provide quality transition services to this unique population of exceptional learners. Indeed, concern over the quality of transition services provided by special educators to the general population of students with disabilities has been raised by a number of authors. Findings indicate that despite the transition mandates of the 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), special education personnel are not writing IEPs which adequately: (a) utilize transition assessment data based on special education student ability and interests, and (b) identify transition-related outcomes and educational activities for special education students (Benz & Halpern, 1993; Kohler, 1996; Trach, 1995). The purpose of this article is to review transition considerations for CLD youth with disabilities and their families and provide special educators with information that will better enable them to effectively assist these individuals in the transition process.

GENERAL TRANSITION PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, P.L. 105-17) specify that an individual transition plan (ITP) must be written for students with disabilities by age 14 and include outcomes and goals which promote movement from school to postschool life (e.g., postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing adult education/services, independent living, community participation). The ITP can be developed and included as part of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and should detail the types of curricular programming, adult services, and supports required to enable the student's successful transition to postschool educational, residential, community, and vocational settings. The importance of student choice, family choice, and self-determination has been emphasized as a key component in the transition planning process (Turnbull, Bateman, & Turnbull, 1993; Turnbull, Turnbull, Bronicki, Summers, & Roeder-Gordon, 1989; Salambier & Furney, 1994; Wehmeyer & Ward, 1995).

BARRIERS TO ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF CLD FAMILIES/YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES IN THE ITP PROCESS

A number of potential barriers exist that can deter the active involvement in the ITP process of CLD families/youth with disabilities, compared to families from the mainstream American culture. These barriers are outlined in Table I and include: (a) CLD family level of acculturation, (b) cultural group attitudes toward disability, (c) inter-personal communication style differences/language barriers, (d) family knowledge and comfort with the school infrastructure, (e) CLD families' perceptions of schools, and (f) cultural diversity knowledge and sensitivity on the part of special education professionals. A brief discussion of each of these barriers follows.

CLD FAMILY LEVEL OF ACCULTURATION

Acculturation can be defined as a process of modifying one's beliefs, styles of being, and adaptations in response to contact and intermingling with a culture different from one's own. Levels of acculturation vary widely both within and between CLD groups, and the ability to identify such differences is an extremely difficult process. Leung (1988) summarizes four distinct levels of acculturation:

1. **Traditionalism:** usually found among older adults who cling to the traditional culture;
2. **Marginality:** persons at the juncture of two cultures, accepting neither the old nor the new, and possibly experiencing alienation from both;
3. **Biculturation:** a level of efficient integration of both cultures; and
4. **Overacculturation:** an extreme rejection of the ethnic culture, sometimes shown by young people.

TABLE I

POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF CLD FAMILIES/YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES IN THE ITP PROCESS

1. CLD family level of acculturation.
2. Cultural group attitudes toward disability.
3. Interpersonal communication style differences/language barriers.
4. Family knowledge and comfort with the school infrastructure.
5. Family perceptions of schools.
6. Special education professional knowledge and sensitivity to cultural diversity.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES FOR INTERACTING WITH CLD FAMILIES/YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES DURING THE ITP PROCESS

1. Develop increased knowledge and sensitivity about multiple dimensions of cultural groups in ITP team members.
2. Utilize family-centered approaches and collaborative techniques when interacting with CLD families/youth with disabilities.
3. Employ effective communication practices with CLD groups.
4. Promote increased CLD knowledge and comfort with school policy, practices, and procedures.
5. Develop new roles for CLD parents.

Leung isolates six factors that most directly influence the level of acculturation in various members of CLD groups. These are: (a) time in the host culture, (b) proximity to the traditional culture, (c) age, (d) birthplace, (e) gender, with females being more open to acculturation than males, and (f) intermarriage.

These levels and factors of acculturation are vitally important for ITP team members to consider in order to avoid potential cross-cultural conflicts when interacting with various CLD families. For example, Americans place a high value on individualism, self-determination, and competition. Hence, it would not be unusual in an ITP meeting to ask an American family to take on a strong advocacy role in planning for their son or daughter's future. Moreover, their youth with disabilities, if capable, should be encouraged to participate in the self-advocacy process as well. In contrast, the concept of self-advocacy may be unusual, confusing, or in direct conflict with the practices and beliefs of many families from cultures outside of America, particularly in CLD families whose level of acculturation is traditional or marginal. Harry (1992a) notes, for example, that a common traditional value shared by several ethnic minorities in the United States is a belief in the interweaving of the spiritual and physical world, which is tied to a holistic and collectivistic orientation to life. This belief manifests itself in an emphasis on doing what is best for one's people or culture, rather than what is best for the individual, resulting in a tendency towards cooperative versus competitive codes of behavior. CLD families of youth with disabilities that share this traditional value are unlikely to engage in strong advocacy behavior when requested to do so by ITP team members, thereby posing a potential barrier to the ITP process.

Cultural Group Attitudes Toward Disability

The attitudes toward disability of a particular cultural group may effect the way in which a given CLD family behaves during an ITP meeting. Southeast Asian groups, for instance, may feel deeply shamed by a disability in the family or believe it represents retribution for the sins of previous generations. Such attitudes towards disabilities may result in family members avoiding special education services or not actively participating in the ITP process because of embarrassment. Native-Americans, on the other hand, share a common belief that the spirit chooses the body it will inhabit, and a disabled body is merely the outward casing of the spirit; the spirit within the body is whole and perfect and is distinguishable from the body itself (Locust, 1988). For this reason, Native-Americans are likely to have difficulty understanding or accepting the Western emphasis on a strictly medical or biological explanation for severe disabilities and may be inclined to avoid such services offered to them in an ITP meeting. Finally, it has been observed that many African Americans have enduring and well-founded concerns about their children being misdiagnosed as having a mild disability and being inappropriately treated by mental health services (Hines & Boyd-Franklin, 1982). Hence, African-American families of youth with disabilities may avoid attempts in an ITP meeting to connect them with postschool mental health service providers.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STYLE DIFFERENCES AND LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Interpersonal communication style differences and language barriers can inhibit the successful participation of CLD families and youth with disabilities in the ITP process. Studies on CLD parent involvement in schools have consistently shown that these parents tend to place their trust in the school system, exhibit respect and deference to school personnel, and withdraw from collaboration in matters where they do not wish to contradict authority figures and possibly lose face (Harry, 1992a). Consequently, they will tend to agree or adhere to the counsel and directions of school personnel, even if it is at odds with their knowledge base, beliefs, or value systems. This pattern of interpersonal interaction and communication is most notable in Hispanic and Asian groups and can potentially reduce their active participation in the ITP process.

A related communication style difference of many cultural groups noted by Lynch (1992) is high context (versus low context) communication. In high context communication, words are less important than nonverbal cues, gestures, body language, and facial expressions. This type of communication style is common in Asian, Native-American, Latino, and African-American cultures and is in contrast to the low context communication style of mainstream American culture, which relies much more heavily on precise, direct, and logical verbal communication. The aforementioned differences in communication style can lead to misunderstandings between special education personnel and CLD families/youth with disabilities during ITP meetings.

Finally, language barriers can result in less active involvement of CLD families/youth with disabilities in the transition planning process. A common strategy of special educators to overcome this difficulty is to utilize interpreters. However, the technical vocabulary of medical, educational, and other postschool transition service options for persons with disabilities places unfair responsibility on interpreters to mediate with CLD families/youth with disabilities during an ITP meeting. Further problems may arise if the interpreter is not familiar with key aspects of the culture of the family (e.g., degree of acculturation, generational status, religion, social class).

CLD FAMILY KNOWLEDGE AND COMFORT WITH THE SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

Many CLD families have difficulty accessing and making appropriate connections with the educational system and school personnel due to their lack of knowledge and comfort with the school infrastructure. This can have detrimental effects on their active participation in the ITP process. With respect to knowledge, Lynch and Stein (1987) found that African-American and Mexican-American parents' levels of information and participation in special education were significantly lower than that of their white counterparts. Harry (1992b) and others (Cassidy, 1988; Lowry, 1983; Sullivan, 1980) report that parents of low-income minorities possess markedly low awareness of their parental rights and special education procedures. As a result, these parents may play a more passive than active role in the ITP process and not ask for the necessary transition supports and services to which they are entitled in order for their child to successfully achieve quality postschool outcomes.

A variety of explanations have been offered for CLD family discomfort with schools, the first of which comes from Ogbu (1978). In a discussion of cross-cultural issues in education, he makes a distinction between the psychological adaptations to the host society of immigrant minorities (e.g., Japanese and Koreans) versus indigenous minorities (e.g., African Americans and Native Americans). Ogbu notes that because immigrant minorities have moved to the host society more or less voluntarily, they tend to achieve their goals (e.g., educational success) within society without being deeply affected by the local hierarchical ideology, making them less likely to internalize experiences of rejection and discrimination. Moreover, their psychological frame of reference lies within their traditional culture. Ogbu describes indigenous minorities (e.g., those who have grown up in or lived naturally in the host society for long periods of time) as "caste-like," operating from a position of low social status and disadvantage within a society that they consider their own. These minority groups tend to internalize the rejection they experience within the dominant society and may become psychologically predisposed toward failure. This predisposition translates into a feeling of discomfort with school personnel and education related matters, particularly those associated with special education and school failure (see subsequent section on CLD Families' Perception of Schools for an expanded discussion on this subject).

The interpersonal communication style of Hispanic and Asian groups cited in the previous section (i.e., hesitancy to contradict authority figures, exhibition of deference to school personnel) is a second potential cause for the discomfort experienced by CLD families with schools. This can be particularly true when plans by school personnel in an ITP meeting do not coincide with those desired by the family. An Asian family whose level of acculturation represents "traditionalism" (Leung, 1988) can be offered as an example. Such a family would probably prefer that their daughter with severe learning disabilities continue to live at home after school completion, help take care of the extended family, and not risk further embarrassment to the family by living and working independently in the community. However, if the goals advocated by the ITP team included independent employment and living, the CLD family would likely experience great discomfort during the meeting.

In a similar way, African-American parents, according to Harry (1992a), would likely feel uncomfortable in an ITP meeting. However, the reasons for their withdrawal from active participation or demonstration of apathy or disinterest in the process are somewhat different. In addition to African-American parents' possession of low levels of knowledge regarding their ITP rights, Harry offers these important reasons for their experiencing discomfort with special education school personnel: (a) African Americans' mistrust with schools and society as a result of their historic cast-like status and overrepresentation in special education programs, (b) a sense of expressed isolation and helplessness among inner-city, low-income Black families, (c) the objections of African-American families to the social and cultural biases in the assessment process, (d) low-income African-American parents' disagreement with the special education classification system, which does not reflect nor tolerate wider and more divergent patterns of child development, and (e) African-American parents' objections to the use of middle-class norms and academic skills as a benchmark for judging the success of their child.

Finally, a review of the literature on the subject provides these additional explanations for CLD families' discomfort with schools and the special education system: (a) professional behavior by school personnel which reinforces parents' feelings of not belonging, (b) active deterrents to parent participation by school personnel (e.g., withholding of information, inflexible scheduling of conferences, use of jargon), and (c) a general lack of understanding by parents of school practices and procedures (Baca & Cervantes, 1986; Harry, 1992; Harry, Allen, & McGlaughlin, 1995a; Hughes, 1995).

CLD FAMILIES' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOLS

The perceptions of schools of various CLD families plays an important role in the ITP process. Black families in the United States, for example, do not perceive schools and education as a viable means for obtaining future upward social and economic mobility (Ogbu, 1987). This is due to their long history of being excluded from opportunities to compete for the most desirable roles, positions, and occupations in society. The least desirable roles that they have historically been forced to play have generally been used by the dominant culture to demonstrate that Blacks are naturally suited for their low position in society. Although Blacks and other caste minorities do not necessarily endorse or support this rationalizing ideology advocated by the dominant group (e.g., Blacks' biological or cultural inferiority), their perceptions of schools and education are nevertheless affected and influenced by it. As a result, many Blacks develop an "oppositional" social identity or frame of reference and a "retreatest adaptation to school," resulting in their rejection of school values and, consequently, high rates of educational failure.

Hispanic families, likewise, may not perceive schooling and education as their highest priority for their children. Condon, Peters, and Sueiro-Ross (1979) indicated that Hispanic families are more concerned with the development of their child's personality as opposed to the school's focus on academic development. Specifically, most traditional Mexican-American families desire their children to develop a strong sense of "familia," as reflected in a personality focused on group and family identity rather than the needs of the individual, which remain secondary (Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974). Although Mexican-American families may value education, their concept of a well-educated person does not necessarily place academic attainment and individual competition at the top of the value system (Harry, 1992a). In contrast, mainstream American society places a much higher value on individual competition versus cooperation. This prompted Trueba (1989) to refer to the dominant mode of U.S. schools as "the culture of competition" (p. 37). Hence, many Mexican-American families have a tendency to perceive U.S. schools as emphasizing a different set of goals for their children than those valued by their cultural group.

Finally, families from a variety of cultures (e.g., Hispanic, Asian, Native-American) do not perceive schools as institutions in which they should attempt to exert their influence. According to Harry (1992a), "the most common research interpretation emerging from documented empirical studies has been that many minority parents tend to place their trust in the school and do not expect to play an influential role" (p. 102). For this reason, many CLD families maintain a passive stance when required to attend school conferences and demonstrate both implicit and explicit trust in school staff.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE AND SENSITIVITY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION PERSONNEL

Harry, Grenot-Scheyer, Smith-Lewis, Park, Xin, and Schwartz (1995b) caution special educators against developing a false sense of competence about cultural diversity when such knowledge is derived from a general, superficial body of information (e.g., foods, holidays, heroes) about particular cultural groups. This is often the case when information on cultural diversity is acquired by teachers through staff development activities such as teacher inservice training. The typical time allotted to teacher inservice training in most schools today cannot provide participants with the depth and breadth of knowledge necessary to understand the multiplicity of factors related to transition for CLD families of youth with disabilities. Hence, such training is likely to produce only superficial knowledge on this topic in teacher trainees. Such superficial knowledge can do more harm than good in an ITP meeting and may result in special education professionals treating CLD parents and youth with disabilities in stereotypical ways which prevent the establishment of good rapport.

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RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES FOR INTERACTING WITH CLD FAMILIES/ YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES DURING THE ITP PROCESS

The formation of effective partnerships with CLD families/youth with disabilities during the ITP process can be promoted through the use of a number of important best practices on the part of ITP members. These are outlined in Table 1 and include: (a) developing increased knowledge and sensitivity about multiple dimensions of cultural groups, (b) utilizing family-centered approaches and collaborative techniques, (c) employment of effective communication practices with CLD groups, (d) promoting increased CLD family knowledge and comfort with school policy, practices, and procedures, and (e) developing new roles for CLD parents. A review of each of these follows.

INCREASING CLD KNOWLEDGE AND SENSITIVITY IN ITP MEMBERS

Members of the ITP team must possess knowledge beyond the superficial level about the multiple dimensions of cultural diversity if they are to respond and interact in a sensitive manner with members of various CLD groups. Harry et al. (1995b) recommend direct, explicit, and intensive personnel preparation on multicultural issues for special educators, with an emphasis that "inculcates the understanding that cultures are fluid and are greatly influenced by acculturation, generational status, gender, social class, education, occupational group, and numerous other variables (p. 106)." Note the following caution, however, with regard to cultural sensitivity training programs. It may be unrealistic to expect special education personnel who participate in such training to become culturally competent in all aspects of the myriad of cultures in the public schools with which they may potentially interact.

A more important objective of cultural sensitivity training workshops for special educators is to teach them how to utilize family-centered approaches and effective collaboration with CLD families (to be discussed in the next section). This begins by ITP members gaining an understanding and respect for a CLD family's perspective on their child with disabilities and hopes and plans for the child's future. Answers to the following questions by CLD family members will provide the ITP team with key cultural specific transition-related information:

1. What language is spoken in the home and by which members; what is the literacy level of family members?
2. What are the family's norms for personal and social development for their child with disabilities (e.g., degree of independence encouraged)?
3. What residential and work-related goals for the child are held by the family?
4. What are the family's views on disabilities, and how does this affect their view on treatment for their child?
5. How is the family conceptualized (e.g., the common mainstream American concept of a nuclear unit, which views individual health as belonging to the individual, or the more extended family structure common to other cultures, which conceptualizes health of an individual in terms of the family as a whole)?
6. What are the family child rearing practices (e.g., authoritarian and hierarchical, in which children have little decision-making power, or equal and individual rights-oriented, as practiced in many American homes)?
7. How much legal knowledge about parental rights and advocacy does the family possess (e.g., schooling viewed as a privilege or a right)?

UTILIZING FAMILY-CENTERED APPROACHES AND COLLABORATIVE TECHNIQUES

Much has been written in the past decade on the topics of family-centered approaches and collaborative communication with families of children with disabilities (see books by Kroth & Edge, 1997; and Singer & Powers, 1993, for summaries of such literature). A paradigm shift in family case management practices has occurred in response to problems associated with past, more traditional models of assisting families with special needs children. Traditional case management models and practices have been characterized as: (a) providing families with a safety net of protection in response to their "dire" circumstances, (b) fraught with eligibility requirements for services and bureaucratic delivery of services in a paternalistic and punitive fashion, (c) heavily oriented toward professional control and the fitting of families to available programs and services, and (d) dominated by a medical orientation toward families, using language such as pathology, treatment, cure, and prescription when describing family needs and problems (Singer & Powers, 1993).

In contrast, newer models and principles of family support have emphasized: (a) a recognition in practitioners of the unique strengths of each individual family and their capacity to change and grow when provided with the proper facilitating conditions, (b) the responsibility of practitioners to assist families in identifying available resources that meet their perceived needs rather than trying to fit families into rigid, existing programs and services, (c) an equal relationship between family members and professionals, based upon mutual respect, open communication, shared responsibility, and collaboration. In addition to these principles, Dunst, Trivette, Starnes, Hamby, and Gordon (1993) have noted that an effective family support program should aim to: (a) enhance a sense of integration into the community in all family members, (b) mobilize resources and support, (c) strengthen and protect the integrity of the family unit, and (d) enhance and promote the competence of each family member.

It is essential for members of ITP teams to incorporate as many of these practices and principles as possible when interacting with CLD families/youth with disabilities involved in the transition process. In order to understand the family's perspectives and needs, ITP team members should make a concerted effort to establish rapport with them, build a mutual sense of trust, determine ground rules for how to get along, and develop a relationship that can bear more risk-taking behavior and mutual involvement. Harry et al. (1995b) have suggested visiting the family at its home or in a community setting, identifying shared interests or family practices, or sharing a snack or meal with the family to help accomplish this task. Chan (1986) and Fitzpatrick (1987) have emphasized the importance of building trust with CLD families prior to questioning them or conducting any formal assessment of their child with disabilities.

UTILIZING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION PRACTICES WITH CLD GROUPS

Transition planning requires active participation of both parents and youth with disabilities in order to be effective and is a much more lengthy conference in comparison to a typical IEP conference. Hence, effective communication between ITP members and the CLD family/youth with disabilities is essential. A number of helpful strategies for improving communication with CLD groups involved in the special education process have appeared in the literature. With regard to the use of interpreters, it has been suggested that special education personnel utilize persons who are familiar with the culture of the family in order to promote accurate, unbiased interpretation (Harry et al., 1995b). Condon, Peters, and Sueiro-Ross (1979), as well as Leung (1988) recommend involving other influential family members or qualified community members. Other children in the family should not be relied upon to serve as interpreters because they may not possess adequate English skills to understand the technical vocabulary and terms involved in special education proceedings (Trueba, Jacobs, & Kirton, 1990). In addition, use of children as interpreters may place the child in an inappropriate power position in the parents' eyes, particularly in more hierarchical cultures (Harry et al., 1995b).

A second suggested strategy for improving communication with CLD families/youth with disabilities during the ITP process is for special education personnel to be aware of high context communication cultural groups. For example, extensive verbal directiveness may be perceived as mechanistic and insensitive by Asians, Native Americans, Latinos, and African Americans. Lynch and Hanson (1992) recommend that special educators slow down, listen more, observe family communication patterns, be aware of nonverbal behavior or gestures, or consult cultural guides or mediators when interacting with members of these various CLD groups. All of these components of communication must be taken into consideration by the ITP team in order to promote optimal understanding and effective CLD family/youth with disabilities participation in the transition planning process.

A third suggested strategy for promoting effective communication with CLD families and youth with disabilities has to do with letters as sources of information. Harry (1992a) discusses the inordinate number of letters sent to parents involved in the special education process (e.g., parent permission for evaluation, invitation to IEP meetings and annual reviews, permission for placement into special education, copies of IEPs, classroom teacher reports). For members of various CLD groups, these letters are frequently sent in English or translated in a form which cannot be interpreted or easily understood by parents. Suggested alternatives include: (a) providing liason personnel who are both culturally and linguistically proficient to provide CLD parents with more personalized communication, (b) reducing the volume of written communication to CLD parents of youth with disabilities, (c) providing families with communication which is not only factual in nature, but sufficiently open-ended and reciprocal as to allow CLD parents to express their cultural views on disability, preferences, and opinions in matters such as placement and teaching methods, and the true extent and meaning of their rights under the law.

PROMOTING IMPROVED CLD FAMILY KNOWLEDGE OF SCHOOL POLICY PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

Schools must take a leadership role and begin developing and implementing practices which make appropriate connections and enable CLD parents to become actively involved in their children's education (Harry, 1992a; Hughes, 1995). Harry et al. (1995b) note that CLD parents often know little about their legal rights and may come from backgrounds where schooling is seen as a privilege rather than a right. Special education personnel, therefore, must provide CLD parents with access to all sources of information about transition, such as legal mandates, postsecondary options and service agencies for their youth with disabilities, and parental advocacy organizations. In addition, special education professionals should consider creating CLD parent transition support groups, mentor programs, and advocacy training programs. A study by Trueba and Delgado-Gaitan (1990) found that the use of academic mentors (Hispanic parents whose children, regardless of social status, successfully completed school as opposed to dropping out) was an important strategy in creating parent empowerment in CLD families. Liontos (1991) points out that successful CLD parent support programs: (a) emphasize the strengths of CLD parents and families, (b) let parents know that these strengths are valued, and (c) teach parents new techniques, what they're capable of doing, and how to overcome obstacles. Parent support programs with these characteristics have been shown to promote increased self-esteem and conscious acquisition of skills in dealing with schools in parent participants (Baca & Cervantes, 1986; Boone, 1992; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990).

Inger (1992) offers several recommendations for establishing successful parent outreach programs:

1. Make it as easy as possible for parents to participate (e.g., offer bilingual programs and materials, provide baby sitting, do not charge fees, provide interpreters and transportation, schedule meetings at times and locations convenient for parents).
2. Establish personalized, face-to-face, individual contact with parents (e.g., meet in their homes if necessary).
3. Disseminate information and gain access to parents through traditional community supports such as churches or ethnic organizations, as opposed to impersonal efforts such as letters and flyers.

These collective strategies, when utilized by ITP teams, will greatly enhance CLD family knowledge of the intricacies involved in transition for CLD youth with disabilities.

DEVELOP NEW ROLES FOR PARENTS

Harry (1992b) suggests that the primary role historically applied to parents in special education meetings is that of consent-giver and advocates that new parental roles be developed and encouraged for CLD parents by special education personnel. These include (a) parents as assessors, (b) parents as presenters of reports, and (c) parents as policy makers.

With respect to the first of these new parental roles, it is critical that parental input related to assessment occur in the ITP process. Family perception regarding their youth with disabilities' interests and preferences in a variety of transition domains (e.g., educational, occupational, and daily living skills) is not only required by law (PL 105-17, The 1997 Amendments to the IDEA), but essential for gaining culturally relevant information about the child. With regard to Harry's second suggestion, CLD parents should be officially designated as members of the ITP team, and this should be communicated to them by utilizing many of the effective communication practices discussed previously (see effective communication practices and family-centered approaches). Reports by parents at the ITP meeting should also be encouraged and entered into the record as an official document. This practice will demonstrate to CLD families the importance of their role in the decisions made by the ITP team. A written report by the parents is not necessary, but written documentation of their oral input is highly recommended. In addition, ITP conferences should be scheduled at convenient times and locations for parents (i.e., held after working hours); parents should be polled beforehand regarding the best times for scheduling conferences; and child care and transportation needs should be attended to by special education personnel. Many of these suggested ideas have been discussed previously but deserve reemphasis here because ITP meetings are frequently more complex and lengthy than IEP meetings. Finally, Harry suggests the formation of CLD Parent Advisory Committees to help in: (a) setting local education agency special education policy, (b) actively recruiting CLD parents as teachers' aides, and (c) organizing and implementing CLD parent support and advocacy groups. CLD parent support and advocacy groups are important because transition planning represents a new and unfamiliar activity for many families of youth with disabilities. These support and advocacy groups can play a critical role in bridging the gap between ITP personnel and families of youth with disabilities from cultures different than those of mainstream American society. Roles for CLD parent transition advisory committees and support groups include: (a) helping CLD families understand the transition related legal requirements of P.L. 105-17, (b) teaching CLD families how to be effective advocates for their children, and (c) offering in-depth cultural and linguistic diversity training to members of ITP teams.

CONCLUSION

Transition from school to a quality adult life is a complex process involving multiple variables for youth with disabilities. The poorer transition outcomes experienced by CLD youth with disabilities compared to other youth with disabilities should be a cause for concern by all special education personnel, particularly for those serving this population of students. It is hoped that the information, strategies, and suggestions presented here will assist transition team members to effectively close the gaps in transition outcomes noted previously, resulting in a quality adult life for CLD youth with disabilities.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gary Green is an associate professor of special education at California State University, Long Beach.

Phylis Nefsky has a M.S. in Music Therapy and is currently working in the field of transition services with adults who have developmental disabilities.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION: MEETING THE NEEDS OF CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE FAMILIES

ROSALIE S. BOONE
Howard University, Washington, D.C.

PAMELA S. WOLFE and JANET H. SCHAUFLER
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

Meaningful participation in special education programming by culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) parents requires that they have comprehensible information regarding eligibility, assessment, services, and educational programming for their special needs children. Educators and other school personnel must develop strategies to disseminate effective written information to these diverse parent audiences. Following a discussion of the educational challenge imposed by an increasingly diverse student population, the benefits of stimulating active parent participation in meeting this challenge, barriers to participation by CLD parents, and the informational needs of CLD parents relative to participation in their children's special education, this paper addresses the nature, characteristics, and development of effective written communiques for CLD families with special needs children. Conceptual, contextual, language, and educational challenges associated with the development of culturally sensitive material are identified, and strategies for addressing these challenges are provided. The paper also delineates suggestions for generally enhancing the comprehensibility of written materials parents receive from education personnel.

THE CHALLENGE OF A CHANGING SCHOOL POPULATION

Non-European Americans currently comprise about one-third of the U.S. population and of the total school enrollment (Grossman, 1995). Current growth patterns for the U.S. population suggest that by the year 2050 almost half of the population will be composed of people and families of color (Salend & Taylor, 1993). Already approximately 30% of elementary school students are members of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) groups (Snyder, 1993). By the start of the century, projections are that more than one-half of America's students will be CLD (Hodgkinson, 1988). Children's Defense Fund predictions for the year 2030 are even more dramatic. According to this source, "There will be 5.5 million more Hispanic children; 2.6 million more African American children; 1.5 million more children of other races; and 6.2 million fewer white, non-Hispanic children" (1989, p. 116). Similar trends can be seen in other countries (Adam-Moodley, 1986).

Data from a comparison of international studies reveal the immense challenge for schools and education personnel posed by these shifting demographics: not atypically, indigenous minority children and immigrant children do not achieve as well in the mainstream schools of our societies as students whose first or primary language and cultural backgrounds are reflected in these schools (National Center for Educational Research, 1990; Macionis, 1994). A consequence of the difficulties CLD children experience in school is their overrepresentation in special education programs, particularly those designed for students with mental retardation, behavior disorders, speech/language disorders, and learning disabilities (Harry, 1992; Drew, Hardman, & Logan, 1996).

Prominent theories used by educators over the years to explain the school difficulties of minority students have been predicated on deficit models that posit the inherent inferiority of lower-class and culturally different socialization styles, language patterns, and child rearing practices (Cochran & Woolever, 1983). The use of terms such as "culturally deprived" or "socially disadvantaged" to describe children from poor and/or CLD backgrounds has reflected the perception of ethnic cultures as deficit and of parents from those cultures as unconcerned about the education of their children. Thus, as Harry (1992) points out,"the home environments of working class and culturally different families have generally been viewed as needing to be replaced by desirable qualities represented by the school that reflects the values and behaviors of the mainstream society" (p. 91).

More recently, however, attribution of child or family deficits as the preeminent explanation for the educational problems of many CLD students has been decreasing. Among the reasons for this decline have been: (a) recognition that research often has confounded cultural factors with differences in educational level and socioeconomic status (Laosa, 1981); (b) promulgation of newer theories that focus on the contributing role of mainstream societal attitudes toward the combination of poverty, cultural, linguistic, and racial differences (Ogbu, 1992); (c) growing recognition that "difference" is not inherently equivalent to "deficit," and (d) acknowledgment that respecting and responding positively to the diversity of students and their families can produce positive outcomes in the educational arena (Comer, 1988; Thomas, 1993). Attention to the need to work more effectively with CLD students and families is evident in a growing dialogue and rapidly proliferating literature that focuses on education that is multicultural, promotes access and equity, and redefines the power relationship between schools and diverse families and the communities in which they reside.

BARRIERS TO CLD PARENTS PARTICIPATION IN THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESS

Despite the benefits of parent participation and federal legislation mandating participation, the role of parents in special education processes has been largely passive. Far from assuming, in collaboration with professionals, the questioning and decision-making roles envisioned by the law, parents' participation has been confined primarily to receiving information and responding to comments directed toward them (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990).

Researchers have reported numerous psychological, attitudinal, cultural, language, contextual, and logistical barriers to more active participation (Grossman, 1995; Harry, 1992; Misra, 1994). Empirical findings indicate that these barriers may have a particularly negative impact on the knowledge and participation of CLD families (Lynch & Stein, 1987; Utley, 1995). Psychological barriers such as anxiety stemming from their own negative experiences as students, fear that the child is not performing satisfactorily, fear of being blamed for the child's problem, and previous negative or ego-shattering encounters with school personnel may predispose these parents to ineffective communication, hinder effective parent-professional interaction, and/or create hostility or embarrassment in parents about subsequent interactions (Berger, 1995; Marion, 1981). Professional attitudes that stereotype or blame the parent, that deny parental expertise and knowledge about the child, or that view the parent as less intelligent, adversarial, angry, pushy, or resistant may also inhibit active participation (Sonnenschein, 1984; Schulz, 1987). Differences in language, dialects, value and belief systems or insensitivity to religious beliefs, family traditions, family pride, or patterns of interaction with nonfamily members illustrate cultural/language-related barriers that might have a negative influence on parent involvement. Finally, participation on the part of families from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds may be more adversely affected by logistic barriers related to income, material resources, transportation, time, educational competence, and knowledge about the school system. An ethnographic study by Lareau (1989) confirmed that one consequent impact of these barriers for working class parents was a sense of alienation from the school. A second impact was these parents achievement of a generic, undifferentiated educational path for their children, rather than the "customized or individualized" educational outcomes achieved by upper-middle class parents. Upper-middle class had greater educational competence, social status, income, material resources, and social networks, and their participation received a warmer welcome from school personnel. No doubt, as Harry (1992) opines, "the sense of alienation would be even more intense for culturally diverse working-class parents from low-status racial or language minority groups" (pp. 93-94).

BENEFITS OF PARENT PARTICIPATION

The benefits of parent and family participation in education have been widely confirmed through research and practice. Paramount among the benefits identified are improved student achievement, increased parental understanding and support of school programs, and greater professional effectiveness (Henderson, 1987; Met, 1987; Utley, 1995). Family-professional partnerships can provide all participants with the opportunity to work cooperatively in a relationship that has benefit for each member of the partnership.

In the U.S., confirmation of the merits of parent participation in education has been codified in federal legislation that mandates parent involvement in programming for children with disabilities. For example, the Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA), mandates parental consent as a prerequisite to the provision of special education services. Schools must obtain parent permission before assessing a student for special education or changing a child's regular class placement. Parent involvement is also required in developing the child's specialized education program. However, in addition to enhancing the potential pedagogical advantages of parent participation, the mandate, through its provisions governing notice, consent, confidentiality, nonbiased assessment, least restrictive placement, and due process procedures, also underscores the role of parent involvement in protecting families and children from inequitable and/or inappropriate treatment in the educational sector.

Children from families whose ethnicity, culture, or language differs from that of the mainstream may, in particular, need the protection that can be provided by parents who are actively involved in their education. These children are more likely than majority students to be defined as having disabilities and identified for special education services (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1997). Once referred for special education, the likelihood of placement is very high (Mehan, Hartwick, & Meihls, 1986). Parental involvement can provide one of the checks and balances to the high rate of CLD student referral and erroneous identification and can better ensure appropriate programming if special education placement does occur.

NEEDS OF CLD PARENTS RELATIVE TO PARTICIPATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

If greater participation in special education programming and resulting benefits for low-income and CLD families are to be achieved, changes must occur in the power balance between schools and these families; traditional patterns of authority and discourse between them must be redefined and negotiated. Knowledge and information are indispensable prerequisites in developing the "communicative competence" CLD parents will require in order to accomplish these changes. Specifically, these parents need comprehensible information regarding the eligibility, assessment, services, and educational programming for their special needs children. In addition, as the primary advocates for their children, they need information regarding their rights in the decision making that affects their children's education (Harry, 1992).

Although it is incumbent upon caring and concerned professionals to affirm parents' choice of passive participation without labeling them as uncaring, it is important not to assume that limited participation reflects parents' informed choice. Concerted efforts must be made to ensure that if parents choose minimal participation options, these choices are not dictated by unpreparedness or lack of knowledge and information necessary for active participation (Boone, 1992).

Sensitivity to individual differences (the bedrock of special education) requires that caring professionals affirm the right of parents to choose the roles they wish to play in their children's education and resist the temptation to label them as "unconcerned" if they do not choose active participation. At the same time, educators must not assume limited participation reflects an informed choice on the part of parents. Concerted efforts must be made to ensure that when parents opt for minimal participation, their choice is not dictated by unpreparedness or by lack of knowledge and information necessary for active participation (Boone, 1992).

Providing culturally and linguistically diverse parents with knowledge and information requisite to their active participation in special education service provision is difficult. The task is made no easier by the tendency of schools to focus on compliance with mandates or bureaucratic procedures rather than on truly effective communication with parents (Harry, 1992). Nevertheless, assurance that diverse parents have equal access to pertinent information demands that several critical concerns related to effective communication be addressed. Paramount among these concerns is the school's provision of effective written communication to CLD parent audiences.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PROVIDING WRITTEN INFORMATION TO CULTURALLY DIVERSE PARENTS

Written communication is typically used by school personnel to obtain informed consent, schedule meetings, and inform families about such things as available services, activities occurring in the school, programming needs of the child, or assessment results (Vaughn, Bos, Hand, & Lasky, 1988). The advantages of written communication are obvious: written materials constitute a time efficient and tangible method for conveying ideas.

Further, written materials can serve as legal documentation of mandated educational processes and procedures.

Despite the frequency with which written communiques are used by educators to share information with families, the effectiveness of the medium is called into question by its very nature. For example, information given in written form does not provide the opportunity for immediate clarification or feedback from the receiver; indeed, the sender of the material is neither seen nor heard, making true "communication" difficult (Harry, 1992). Further, despite the assumption of clarity inherent in written communication, often materials do not dearly communicate intent. A study by Cuadra and Albaugh (1956) found that agreement between consumers of written material and the writers of the information occurred in only 50% of the cases, indicating that the writers had not successfully expressed their intent to the consumers of the information.

The impact of these general shortcomings of written material may be exacerbated in attempting to communicate with CLD parents and families. For instance, although these families by no means constitute a homogeneous group and vary widely with regard to formal education and literacy skills, some CLD parents may be unable to read. Many may be uncomfortable with, or place limited value on, the written word. Additionally, written material from a "relatively unknown power [may be] particularly intimidating and alienating for [families] whose culture requires the personal touch" (Harry, 1992, p. 172). Thus, in addition to being unfamiliar or uncomfortable with written communication, CLD parents may find written school communication cold and impersonal (Figler, 1981) or otherwise inconsistent with their experience or culturally valued methods of interacting with educators (Akamatsu, 1993).

Addressing general considerations. In view of these factors, prior to developing written material for parent consumption, education personnel should consider carefully whether the written word is the best vehicle by which to transmit certain types of information to all parents, particularly when the information relates to the special education of their children. Certainly, written documents should not be the sole method relied upon to communicate with these families. Face-to-face school-based meetings, home visits, and contact through local and neighborhood community agencies, (e.g., churches, community centers) should also constitute major avenues of interaction and information dissemination. Nevertheless, written materials no doubt will remain a frequent communication option utilized by educators to reach parents and families. Consequently, it is essential (a) that educators be aware of cultural, linguistic, and educational variables that could impede the comprehensibility of written material directed to CLD families; and (b) that they be responsive to the use of strategies that address these variables and enhance the potential effectiveness of materials.

CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPING WRITTEN MATERIAL FOR CULTURALLY DIVERSE PARENTS

Considerations related to the topic of disabilities itself may complicate the accomplishment of effective written communication with these families. Specifically, the framework of services to individuals with disabilities in westernized countries is typically derived from a technological perspective in which the models of disability etiology and service provision are medical. Such models may be at odds with cultural-related attitudes CLD parents hold toward disabilities. For instance, the belief systems of some parents regarding the nature, causes, and treatment of disabilities may differ from Anglo or Western notions. Beliefs about causes, for example, may include both natural and supernatural explanations, especially among families who have not been acculturated to westernized views of medicine (Chan, 1992; Harry, 1992). Additionally, parents may not make the distinctions regarding disabling conditions that are made by educators: some, for example, may not distinguish mental disorders from developmental disabilities. As a result, these parents may not understand the nature of their child's disability as it is understood by the educators who try to communicate with them about the child's education (Heron & Harris, 1987). Furthermore, in addition to being less aware than mainstream parents of appropriate educational services available (Lynch & Stein, 1987), all parents' willingness to seek or utilize professional services for children with disabilities may be constrained by the cultural emphasis placed on family pride or by conceptualization of the individual as a reflection of the biological group (Baglopal, 1988; Chan, 1992; Leung, 1988).

Addressing conceptual considerations. Educators with sincere concern about maximizing the value and efficacy of written materials for diverse parent populations should avoid developing materials reflecting the erroneous assumptions that all parents: (a) conceptualize the etiology, characteristics, and treatment of disabilities from technological and medical perspectives, (b) conceptualize disability categories in the same way mainstream professionals do, and (c) can easily modify (assuming they wish to do so) culturally-based help-seeking behaviors that may place greater emphasis on familial or informal than on professional or bureaucratic systems of support. Rather, developers of written material for diverse families should first acquire knowledge regarding families' perceptions about and familiarity with academic and behavioral conditions that qualify children for special education services. Information obtained from individuals who are members of the cultural/language group to which targeted families belong may be helpful in explaining how the construct of disabilities in general and various disabilities in particular are viewed among the group. This information can assist educators in developing more culturally sensitive written material. Furthermore, to clarify professional usage of disability labels, informational materials or documents that require informed consent should explain these labels in a variety of ways. For example, material that, rather than merely labeling a disability category, provides information that functionally describes typical characteristics and potential outcomes can help parents differentiate mental disorders from developmental disabilities.

Finally, the content and conceptualization of written material should allow for and take advantage of the familial or informal support networks CLD families may have available to them. Often extended family members and individuals outside the CLD family play a crucial role in the life of the student with disabilities (Smith, 1998). Material that references the presence/role of siblings, extended family members, or highly respected friends in the life of the student may enhance the home-school relationship by acknowledging the value parents place on family as a support system and by infusing existing support structures with service-related information that leads to increased or better informed participation in special education programs.

CONTEXT CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPING WRITTEN MATERIALS FOR CULTURALLY DIVERSE PARENTS

One of the most consequential considerations that arises in the development of written materials for diverse parents highlights the primary function of language — communication of meaning. Ultimately, parents must understand the meaning attached to any form of communication with them if the communication is to promote their knowledge and potential involvement in the educational lives of their children. However, parents from foreign countries or nonmainstream cultural/language backgrounds may lack the context necessary to provide real meaning to written documents they receive from the school. Hall (1977, p. 93) has opined that, "One reason that bureaucrats are so difficult to deal with is that they write for each other and are insensitive to the contexting needs of the public." As frequent recipients of written communication from the educational bureaucracy, many parents would, no doubt, agree with Hall.

Harry (1992) found that, although written communiqués from the school may signify for CLD parents the formality and power of the school system, without a context in which to frame this communication, parents may, in effect, merely be recipients of bewildering recyclable material. For example, in reference to the "monton de papeles" (pile of papers) she had received regarding her child's special education, one of the Puerto Rican respondents in Harry's ethnographic study exclaimed:

> So many papers! I have a lot of work to do—in the mornings I work in my house, and then in the afternoon I take care of my mother and buy her groceries and wash her clothes. I have a lot of boxes full of papers, and I told Fidel I would throw them away, and he said, "No! No!" So I took them to the LAA and gave them to them. I can't stand having so many papers. (Harry, p. 171)

These parents poignantly illustrated the dilemma of many CLD parents who may recognize the seriousness of formal written communiqués from school, yet have no useful understanding of what the papers readily mean.

Addressing context considerations. Meaningful communication with diverse parents demands that they have a context in which to evaluate the power of written documents in the educational lives of their children — a demand that significantly increases the challenge facing professionals who develop written materials meant to convey information about special education. Professionals can address this challenge if, when creating written communiqués intended to keep parents informed about their children's education and their parental rights in the educational process, or intended to elicit informed consent or parental input necessary to design appropriate programming, they also aim to make parents aware that activities/events addressed in the communiqués represent established educational procedures, each with a recognized name and a ritualized manner of implementation (Harry, 1992).

LANGUAGE CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPING WRITTEN MATERIALS FOR LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE PARENTS

Although contextual issues may greatly influence the impact of written communiqués on diverse parents, material characteristics more specifically related to language structure and pragmatics also affect educators' achievement of meaningful communication with CLD parents. For example, many families with whom educators must communicate may not be fluent in the language or dialect of the dominant culture — the language in which educational decisions are made (Lynch & Stein, 1987). Any assumption that mere translation of material into parents' native language constitutes an uncomplicated resolution to this problem is misguided.

Identification of word equivalents cannot be equated with interpretation of a message. Written educational communiqués that have been skillfully interpreted convey to linguistically diverse parents, not only the words of educators, but their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes as well (Schweda-Nicholson, 1987). These materials transmit explicit and implicit messages that prepare parents to make informed choices about special education and invite them to work collaboratively with educators. Unfortunately, creation of such materials is no easy task: several problems attend the process of interpretation in the special education arena (Plata, 1993). Difficulties include: (a) loss of meaning in the interpretation process, (b) providing meanings of words or concepts, (c) hostile feelings on the part of interpreters toward monolingual school personnel, and (d) utilization of culturally sensitive communication etiquette.

As mentioned previously, many special education terms and concepts are understood in the context of a highly technical educational system. The special meanings attached to these terms make their translation into other languages difficult. Even when words in two languages have similar meanings, they may have different difficulty levels and therefore not be the same (Figueroa, 1989). Furthermore, it is exceedingly difficult, according to Manuel (1935), to translate psychometric properties from one language to another. Because the translator must rely on his/her pragmatic understanding of specialized terms, the probability is high that the intended meaning of some terms or concepts will be lost in the translation process. Provincial meanings of terms or concepts further complicate translation efforts. Words and concepts may have more than one meaning depending on the context in which they are used and depending, also, on the geographic region in which they are used. Thus, for example, the meaning of a Spanish word may differ depending on whether the user's country of origin is Spain, Puerto Rico, or Mexico.

Establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships between educators and interpreters create additional challenges to the development of educational material written in parents' native language. Although the need for interpreters in special education has become acute in many geographic regions, the supply of well-qualified interpreters or bilingual educators/staff who can serve as interpreters remains low (Plata, 1993). The high demand for their ability; the stress and fatigue associated with providing skilled, sensitive, and reliable services (sometimes without remuneration); the pressure and conflict of working with educators who may be culturally insensitive; overidentification with families; and the challenge of fulfilling other work obligations may cause interpreters to develop negative feelings toward monolingual educators with whom they work (Lynch & Hanson, 1992). Such feelings have the potential to undermine cooperation between families and educators and/or result in transmission of incomplete, haphazard, or erroneous information. Plata (1993) considers these feelings the most serious pitfall associated with the use of interpreters in special education.

Etiquette, as it relates to communication between mainstream educators and CLD families, refers to the "rules" and patterns of behavior that govern social interaction. Although some of the rules may be explicitly taught to young children in a given culture, most are acquired simply by virtue of an individual's exposure to and observation of social and communicative behaviors in the culture. The patterns of interaction become such second nature that an individual has little, if any, conscious awareness of them. Yet, so ingrained are these rules, that the individual may expect them to be observed by virtually everyone with whom s/he interacts. Indeed, a series of encounters in which the individual's patterns of interaction are challenged by different, unfamiliar patterns, may engender emotions ranging from frustration and anger to confusion and withdrawal. These observations have applicability to interaction between CLD parents and mainstream educators. For example, educators and parents who are unfamiliar with the rules, assumptions, or expectations that govern interpersonal communication in each other's culture may: (a) develop misunderstandings that hinder the development of mutual trust (Salend & Taylor, 1993), (b) misinterpret responses to their communication efforts, and (c) make erroneous assumptions about one another. Thoughtfully conceived materials can provide opportunities for both parents and educators to increase their competence in cross cultural interaction.

Addressing language considerations. Many parents from linguistically diverse backgrounds may need and must have access to educational communication in their native language. Development of skillfully interpreted written communication can maximize the impact of too few educators and staff with bilingual or multilingual abilities. However, to assure the production of high quality communiqués, educators should develop and adhere stringently to guidelines recommended to ensure optimal outcomes. Specifically, for example, written materials should be developed by individuals who: (a) are proficient in the targeted language, including its nuances and pragmatics; (b) have very strong writing skills in the targeted language; (c) are familiar with the targeted culture and knowledgeable about its impact on parents and families; (d) are knowledgeable about special education concepts, terminology, and administrative procedures; (e) have training and experience in cross-cultural communication; and (f) have received training regarding their responsibilities to the language, to material recipients (parents), and to colleagues.

Even in cases where written material is not translated into the native languages of diverse parents, its cultural sensitivity can be enhanced if educators identity and utilize some of the principal rules and protocols that govern interpersonal discourse in the targeted cultural/language groups. For example, strategies designed to alleviate the impersonal tones many diverse parents find discomfiting would demonstrate respect for the value some families place on a personalized approach. Specifically, material could be developed in which the educators: (a) incorporate a greeting in the native language; (b) use culturally appropriate forms of address; (c) provide correct spelling and sequencing of family names; (d) provide an introduction of themselves (name, title, role); (e) include information designed to 'break the ice" prior to requesting information or disseminating content; (f) use first and second person pronouns; and (g) make positive, references to the child, the parents, extended family members, and the community.

EDUCATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPING WRITTEN MATERIALS FOR DIVERSE PARENTS

The effectiveness of written communication may be essentially eviscerated if educators pay insufficient attention to whether the content of the materials is appropriately matched to the education and knowledge level of parents with whom they wish to communicate. For example, Roit and Prohl (1984), in analyzing the readability of materials containing information about special education services mandated by law to parents in the United States, found that the sixth-grade reading level required to comprehend the material was potentially beyond the skills of many native and nonnative English speakers. Similarly, Weddig (1984) analyzed 50 psychoeducational reports shared with parents of children receiving special education services in the U.S.; she found that a 15th-grade level (i.e., 3 years of college) was needed to comprehend the information. Given that 81% of the population in the U.S. has only a high school education or less (Borrowman, 1992) and that persons from other countries may have even less formal education, it is highly probable that material with a readability level as high as that in Weddig's study would exceed the ability of most parents. Indeed, when, as part of her study, Weddig asked parent participants to read pyschoeducational reports revised to reflect a lower reading level, she found that parents could more accurately interpret the results of the reports.

Readers' familiarity with the specific subject matter addressed must also be considered when sharing written information. A primary difficulty with many written communiqués is the frequent use of technical terminology and jargon that may not be known to persons outside a particular field or discipline. Some technical terms, particularly terms used to describe legal rights or responsibilities in special education, represent critical but difficult concepts to describe. Further, such material often uses acronyms as a means of labeling information. For example, in the U.S., terms commonly used to reference the Individualized Education Plan mandated for all children with disabilities are "IEP" and "IFSP" (Individualized Family Service Plan). Although the use of acronyms makes communication decidedly simpler among professionals, families who are unfamiliar with such terms may feel as though they must acquire an entirely new language in older to understand and participate in the educational process. A particularly salient example of misuse of jargon is illustrated in the story of a woman of Native-American descent who, when told by her doctor that she had given birth to a "Mongoloid" child, asked her mother how it was possible she could have given birth to an Asian child. In this case, use of jargon led to an exchange of information that was inaccurate and misleading.

Addressing education considerations. Communicating effectively about educational issues with parents who represent a wide range of social and educational backgrounds is a daunting task. It requires that educators produce written material whose reading level, word choices, and general characteristics enhance the likelihood that they will be readily comprehensible to a broad audience.

The likelihood of material comprehensibility can be enhanced by matching the reading level of the material to the educational level of the reader. Computation of material "readability" (the relative ease or difficulty of written passages) is used in the U.S. educational system to match textbooks used in reading, math, social studies, and science to the educational experience (i.e., "grade level") of students. This match is considered essential in assuring that students will comprehend the materials and, hence, the subject matter. An appropriate match between written material and the diverse parents to whom it is disseminated can be considered equally essential.

A number of readability indices can be used to determine readability levels (e.g., Fry, Fog, and Flesch indices). The difficulty level of the material is usually expressed in terms of a grade level equivalent that theoretically equates to the years of formal schooling required by the reader in order to decode the material. Readability indices consider factors such as: average length and relative frequency of words, and length and relative complexity of sentences (Canine, Silbert & Kameenui, 1990). A number of computer programs now include software that both calculates reading level and provides suggestions for improving the comprehensibility of written prose. Although it may not be feasible to make individual matches between educational materials and particular families, as a rule, educators should seek to develop material with a calculated readability level well below the assumed educational level of the general population. Even if linguistically diverse families have high educational levels, material with lower reading levels may be used in alleviating some of the difficulties that nonnative readers typically experience. Professionals in fields that disseminate written information to extensive portions of the population suggest that the most appropriate materials exhibit a readability level between 5th and 10th grade, the expected reading range for 10- to 16-year-olds in the U.S. (W. Hudson, personal communication). They advise, however, that levels should be kept as low as possible. Consequently, for example, most U.S. newspaper articles tend to have a reading level of the sixth grade, the level typically expected of a normally achieving 12-year-old.

In addition to the development of materials with appropriate reading levels, effective communication with CLD families requires that words chosen for use in the material be carefully selected. Some diverse families may have had little or no exposure to the educational system, or may be distrustful of the system itself. Consequently, it is important that words chosen convey information in a non-threatening manner. Using informal, rather than formal, wording is one non-threatening way to convey information. For example, an educator might substitute "school" to talk about the "educational system," or "school work" to discuss "educational programming." Similarly, it may be helpful to incorporate colloquial terms that are indigenous to a particular community to elucidate concepts or enhance descriptions and examples educators wish to provide. For example, an educator in Hawaii might employ the terms "ohana," "kokua," and "mahalo" in written communication with families. These Hawaiian terms for "family," "help," and "thank you," respectively, are widely understood across cultural groups in Hawaii; their usage connotes some acculturation to life in the islands.

It is unnecessary, and perhaps unwise in most cases, for professionals from mainstream backgrounds to try to communicate entirely in the vernacular of a CLD community — novice attempts at imitation may create or exacerbate distrust on the part of students and families. Effective use of colloquial terms will require that educators take the time to become familiar with the community in which the terms are used, understand how they are used in the community, and ensure that the terms accurately communicate the concepts intended. However, the effort educators invest should yield worthwhile benefits; judicious incorporation of local terminology into written communications can demonstrate educators' interest in the language and lives of diverse students and families and, thus, facilitate establishment of family-professional rapport.

Developers of written information for CLD parents should avoid or minimize the use of technical terms, educational jargon, and acronyms. Overuse of technical terms and jargon can alienate parents and families, make them feel less empowered, and propagate inaccurate information (Harry, Allen, & McLaughlin, 1995). Although use of some technical terminology may be unavoidable, it should be used only when necessary. When used, it should be explained in the simplest language possible; acronyms should be written out and explained. In all cases, multiple examples should be provided to facilitate full understanding of relevant concepts.

Although many of the strategies noted above are particularly salient for effective written communication with CLD families, a number of additional strategies are beneficial for all written communiqués. All well-written documents are characterized by attention to variables such as physical attributes, format and organization, language, and message. Table I provides a list of strategies for constructing effective written materials. The strategies represent a synthesis of recommendations derived from journalism, health education, and business education literature that focus on issues pertaining to literacy, effective communication, and visual presentation of materials.

Best practices in service delivery to families of children with disabilities are moving toward approaches that emphasize the importance of parent-professional partnerships. Commitment to the well-being of ***all*** children in our educational institutions necessitates that

TABLE I

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING THE READABILITY OF WRITTEN INFORMATION

Physical Attributes

Print Size

- Use print size of at least 12 to 14 points

Type Style

- Use simple type style (e.g., without serifs and italics)
- Mix lower and uppercase letters
- Number or letter directions, lists, and steps

Spacing

- Keep overall spacing consistent throughout the document

Color

- Use blue, black, or green ink

Visual Devices

- Incorporate arrows, color, bullets, underlining, and highlighting to guide the reader
- Keep columns narrow (e.g., 40-44 characters)

Margins and White Space

- Utilize wider margins at the bottom of the page than at the top
- Use equal side margins
- Use unjustified right margins

Lettering

- Contrast lettering color with the background color
- Utilize thin, dark lettering on a light background

Illustrations

- Only use illustrations that have a specific informational purpose
- Make certain that the illustrations emphasize, explain, or summarize the text
- Place illustrations on either the top or bottom of the page at an outside margin
- Remove unneeded background or extraneous detail from the illustrations
- Use pictures of people and activities that are realistic
- Use pictures of people and activities that depict the diversity found in daily life

Pagination

- Limit the number of pages of the document
- If the document is more than one page, number each page

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TABLE I (continued)

Format and Organization

Pre-Reading Activity

- Utilize brief subheadings and lists
- Make sure that subheadings and headings summarize important information
- Include arrows, color, bullets, underlining, and highlighting with headings

Questions

- Intersperse questions throughout the text

Signal Words

- Incorporate signal words such as first, second, and third throughout text

Language

Words

- Include words of 2 syllables or less
- Use a variety of words
- Incorporate action verbs and concrete nouns
- Include personal pronouns
- Avoid adjective and adverbs as much as possible
- Use gender-neutral language where appropriate

Sentences

- If text is in narrative form, vary the sentence structure (e.g., put the verb in front of the noun at times)
- Restrict sentences to 8 to 10 words long
- Restrict sentences to less than 15 words
- Avoid combining complex ideas within a sentence
- Incorporate a variety of signal words used (e.g., first, second, third)
- Avoid the use of double negatives
- Use appropriate punctuation
- Limit the use of abbreviations, contractions, acronyms, unfamiliar spelling of words, and quotation marks as much as possible
- Minimize the use of statistics
- Avoid the use of parentheses

Paragraphs

- Limit each paragraph to one idea only
- Ensure that paragraph sequencing is logical (e.g., step by step, chronological, or topical)
- Indent short paragraphs
- Provide double spaces between paragraphs
- Use primarily short paragraphs

Message

- Present important information either first or last
- Introduce only one concept introduced at a time
- Summarize or repeat ideas often to refresh the reader's memory
- Provide specific, concise, and accurate information

educators be able to establish effective communication with parents, guardians, and caregivers whose culture, ethnicity, and/or language may differ significantly from their own. Hopefully, the preceding discussion and recommendations will assist educators in maximizing the utility and efficacy of the written materials that constitute an integral aspect of communication between schools and families with exceptional children.

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REVIEW OF THE MCINTRYE ASSESSMENT OF CULTURE (MAC)

GWENDOLYN WEBB-JOHNSON
University of Texas at Austin

MARY G. ANDERSON
Medgar Evers College

ABSTRACT

The McIntrye Assessment of Culture is an educational tool that is marketed as a valuable asset in assisting teachers in the identification of problematic school behaviors in culturally appropriate manners. Its noted intent is to assist teachers in determining the difference between culturally appropriate behaviors and problematic school behaviors. The impact of this instrument does not match the intent. This review critically analyzes the culturally disrespectful and inaccurate premises of the instrument. Problematic aspects of the MAC are addressed as they specifically relate to the development and use of the instrument among teachers and service providers.

REVIEW OF THE MCINTRYE ASSESSMENT OF CULTURE (MAC)

As we rapidly approach the 21st century, public school personnel in the United States become increasingly perplexed by the challenge of diversity. Masses of culturally diverse students in general and special education settings continue to experience incomplete school success (Harry & Anderson, 1994; Ford, Obiakor, & Patton, 1995). Service providers are often bewildered by the historical and continuing disproportionate placement of culturally diverse learners in various school categories (i.e., behavior disorders, cognitive and learning disabilities). Some professionals "react" in an effort to address the differences that children of color often bring to the classroom. Reactionary paradigms, often seek "recipes" or "quick fix" methods to alleviate the impact of this pervasive educational challenge. Such practice is often problematic. As a result, educators are obligated to seek, assess, implement, and evaluate methods that are culturally relevant and responsive (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). The McIntyre Assessment of Culture (MAC) (1995) is an educational tool designed with the author's intent to assist teachers in providing effective academic and behavioral intervention in a culturally responsive and relevant manner. The purpose of the MAC is to assist "professionals in the accurate identification of emotionally and/or behaviorally disordered children and youth" (p. 7). A behavior checklist separated into 10 subscales is provided to assist service providers in identifying behaviors "that might be influenced by cultural background..." (p. 7). The accompanying manual is designed to assist in the interpretation of completed checklists by assessing "the influence of culture upon behavior," while targeting also the education of professionals in the area of cultural differences. The author's seemingly virtuous intent, however, does not match the potential negative impact of this instrument.

The field is presently seeking answers on how to better serve a growing diverse student population. Effective service providers champion efforts that are proactive in building culturally responsive knowledge bases which embrace the fact that diversity is not new to public schools (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Nieto, 1996). They purport that responses to diversity demand new and renewed responses to effect positive changes (Banks & Banks, 1997). Unfortunately, the MAC (McIntyre, 1995) is a "reactive" and negative response to human differences in schools. The purpose of this review is to explicitly critique the efficacy of its use in school settings. The fundamental position of the authors is that the MAC threatens to advocate continued public educational practices deeply steeped in institutionalized and instructional racism (Larke, Webb-Johnson, Rochon, & Anderson, in press). Ineffective educational practices that facilitate predictable negative academic outcomes influenced by deficit views of race and culture have long been the results experienced by masses of children of color in United States' public schools. By design, racism is systemic to the invalidation of cultural plurality in the definition of American public education. The cultural transmission ideology that grounds American public education dictates a mainstream culturally specific schooling experience void of plurality. The social charge of education then is to perpetuate the "status quo." While "status quo" has served as a standard for the development of school policy and practice, it has become clear that such strategies have limited positive impact on masses of children of color. The MAC, as a purported educational tool, represents a diminishing, erroneous, and alienating effort to "react" to diversity. It is void of a perspective that responds from a "strength" prospective. The MAC does not focus on identifying, defining, and constructing what students can do in school contexts. It's examination and conclusions about cultural sanctioned information are not proactive, nor is it authentically respectful of the many rich cultural traditions and foundations that students bring with them to school. In this review, problematic aspects of the MAC will be addressed as they specifically relate to the development and use of the instrument.

PROBLEMS WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAC

The MAC was developed on the premise that the instrument could provide professionals with information "...on 'normal,' common, and/or acceptable behaviors for various groups" (p. 8). It purports to appraise the influence of gender, culture, and social economic status on behaviors. These influences are often viewed by service providers as evidence of demonstrated emotional and/or behavior disorders (McIntyre, 1995). The author further asserts his purpose of appraising cross-cultural influences to facilitate the development of management techniques "...specifically designed to eliminate value differences between a child's family, the school system, and the larger society" (p. 5).

The author states that he developed the instrument to assist professionals in the accurate identification of emotional and behavioral disorders among children and youth from culturally diverse backgrounds. He acknowledges the potential for misidentification because of a lack of knowledge among service providers unfamiliar with cultural differences. In fact, he recently marketed the MAC as a multicultural assessment tool. He advocated the tool's ability to assist the field of special education in "eliminating from consideration those youngsters who are displaying behaviors reflective of their cultural heritage and upbringing" (p. 7). The MAC provides over 600 citations from over 400 sources representative of some important research and conceptual literature on issues of culture and schooling. The author derived his large item pool of cultural traits and characteristics from a review of this extensive literature. However, he claims no reliability or validity of the scale, and refers only to content validity as a basis for legitimizing the instrument.

THEORETICAL INADEQUACY

Views About Culturally Diverse Students' Educational Performance. McIntrye's use of this vast amount of seminal and current literature provides only surface and often a one-dimensional examination of some very complex issues. The great majority of the citations are taken completely out of context. As a result, the premise of the instrument can be viewed as theoretically inadequate. For example, McIntyre cites Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) study on African-American high school students coping with the burden of "acting white," 19 times throughout the manual. McIntyre contends that "as a result of past societal abuses" (p. 46) at least three groups of historically marginalized learners "may place pressure on peers not to "act White by achieving in school" (p. 46). He would have educators to believe that African-American, Native-American, and Hispanic-American learners demonstrating: (a) inferior academic performance, (b) disrespectful and rude behavior, (c) threatening and testing behaviors, (d) resistance to confirming to limits and following directions, (e) inattentive behavior, and (f) failure in applying themselves to academic tasks, might do so because they do not want to be perceived as "White." This is clearly too simple a conclusion for such a complex issue.

While Fordham and Ogbu (1986) are well respected throughout the educational community in their efforts to explain why some African-American students might embrace a burden to "act white," their study does not focus on explaining why culturally diverse students might be perceived as being disrespectful, rude, or inattentive. In fact, their study was based on African-American youth who were either doing well academically or underachieving. The only problematic behavior demonstrated by their subjects was school absence that led to academic failure. Those students who earned failing grades did so because of their absences. Had they not accumulated so many absences, they would have passed their academic classes. Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) subjects did not demonstrate the threatening, testing, rude, and inattentive school behavior cited throughout the MAC. This gross misinterpretation of research highlights the potential for the MAC to assist teachers in drawing faulty conclusions as they attempt to impact on perceived and real problematic school behavior. If service providers use this instrument, they increase the likelihood of reinforcing significant misinformation and racist conclusions about particular behaviors observed among children from various culturally diverse groups.

Views About Culture. The MAC facilitates a potentially biased interpretation of student behaviors and manifests itself more as a racist tool for continued miseducation. It provides very negative views about racial and ethnic cultures (patterned behaviors "learned" within the context of community and family interactions). Many predictable and faulty conclusions may be drawn from the 27 pages of explanations in the manual. The promise to teach professionals about cultural differences is unfulfilled. The manual is dominated by conclusions and quotes taken from studies and essays with little detail on the scope and direction of those researchers and theorists who are dedicated to reversing the trend of academic failure among children of color. Teacher perceptions of African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Native-Americans pressure to not "act white" is not why many children and youth of color do poorly in school. It is not why they experience failure, suspension, and placement in special education at disproportionate rates. It is not why they demonstrate challenging classroom behaviors. African-American students, for example, often do poorly in schools because schools fail to embrace, understand, and affirm the cultural integrity of African-American learners (Boykin, 1994). Hispanic-American students, especially those who speak English as a second language, often do poorly in school, because schools fail to acknowledge and implement pedagogical knowledge steeped in second language acquisition realities (Darder, 1991, Cummins, 1984; Ortiz, Yates, & García, 1990). School's systematic failure to meet the educational needs of diverse learners has historically been by design. Teachers have historically relied on reinforcing standards of behavior and performance from a European American perspective. Students of color want to do well in school and with high teacher expectations, effective leadership, and culturally relevant pedagogy, they do; (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Nieto, 1996; Foster, 1997; Kunjufu, 1989, 1993).

The MAC asserts that it offers descriptions of school behaviors that might be influenced by cultural backgrounds. This information was gleaned from hundreds of articles, pamphlets, and books. These behaviors are commonly found on other behavior checklists and are frequently reported by teachers as evidence of problematic conduct in schools. In the opening narrative, the McIntyre asserts that "many" of the statements in the instrument are often presented in judgmental terms used by educators unfamiliar with the behaviors of cultures other than their own. He states that his use of judgmental language is primarily an effort to make the instrument more user-friendly. User-friendly language then, as an example, might lead an educator to believe that Hispanic children "lie" (p. 36) as a cultural characteristic. The author cites Irujo's (1989) study on the expressive differences of Hispanic and European American students as an explanation for why Hispanic students might tell lies. "In order to avoid conflict, Hispanic students might avoid direct and frank commentary as courtesy, honor, family, loyalty, machismo, or other values often take priority over honesty" (McIntyre, 1995, p.37). Again, a significant scholarly effort is taken out of context by the MAC. Irujo's work highlights the diunital socialization pattern (the ability to attend to more than one idea at a time) often observed among Hispanic-American learners. Hispanic students are discussed from a strength perspective. The study focuses on what Hispanics can do as a basis for assisting them in learning skills that may present challenges. Irujo's work provides examples of how culturally sanctioned behaviors (i.e. courtesy, respect) might assist Hispanic students in attending to several concepts at one time. The study does not justify lying as a behavior affirmed by Hispanic culture.

LINGUISTIC AND CONTENT BIASES

Description of Scale Items. The MAC is largely a Behavior Checklist containing 103 statements about student behaviors demonstrated in the school context under the categories of academics, interactions with authority figures, disruption of classroom routine, empathy/concern for others, immaturity/impulse control, interpersonal relationship/interactions, learning difficulties, motivation, personality traits and viewpoints, and sexual/gender role behavior. Professionals who use the MAC are cautioned to follow the directions on the checklist to assess each item by using the following notations:

blank – (not a characteristic), 1 – (sometimes displaying), 2 – (often displaying), and 3 – (highly characteristic).

Of the 103 statements in the checklist, 72 use explicitly negative language (e.g., satisfied with inferior performance, cheats on tests, lies, disrespectful, or rude). These statements carry with them specific negative and often judgmental perceptions about certain behaviors. Twenty-four of the statements use implicit negative language (e.g., avoids eye contact during discipline, excessive talking, becomes excited during lessons, unemotional). These statements carry with them judgmental perceptions that imply problematic conclusions about certain behaviors. Finally, only 7 of the scale items use language denoting observable behavior that can be void of judgmental conclusions (e.g., tardy, absent often, difficulty taking notes) to interpret perceived problematic behaviors. The author provides a key to denote the characteristics of seven distinct groups and 6 categories to assist in organizing these groups. The key for the checklist labels the following: African American (A), Arab American (AR), Asian American (AS), European American (E), Hispanic American (H), Low Income (L), Limited English Proficient (LE), and Native American (N), adolescent (a), female (f), homosexual (h), male (m), streetcorner/streetwise youth (s), and all ages (x). The professional who then completes the checklist is provided a grid that delineates each behavior by group and category. An example follows:

Under the category, learning difficulties, all groups, except European-American learners, are noted as having cultural explanations to address their perceived inability to learn new material.

Learning Difficulties	A	AR	AS	E	H	L	LE	N
Unable to learn new material	x	x	x		x	x	x	x

When the language of the checklist is examined closely, some very interesting patterns emerge about particular groups. (See Table 1.)

Of the 72 explicitly negative statements, 68% and 57% of them are attributed to African-American and low-income children and youth respectively, while only 14% are attributed to European-American learners. According to the MAC, European-American learners demonstrate no challenging behaviors in the classroom (e.g., immaturity, impulse control, motivation) that would warrant a cultural explanation, and few challenges in academic, interpersonal and learning difficulties also warranting a cultural explanation. The MAC uses citations in one of the appendices (Appendix C) that may in fact reinforce perceptions and beliefs that support stereotypical and racist ideologies about various groups of children and youth. Ironically, in the MAC's efforts to assist educators in supporting students' of all cultures need to feel valued, respected, and physically and psychologically safe, teachers are in fact provided a rationale that may perpetuate the negation of such efforts. The preponderance of negatively stated behaviors and the interpretations that follow support continued racist and problematic interpretations of knowledge about various culturally diverse groups.

PROBLEMS WITH THE USE OF THE MAC

The language of the MAC throughout the instrument and the manual provides no replacement language to challenge or educate those judgmental terms allegedly used by educators who may be unfamiliar with cultural differences. The explanations given are value laden with verbiage that posits very narrow views of cultural and language differences. European-American values are highlighted as the norm and the desirable behaviors that follow are expected of the general school population. Even in "defiant" forms, the behavior of European-American students is shown as more acceptable. As an example, McIntyre provides the following language to assist educators in understanding what might be perceived as rude and disrespectful behavior toward a teacher when such behavior is observed in European-American and African-American students.

> **European American** — This may occur for a number of reasons, all attributable to typical European-American childrearing practices. European-Americans tend to view themselves as equal to all and inferior to none. Informality in interaction is also promoted, as is a autonomous, independent, individualistic, questioning personality. Additionally, majority culture pupils have been raised to resolve problems and issues by themselves and believe that teachers are fallible. This means that European-American students (especially adolescents) may challenge statements and policies of authority figures.

TABLE 1

EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT NEGATIVE STATEMENTS OF BEHAVIORS BY GROUPS

Group	*Explicit Statements*		*Implicit Statements*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
African American	49	68	8	33
Arab American	32	45	8	33
European American	10	14	5	21
Hispanic American	20	28	7	30
Low Income	41	57	7	31
Limited English Proficiency	26	36	3	13
Native American	22	32	4	16

> **African American** — The less restrained self-expression of many Black students may appear to non-Black teachers to be rude or undisciplined. Additionally, as a result of past societal abuses, African Americans may place pressure on peers not to "act White" by achieving in school. African Americans also tend to have a learning style that is opposed to the typical teaching style found in schools. These youngsters often develop an anti-achievement ethic. All of the above traits are more pronounced in the low socio-economic classes. African-American pupils may also engage in blatant attempts to oppose the constraints of the traditional education environment, which they find to be alienating. Among low-income Black students, this peer-promoted oppositional behavior may be a ritual testing to determine whether the teacher has the leadership attributes of strength, forcefulness, intelligence, persuasiveness, and generosity. (p. 30-31)

Many educators might have problems with the language used to explain the behavior of both groups; however, this review's present focus is on the language usage of the MAC and its potential of further biasing educators against, in this case, African-American learners. African-American learners are referred to as rude, undisciplined, oppositional, and anti-achievement oriented, while European-American learners are referred to as typical, equal to all, autonomous, independent, individualistic, and problem solvers. While all of this language is taken from the research and scholarly work of others, the language choice promotes negative conclusions for one group, while promoting positive and justifiable conclusions for another. Most important, the MAC provides teachers with no information on developing replacement perceptions and/or behaviors to better deliver quality educational services to any children and youth, even those who might display problematic behavior.

The MAC's attempt in presenting "user-friendly language" only serves to assist service providers in reinforcing some very negative stereotypes deeply steeped in deficit paradigms of understanding. The language of the MAC provides no bridge for collaborative efforts to actually assist teachers and other service providers in the design or implementation of effective pedagogy. The following analysis of the scale items included in the MAC, also illustrates this point.

CONSEQUENTIAL VALIDITY

The author of the MAC states, "Those who complete the behavior checklist, and read the explanations in Appendix B regarding how cultural background might influence the identified student actions will come to a better understanding of why certain behaviors are occurring. With this knowledge, educators can then devise instructional, interactional, and disciplinary strategies that work with, rather than against, a student's cultural proclivities" (p. 7). Nowhere in the scale or the appendices that follow are professionals provided an avenue for developing replacement behaviors or perceptions to alter the judgmental statements provided by the instrument. As a consequence, one questions any validity or useful purpose in the completion of the instrument. Professionals are not provided with strategies that assist in the

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development of respectful understandings of "culturally influenced" behaviors. A teacher who completes the MAC would not have any detailed information to alter a potentially biased view of a child from a culture different from his/her own. For example, if one completed the section on the MAC that addresses interactions with authority figures in an attempt to better understand an "acting out" Asian-American learner, the scale would share that Asian students are often overly obedient, avoid eye contact during discipline, and smile while being disciplined. If indeed the observed learner demonstrated all of those behaviors, the teacher would have no information on what to do about the possibility that the learner could demonstrate all of these behaviors while defying all of the classroom rules. What if the learner is very knowledgeable about the fact that those behaviors are often viewed as traditional Asian values and chooses to not follow those traditional patterns in school unless he/she knows that it will fulfill a superficial notion that the teacher believes is characteristic of him? Would the learner be demonstrating a behavior disorder if those behaviors were not demonstrated under those conditions?

More specifically, the MAC tends to reinforce and further support racist and hegemonic notions of European-American privilege in the school context. The instrument does not include information on the need to address school reform efforts in policy development and implementation of effective classroom management from multiple perspectives. The MAC fails to assist service providers in building their own knowledge bases to confront notions of "white privilege," and its impact on teacher attitudes and their subsequent action as a result of those attitudes (Howard, 1996). For example, if the teacher has never experienced being excluded from a group activity because of his/her race, that teacher might experience difficulty in understanding why some students of color fail to volunteer for activities in his/her classroom. While the teacher might strive to include all of his/her students, the remnants of the feelings experienced by rejection might be used as a defense mechanism to protect the learner from having to confront that pain again. The teacher might draw the conclusion that there is something deviant about the learner. Having no experience in the void often felt because of such rejection occurs because of the "privilege" of not being subjected to exclusion based on race.

The utility of the instrument for informing instruction or behavioral interventions that should naturally follow is suspect. How teachers might use any information gained from the completion of the checklist and included forms is further compromised by McIntyre's assertion that "each person truly understands only his or her cultural groups and those who belong to it" (p. 4). This notion can clearly be challenged with DuBois' (1903) and Boykin's (1994) double consciousness and triple quandary theories. People of color have been historically forced to understand their primary culture, the culture supported by mainstream society, and necessity in weighing the efficacy of use of either culture in social contexts. Such understanding has often been a matter of survival.

Once professionals complete the checklist, they are directed to Appendix B to read the explanation of the "culturally oriented behavior." The appendix "refers to the explanations and elaborations on these behaviors" (p. 7). For example, under the category "immaturity/impulse control," the explanation in Appendix B, for all ages among African-American learners is, "Black students commonly seek a great amount of teacher attention, nurturance, encouragement, and reassurance. When this is not provided, pupils may become frustrated, angry, or disruptive" (p. 38). A practitioner attempting to understand and impact what he/she perceives as immature behavior, might conclude that it is culturally sanctioned for African-American learners to become frustrated and angry when they seek and do not receive teacher attention. The MAC's explanation does not share with the practitioner that African-American youth are called upon less than any other group of students in classroom settings (Kunjufu, 1993).

The instrument fails to share that it is not culture, but being ignored, that often contributes to any student seeking excessive amounts of attention in the school context. McIntyre provides no proactive information that might explain the "member to member" orientations (Nichols, 1976) often demonstrated by African-American and Hispanic-American learners that might assist educators in understanding the powerful dynamic of social interactions in both communities. The MAC forces teachers into reactive modes that dictate a way to define deviance rather than assisting teachers in constructing academic environments that will respect the integrity that all learners bring to the classroom. All learners bring "culturally" defined values and behaviors to all classrooms. While teachers are indeed charged with teaching "standard" skills that will increase the likelihood of success for all learners, such a task is better accomplished by including aspects of the learners' "strength" based cultural experiences. Nichols (1976) work is not based on establishing "stereotypical" views of certain groups. He examines patterns of interactions within specific communities (i.e., African-American, Asian-American, European-

American, Hispanic-American, and Native-American) to assist teachers in examining cultural differences from a positive and "strength" perspective rather than a "deficit" perspective.

Because teachers are expected to intervene on challenging behavioral presentations of culturally diverse youth that might be attributed to culture and not a disability, a promise by the MAC to do so would be welcomed. "Those who complete the behavior checklist and read the explanations in Appendix C regarding how cultural background might influence the identified student actions will come to a better understanding of why certain behaviors are occurring. With this knowledge, educators can then devise instructional, interactional, and disciplinary strategies that work with, rather than against, a student's cultural proclivities" (p. 7). Use of the MAC, however, does not fulfill the promise of such strategies. The foundation build by Appendix C is faulty as it relates to the development of culturally meaningful and respectful instructional, interactional, and disciplinary strategies. The use of "verve" as a cultural explanation provides an example of this faulty foundation.

The MAC offers the demonstration of "verve" as an explanation for 19 inappropriate behaviors for African-American, Hispanic, and Native-American students. Propensity toward high levels of activity, for example, referred to as "verve" (Boykin, 1982), explains in culturally relevant and responsive ways the powerful energy often demonstrated by African-American learners in school contexts. The MAC cites Boykin's (1982) work on the vervistic nature of task variability among African-American and European-American children, 42 times. These citations are used first to explain student interest in learning through physical movement, spontaneous verbal response, differing learning styles, alienating environments, the notion of acting white, and past societal abuses. Boykin's (1982) work is then used as an explanation for problematic school behavior. Table 2 highlights the MAC checklist behaviors referencing Boykin's seminal work on "verve" as an explanation.

TABLE 2

"VERVE" AS AN EXPLANATION FOR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

Behavior	*African-American*	*Hispanic-American*	*Native-American*
Jumps to new task	x		
Disrespectful or rude	x		
Threatening/Test authority	x		
Does not conform to limits	x		
Resist/Refuses to follow directions	x		
Disobeys school and classroom rules	x	x	x
Absent often	x		
Disruptive behavior	x		
Excessive talking	x		
Becomes excited during lessons	x		
Impulsively answers without raising hand	x		
Poor impulse control	x		
Impatient/Blurts out answer without raising hand	x		
Inattentive/Difficulty attending to lesson	x		
Little belief in his/her own ability	x		
Bright but does not apply self	x		
Dislikes praise or recognition	x	x	x
Lacks motivation	x		
Dislikes school/Planning to drop out	x		

Again, the checklist takes a very valuable piece of research out of context, potentially leading educators to faulty conclusions about the impact of culture. Boykin's research highlights the mismatch of school interventions on cultural strengths demonstrated by African-American youth. His scholarship does not seek to explain the problematic school behaviors listed. His work demonstrates the failure of schools to understand verve as a strength rather than a deficit. His studies have examined and shown how schools fail to affirm, respect, and use the existence of high-activity levels as a positive and resourceful avenue for teaching academic skills. He highlights how schools often insist that students "calm down," and demonstrate their readiness for learning by acting only in ways that are deemed acceptable by traditional modes of academic intervention (e.g., sitting quietly, keeping hands and feet to self, raising hands when desiring to speak). He further posits that "traditional" expectations are not always the most effective for African-American children and youth.

Only four of the behaviors in Table 2 could logically be attributed to verve. Some African-American students might demonstrate an eagerness to attend to new tasks, excessive talking, excitement during lessons, or impulsivity in answering questions during academic engagement because of their socialized propensity toward high levels of activity, "verve" (Boykin, 1982, 1983). However, verve would not be a cultural explanation for being rude, disrespectful, disruptive, or inattentive. Verve would not explain why African-American, Hispanic-American, and Native-American learners disobey school rules, and dislike praise or recognition as the MAC would have educators believe. Such problematic behaviors would have to be systematically observed to determine the reasons why students behave in such manners. All students might choose such behavior because of teachers ineffective pedagogical strategies. For many students of color, such "negative" behaviors could be associated with educators' inability to respect, understand, and effectively intervene on the cultural strengths of students. This educational dilemma presently challenges the field to seek research supported strategies. The scholarly contribution of Boykin is no way asserts that students should not learn "traditional" modes of academic and social behavior. His contribution does however challenge the field's lack of flexibility and failure to be more inclusive of cultural differences. The MAC's attempt merely provides "user friendly" explanations through the use of negative and judgmental terminology. It provides educators with no examples in developing "appropriate" interventions.

The MAC neglects to acknowledge the reality that reasons beyond surface — presumed cultural explanations or adult expectations for behaving are underlying intentions and motivations of actual student behaviors. The following scenario emphasizes this point. In reference to the teacher attention-getting behavior that the MAC attributes to a significant number of African-American learners, the following scenario provides an alternative context for understanding such behavior. William, an African-American youth, aged 13, was suspended from school for constantly raising his hand and demanding attention from the teacher. His demands were perceived as so incessant that the teacher could not provide adequate instruction for the rest of the students. Although the teacher tried alternative ways of meeting his need for her assistance, none were successful. His parents, working with the teacher, put William on punishment to convey the message that the behavior was inappropriate and unacceptable. No one asked William why he behaved in this manner. As an educator and culturally responsive advocate for William's situation, one of the authors of this review asked, "William, why are you botherin' that lady?" His response was, "she smell good."*

The MAC explanations of influences had nothing to do with William's attention-getting behaviors. A more contextualized and culturally relevant demeanor and behavior, on the part of the teacher, was needed in this scenario. Culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995) first of all affirms and acknowledges the importance of "member to member" interactions among African-American learners (Nichols, 1976). In this instance, William's behavior was primarily driven by his immediate experience of being an adolescent male who enjoyed the fragrance of his teacher's perfume. The teacher had not bothered to ask William what motivated his attention-seeking behaviors. His reasons were his own; however, the MAC would lead one to believe that a culturally oriented premise motivates African-American learners to demand negative attention from their teachers. A more appropriate explanation and understanding in William's situations centers around his culturally sanctioned and reinforced reliance on affective relationships with those in his environment. He liked his teacher and enjoyed being close to her, especially because the perfume she wore was pleasing to him. He discovered in his classroom context, ways to remain in close proximity to his teacher. He was in fact interested in learning, but quickly became a part of a spiraling scenario that pitted him as the "bad guy" who prevented others from learning.

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* **Note:** *The choice of language in this scenario was transcribed verbatim. The author and William's use of Ebonics might be viewed as inappropriate by some educators, however, both authors affirm the integrity and utility of Ebonics in a classroom context. They do not advocate that Ebonics be taught, rather, they advocate that this African-American communication system be used to assist in bridging the gap between culturally responsive pedagogy and instructional practices that are often disrespectful and demeaning.*

When an educator understands that many African-American youth are socialized to highly value interactions with people, their response to perceived extreme attention-getting behaviors would first affirm the student's keen interest and satisfaction associated with personalized relationships in social interactions. They would then respect a student perspective by asking him why he is behaving in certain ways. Further, culturally responsive pedagogy demands that teachers examine their own reactions to perceived attention-seeking behaviors before placing judgmental labels and/or implementing punitive actions.

The authors of this review purport that all the behaviors on the MAC, as with any human behavior, demand contextualized professional response that begins first with the learner and then teacher self-examination of personal understanding and potential bias about academic and classroom behaviors. Before assigning any judgmental premise to behavior based on cultural context, the professional is obligated to first respect that behavioral differences do not have to be perceived as "deficit or negative" in efforts to construct effective instruction or classroom management. We suggest that identified behaviors be understood as positions from which to begin further investigation while respecting and understanding, in William's situation, the dimensions of African-American culture (Boykin, 1983) and potential teacher-biased beliefs about students seeking and/or having social interactions with their teachers or school personnel.

In addition to completing the checklist, professionals are also asked to complete a student information and interview form, and a parent/home information form. Each of these items continue to compromise the meaningful collection of important data to assist in making decisions about cultural manifestations of specific behaviors by some children and youth. For example, the student information form asks if the student behavior is similar to the child's country of heritage or more like the behaviors of "North American mainstream culture." First of all, few teachers know anything about the behavior of individuals from various countries in Africa or Asia. Further, who defines mainstream North American culture in light of all of the regional differences that exist in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, as it relates to behavior? In reference to the student interview form, would it be appropriate to ask a Hispanic/Latino-American child whose family has been a part of this country for five generations to describe a "kid from your parent's original country?" Finally, would it be appropriate to complete a parent information form asking the socio-economic level of the parent upon entry to North American if that parent's ancestral entry was during slavery?

CONCLUSION

Despite the MAC's effort to provide professionals with useful information about observable student behaviors, in essence, it perpetuates a fundamental flaw of traditional educational thought and practice, namely, understanding and defining learners and their behaviors based on adult notions of isolated and inherent learner-characteristics as cause, rather than interactive, adult-learner performance. To date, professional practice evidences an educational tradition that neglects to understand and describe observable student behaviors in terms of the child's reasons for personal performance and the adult's contributions to the behaviors of concern. To a large degree, adult notions about how children should behave determine student identifications and educational treatments. For example, behaviors identified as disruptive often lead adults to identify and treat the child as if the behavior observed evidences problems of inherent disorder.

Schools exist to promote homogeneous rather than heterogeneous group interactions. Historically, powerful American social myths fundamentally define self-serving beliefs in Euro-centric superiority as the definition of what is human and as the standard for defining what is normal (Valencia, 1997). These myths create redundant traditional views used to interpret narrowly defined social myths as exclusively valuable, individual choices and expectations. From this perspective, individual differences conflict with expected ways of being and subsequently, evidence individual deficit. The MAC uses almost endless combinations of traditional social myths to explain cultural differences as causes of in-school noncompliance.

The MAC is potentially a very dangerous tool. Educators are seeking information to assist them in meeting the needs of a diverse student population. Understanding cultural differences in the context of the school will be important in our efforts to alter the trends toward failure experienced by masses of culturally diverse students in K-12 settings. However, the use of the MAC will only serve to reinforce age-old myths and stereotypes about historically marginalized groups by continuing to use as a standard for measure only European-American values and constructs. If we are to truly embrace the 21st century through advocating for a culturally pluralistic school system, each stakeholder must participate as an active and valued member of the necessary paradigmatic changes.

Any belief that culture, like disability, has an objectively discernible nature is unequivocally false. The MAC, however, is based on a benign neglect of world views from which individual perceptions are sanctioned and socially significant decisions are made. The limitations of this "tool" do more to promote stigmatizing images of ethnic stereotypes than eradicate them. The presence or absence of a given behavior is knowable to professionals without the MAC checklist. Ultimately, it is not solely a lack of knowledge that drives professional theory and practice. It is more significantly a lack of understanding about the interplay of cultural orientations, children as independent decision makers, and shared ownership of educational purpose, that demands our immediate attention. Professionals are charged to first understand that we live in a race-conscious rather than raceless society that has been inundated with hegemonic forces that dictate how professionals should perceive and act on a catalogue of "school behaviors" (Delpit, 1995; Hilliard, 1991; Smith, 1997). They are further charged to reconstruct paradigms that are culturally relevant, responsive, and affirming. Such efforts are not achieved by the MAC.

The author's efforts in designing the MAC may have been well intentioned, but, it is the potential impact of its use that must not be allowed. While the author recently asked the publisher to remove the instrument from its shelves, the instrument has been circulating in the educational community for over two years. There are school districts and service providers who are utilizing its negative explanations about diverse children and youth. Six generations after slavery, the lives and educational futures of some children are still threatened by uninformed judgments and conspicuously held beliefs about human value. These social constructions have little to do with preparing productive members of our society. It is up to the entire educational community to redefine the meaning and utility of our shared humanity such that we empower rather than demean our uniquely collective and individual differences. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the educational community to work together to reconstruct pedagogical efforts to serve all children and youth. The MAC will not assist us in such endeavors.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

GWENDOLYN WEBB-JOHNSON is an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

FOCUS ON CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE EDUCATION OF ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS

HELEN BESSENT BYRD
Professor, Norfolk State University

This section of Multiple Voices *capitalizes on the oral tradition common to many cultures. In this tradition, history and cultural values are transmitted from one generation to another by word of mouth. In some cultures, a specific person carries the responsibility of learning and telling the history of the people.*

"In the Oral Tradition" presents interviews with eminent scholars and community leaders in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional learners. These "elders" of the education community share their perspectives and prognostications on pertinent issues.

Helen Bessent Byrd, Professor, Special Education Department, Norfolk State University, Norfolk, Virginia, the feature editor, conducted the interviews. The interviewees are: Drs. Phil Chin, Esther Leung, and Jeanette Misaka

Dr. Phil Chinn is a professor in the Division of Special Education and Director of the Center for Multicultural Education at California State University, Los Angeles. Dr. Esther Leung is a professor in the Special Education Department at Eastern Kentucky University, Lexington. Dr. Jeanette Misaka is a Professor of Special Education at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

Byrd: What is the impact that generational differences have on education issues? For example, parent participation, perception of disabilities, and so forth. Can you identify any barriers and any ameliorators?

Misaka: Well, I think some of the barriers I see are funding, time, parents not understanding how to navigate the educational system and professionals not having enough information abou the Asian/Pacific Island cultures to interact effectively with the parents/families. Other cultural barriers are the family's perception of the child's disability; its effects on how the family handles the situation at home and in the community.

Generational differences must also be addressed. The Asian American families who have lived in America for several generations will understand the educational system better than immigrant and refugee families who are first generation in America. The latter families may need more assistance in navigating the educational system. Then there are some Asian families who are assigned here for shorter durations as part of their business employment. If they have a school aged child with a disability, who speaks no English, and the family plans to return to their homeland within a few years, this child's IEP may need special considerations to accommodate his future transition plans. I know of a Japanese family with a child diagnosed as autistic. He is currently in a public school program but he speak no English. His parents speak to him only in Japanese at home because they plan to go back to Japan in a few years and they feel it would be too confusing for their child to learn English. This situation has been a challenging one for his IEP team to resolve.

Leung: For our first generation, the cultural background has a lot of impact on parent participation. I can speak only for the Asians, specifically the Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and a lot of Vietnamese. Generally Asian people who are influenced by the Chinese culture, have a lot of respect, trust, and reverence for education and educators. Asian parents generally don't interfere with what teachers do. This is not because they don't want to participate, but it's just respect and noninterference. I can speak from my own experience. Sometimes they see things that don't quite go right. Out of respect, even if they know better, they seldom interfere. From the teachers' Western perspective, parents don't participate. This is often misunderstood. However, parents could be encouraged to participate; people of their own ethnic background who know better can explain circumstances, guidelines, and expectations to them. I've been explaining quite a bit to parents to encourage them to go and talk to their child's teachers. Teachers will respond. They may not quite understand the child. The parent needs to go and talk with the teacher.

Perception of disabilities are not the same for all Asians. There could be different responses to different disabilities. One reaction that people generally talk about, when they consider cultural differences, is that Asians perceive that the disability is due to fate or destiny. You take care of your own. It is accepted so whatever they have, whether they have disabilities or not, it is your honor to take care of them. If you have a bright child, a high achiever, it is your fate. It's your own blood. You take care of the child. On one extreme, some people look at disability as a face of the god, a sign of favor. But a mentally retarded child or a child with mental illness would not be looked upon with favor. A person with mental retardation is looked down upon. It's also considered as a shame. Therefore you do not talk about it. You do not go to the schools and say, "help my child." You want to cover it. You want to mask it. And sometimes school personnel collaborate in the denial. There are also people who because of superstition, look upon mental retardation as bad luck. There is some supernatural or bad spirit trying to affect them, and through their child will bring bad luck to them or powers against them. In this situation, the supernatural power is supposed to be working against the parents or especially the mother, or the mother may think that it's against the father. This child brings bad luck to the father or in superstitious terms, the evil forces use the child to bring disgrace or heartache or loss or damage to the family's personal life. So these children could be treated very harshly. Not many people would talk about it. However, these traditional beliefs and practices need to be understood. Parents adhering to these values would ill treat their child, not show any love, and always let the child know that the child brings bad luck to the family. The first kind of rejection would create behavior problems. Disability may have occurred at the beginning or maybe be created because of this kind of treatment.

Chin: My answers are based on Asian Pacific Americans. There are vast differences between Asian and Pacific Americans. The two groups are grouped together for convenience for the census bureau for federal government statistics. I happen to be both Asian and Pacific American, and I'm part Hawaiian and part Chinese as well. So I can respond a little to both groups. It's very much a part of the stereotyping that we expect one response regarding both groups. There are a lot of intra group differences among Asians. There are tremendous differences based on such factors as economic background and the generational differences you're asking about. Over 60% of the Asians in the United States are immigrants. When you and I first began working together more than twenty-five years ago, that was not the case. Back then most individuals were born and raised in this country and were relatively acculturated into Western society. So there are vast differences between these groups during the earlier years and today.

In the last few years, the quotas on Asian immigrants have relaxed. Now we're seeing massive numbers of Asians coming into this country. Consequently we have many first generation Asian Americans who tend to hold very strongly to traditional Asian values. Among some of the Southeast Asians, there have been two waves of the same ethnic groups — the first wave in the mid-1970's and the second wave followed. The first wave was the people in government who were politicians and people from the upper middle class and middle class who were educated for the most part. Whereas in the second wave, many of these individuals lacked formal education. Some of them never have been in school before. And so with the less educated, you have considerable differences from the educated group. When you look at this, it is important to understand that the Asians in general need help.

Traditional Asians tend to be highly superstitious. As individuals become increasingly more acculturated and each successive generation becomes more acculturated in Western society some of these superstitions begin to fall by the wayside. So what you see is that when you are looking at generational differences, you may have first generation individuals who are now into the country who hold fast to the superstitions. Then there are people whose parents were born in this country, in some cases whose grandparents were born in this country, and who have been educated in this country as were their parents, for whom some of the superstitions have fallen by the wayside. An example is in terms of perception towards disability.

One of my colleagues related a story about a Southeast Asian family who lived off the land as they worked their way across the country into a refugee camp and eventually over to this country. The father of this family related that the family ended up having a child with a physical disability in one leg. The father confessed to a counselor that as the family was living off the land and working their way to a refugee camp, one day the father hid behind a bush with a rock in hand. He threw the rock at a bird in an attempt to kill it so his family could eat it. He succeeding in hitting the bird, but the rock hit the bird's leg and apparently broke it. The bird was able to limp off a little bit, finally became airborne, and escaped. This injury sustained by the right leg of the bird was visited upon the child. The father is convinced to this day and no amount of counseling has been able to dissuade him from his perception that his son's impairment was retribution for the sin of trying to kill the bird. And the family carries with it this tremendous feeling of guilt that they are responsible for the disability of the child. Very often patients from traditional backgrounds feel that their family problems are theirs to solve on their own. And they consider the advent of a child with a disability as something shameful. Because of that, they are less prone to expose their plight, and they conceal the disability of the child. Some of these parents have even sheltered the child in the home without the authorities ever knowing that the child has a disability. Even if the child ends up at the school, in some cases parents become more reluctant to express their feeling because having a child with a disability is such a shameful thing for them. Now, these are values among traditional families. Understand that many Asian families are very acculturated where the parents are very much involved in parent organizations and in the schools. And not all immigrant families fit the stereotype described earlier. There is a danger in stereotyping.

Byrd: Would you discuss IDEA requirements as they relate to assessment devices in a native language, testing, parent participation, etc. Would you comment on the IDEA legislation?

Leung: The IDEA requirements of using the native language and an interpreter if necessary seeks to eliminate cultural bias and empowers parents to participate. Often the empowerment is not there, but the intent is there. The requirements are welcome because some Asian parents tend not to want to participate, and this legislation urges them to participate. It's a good thing that they can gradually learn that it is the policy. It is good to get them involved. The requirements regarding native languages and so on would certainly lessen misidentification. It's not overidentification, but the underidentification of Asian and Pacific Islanders that could be a major problem because of the stereotype that they are okay. The model minority notion often results in failure to identify emotional problems and adjustment problems. And then there is the issue of the major language. I know of many instances where children who don't speak English are misidentified as mentally retarded and sent to special education classes. All of these incidents have strong implications.

Chin: I will focus on my own perceptions in the area of parent participation. I serve on the California State Commission for Special Education. California is the largest state of the union. It is the most diverse state in the union. Over 60% of our students are students of color, and we have large numbers of Latino students and African-American students in particular who have been placed in special education classes. And there are probably more Asian students than most other states that have been placed in special education programs just by the sheer numbers. There are more Asians in this state than African Americans. There is also a fair number of Native Americans.

Until this year, out of 15 regular members of the aforementioned commission, there were only two regular commission members who were individuals of color. We had two student members, one Latino and one African American. This year, out of the 15 regular members of the commission, I am the only person of color. This is appalling. When the issue of ethnic representation was raised, the response was there is nothing in IDEA regulation requirements for the climate that specifies the ethnic composition of the commission. It stipulates that there must be parents involved, and different function groups (i.e., advocacy organizations, teacher preparation programs, etc.) must be represented on the state commission. Asians are underrepresented in special education programs, and they may very well have ended up with an Asian who knew nothing about relevant issues regarding students of color in special education. It's absolutely appalling that the IDEA does not have a requirement that some specific degree of ethnic representation be appointed to the state commission.

One of the areas that I have been involved in well over ten years on the commission is the area of support of representation of students of color. Dr. Alfredo Artilies from UCLA and I made a two-hour presentation to the commission on the disproportionate placement of children of color in special education. More minority people need to be aware of and chosen for membership on various state boards, agencies, and legislative committees.

Misaka: I really think its great that IDEA requires that testing should be done in the native language of the child when found to be needed and it mandates the use of multiple assessment tools to measure the child's strengths and weaknesses. This allows formal and informal tests, parent interviews, etc., to be considered in planning and implementing the IEP. Picking the most appropriate measures for the individual child is critical. One drawback of the IDEA '97 appears to be an increase not decrease in our special educators' paperwork. This will create time problems for the teachers and administrators.

Byrd: How well are the schools serving the limited-English-proficient students? How are we responding to members of the limited-English-proficient students population? What progress do you see being made and what might be done?

Misaka: Though the process is very slow in developing, I see efforts being made to improve the situation. This is encouraging. In larger cities where there are larger populations of Asian students with disabilities, one would likely find more qualified teachers to work with this population. However, in less densely populated areas, qualified teachers for LEP and ESL Asian students are still very scarce and/or non-existent. Here again, may be a funding and recruitment issue, as well as inserving the teachers currently employed. I have seen teachers who are truly professional and who go the extra mile to provide appropriate services to their students. Take for example, the teacher working with the Japanese student I mentioned earlier. She has considered the parents' future plans of returning to Japan. She had the parents give her some instructional sentences in Japanese that she could use with the child to initially start teaching him. The parents were very pleased to be asked and they frequently volunteer now in the classroom to learn ways to support the teacher's efforts when the child is at home. Building home to school relationships are important. Some Asian parents may be reluctant to "interfere" with the authority of the teacher. They feel that teachers have been trained with knowledge and skills to work with their students with disabilities and therefore, rely on them to fulfill their professional responsibilities. The more assimilated parents know that when they asked to participate, it's a collaborative endeavor. Teachers should recognize these generational differences as they interact with Asian/Asian American and Pacific Island families.

Chin: Over the years there have been increases in attempts to address the needs of linguistically diverse students. However, a big problem today is a retreat in terms of appropriate services. This past spring, California voters made Proposition 227, the law, which is in essence going to eliminate bilingual education in the state. And there seems to be momentum to continue this movement nationally so that the federal government stops funding bilingual education and essentially eliminates bilingual education programs. Proposition 187 (the anti-immigrant legislation), Proposition 209 (the anti-affirmative action legislation), and now Proposition 227 reflect a very dangerous trend in California. There are efforts to move this agenda forward nationally. While California now has one year of English immersion for limited-English-proficient students, that is going to be all that is available to students; this is cause for great concern because the research indicates that students do not develop linguistic skills that are sufficient to carry them through academics in one year. They need five to seven years of training before they are really proficient enough to understand and use English, the language of academics. The implications of Proposition 227 for children with disabilities are uncertain. There are ways to get around it but action would have to be initiated by parents. And whether there are parents that are informed enough, educated enough, pro-active enough to do the things that are necessary for their children is at issue. The critical question is whether the state's activists have an anti-minority, anti-immigrant agenda. As I've stated, over 60% of the children in the schools are now of color and within the next couple of years 50% of the state population will be people of color. Some think this population shift will be perceived as the onset of a power shift and feared by white Americans who are proffering laws to "protect" themselves by denying access to services to people of color.

Leung: Here in this region a lot of schools don't have ESL services. So kids are forced to learn English and for some bright ones, they pick up the language very quickly even though they may suffer from initial problems. But for those who are not that bright, the perceptions that they are poor students, they are stupid could tend to live long. A child could be very shy, not participating. Sometimes teachers say they are quiet or shy and should not be forced to interact, not knowing the issue of limited-English-proficiency. The other extreme of misidentification sometimes occurs. You have an autistic child that's not speaking, and teachers will say this child is from a non-English speaking family. This child is in ESL classes for several years before it is recognized that the child is misplaced.

Byrd: Do special programs that entail a pullout type delivery model serve students well? Why do these programs sometimes fail and what can we do to make them work well?

Leung: As a whole, the pullout program is not welcomed by the Asian parents. Children, too, are not as likely to be identified for placement in special classes because they tend to be quiet. Even if they have behavior problems, it's the kind of behavior problems that are more internal rather than external. However, these programs are not all bad. Why do they sometimes fail? Generally the teachers fail. The programs themselves fail. A lot of times children fail to achieve, and they are in special education classes because teachers lost sight of the general curriculum. They focus on those basic skills or isolated skills and fail to help students connect to the general curriculum. So, Asian families tend not to favor a pullout program. However, they tolerate the program because their children will not be ridiculed. In special education, teachers tend to be more nurturing and caring.

Misaka: It depends on the individual needs of the student and his/her family. I feel that maintaining the continuum of various service delivery models is important to meet those needs. What I have observed is not whether one service delivery is better than the other, but who, the individual educator or team, is in charge of the program. Their professional competencies dictate the success of the program.

Byrd: What focus should be added in preservice teacher education to adequately accommodate the diverse student population in general and particularly the Asian and Pacific Islander learners? What should we be doing in teacher preparation?

Misaka: Preservice programs need to emphasize specifically delinated competencies for working with culturally diverse students and their families. Content should include how to select tests and adapt curriculum materials that would be appropriate and how to attain information from parents or community resources that would be helpful. One class in multicultural education is not sufficient. Multicultural content should be infused into all aspects of the teacher training program, including first hand experiences in working with culturally diverse populations, if possible. First hand experience is invaluable. I realize that this may not be possible in some school districts the where there are no or limited minority students.

Preservice teacher recruitment of Asian/Pacific Islanders and other minorities would be helpful to the field of special education. The recruitment and training of bilingual paraeducators, who assist the special educators, would also be very helpful. Preservice teacher education programs must continue to seek out the most qualified candidates and ensure that they leave the program with specifically delineated professional competencies needed to serve all students with disabilities and their families.

Leung: Children behave differently because behavior is driven by the value system or cultural conduct codes. Some teachers fail to understand this fact. And another thing that teachers should know is that there is tremendous diversity within any cultural group. In fact, cultural value and behavior are always tempered. The purity of it is impacted by generation — first generation, second generation, etc. It depends on how long a family has been in America and where in America the family lives. Do they live close to their group, or are they integrated early on, and therefore get acculturated quite fast and extensively? Or what is their socioeconomic level? Families of wealth tend to be Americanized quicker. If you look at any minority group, individuals who have gone to school here in America are more like the mainstream than those who got most of their education somewhere else. Also gender is a factor, too. Females tend to get acculturated more quickly than males. What I'm saying is that you need to understand that there are many variables and you can't stereotype.

Why is it difficult for children who are from first generation families? Because of the hidden curriculum involved. What I mean by hidden curriculum is what is generally expected culturally in the schools. School culture maybe very different. The child who goes to school must learn how to interact with the teachers and peers. For example, in high school some cultures are not open in terms of boy/girl relationships. The special education curriculum, like a regular education curriculum has a lot to do with mainstream culture, and teachers need to understand that. The hidden curriculum is that children not only must learn the regular school curriculum with everyone else, they also have to learn a whole other set of values that undergird that curriculum such as the nuances of verbal and nonverbal communication.

Chin: Professional accrediting bodies are now requiring understanding of cultural perspectives in all the teacher education programs. We need to continue to strengthen that, and there continue to be too many faculty members who make no attempt to include the information in their own teaching. What they want to do is bring a professor of color into their classrooms to address the issues in one class. In this way, the content is not infused through the curriculum. The faculty members need to make sure that they themselves have an understanding, and full comprehension of the issues of diversity, such that it will be truly infused throughout each of their classes. The Asians now are the fastest growing minority group in the country. The last two census periods have indicated vast growth of Asians. They now comprise over 7% of the population and are growing. There's a tendency to overlook Asians because a lot of people have misconceptions of Asians and Pacific Americans. One of our own CEC administrators told me while I worked at headquarters that all his Asian students were gifted. The individual insisted that all Asians persons are gifted. This is dangerous because the reality is that there are some groups of Asians where their level of poverty exceeds the poverty of Latinos and African Americans, particularly among some of the Southeast Asian groups where many live in abject poverty. Some have never been in school before. So there are varied views of education among these families. While you see the academic achievement level, the socioeconomic level, and the per capita earning of Asians tending to be, among the highest, the individual problems of different subgroups are obscured by the overall reporting. There is a disproportionately large number of native Hawaiians and other Asian groups as well who are in special education classes of Hawaii.

We talk about disproportionate numbers of African Americans and in some instances Latinos in some states. No one tends to mention the Hawaiians. Beth, Harry, and I are making this situation known. People need to understand that Asian-American students are not always gifted. It's very problematic that Asians aren't even considered a minority worth mentioning in some states. Usually, one minority group is the focus in a geographic area. Most often it is the African Americans, frequently the Latinos, and sometimes both groups. Sometimes there is little or no effort to recruit Asians and Latinos to the teacher education faculty in some states. This is a mistake. I'm not saying that it is not critical to recruit African Americans when they comprise the largest minority of that particular state. But when you have a total void of representation of Latinos and Asians, that condition has to be addressed.

Byrd: What do you see as some other issues that should be dealt with in serving exceptional learners, particularly those of the Asian and Pacific Islander American population? Are there any critical issues that we might have missed?

Chin: I already mentioned to you the matter of intragroup overrepresentation. People may be unaware of this disproportionality because the United States Office of Civil Rights data do not reveal that the native Hawaiians are overrepresented in special education. Rather, it is evident that Asians and Pacific Americans in general are greatly underrepresented. Since the data on Asian Americans and Pacific Americans are aggregated, the overrepresentation of the latter group in programs for persons with disabilities is obscured. Attention needs to be drawn to this issue, and intervention strategies need to be designed and implemented. These data reveal that those that tend to be on the bottom socioeconomically tend to have problems, not only in terms of health, but also in terms of their disproportionate placement in special education classes.

Leung: People must realize that we have children with disabilities. The symptoms or characteristics may look more subdued. But once again it is important to know and differentiate disabilities versus cultural differences.

ENHANCING VERBAL SKILLS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH POETRY: A VALUABLE TOOL FOR SPEECH PATHOLOGISTS

STACY PRYOR M.A., CCC-SLP
Speech Pathologist
Akron Public Schools, Akron, OH

Stepping
When I step my feet
Say look at me
I'm beautiful.
My feet talk and people
cheer and clap.

BY DAHNESIA, 2ND GRADE

The role of the speech pathologist is changing. No longer are we removing students from the classroom to provide speech/language services in small, isolated rooms. We are going into the classroom working directly with classroom teachers to promote a more natural environment for learning. As a speech pathologist, I work with students with disabilities and those not identified with disabilities, but who demonstrate subtle linguistic problems or require assistance in progressing linguistically to higher levels. Subtle language disorders may be defined as having a language problem that may not be identified on standardized tests but is noticeable in conversational speech. A student with a subtle language disorder may use sentences decreased in length and contextual clarity. Since speech pathologists are working with an increasing number of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the traditional method in which we deliver services must change to respond to each student's leaning style and experience (Grossman, 1998).

One of my primary goals as a speech pathologist is to improve verbal skills. These may include increasing vocabulary and articulation skills, sentence structure, and grammar. Years ago when I began working in the classroom with students with language, behavior, and/or at risk for academic failure, I discovered that approximately 90% were African-American students. My role was to increase verbalization skills so that the students could converse on a variety of topics in a variety of settings in more appropriate ways. I used a more traditional approach such as the drill method which required the student to produce the correct response for a certain percentage of the time. In addition, I used modeling, expansion, and elaboration.

Through the years, my evaluation of students' progress revealed: a) slow progress, b) limited generalization, c) low motivation, and d) sense of failure. Collectively, I also observed boredom. As a result, I modified my technique and attended workshops on cultural diversity that focused on African-Americans, in which I learned that there are differences within the African-American population. There also exist many patterns of behavior that can be used to enhance the learning process of African-American youth. For example, many African-American students focus for longer periods of time and learn best when visual cues were presented. I also discovered that it is part of the African and African-American history and tradition to participate in a call response form of communication. In a call response interaction, both parties talk and both parties listen (Dandy, 1991). The speaker has the responsibility to issue the call, and the listener has the obligation to respond in some sort of way (via movement, i.e, nodding and in my experience repeating). Logically, many African-American students who were reprimanded for moving or talking during class were demonstrating a natural form of expression that is part of their culture. These students have had consistent experiences with rhythmic activities such as rapping (Dandy, 1991). To work with them, I combined words together rhythmically in the form of poetry. I found poetry helps some African-American students with speaking, listening, and imitating. What I realized was that I needed to combine traditional methods with a more culturally responsive technique. Poetry became a valuable tool for me as a speech pathologist. The purpose of this article is to describe the use of poetry as a teaching tool for improving verbal skills.

BENEFITS OF POETRY TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Specific characteristics of poetry make it a good strategy to help improve academic and communication skills of many African-American students with linguistic and behavioral problems. For instance, poetry can cover a wide range of topics and genres from humorous to controversial; it can also be brief. Poetry is very rhythmic and that tends to capture and sustain children's attention. In my experience, after reciting a poem, children's natural talents are exposed. Some children sing the verses and others make up the movements. In the end, poetry increases vocabulary, reading, writing, spelling, expressive and receptive language, and cognitive skills.

As a professional, poetry writing is very therapeutic. Through poetry I encouraged my students to follow their dreams and discover their talents. I found different ways to make my students laugh, play, and learn. Even though my students did not understand the joy of poetry writing, they were motivated to try. This motivation improved their language and academic skills. In addition, behaviors that prevented learning progress were reduced.

To buttress my point, I have selected the following examples:

> **Case #1** One student that I worked with was diagnosed as developmentally delayed. She is very withdrawn and quiet. I will call her Kelly. Kelly did not engage in much conversation inside or outside of the classroom. I introduced her to poetry in the form of storytelling using people that were very close to her. Kelly could not read or write well prior to me working with her. She had difficulty reading and writing the poetry but, she enjoyed drawing; therefore, I wrote the poem based on information that she provided for me. Her pride in her illustrations increased her confidence and self-esteem to the point where she began interacting with peers and teachers. Kelly entered the poem that we wrote together in the Young Author's Contest, and her poem was selected to be read at a luncheon.
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> **Case #2** I worked with two students who we will call Tasha and Latisha. These two students exhibited severe behavioral disorders. Tasha and Latisha wrote poems that were eventually displayed in the administration building for Akron Public Schools during better Speech and Hearing month.
>
> **Case #3** I worked with a little boy who was diagnosed as having a severe production disorder (stuttering); I will call him Dennis. Dennis exhibited secondary characteristics such as facial grimaces and body jerking. I used poetry to demonstrate the melodic and rhythmic patterns of speech.
>
> **Case #4** I used poetry with a little girl that we will call Keisha and a boy that we will call Keith. Keith had articulation errors as well as errors in grammar and dialect. Through modeling and repetition, I was able to demonstrate more appropriate and accurate speech patterns by allowing these students to hear and practice correct speech patterns.

WHAT I DID IN MY SESSIONS

A typical session would include the following sequential components:

1. A. **Review of the Last Session:** I would ask the children to tell me some things that they remembered about the last session.
   B. **Introduction of New Topic/Subject:** I used a typical introduction; for example, "I've noticed your interest in dancing so today we are going to talk about dancing."
   C. **Using Motivational Chants:** A motivational chant is done to promote positive reconditioning. I believe this boosts a student's self-esteem and in turn fosters learning. Children need to believe in themselves; they need to believe they can learn. I designed motivational chants to get students excited about themselves which in turn gives them a positive attitude for learning. For example, I did an activity on nutrition and the motivational chant was:

I'll take care of my body
From my head to my feet
For as the saying goes
I am what I eat.
I'll take care of my body
For, I have much to give
I'll eat the food I should
So a healthy life I'll live.

I write the chants on the board. Next I recite it. I read a line then students repeat the line in a very enthusiastic and energetic voice. This is a cheer in their honor.

D. **Discussion about the Chant.** I discuss with the children how the poem applies to each student. For instance, I might ask, "How do you take care of your body?", or "What do you have to give to your school, community, or family?"

II. **Begin writing poem.** In this case the topic is nutrition. I reinforce the fact that there is no wrong or right way to write a poem.

A. **Brainstorming.** Students are encouraged to think of as many words to describe the topic of discussion. All words and ideas are put on the board without correcting or criticizing suggestions. This encourages students to take ownership of their work.

B. **Select an open liner.** I write an open liner on the board to help students start writing their poems. For example, "Being healthy is..." The students start filling in the missing words and completing sentences until they have used most of the words on the board. At this point, it does not matter if the poem is not perfect or does not make sense completely because corrections will come later. However, I only correct academic errors such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation. I do not change the style or context because I want to encourage creativity by allowing the students to create the poem.

III. **Fine Tuning.** My students and I engage in a reciprocal question and answer period. I have discovered through research that African-American children like to participate in a communicative setting that allows for a call and response for; it is a natural part of their culture (Dandy, 1991). Through poetry, I issue the call by reciting a line, and my students respond by repeating the line. Often students would sway or tap their feet, which is also part of the response. I fine tune poems not to make them perfect or to impose my own ideas on the children. Fine tuning affords me the opportunity to use techniques that will increase classroom performance. The techniques include:

A. **Expansion.** I take what the student says and expand on it. For example, the student might say, "Being healthy is eating vegetables." I respond by saying, "Being healthy is eating green vegetables."

B. **Elaboration.** I take what the student says and instead of expanding on the student's comment, I probe the students with "wh" questions to allow students to elaborate or give meaningful details to their responses. It looks like this:

Student: "Being healthy is eating good food."

Teacher: "Okay what's good food?"

Student: "Vegetables"

Teacher: "What kind of vegetables?"

Student: "Green vegetables."

Teacher: "Then we can say, being healthy is eating green vegetables."

C. **Association.** The students and I observe and review the board to arrange the words in categories by similarities. For example, all edible things may be grouped together. This helps children develop the skills of writing logically and sequentially. It helps with reading and memory skills that will improve classroom performance.

IV. **Use illustrations and movement to demonstrate the poem.** This again allows students the opportunity to utilize their own learning styles and talents. I find movement, dance, and/or illustrations helped students to stay focused and motivated over time.

V. **Review chant and poem.** I discussed at least two ways to use newly learned information. I gave my students questions to ponder such as, "See if you can eat from all four food groups tomorrow at lunch." I sent a letter home to the parents at the beginning of the week that described topics that may be discussed that week. Teachers also received a copy and ways to incorporate topics into their lessons.

SUMMARY

Poetry promotes good language skills in a nonthreatening and positive framework. It recognizes language differences not only disorders. Poetry is brief and rhythmic; therefore, students stayed focus. Poetry allows students to utilize their own leaning styles and natural form of expression which promoted carryover to other topics. Poetry used along with any subject taught in school; and it can be easily incorporated into any lesson and used along with any subject taught in school. Finally, poetry takes what the student knows and expands on it; to a larger extent, students become active learners. I consider poetry to be my talent, and I enjoy sharing this talent with my students. As a speech pathologist, I encourage the use of poetry because it reduces the boredom of traditional techniques.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stacey Pryor, M.A., CCC-SLP, is a speech pathologist in the Akron Public Schools, Akron, Ohio.

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS IN ETHNIC MINORITY PUBLICATIONS: A REBUTTAL TO SPOONER, ET AL.

DR. LAURA ZIONTS
Central Michigan University

In the 1997 issue of *Multiple Voices*, Spooner, Algozzine, Thurlow, Obiakor, and Heller published an article titled, "Ethnic Minority Scholars Writing for Professional Publication: From Myth to Reality." The article is a primer for professional publication, directed to people of color. The authors approach the topic by addressing several myths about writing for professional publication and by providing guidelines for how to become more effective writers.

The myth that needs to be addressed is that professionals of color lack writing ability, self-confidence and organizational skills more so than their white counterparts. Spooner, et al.'s assumptions are based on the notion that faculty of color appear to publish less often than other faculty in academia. However, the authors fail to substantiate this supposition. Moreover, their article is faulty in two respects: first, their assumption is not grounded in evidence; and second, the tone and content of the sections that address cultural issues seem to reinforce the stereotype that people of color are not academically equal to their white colleagues. This rebuttal will attempt to illustrate the myths about people of color that are present in the Spooner, et al. article, and to stimulate debate within the profession about these assumptions and stereotypes, even when the people presenting them have the best intentions.

Let me begin with two positive aspects of the article. First, the concept of cultural taxation is real and alive. Second, the information presented by the authors with regard on how to write for professional publications provides quality advice. It would, without doubt, assist a new professional or faculty member, regardless of the person's race or ethnicity, who desires to publish.

Kudos aside, the purpose of this rebuttal is to address through respectful, professional discourse the advancement of myths given the appearance of facts. Left unquestioned, such "facts" reinforce the notion of "dysconscious racism" (King, 1991). Dysconscious racism occurs when society absorbs certain tenets regarding people of color into its "collective conscience" and therefore advances biased ideas and actions without the realization that what they are doing is based in racism. For example, the authors themselves write that "minority scholars are underrepresented..." (p. 14, paragraph two). Underrepresentation in the field may alone explain an apparent underrepresentation in the professional literature. It is not the same as saying that those scholars who are in colleges and universities are producing less than their white peers. The authors of the article probably had no knowledge that they were writing a controversial piece, a fact which speaks volumes.

American society (including people of color) has "bought into" the notion that people of color are in some way achieving less than the majority culture. A first reaction to an article such as this may be to defend faculty members of color: to pose alternative explanations to Spooner et al.'s, who said that the lack of professional writing among faculty members of color is due to inexperience, lack of organizational skills, and need for mentorship in the area of writing. The reading audience attempts to ask why the hypothesis might be true before considering whether Spooner, et al.'s supposition is accurate. It is the contention of this author that these questions must be asked in reverse order whenever reading professional articles. Despite the many possible factors that *could* have an impact on a professor of color's (or any other faculty member's) opportunities to publish in mainstream professional journals, it must be maintained that people of color are achieving equally until the opposite is proven. While each question bears importance and deserves to be addressed, in this case, for example, no evidence is provided that Spooner et al.'s supposition is true. Therefore, it does not seem wise to expend personal and professional energies creating explanations for a problem that may not exist. The concept of dysconscious racism could explain what can be interpreted as the well-intentioned and genuine attempt by the authors of the article to mentor persons of color.

However, it is the responsibility of the reading audience to insist on accountability from professional writing, regardless of the topic or reputation of the writers.

Spooner, et al. make sweeping generalizations about the talents of professors of color by proclaiming that "we have found that barriers that impede the success of ethnic minority faculty in professional writing can be overcome" (p. 14). What is the exact nature of the barriers the authors indicate can be overcome? Again, an initial reaction to this statement is that perhaps the erroneous notions encountered by professors of color in their professional endeavors are what need to be overcome. The authors patronize professors of color in the article when they indicate that "there are successful scholars and teachers from diverse cultural and ethnic groups who can become mentors; there are also Anglo-American colleagues who can brighten the way" (p. 19). Their advice includes "writing is hard work" (p. 19) and "ask friends outside of work to read what you have written. If they cannot tell you what it is about..." (p. 19). Minimally, people of color would have completed dissertations that demonstrated these behaviors. Although there is a brief (quasi) disclaimer, "...our purpose is to assist and encourage those who are still struggling..." (found four pages into the article, p. 16), one wonders why the focus couldn't have served equally well white professors who are experiencing problems writing, or tenured faculty of any color who have not published anything since receiving tenure (for example, see Spooner & Heller, 1993, which offers similar writing advice without reference to race).

What's most disturbing about the logic employed in the article is that the very publication of the article as it is, lacking in substantiation, implies to the majority culture that once hired, a faculty member of color will be less proficient in his or her position than a person from the majority culture, unless they receive help or mentoring in the skills required for the job. This hypothesis calls to mind the jaded societal perspective about people of color rebutted nearly three decades ago by Barratz and Barratz (1970). The common belief at that time was that many African-American parents could be taught how to be capable parents to their children if given the proper education and mentorship from members of the majority culture. Barratz and Barratz attempted to debunk the myth of "cultural deprivation." Sadly, this myth is still present in our society in different forms...no matter the level of education earned by people of color.

In addition to the myths about people of color advanced by this article, there are issues of content that reflect the majority culture's tendency to elevate their own set of values and practices above those of other cultural groups. In the section entitled, "Perspectives from Minority Scholars" (p. 18), it is asserted that there are three major points about professional writing to be considered by people of color: (a) "there is a dearth of information about the positive experiences of people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in our media, textbooks, journals, newsletters, and newspapers"; (b) "stories with a minority perspective cannot be told accurately unless professionals with minority experiences attempt to tell them"; and, (c) "telling these stories through discourse without accurate written records does a great disservice to those whose stories are being told." Each of these three points gives rise to debate.

The essence of the first point ("there is a dearth of information about the positive experiences of people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in our media, textbooks, journals, newsletters, and newspapers") has been explained by writers of color in public media (Pitts, 1997) and in academia (Stanfield, 1988). Both discuss the tightrope that authors of color must walk. For example, Pitts, a journalist for the *Detroit Free Press*, recently commented on the frustration and confusion faced by writers of color: by focusing too much of their work on issues related to race/ethnicity, they may be categorized as "radicals" or "cultural chauvinists" as opposed to focusing too little of their work on important issues of race/ethnicity, in which case they may be seen as trying to "neutralize" their skin color. The writer of color must struggle to find a balance between being perceived as, in Pitts' words, "too black or not black enough" (p. 1F).

Writers like Pitts and Stanfield raise the issue that the mass public resists the nondominant perspective, which makes Spooner, et al.'s first point seem simplistic. The reason behind the "dearth of information" may be important to explore before faculty members of color should become motivated to more often attempt mainstream publication in (multi)cultural issues. Is the dearth of information due to a paucity of submissions in culture-related issues, or is it due to resistance by reviewers for professional journals? Regardless of the possible, hypothetical rationalizations for the problem, the fact remains that there are little or no data to validate the problem. Until there are data, it is somewhat premature to discuss possible solutions (such as improving the writing abilities of professors of color).

Spooner, et al. later enumerate possible topics for research in special education that could be explored by people of color. It is insulting to be "enlightened" about the problems experienced by people of color in education where the primary reading audience consists of people who have their doctorate in the field.

The second point ("stories with a minority perspective cannot be told accurately unless professionals with minority experiences attempt to tell them"), makes the assumption that because a person is of color that they would necessarily become a spokesperson for their race/ethnicity in the special education system. It is based in the fallacy that a unified, monocultural perspective exists. If the authors were addressing an audience of white males who hold their doctorates, it is unlikely that audience would be encouraged to focus on issues of "whiteness" and "maleness" in their research. They would have carte blanche within the wide array of complex issues that comprise the field. The rationale by Spooner, et al. seems to disregard the consideration that a specialist in any issue is a specialist because they *choose to study, learn, and reflect carefully on a particular set of variables,* not simply because they were born into a race.

And what of the work of white professionals who have dedicated a large portion of their career energies to the study of multicultural issues? Several professionals in the field who are white (e.g., Ellie Lynch and Marcie Hanson) have produced solid studies and resources within the area of multicultural issues. It would appear elitist to infer that it *necessarily* follows that because information is researched by "people of white" it is of lower quality than writing by "people of color." It seems doubtful that Spooner, et al. would argue that their piece is less meaningful because only one of their group is "of color."

Thirdly, and most importantly, the idea that the oral tradition "does a great disservice, without written record, to those whose stories are being told" (p.18) is disturbing and, one might assert, reflects the mindset of the dominant society. For example, in one broad sweep, the authors suggest that with regard to the oral tradition, "written documents appear to be the most reliable" (p.18). Some cultures (e.g., Native Americans and African Americans) have conveyed their histories largely in the oral tradition. And most likely members of these cultures would find their sense of history and the manner in which it is communicated sufficient to their needs at the very least. They may perceive it to be rich with context, emphasis, and interpretation, and therefore believe that it transcends what could be recorded in mere written words. The authors' point seems to ignore the subjective "reliability" of the written accounts of American history that have been advanced over the years in our schools and in our society. Can the objectivity and worth of a culture's history truly be enhanced because it is recorded in the *written* word? Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, as is the perception of "reality." The form of language used to remember one's history (written, oral, or in some other form) only changes its appearance. The person recording the history impacts its reliability. The people learning from it determine its worth. The authors further state that, while simplistic, there is merit to the phrase "Talk is Cheap" (p.19). This entire line of discussion is a blatant disregard for the importance of how other cultures pass on information. Writing is important. For some cultures, talking is *more* important. This issue is not raised to minimize the importance of scholarship. It is to vigorously attack the contention of authors who argue that writing is the only reliable manner to disseminate who we are. Historical accounts of the Holocaust, the pogroms, and slavery have been documented in journals and texts. Their worth is unquestioned. Remembrances of the same events in history have been recounted around the all-day-dinner, during holidays, during moments of prayer...to share how a culture, a people, have survived and flourished. Accepting both is crucial if we are to truly learn to respect and cherish the diversity within our world.

The Spooner, et al. article presents biases that represent the majority culture perspective. The information about how to strengthen one's professional writing is, as suggested in the beginning of this rebuttal, worthwhile to anyone, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. The authors' intentions seem genuinely supportive, but that cannot excuse their error in ever trying to tie together the information they have to offer on professional writing with race and ethnicity. It is hoped that this discourse will be interpreted as an effort to stimulate dialogue among professionals, and as an effort to stay vigilant about recognizing the myths that are present in our society and in our field.

Through the publication of Spooner et al.'s article, people of color are being asked to believe that they need to be molded in order to fit within the majority expectations-a message disseminated through a journal expressly created to explore issues of diversity in education. None of us in the field or in society should be willing to accept such notions of inability related to members of any diverse group without closer examination, even when they are presented with the best intentions. To quote Pitts (1997), "It can be easy to lose yourself...to drown in the fuzz and static of competing agendas and dueling fears...There comes a certain freedom when you...choose to stop bearing the weight of other people's fallacies." (p. F1)

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Laura Zionts is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling and Special Education at Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant, MI.

PROFESSIONAL PUBLICATIONS OF ETHNIC MINORITY SCHOLARS: SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

FESTUS E. OBIAKOR
Emporia State University

FRED SPOONER
University of North Carolina, Charlotte

BOB ALGOZZINE
University of North Carolina, Charlotte

MARTHA THURLOW
University of Minnesota

H. WILLIAM HELLER
University of South Florida, St. Petersburg

Our article in the 1997 issue of *Multiple Voices* titled "Ethnic Minority Scholars Writing for Professional Publication: From Myth to Reality" was written with the best of intentions (Spooner, Algozzine, Thurlow, Obiakor, & Heller, 1997). We examined myths and misconceptions about publishing as suggested by our colleagues and provided necessary guidelines for becoming more effective in professional writing based on our collective years of editorial and mentoring experiences. One of the intricacies about writing is that it can be prone to multiple interpretations, some of which could be negative or positive. We are encouraged that our article has provided a tangible opportunity for professional discourse on the sacred issue of writing.

Our intention was not and will never be to engage in unconscious, conscious, or "dysconscious racism" against people of color. Our agenda was to inspire and stimulate critical thinking. We understand the controversial aspects of our piece, but we also understand how self-empowering or self-rewarding writing can be. In many colleges and universities, the predominate debate is whether teaching, scholarship, or service should be given top priority in continuing, tenuring, promoting, and rewarding faculty. In fact, the lack of commitment by colleges and universities to serve and build communities has been decried (Boyer, 1994). We have no doubt that people of color are as capable as their White counterparts in all areas of education. While we agree that historical burdens of racist exclusionary policies have done damage to the progress of people of color in higher education, we strongly believe it is imperative that minority scholars publish their works (Obiakor, Lomotey, & Rueda, 1997). The reasons are twofold: (a) to create truths and respond to inconsistencies, and (b) to advance career opportunities through self-pride and self-determination. In addition, we know that many cultures honor oral tradition. Though this tradition encourages cultural continuity, its historical longevity lends itself to more falsities than those preserved in written documents (Obiakor et al., 1997); and unfortunately, it is not a prominent source in professional development activities honored by colleges and universities across the country (Hensen, 1995). Again, our purpose was to offer guidelines, assistance, and help in meeting the challenges created by the continuing need for professional writing in academic careers.

There is enough data to suggest that achievements of ethnic minority numbers have not been positively and progressively highlighted in the literature (Ford, Bessent-Byrd, & Misaka, 1997; Ford, Obiakor, & Patton, 1995; Obiakor, 1994, Thomas & Alawiye, 1990). In the rebuttal, the author asks: "Is the dearth of information due to a paucity of submissions in culture-related issues, or is it due to resistance by reviewers for professional journals?" The author goes on to note that "regardless of the possible, hypothetical rationalizations for the problem, the fact remains that there are little or no data to validate the problem. Until there are data, it is somewhat premature to discuss possible solutions (such as improving the writing abilities of professors of color)." This argument is insulting and patronizing to ethnic minority scholars. It seems logical that underrepresentation in the field may be the result of underrepresentation in the literature. However, our collective years of editorial and mentoring experiences have shown that we receive fewer than expected manuscripts from people of color (Algozzine, Obiakor, & Spooner, 1997; Obiakor, Patton, Ford, Spooner, & Zigmond, 1992; Thurlow, Spooner, & Obiakor, 1998). If we go with the argument that all people publish equally, underrepresentation in the literature will not be a critical issue in today's general and special education. Ford and her associates (1997) confirmed this assertion in their well-researched paper entitled, "Contributions of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Ethnic Groups to Changing Paradigms in Special Education." In terms of scholarly publications, their investigation concluded that ethnic minority professional writings were limited in special education journals and other publications. This conclusion represents a justification for providing assistance to minority scholars. Another comes from the continuing interest of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and other professional organizations to support writing as a professional development activity among underrepresented populations.

In summary, we believe multiple voices generate multiple interpretations. It is counterproductive to assume that comments made by ethnic minorities cannot be replicated by people of different cultures. Most good works are works that can be generalized across settings and/or subjects. To assume that our comments are simplistic is to downplay the legitimacy of our intentions. It is also improper to assume that honest, well-meaning comments are patronizing. Assuming that honest and well-intended comments are patronizing sounds like mind-reading to us. We meant our statement that there are successful ethnic minority scholars, with many of whom we have worked and will continue to work. Our intention was not to "curse the darkness" with our writing — we wanted to "light the candles." The intriguing question should be, "Do we want to censor different voices, or do we want to increase multiple voices?" We support the latter. While race continues to matter in our nation (West, 1993), racism is not a construct that we should throw around loosely — it usually has devastating effects on people and society. We cannot solve prejudice by being prejudiced (Duvall, 1994). To this end, we must encourage multiple voices as different as they may seem not just through rhetoric but also through writing if we are truly opponents of exclusive policies. Our eyes must continue to be on the real prize.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

FESTUS E. OBIAKOR is a Professor in the Division of Psychology and Special Education at Emporia State University.

FRED SPOONER is an Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling, Special Education, and Child Development, College of Education, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

BOB ALGOZZINE is a Professor in the Department of Educational Administration, Research, and Technology, College of Education, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

MARTHA THURLOW is the Associate Director, National Center on Educational Outcomes, College of Education, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

H. WILLIAM HELLER is Professor and currently, Dean and Chief Executive Officer, University of South Florida at St. Petersburg.

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