

THE SPECIAL EDUCATION OF BLACK BOYS:  
AN ECOLOGICAL EXAMINATION

By

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## ABSTRACT

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This study examined school psychologists' awareness and beliefs about the various ecological factors that may contribute to the negative school and long-term social outcomes experienced by many Black boys. Guided by an ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and principles from attribution theory (Weiner, 1995; Graham, 1997), a conceptual model was created to examine school psychologists' knowledge about the outcomes related to Black boys, such as their disproportionate representation in special education placement and the causal attributions school psychologists' endorsed to explain such outcomes. Three hundred thirty eight school psychologists completed a 60-item on-line questionnaire. Findings indicated that school psychologists were knowledgeable about statistics related to outcomes for Black boys and perceived themselves to be knowledgeable about terminology relevant to sociological, historical, and political issues related to power and privilege. Participants in this study endorsed factors related to the *microsystem* (e.g. teacher-student relationship) and *exosystem* (e.g. special education eligibility processes) as explanations for the negative outcomes commonly experienced by Black boys. Relationships were also found between what school psychologists know about the outcomes and why they think the outcomes occur. Finally, Black school psychologists were found to be more knowledgeable about the outcomes for Black boys and they endorsed the *exosystem* (e.g. special education eligibility processes) and *macrosystem* (e.g. institutional racism) at a

higher rate when compared to White school psychologists. This study offers a unique and potentially significant contribution to the empirical literature in school psychology and special education, as it encourages school psychologists to examine and determine what students need through an ecological lens and to take an active role in transforming the negative school and long-term social outcomes commonly experienced by Black boys. The study concludes with specific suggestions for future directions in the training, research, and practice of school psychology.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation and my doctorate of philosophy to my family and the community where I was born and raised, Ithaca, N.Y.

To my little brothers, Fajhir & Eisah, your success in school and life means everything to me. Remember that you have a special responsibility to model and advocate for the young brothers in our community.

To my children, Eamon, Rohan, & Lochlan, thank you for three beautiful births and great sleeping habits during the course of my graduate school and early professional career. Your vivacious smiles and love for learning leave me in motherhood bliss on a daily basis. I love you to the moon and all stars!

To my husband, Liam, I'm grateful for our strength through stormy weather. I am enjoying raising these happy and healthy little people with you. Our commitment to support one another in achieving our dreams is working out well.

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To the Beverly J. Martin (BJM) Elementary School community, I thank you for being extraordinary human beings. As a BJM school psychologist, I come face-to-face with work directly linked to this dissertation topic. My experience at BJM has accentuated my passion for this work and my commitment to serving as an agent of social transformation. I believe in the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child". Thus, I am dedicated to serving our children, families, and community.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Black boys are represented disproportionately in many markers of poor school achievement, including school drop out, academic underachievement, suspensions and special education placement (Davis, 2003; Kunjufu, 1982; Kunjufu, 2005; McNally, 2003; NCES, 2003; Noguera, 1996; Smith, 2004). Current research indicates that fewer than 50% of Black boys in the United States graduate from high school (Kunjufu, 2005). Black students who are identified with a disability also have the lowest graduation rate of 36.2% when compared to all racial/ethnic groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). In addition, 75% of those who graduate with special education labels are found to be unemployed two years after graduation and 40% have been arrested (Losen & Orfield, 2001). Over 51% of inmates in state and federal male prisons are also Black (Sides, 1997).

#### The Scope of the Problem

In 1998, Black students were at the highest risk of receiving a disability label in schools, with a risk index of 14.28% compared to 13.10% for American Indians/Alaskan Natives, 12.10% for Whites, 11.34% for Hispanics, and 5.31% for Asians (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Harry & Klinger, 2006; Losen & Orfield, 2001). In 2003, Black students were at the second highest risk of being classified, with a decreased risk index of 12.4%, after American Indian/Alaska Native students (13.8%) and before White (8.7%), Hispanic (8.2%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (4.5%) students (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). In spite of a decreased risk index the national statistics continue to indicate that Black students are 3 times more likely to receive a special education label and related services for mental retardation and 2.3 times more likely to receive a

special education label and related services for emotional disturbance than all other racial/ethnic groups combined (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

In Rosa Smith's (2004) article entitled *Saving Black Boys: The Elusive Promises of Public Education*, she acknowledges that Black boys represent an alarming 15% of the special education population, despite comprising only 8.6% of the national public school population. Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) indicated that in 2007, Black boys represented 8.5% of the national population and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) data system confirmed that this population represented roughly 14% of the national special education population in 2007. Reports between 2004-2007 indicate that the different special education classifications for Black boys exceed their proportion in the school population, as they constitute a range between 20-22% of the special education population classified as educable mentally retarded (EMR), 18-21% classified under emotionally disturbed (ED), and 12-14% of those diagnosed with a specific learning disability (SLD) (IDEA database, 2007; Smith, 2004). The Office of Civil Rights and the National Association of Sciences have also acknowledged the high representation of EMR, ED, and SLD classifications as the "high incidence" categories that cause the most concern regarding the processes for determination of eligibility and resulting in significant disproportionality by race and gender (Harry & Klinger, 2006; NRC, 2002; OCR, 1998). Scholars have argued that involvement in special education services and these particular "high incidence" labels requiring "professional judgment," have definitional and validity problems with serious social consequences and great negative implications for Black students, but particularly for Black boys (Patton, 1998; Reid & Knight, 2006).

## Background of the Problem

While some scholars allege that there is no evidence that negative outcomes result from special education for Black children (Macmillan & Reschly, 1998), other scholars acknowledge special education to be “structurally flawed,” and “unethical” (Patton, 1998). It has been suggested that the overrepresentation of Black students simply perpetuates a “sociological legacy,” an “epidemic” (Patton, 1998), and a “national tragedy” for the Black community (Kunjufu, 2005). In fact, Kunjufu (2005) asks that educators and researchers critically examine a possible link between special education and eventual prison.

Special education is intended to meet the unique needs of individuals who have been diagnosed with an educational disability. However, the research evaluating its benefits indicate that typically there is a reverse impact (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000; Rathvon, 1999), particularly for the high incidence disabilities (Harry & Klinger, 2006) and especially for Black boys (Kunjufu, 2005; Losen & Orfield, 2001; Noguera, 2008). However, the “special” nature of this broad intervention and educational structure is in question, as it may further promote the social isolation and separation of Black boys from the mainstream population and prevent them from making healthy contributions to society.

Negative patterns of outcomes associated with the overrepresentation of racial minority students in special education were first documented in professional literature by Dunn (1968) and were further elaborated on by Mercer (1973). Forty years later, scholars and the general public remain concerned about the consistent pattern of disproportionality. The United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Office of Civil Rights (OCR), National Research Council (NRC), and the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) continue to document this reality and encourage continued research that investigates this concern. In fact,

the reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 and 2004 added a provision that requires school districts to monitor the racial and ethnic breakdown of students who receive special education services because of concerns regarding disproportionality.

In an exploration of the causes of special education disproportionality, the National Research Council's Committee on Minority Representation in Special Education reported the causes for such disproportionality to be related to a need for early interventions. The committee summarized that these findings suggest that "schools should be doing more and doing it earlier to ensure that students receive quality general education services to reduce the number of students with pronounced achievement and behavior problems" (NRC, 2002, p. 7).

The disabilities referred to as "high incidence" (Harry & Klinger, 2006; Reid & Knight, 2006) require practitioners to use what is often referred to as their "clinical" or "professional" judgment. Thus, there are great variations in eligibility criteria among professionals and across states, districts, and even different schools within districts (Blanchette, 2006; Losen & Orfield, 2001). The ambiguity and subjectivity involved in determining students who meet eligibility criteria for these disability categories, also considered to be, "soft," "mild," "subtle" disabilities are dependent on normative and hegemonic frames (Blanchett, 2006). For example, a learning disability is determined by the degree to which environmental and cultural factors may be attributed to the discrepancy between achievement and ability (IDEA, 2004). There is virtually no indication within the literature of how these exclusionary factors are assessed. Thus, it can be argued that this exclusion of cultural and environmental factors as valid assessment techniques place Black boys at a significant disadvantage and reinforces a social stratification.

The case made most famous in addressing the overrepresentation of Black students, particularly Black males in special education, was that of *Larry P. vs. Riles* (1979). This case challenged the inherent biases and culturally loaded nature of IQ tests and assessment procedures that placed Black students at a disadvantage, and thus, overidentified them with the educably mentally retarded label. While some scholars still challenge the legitimacy of the trial and question whether the overrepresentation of racial minorities is a problem (MacMillan & Reschly, 1998), it became evident after this trial that classifying students as educably mentally retarded declined while the emotionally disturbed and learning disability labels dramatically increased (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Harry & Klinger, 2006). This shift provides evidence of the subjective nature of determining such disabilities.

#### *School Psychologists' Link to the Problem*

There is a need to investigate the nature of school psychologists' knowledge and explanations for the school and long-term social outcomes experienced by many Black boys because school psychologists are critical participants in the special education determination process. Through their information gathering and interpretation of data, school psychologists are directly involved and utilize professional judgment to make such decisions. Focusing research attention on school psychologists is a significant departure from existing research because it acknowledges the power and critical responsibility that school psychologists hold in gathering data and recommending educational programming for many young people.

School psychologists have been recognized to be psychoeducational specialists who are influential "gatekeepers" of special education (Curtis & Stoller, 2002; Lam & Mak, 1998). Curtis and Stoller (2002) define the role of a gatekeeper to be characterized by one with "decision-making power, [the] ability to distribute resources, and authority within a system" (p.

228). Although the role of a “gatekeeper” is most commonly recognized to be that of principals and superintendents, school psychologists are clinically trained and qualified school team members who are responsible for gathering and presenting data that fosters major decision making for individual children, classrooms, schools, and districts.

School psychologists utilize professional judgment in the assessment and special education decision making process. Various scholars advocate for strengthening and developing a shift in school psychological practice, however, the issues of overrepresentation and the critical areas needed in training and practice for addressing this are vaguely examined in current research (Reschly & Ysseldyke, 2002; Thomas & Grimes, 2002; Ysseldyke, et al, 1997; Ysseldyke, et al., 2006).

In fact, according to Klotz and Nealis (2005) federal and legislative mandates have begun to support a shift in addressing the overrepresentation of minorities in special education. The new IDEA (2004) indicates that states will be "required to keep track of how many minority students are being identified for special education . . . districts must make the public aware of what they're doing to address (if applicable in that district) the overrepresentation problem by establishing clear targets and indicators" (Klotz & Nealis, 2005, p. 5). How school psychologists will apply the new standards to their practice has yet to be explored in school psychology and special education literature.

### Rationale for the study

Several scholars in school psychology and special education have questioned whether the overrepresentation of Black boys in special education is a significant problem (MacMillan & Reschly, 1998), while other scholars have considered the overrepresentation of Black boys to be

a problem of epidemic proportion (Kunjufu, 2005). Although the negative school and long-term social outcomes that many Black boys experience have been examined, research has not taken into account the role that school psychologists should play in reducing special education overrepresentation.

This study examined school psychologists' current level of awareness and beliefs about the various environmental factors that may contribute to the negative school and social outcomes that many Black boys experience. The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which there were patterns of perceived knowledge and causal attributions among school psychologists as it relates to the schooling experiences of Black boys. The study is guided by the assumption that causal attributions about why outcomes occur are important determinants of behavior (Graham, 1992; Weiner, 1995). In other words, the explanations that school psychologists create regarding the nature of the outcomes experienced by Black boys informs the professional judgment school psychologists use in making decisions relevant to the educational programming for Black boys. This study also investigated whether there were any differences in the school psychologists' knowledge and explanations given their race and gender.

Awareness of diversity and sensitivity to these issues in special education service delivery is viewed as a critical domain of competence in the field of school psychology (Ysseldyke, et al., 1997; Ysseldyke, et al., 2006). However, it has been recognized that research, training, and practice in school psychology largely does not explore culture and diversity from a historical and sociological perspective (Miranda, 2002; Orti, 2002). Although the research was conducted nearly two decades ago, Rogers, Ponterotto, Conoley, and Wiese (1992) conducted a nation-wide survey of multicultural training occurring in school psychology programs and found that little systematic attention to diversity issues was evident in many of the programs.



Although, Frisby (1992) cautions that some approaches to addressing cultural differences promote new and potentially harmful stereotypes about different ethnic groups, the primary research and literary cannon in the field of school psychology has neglected to analyze the historical nature and larger social construction of overrepresentation that impacts ethnic minorities. Without this necessary depth in analyzing the possible reproductive nature of historical and present patterns in special education, stereotypical approaches are likely to continue to develop, and this sociological legacy of isolation and marginalization of Black boys will remain.

### Research Questions

This study was guided by the following five research questions:

*Question One: What are school psychologists' knowledge of the statistics and terminology relevant to the negative school and social outcomes experienced by Black boys?*

*Question Two: How do school psychologists view the role of ecological factors in the school and social outcomes for Black boys?*

*Question Three: Is there a relationship between school psychologists' causal attributions and their knowledge of outcomes relevant to Black boys?*

*Question Four: Is there a difference among school psychologists by race and gender as it relates to their knowledge and the causal attributions made to explain the patterns of school and social outcomes associated with Black boys?*

The intention of this study was to focus attention on school psychologists in an effort to better understand patterns of their perceived knowledge, what they think, and how they explain the school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys. The research questions listed

above were informed by Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1995) ecological view of human development from a sociocultural perspective to understand how various environmental systems influence school psychologists' view of the schooling experiences of Black boys. This comprehensive model of ecological influences on development was utilized in this study along with Bernard Weiner's (1986, 1995) attribution theory to explore school psychologists' perspectives of the various explanations at each level of the ecological model (*individual child, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem*) that influence the schooling experiences of Black boys.

The following chapter (Chapter 2) will provide a more in depth review of the research literature relevant to this study's theoretical premise and the experiences of school age Black boys. Chapter 2 also elaborates on the education and practice of school psychology and concludes with the researcher's hypotheses associated with each research question. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 presents the study's results, and Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion regarding the results, implications, limitations, and future directions in school psychology training, research, and practice.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RELATED LITERATURE & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides a review of the related literature on the education and practice of school psychology, the attribution theory, and explanations across the ecological systems theory that can be attributed to the outcomes of school-age Black boys. The main ecological constructs explored in this review include characteristics of Black boys as an *individual child* (ability, effort, self-esteem, etc.) and factors relevant to their schooling experiences in their *microsystem* (peers, teachers), *mesosystem* (parent involvement), *exosystem* (social processes in school and special education) and *acrosystem* (social construction of disability). This chapter also introduces the conceptual framework and model that guides the study's purpose and concludes with the study's hypotheses given each research question.

#### School Psychology: Education and Practice

Several scholars (Gutkin & Conoley, 1990; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000) have asserted that school psychologists are the most highly trained mental health experts in schools. However, according to Curtis, Grier, and Hunley (2003), practitioners in the school setting are often limited to the responsibility of assigning a label of “disability” to a child. Conoley and Gutkin (1995) suggest that this limitation comes from the traditional school psychological practice, which identifies that the problems children experience stem from internal pathologies. These perspectives on school psychological practices reinforce the position of Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) that current practices may inhibit school psychologists from focusing on prevention and larger social problems. In discussing the need for a conceptual model to change the structure of contemporary school psychology, Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) argue that a “dysfunction” in

practice will remain until there is more of a focus on an ecological and multilevel systems paradigm. This study offers new scholarship by providing a conceptual model that relies on an ecological perspective in exploring school psychologists' perceived knowledge and the causal attributions they make to explain the negative school and social patterns commonly experienced by Black boys.

Based on the review of literature, it is likely that school psychologists would attribute negative outcomes to direct explanations, such as “within child” factors and relationships within a child’s immediate environment. According to Miranda (2002), research on indirect explanations, such as special education eligibility policies and larger structural and cultural philosophies, has been virtually neglected in school psychological literature. In fact, Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) indicate that “school psychologists have not routinely looked beyond the microsystemic level and considered roles related to ecological macrosystems” (p. 496). Talley, Kubiszyn, Brassard, & Short (1996) encourage school psychologists to become involved in efforts and opportunities to influence policy and address indirect issues impacting the school functioning and well-being of children. Sheridan & Gutkin (2003) also state that “. . . school psychologists *must* become invested in addressing social and human ills” (p. 488) and not limited to a within-child medical model.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2000) and the American Psychological Association (APA, 2000) have recognized the awareness of larger social issues and the establishment of multicultural competence as ethical responsibilities for practitioners. The APA (1995b) underscores a commitment to multicultural training under accreditation guidelines necessary for programs in psychology; however, studies in school psychology have revealed variability in the integration of multicultural issues in the core curriculum of many

school psychology programs (Lopez & Rogers, 2001; Rogers, Hoffman, & Wade, 1998; Rogers, 2006). As noted by Sheridan and Gutkin (2000), addressing explicit indirect and macrosystemic issues continues to be missing in school psychology training, research, and practice.

An additional multicultural concern in the field of school psychology has been the representation of minorities in training and practice (Rogers, 1998; Rogers, Hoffman, & Wade, 2002). Minority representation, as it relates to recruitment and retention efforts in school psychology, has revealed that programs experience difficulty finding students who represent minority groups to apply for programs that prepare them to be school psychologists (Rogers, 2006). Scholars such as, Reschly (2000) and Curtis (2002) have indicated that the majority of school psychologists are White and female and do not share the personal demographic characteristics of many students who are served in special education, such as Black boys.

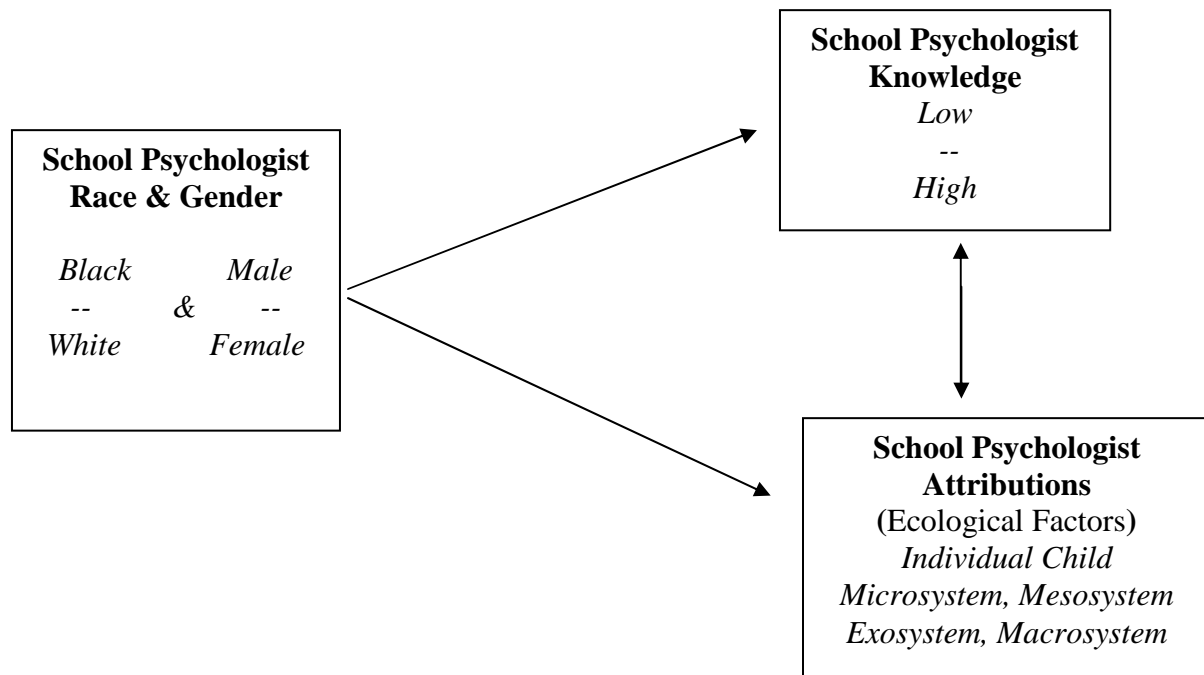
#### Creating a Conceptual Framework of School Psychologist's Knowledge & Attributions

In this investigation a conceptual framework was fashioned by drawing on several models and theories. These include an ecological perspective on human development originally presented by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), and the attribution theory articulated by Bernard Weiner (1986, 1995) and Sandra Graham (1992, 1997). The study also drew on theories on race (Helms, 1990, 1996; Thomas & Carter, 1997) and gender (Bem, 1981; Egan & Perry, 2001; Corby, Perry, & Hodges, 2007). The theoretical approaches fit together under the assumption that the causal attributions that school psychologists make regarding the ecological explanations for the outcomes experienced by Black boys inform the professional judgment school psychologists use in making decisions relevant to the educational programming of Black boys. The study also hypothesizes that the race and gender of school psychologists are linked to a

common experience that shapes perception and influences professional judgment and decision making. Each theoretical premise is discussed in more detail and is presented below (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Conceptual Model for School Psychologist's Knowledge & Attributions



Key elements of the conceptual model of this study include:

- *School Psychologist Race and Gender*- The race (Black or White) and gender (male or female) of school psychologists.
- *School Psychologist Knowledge*- School psychologist's level (low or high) knowledge of the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys.
- *School Psychologist Attributions*- The attributions (*individual child, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem*) that school psychologists make to explain the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys.

The conceptual model presented in this study incorporates variables not previously studied together. The model illustrated above adds new scholarship to the subject area under investigation because the study examined a dynamic relationship between the race and gender characteristics of school psychologists and the extent to which they perceive themselves to be

knowledgeable about the negative school and long-term social outcomes experienced by Black boys as well as where they attribute the causes (i.e. *individual child, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem*). This study investigated the relationships between variables associated with the theories under investigation in an effort to enhance the practice and decision making of school psychologist who work with school-age Black boys.

### Attribution Theory

In his 1958 publishing of “The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations,” Fritz Heider introduced attribution theory to describe how people perceive the behavior of themselves and that of others. Attribution theory attempts to address the natural human search for understanding (Kelley, 1967). More specifically, it helps to evaluate how people make causal explanations for behaviors, outcomes, and experiences. This theory was initially guided by a distinction between internal and external causality, which is also articulated by Rotter (1966, 1982) as the locus of control theory. The locus of control theory describes the ways in which individuals either attribute responsibility for outcomes to factors within themselves (internal) or to outside factors in their environment (external) (Rotter, 1966, 1982). Current scholars of attribution theory consider it to be a refinement and elaboration of Rotter’s theory on locus of control because attribution theory allows for more specific behavioral predictions about what reinforces and motivates individuals.

Bernard Weiner (1986, 1995, 2000) has expanded upon attribution theory for decades by recognizing that the specific causal attributions are less important than the underlying dimensions of the attributions made. Because Weiner (2005) purports that simplifying outcomes and experiences to internal and external causality is inadequate, he expands on the study of locus



of control by identifying the roots and underlying foundations of why things happen the way they do. Graham and Weiner (1993) suggest that the most common attributions necessary to explore in understanding performance outcomes are related to three separate dimensions: *locus of control* (internal vs. external), *stability* (the consistency of an experience), and *control* (skills vs. luck).

These three dimensions of explaining achievement outcomes primarily focus on the individual and their internal characteristics as the cause. An individual's aptitude, competence, or skill (ability) are considered to be both stable and uncontrollable, while, the effort an individual puts forth to achieve may vary from situation to situation (unstable) and there are choices involved (controllable). On the other hand, external influences on individual and group outcomes require a change in the perceived focus of agency. Weiner (2006) emphasizes that controllable external causes require very careful examination because their influence can be multilayered and challenging to discern.

Graham and Hudley (1994) and other attribution theorists, have researched peer-aggression among African American youth, particularly males (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Graham, Hudley, Williams, 1992; Graham & Hudley, 1994; Hudley & Graham, 1993). Grounded in a motivational perspective, these studies examined the causal attributions that Black boys make to explain their own behavior and that of their peers. The most common results have indicated that Black boys who are identified as aggressive attribute their aggression and negative outcomes to external forces. Forsterlings (1995) presents how altering causal thinking can influence behavior; therefore, efforts have been made to develop and implement school-based interventions that help to alter the causal attributions made by Black boys labeled as aggressive (Hudley & Graham, 1993).

Graham and Hudley (1995) also found that the causal attributions Black mothers make about their sons negative outcomes influences their treatment and response to the outcomes. More specifically, Black mothers who believed that their sons were responsible for their own negative outcomes utilized harsher punishment, felt more anger, and less sympathy for their sons, thus supporting the idea that the individual child is at fault. A person's beliefs about causal factors influence their understanding, their actions, and decision-making (Graham & Hudley, 1995; Weiner 1986, 1995). This linkage between causal attributions and behavior is also known as the thought -- emotion-- action sequence (Weiner, 1995). Schmidt and Weiner (1988) found that people tend to have a negative response (e.g. anger, frustration) to individuals when they are considered to be responsible for their negative outcomes compared to a more positive response (e.g., support, pity) toward individuals who are not considered responsible for their negative outcomes.

A large body of attributional research focuses on an individual's perceptions of his/her own achievements and outcomes versus the perceptions that people have of others. The current study utilized a version of the attribution theory that explores the judgments individuals make about the causes of others' outcomes: *Interpersonal Attributions*. This investigation presents a departure from attribution research relevant to the schooling experiences of Black boys because it studies the perceptions of a key gatekeeper in schools, school psychologists.

### The Schooling Experience of Black Boys & Ecology Theory

A large body of literature indicates that the schooling experience of Black boys has lead to more failure than success. Davis (2003) articulates the importance of researching this particular population:

“The negative consequences of the achievement gap are more acute for African American males who are victimized by chronic, systemic levels of poor performance and behavior problems in school. In short, the potential loss of resources—intellectual, cultural, and economic—resulting from lower achievement reduces the capacity of African American males to be productive, integral, and contributing members of their communities.” (p. 515)

Many factors have been identified in an effort to explain the negative school and social outcomes commonly experienced by Black boys. Ecological systems that intimately and immediately shape human development are represented by complex layers of the environments that have a great effect on a child. Chavous, Smalls, Rivas-Drake, Griffin & Cogburn (2008) indicate a need to consider interactions between factors in a child’s biology, immediate environment, and the social landscape in understanding the academic and social development of Black youth, boys in particular. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995) presented a view of human development from a bioecological systems perspective in which environmental structures make significant contributions to the identity and outcomes of individuals. This comprehensive and multilayer model of influences on development provided the foundation for this study. Bronfenbrenner’s model offers a contextual map for understanding behavior and development as a joint function of the interactions between a person and their environment. The various systems surrounding and contributing to the development of the individual include four nested structures, the *microsystem*, *mesosystem*, *exosystem*, and *macrosystem*. A review of the literature on overrepresentation of minorities in special education has not revealed the examination of negative school and social outcomes commonly experienced by Black boys using Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory. The current study attempts to address this gap by examining the application and impact of Bronfenbrenner’s theoretical construct of human development to the common experiences of school-age Black boys.

### *Individual Child*

At the center of the ecological model of human development lies the individual child and his or her unique biological and psychological dispositions. A developing child's abilities, personality style and way of thinking are critical aspects of how he or she interacts with the world (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The complex direct and indirect impact of relationships and environmental factors are critical to examine in understanding outcomes. Practice in school psychology has traditionally been guided by a medical model paradigm, emphasizing individual development and within-child/pathology factors. Advocating a different model, scholars have argued that school psychologists "can not serve children effectively by decontextualizing their problems as internal pathologies" (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000, p. 489).

Noguera (2008) acknowledges that Black boys enter school with the energy of a typical child, excited about learning, putting forth the effort to explore the world, and with a healthy level of confidence about their ability to be successful. Shortly after, something happens. Various researchers have attempted to provide reason and explanations for the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys (Davis, 2003; Kunjufu, 2005; Noguera, 2008). With a primary focus on the individual child, intellectual inferiority, self-esteem, effort/ambition, educational value, and academic disengagement were reviewed to examine the schooling experiences of Black boys because, based on the highly individualistic nature of schooling, the negative outcomes experienced by many Black boys are often considered to be of their own making (Davis, 2003).

#### *Individual Child: Intellectual Inferiority*

An individual's ability is perceived as a relatively stable cause that is beyond one's control (Weiner, 1992). It has been argued that Black people have smaller brains and are

therefore genetically less intelligent (Jensen, 1974). Black children's low performance has been explained by genetics and a belief that this population has a generally inherent low intellectual ability. In addition, the controversial book of *The Bell Curve* by Herrnstein & Murray (1994) suggested that the racial achievement gap could be explained by genetic differences between Black and White people. More specifically, the authors argued that Black people are naturally intellectually inferior and therefore racial differences in intelligence account for unequal outcomes in academic performance. While Herrnstein & Murray present genetics as the justification for the achievement gap, Ogbu (1987) and McWhorter (2000) attribute the lower performance of Black students to cultural factors and perceptions.

Scholars have noted cultural differences regarding the manner in which people attribute their achievement outcomes (Hale, 1991; Irvine, 1991; Kunjufu, 2005; Noguera, 2008). Therefore, it is important to examine the ways in which various cultural views of intelligence also may support the charge that a generally natural low intellectual ability explains the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys. Consistent with Asian philosophy, children growing up in Japanese and Chinese cultures tend to attribute outcomes to effort compared to a common North American perception in which a lack of ability explains negative outcomes (Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Lee, Ichikawa, & Stevenson, 1987; Stevenson, Lee, & Stigler, 1986; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992; Tuss, Zimmer, & Ho, 1995).

The North American cultural view equating negative outcomes with low ability was presented in McLeod's (1995) research. In his book *Ain't No Makin' It*, MacLeod (1995) conducted a longitudinal study challenging the concept of the "achievement ideology" in which success is based on merit and inequality is based on differences in ability. The study involved a group of high school Black male students who eventually embraced the cultural belief that they

were in fact intellectually inferior. As a result, they attributed all of their failed experiences in school to themselves. Despite their significant efforts these young men began to have a low self-esteem, as they believed that they were inherently inferior to their White counter-parts.

#### *Individual Child: Self-Esteem*

In opposition to this view, a large body of research provides evidence that Black people in general, and youth in particular, have a higher level of self-esteem compared to their White counter-parts (Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000; Kuykendall, 1991; Twenge & Crocker, 2002). In fact, Black males have reported a higher level of self-esteem, self-concept and perceptions of their abilities compared to Black females, White males, and White females (Cokley, 2002; Sirin & Jackson, 2001). Cokley's (2002) found that Black male college students reported significantly higher academic self-concept and a lower grade point average (GPA) compared to their Black female, White male, and White female counterparts, whose high academic self-concept mirrored their GPAs.

High self-esteem has been found to be associated with high achievement (Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000; Cokley, 2002). However, for school-age Black males high self-esteem typically does not correlate with high academic achievement (Cokely, 2002). Guided by Weiner's attribution theory, it is necessary to examine additional dimensions to explain the causes of outcomes, such as an individual's effort.

#### *Individual Child: Effort/Ambition*

The effort an individual exerts is perceived in the attribution theory to be unstable and under one's control (Weiner, 1992). To examine the schooling experiences of Black boys and the level of effort they put into being successful in school, Noguera (2000) surveyed 147 school-age Black males asking them to respond on a Likert scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly

disagree” to several statements. When presented with the statement “I think education is important” the majority of the participants responded “strongly agree” or “agree.” However, when presented with the statement “I work hard to achieve good grades” fewer than 22% of the participants responded affirmatively. These findings provide evidence of a discrepancy between the value that Black boys place on school and the effort and energy put forth to establish a level of success with school.

#### *Individual Child: Educational Value*

A common finding in research regarding Black student achievement provides that the vast majority of Black students, including males and females, value and desire educational success (Anderson, 1990; Kao & Tienda, 1998; Noguera, 2001). However, fulfilling this desire can be compromised by various factors. Mickelson (1990) and Ogbu (2003) suggest that this population, in large part, does not recognize school to be relevant to their realities or that it will contribute to their futures in a healthy manner, therefore justifying a lack of effort put forth into achieving academic success. Research has also demonstrated that Black students report very low scores on various indicators perceived to contribute to school success, such as a sense of school belonging (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Schaps, 2003), school satisfaction (Baker, Bridge, Terry, & Winsor, 1997), feeling supported by teachers (Noguera, 2001, 2008), and trusting and healthy relationships with teachers (MetLife, 2000).

#### *Individual Child: Academic Disengagement*

Several researchers have presented explanations for the resistance exhibited by Black students, particularly males, in exerting the necessary effort to establish academic and school success. Given various social realities relevant to race and gender as well as the design of schools, many Black boys perceive conforming to the expectations of school structure as a

challenge to their social identity, leading them to disengage and withdraw. According to Steele (1992), the longer Black students are in school, the less likely they are to identify with academics. Osborne's (1995) findings indicate that the lack of effort and level of disidentification with academics is significantly stronger for Black males compared to Black females. This notion of academic disidentification and disengagement of Black boys, as noted by Osborne (1995; 1997; 2001), has also been acknowledged by scholars to be heavily influenced by peers.

### *Microsystem*

The *Microsystem* is defined by complex patterns of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in their immediate setting such as school, family, peers, and neighborhood. Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) express great concern regarding the heavy emphasis on the *Microsystem* in the evaluation process, as referrals for special education primarily come from teachers and eligibility for special education is based on the norm of comparing students to their peers. In this case, a child's interactions with peers and teachers have been the center of literature explaining the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys. Specific literature relevant to these examples of *Microsystem* level factors impacting the schooling experiences of Black boys is reviewed below.

#### *Microsystem: Peers*

Peer relationships take place within the *Microsystem*. An extensive body of research reveals that peer influences can lead to negative school and social outcomes based on socially acceptable behaviors around not identifying with school (Ford & Harris, 1997; Mickelson, 1990; Osborne, 1997). School disidentification refers to the psychological disengagement with academics that many students experience (Chavous et. al, 2003; Ford & Harris, 1997; Mickelson,



1990; Osborne, 1997, 2001; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). Graham (1997) reports that Black boys tend to value their social status with peers over academic achievement. In fact, Graham, Hudley, and Taylor (1995) found that Black boys are less likely to report admiring, respecting, or wanting to be like peers who get good grades and follow school rules compared to peers who represent characteristics of doing poorly in school or being socially deviant.

Additional research has shown that peer groups assume a great influence over the orientation children adopt toward academics, beginning in the early years (Davis, 2003). Noguera (2008) noted that “. . . peer groups play a powerful role in shaping . . . identity because the desire to be accepted by one’s peers and fit in with ones peers often becomes paramount concern for most adolescents” (p.30).

The social identity of Black males is a necessary factor to explore when reviewing the schooling experiences of Black boys. To avoid social ridicule, many Black boys develop oppositional identities which are often encouraged by peers (Tatum, 1997; Ogbu, 1987; 1994). Ogbu’s (2003) ethnographic study indicated that Black students do not engage in the attitudes and behaviors that lead to school success because accepting the school curriculum, language, and pedagogy would mean rejecting their collective and social identity, often referred to as the “Acting White” phenomenon (Delpit, 1995; Landsman, 2001; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 2004). The “Acting White” phenomenon describes a set of social interactions in which Black youth oppose the norm and dominant culture by ridiculing other Black youth for investing in behavioral characteristics considered to be representative of Whites (Fryer & Torelli, 2005). Unfortunately, some of these characteristics involve images of educational success, and therefore, embracing the necessary behaviors associated with school success is often considered by Black adolescent males as “selling out” and challenges their “Blackness.”

In Tatum's (1997) book *Why are all of the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?* she indicated that most people, including many Black children, have limited and commercialized perceptions of "Blackness." These false and stereotypical perceptions are sometimes reinforced and encouraged by peers leading to an oppositional identity or rebellious energy as a coping mechanism to protect themselves from the psychological assault of racism (Miranda, 2002; Ogbu, 1994).

These responses and frustrations are often misinterpreted as aspects of "Black culture" (Harry & Klinger, 2006; Noguera, 1996). Black male youth have been recognized to not only partake in understanding interactions and school behaviors as racialized, but they also expressed concerns and experiences with discrimination based on gender as well (Ferguson, 2000). Davis (2003) reported that one of the reasons for the school disengagement and poor academic performance of Black boys is that they often perceive "most educational activities to be feminine and irrelevant to their masculine identity and development" (p. 519).

Evidence indicates that peers influence the racial and gender identity of Black boys (Peshkin, 1991) and help to construct the relationship that they have with academics (Phelan et al., 1998), thus influencing their school and social outcomes. However, it is also necessary to examine those who provide leadership in classroom environments that directly impact student experiences. A review of the research on the influences that teacher perceptions of and interactions with Black boys have on their school and social outcomes is briefly discussed below.

#### *Microsystem: Teachers*

Research has shown that school outcomes for young people are attributed to teachers' perceptions and interactions with children (Chang & Sue, 2003; Gay, 2002; Good & Brophy, 1994). The majority of research examining the perceptions that teachers have of Black children

indicates that Black children and particularly Black boys are consistently rated by teachers at a less favorable level (Adams, 1978; Murray, 1996; Partenio & Taylor, 1985; Plewis, 1997).

Research in school psychology has also examined contemporary stereotypes held by teachers and how these perceptions influence relationships and decision making that effects the outcomes of Black boys in schools (Chang & Demyan, 2007).

Teacher perceptions and interactions are an important dynamic within the *Microsystem* to explore when addressing the special education of Black boys because it has been noted that 20% of teachers make 80% of the special education referrals (Kunjufu, 2005). Of these, 92% of referred children are tested and 73% are placed (Kunjufu, 2005). From the perspective of Noguera (2008):

“Black males are more likely than any other group in American society to be punished (typically through some form of exclusion), labeled, and categorized for special education (often without an apparent disability), and to experience academic failure.” (p. xvii)

Teacher perceptions of gender, race, and socioeconomic status have been found to be interactive variables in the referral to special education process (Foster, 1990; Lomotey, 1990). Thus, it can be argued that negative teacher-student relations not only have a powerful effect on student performance (Weinstein, Madison, & Kuklinski, 1995), but also influence referrals made that remove students from the general education environment.

Teachers of all racial identities have been recognized to be successful in supporting healthy educational experiences for Black boys (Harry & Klinger, 2006; Lansdman, 2001). However, for the past few decades, researchers have documented a significant lack of encouraging, nurturing, and positive relationships and perceptions of Black students by White teachers, particularly White female teachers and Black male students (Irvine, 1991; Kuykendall, 1991; Ferguson, 2002; Noguera, 2008). In a number of studies, White teachers have reported the

lowest ratings on social behaviors and academic expectations for Black boys (Davis, 2003; Irvine, 1991; Rong, 1996). Black male students are routinely excluded from rigorous classes and prevented from accessing educational opportunities that might otherwise support and encourage them (Anyon, 2001; Oakes, 1985). Black males are more likely to be labeled behavior problems and less intelligent beginning at a very young age (Hilliard, 1991; Noguera, 2008). Lewis (2003) conducted a study in which White kindergarten teachers reported having fear of their Black male students. Davis (2003) acknowledges how negative images portraying Black males as violent, unintelligent, over-sexualized and threatening has not only a significant impact on the young Black male psyche, but on teacher perceptions and interactions with this particular population.

Although there is great concern about the perceptions that White teachers hold of Black male students, it is important to recognize studies that indicate reports from Black teachers having lower expectations for their Black male students compared to their Black female and White male and female students (Harry & Klinger, 2006; Washington, 1982). Like White teachers, Black teachers are generally trained under, and are thus products of, a larger educational and social structure, therefore they become “agents of an institution that is part of the dominant culture and whose interest is to reproduce the system” (Tyson, 2003, p. 339). Tyson (2003) conducted a study on the social reproductive processes in the schooling of young Black students in predominantly Black schools. He found that many Black teachers, although well-intentioned, through requiring self-restraint and providing strict guidelines for compliance, inadvertently have internalized stereotypes and bought into false perceptions of Black youth.

Black teachers, however, are less likely, compared to White teachers, to refer Black students for special education (Harry & Klinger, 2006). Hale (1991) and Harry & Klinger (2006) suggest that there are distinct cultural differences in the perceptions of special education

as many Black parents and scholars perceive it to be a “dumping ground” for teachers who cannot or do not want to deal with the responses to a cultural clash between teacher and student (Hale, 1991). These teachers have been recognized to implement fewer prereferral interventions and behavioral management strategies for Black males (Kunjufu, 2005; Losen & Orfield, 2002).

### *Mesosystem*

The *Mesosystem* represents the interactions the people in the *Microsystem* have with each other. In other words, the *Mesosystem* represents interactions between immediate environments (i.e. school and home) and key agents (i.e. teachers and parents). When determining special education eligibility, it is not common practice for school psychologists to examine *Mesosystem* level factors that may influence school functioning (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). The connection between parents and teachers and the level of involvement that parents have in schools, is the *Mesosystem* level factor presented in this review of the schooling experiences of Black boys.

#### *Mesosystem: Parent Involvement*

Decades of research have indicated that student performance is enhanced by the relationship between parents and teachers in schools (Benner, Graham, & Mistry, 2008; Coleman, 1988; Lareau, 1989, 2003; Laureau, Horvat, & McNamara, 1999). For the purposes of this study, parent involvement may be defined by parent participation in school activities such as parent-teacher conferences. In a report on the benefits of parent involvement, Benner, et al, (2008) identified direct improvement on student’s level of engagement and school performances. Research highlighting relationships within the *Mesosystem* has found that healthy teacher-parent relationships commonly result in better academic and behavioral functioning for Black boys (Cooper, 2002; Monroe & Obidah, 2004). Increasing parent involvement in schools, particularly

for students experiencing chronic failure, has been acknowledged as a national priority (Baker & Soden, 1997; Waanders, Mendez, & Downer, 2007).

Research in school psychology has addressed parent involvement for Black children from inner-city schools (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006). Unfortunately, research has indicated that inner city Black parents generally evidence patterns of low school involvement across a range of activities compared to White parents (Desimone, 1999; Ford, 1995; Ford & Webb, 1994; Halle, Kurtz-Costes, & Mahoney, 1997) and even in cases where children are labeled academically gifted (Ford, 1995; Ford & Webb, 1994). Studies have suggested that Black parents, particularly from low-income inner-city communities, value education less than White parents and they demonstrate a disinterest in school (e.g. not attending parent-teacher conferences) that leads to negative school and social outcomes for their children (DeMoss & Vaughn, 2000; Lareau, 1996).

Research has provided that Black parents, across various economic-statuses, report significant value for education (Lareau, 1996). The controversy regarding the involvement of Black parents in their children's education is rooted in different definitions of parent involvement. In defining the ways in which children benefit from parent involvement, Lareau (1996) found that parents can assist their children's education in ways that may not coordinate with the school curriculum. Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) indicated that involved parents in predominantly inner-city Black communities have multiple forms of parent involvement that are not commonly detected in mainstream research. Several researchers have suggested that parent involvement increases academic self-concept and achievement (Halle, et al. 1997; Henderson & Berla, 1994). Therefore it is important to examine school psychologists' perceptions of the role that parent involvement plays in the successful academic and behavioral performances when addressing the schooling experiences of Black boys.

### *Exosystem*

The *exosystem* describes social settings that indirectly involve the developing child. As noted earlier in this chapter, *exosystems* represent socially created structures that are designed to fulfill specific social and cultural needs by transmitting a body of prescribed knowledge, skills, values, and norms considered to be essential for society (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Irvine, 1990). School psychologists are most directly linked to the *exosystem*, as they are agents of this sorting and classification structure in schools. The social processes in schools and in the determination of special education eligibility are examples of *exosystem* level factors worth exploring when reviewing the schooling experiences of Black boys.

#### *Exosystem: Social Processes in School and Special Education*

Ideally, the purpose of schooling is to enhance and promote the healthy cognitive, affective, social, and physical development of young people (Deno, 2002). However, recognizing schooling more realistically as an instrument of society, the federal government clarified that the threefold mission of public schooling is 1) to assist in the socialization of the young, 2) to prepare students to play a role in continuing the nation's economic viability, and 3) to teach in ways that help preserve the prevailing political system (Adelmen & Taylor, 2003; *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 1972).

Schools are *Exosystems*. The *Exosystem* can be defined as all of the external networks, community structures, local agencies and programs that indirectly influence the individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). *Exosystems*, such as schools, are human creations designed to fulfill specific social and cultural needs by transmitting a body of prescribed knowledge, skills, values, and norms considered to be essential for society (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Irvine, 1990).

The structure of the American public education system is argued by many scholars to be well-organized and hierarchical. Thus, it inevitably reproduces a system of racial, gender, and class stratification (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Collins, 1971; McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 2006; Tyson, 2003). This stratification is made most evident through the education systems commitment to various sorting and classification practices, including ability tracking and special education (Oaks, 2005; Anyon, 2001; Reid & Knight, 2006). In analyzing these sorting practices it has been argued that “race has been an essential ingredient in the construction of American public education, and inevitably, of special education” (Harry & Klinger, 2006, p. 10).

Special education represents a subsystem of American education (Blanchett, 2006). It provides a ready explanation that links school failure with “disability” so that problems are legitimized and are assumed to be situated within the child. Special education is intended to provide critical services that are beyond the scope of general education for students who have been diagnosed with a disability. Blanchett (2006) reminds us that special education is not a place, but rather a “service delivery structure designed to provide individualized instruction and support based on an objective referral, assessment and evaluation, eligibility determination, placement processes” (p. 25), even though it has been well documented that Black boys are typically placed in segregated classrooms, and even segregated buildings, without comprehensive data to support the programming (Harry & Anderson, 1994).

Given the realities of a reverse impact (Kavale & Forness, 1999), special education has not been demonstrated to be an effective educational program intervention for many children in general. Harry and Klinger (2006) suggests that the overrepresentation of Black boys in special education puts this population even more at a disadvantaged position compared to their White counterparts, because it denies them access to quality and life-enhancing educational



experiences. It has been argued that there is growing awareness that special education programs and schools specifically designed for youth with behavior problems have targeted Black males based on persistent prejudice, assumptions about their innate inferiority, and societies deeply ingrained fear and hostility toward them (Milofsky, 1974; Patton, 1998; Wilson, 1992). Scholars have indicated that there are social consequences for individuals who are assigned stigmatizing label. Blanchett (2006) suggests that special education eligibility represents “a legalized form of structural segregation” (p. 25) and Noguera (2008) stated that “the situation in special education mirrors a larger trend in education for African Americans generally, and males in particular” (p. 436).

### *Macrosystem*

The *macrosystem* level perspective is defined by larger social forces influencing all other systems. Further, the *macrosystem* represents broader cultural, historical, and political forces represented by political philosophies, economic patterns, social conditions, cultural values, attitudes and ideologies. Macrosystem level issues are virtually neglected in school psychological literature and practice (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). The social construction of disability is a *Macrosystem* level concept that is also neglected in school psychological literature and practice (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000), but has been considered by many scholars to be directly relevant to the schooling experiences of Black boys (Kunjufu, 2005; Noguera, 2008; Reid & Knight, 2006).

### *Macrosystem: Social Construction of Disability*

Researchers have concluded that special education is an historical instrument of institutionalization and segregation that disadvantages many students of color (Blanchett, 2006; Reid & Knight, 2006). Evidence has demonstrated that when students are labeled “disabled,”

“deficient,” “dysfunctional,” “disadvantaged,” or “different” in any way, those students tend to receive services of inferior quality (Anyon, 2001; Noguera, 1997; Milofsky, 1974; Oaks, 1997; Wilson, 1992).

An institutional framework assigns meaning to “disability” in the complexities of social interactions and is implemented primarily in institutions such as schools (Dudley-Marling, 2004). The conceptual framework to support an ideology of normalcy is embedded in the functionalist theory, which is the medical and psychological grounding of the field of special education, explaining deviations from normality as disabilities pathologies (Skritic, 1991). This theory, often described as a medical model, is deficit-oriented and focuses on what an individual cannot do. It further explains that the problems or deficiencies are personal conditions within the individual (Schneider, 2005).

The basic ideologies, assumptions, human rights, and practices regarding people with conditions considered to be disabling, are beyond the scope of this paper, but would likely benefit from being challenged at various levels of the ecological model. However, it is evident that labeling an individual with a “disability” is the most prevalent justification within schools for inequality and discrimination against groups that break from normalcy. This is done by attributing a label of “disability” to them (Bayton, 2001; Reid & Knight, 2006). This *macrosystem* level principle around the concept of disability influences the interactions at every layer of the ecological system.

Bayton (2001) and Patton (1998) suggest that the pathology and medicalization of disability has historically served to disadvantage Black people. The medical and science world has played a prominent role in freedom and citizenship debates involving people of African decent, such as the enslavement of Africans and the civil rights of Black Americans. One

example Bayton (2001) presents is a condition that was called “Drapetominia” which was described to cause slaves to runaway because an “educated negro” was considered to be a “social monstrosity.”

When an individual is labeled and categorized as “less than”, learning and behavior problems emerge and are located in the context of human relations (Dudley-Marling, 2004). In other words, school behaviors and performances are, in large part, compared to a dominant norm. A set of cultural standards define this powerful concept of “normal,” and any deviation in human behavior that is not dominant is considered not only “different” but “abnormal,” “defective,” “deficient” and/or a “disability. Black boys are given disabling labels and are overrepresented in special education throughout the country (Harry et al., 2000; Noguera, 2008). Schneider (2005) indicated that individuals with conditions that are considered to be “disabilities,” historically and presently, experience oppression, are generally assigned an inferior social status, and are not expected to be fully integrated into society.

Best practice in school psychology encourages ecologically valid assessment, intervention, and consultation practices. However, traditional school psychological methods of analyzing problems stem almost exclusively from a within-child deficit model remains in many states, districts, and schools across the country (Harry & Klinger, 2006; Miranda, 2002; Noguera, 2008; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). Abraham, Theberge, and Karan (2005) suggest that the various systems embedded in the ecological framework should be considered in identifying appropriate interventions for the well-being of children. Gibbs & Huang (1998) state that the “. . . ecological perspective is especially relevant in analyzing the impacts of poverty, discrimination, immigration, and social isolation on the psychosocial development and adjustment of minority

children and youth” (pp. 6-7). Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) propose that ecological theory holds the greatest potential as an effective school psychological service-delivery orientation.

This review of the research imbedded in Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological approach to human development presents various potential causal attributions for understanding the schooling experiences of Black boys. The main constructs elucidated above [the *individual child* (ability, effort, self-esteem, etc.), *microsystem* (peers, teachers), *mesosystem* (parent involvement), *exosystem* (Social Processes in School and Special Education) and the *macrosystem* (Social Construction of Disability) level factors] provide evidence that there are multiple explanations for the negative school and social outcomes commonly experienced by Black boys. The knowledge and perceptions that school psychologists bring to the table primarily focuses on the individual child and *microsystem* level dynamics. The present study serves to challenge this phenomena by requiring school psychologists to report their perceived knowledge and explanations across the ecological systems.

### Race and Gender

In this study, the race and gender demographic identified by each participant was highlighted in the analyses. It is important to note that the study recognized participants as *racialized* and *gendered* beings in the world, with common experiences that shape perception. The study did not analyze the identity development of school psychologist, but rather, simply their demographic identification by race (Black, White) and gender (Male, Female). This study assumes that race and gender influence the way in which an individual processes information about one’s self and the environment (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Rollins & Riccio, 2006).

Analyzing responses by race and gender was expected to provide patterns in responses to school psychologist's perceptions of the school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys.

School psychologists are encouraged to recognize how children develop their identities and the ways in which these identities influence successes and failures. Identity is an important part of self-concept and influences the way children perform in school (Rollins & Riccio, 2006). Rollins and Riccio (2006) addressed the importance of recognizing and supporting the racial and gender identity development processes in creating interventions for school-age children and youth experiencing challenges in school. However, a review of the literature in school psychology has not yielded a deconstruction of the racial and gender identity of practitioners. More specifically, there is virtually no research on the influences that the racial and gender identity of school psychologists may have on their knowledge and perceptions of the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys.

The impact of one's racial identity on psychological development and functioning can inspire self-pride and self-actualization (Thompson & Carter, 1997). Racial identities influence and foster basic human interactions, particularly in the United States (Smedley, 1993). Helms (1990) defines racial identity as a "sense of group or collective identity which is based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (p. 3). Although race can be described as a complex social construct that intersects with other socializing forces such as sexuality, gender and class, race is "a central axis of social relations" (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 16). Despite the changes in particular definitions and stereotypes, "a system of racial meanings, stereotypes of racial ideology [exists and] seems to be a permanent feature of U.S. culture" (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 17).

Thompson & Carter (1997) address the neglected role of race in psychological training and practice:

The education and training of American psychologists can be described as a display of genuine ambivalence (at best) or skillful avoidance (at worst) when matters of race are addressed in the context of human development and functioning. This conclusion would seem off-base given the sweeping trends in multiculturalism and globalization in recent years. However, existing alongside a host of strategies aimed at helping psychologists integrate race conceptualizations in their practices is evidence of a myriad of forces that serve to minimize or obscure race's impact. (p. xiii)

The resistance to exploring the racial construct may stem from feelings of discomfort, as this examination requires understanding that confronting "societal racism and the concomitant self-reflection entailed in understanding one's racial identity is a profoundly difficult process, and people generally resist this change" (Thompson & Carter, 1997, p. xv).

Egan and Perry (2001) acknowledge that one's gender identity has implications for his/her adjustment, including the knowledge of one's gender and perceived similarities to others of the same gender. Corby, Perry, and Hodges (2007) indicate that it is often assumed that the links between gender identity and adjustment hold across racial groups, but evidence indicates that the social processes embedded in the identity development process result in common experiences and perceptions due to the interaction of race and gender (Egan & Perry, 2001). Since scholars have indicated that social identity guides decision-making (Brewer, 1991), this study attempts to contribute to the scholarly void by examining the race and gender differences among school psychologists and the effect on knowledge and perception of the schooling experiences of Black boys.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

After reviewing the available literature, a number of research questions and hypotheses have emerged. The first question addresses school psychologist's perceived knowledge of the

negative school and social outcomes for Black boys. The next question pertains to school psychologists view the role of ecological factors in the school and social outcomes for Black boys. The third research question asks if there is a relationship between school psychologists' endorsement of ecological factors and their perceived knowledge of outcomes relevant to Black boys. The final research question investigates whether there is a difference among school psychologists by race and gender as these relate to their perceived knowledge base and the attributions made to explain the patterns of school and social outcomes associated with Black boys.

*Question One: What are school psychologists' knowledge of the statistics and terminology relevant to the negative school and social outcomes experienced by Black boys?*

Hypothesis: school psychologists will have limited knowledge of the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys.

*Question Two: How do school psychologists view the role of ecological factors in the school and social outcomes for Black boys?*

Hypothesis: school psychologists will endorse the *individual child* and *microsystem* level explanations at a higher rate than they would for explanations relevant to the *exosystem* and *macrosystem*.

*Question Three: Is there a relationship between school psychologists' causal attributions and their knowledge of outcomes relevant to Black boys?*

Hypothesis: school psychologists who endorse any of the four ecological systems will have greater knowledge compared to school psychologists who endorse the *Individual Child* level explanations.

*Question Four: Is there a difference among school psychologists by race and gender as it relates to their knowledge-base and the causal attributions made to explain the patterns of school and social outcomes associated with Black boys?`*

Hypothesis: there will be a difference in responses to the four questions stated above, by the race (Black/White) and gender (male/female) of school psychologists. More specifically, the participants who identified themselves Black **or** male, compared to participants who identified themselves as White or female, would report being more knowledgeable about outcomes and terminology related to the schooling experiences of Black boys. Participants who identified with Black **and** male, compared to participants who identified themselves to be Black and female, White and female, or White and male, will also report themselves to be more knowledgeable about outcomes and terminology related to the schooling experiences of Black boys.

### *Closing*

The review of the related literature suggests a space for a new paradigm for examining the schooling experiences of Black boys because it incorporates a focus on causal attributions across the ecological systems to explain the negative patterns commonly experienced by this population. In response to the recommendations presented by Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) and Talley, Kubiszyn, Brassard, and Short (1996) the major aim of this study was to investigate school psychologist's perceived knowledge and perceptions of the schooling experiences of Black boys. The following chapter provides an account of who participated in the study, instruments used and how the study was conducted.



## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

This chapter presents the methods used in carrying out the pilot and main study, giving special emphasis to the recruitment of participants, data collection, as well as measure selection and development. The study's measure will also be described, followed by the procedures used for data collection and a brief description of the data analyses.

#### General Perspective

This study examined school psychologists' current level of awareness and beliefs about the various ecological factors that may contribute to the negative school and social outcomes that many Black boys experience. Because this study was based on a sociocultural perspective, the project also provided data on school psychologists' understanding of historical, sociological, and political issues related to power and privilege.

On-line survey methodology was utilized for the collection of data for a variety of reasons. Various researchers have found web-based surveys to result in more successful response rates when compared to paper and pencil mail-in surveys (Bachmann & Elfrink, 1996; Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire, 1984; Parker, 1992; Schaefer & Dillman, 1998; Sproull, 1986; Walsh, Kiesler, Sproull & Hesse, 1992). Specific reasons for such success with web-based surveys have been attributed to the following: 1) on-line surveys are a cost effective form of research befitting the researcher's limited funds for data collection, 2) they eliminate tedious mail processes, 3) they are faster in transition allowing for relatively rapid turnaround in data collection, and 4) this method of data gathering can be viewed as environmentally friendly as it reduces paper waste (Bachmann & Elfrink, 1996; Dillman, 2000; Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire, 1984; Tse, 1998; Schaefer & Dillman, 1998; Sproull, 1986).

This study consisted of two phases: a pilot study testing a newly created on-line questionnaire and a main study. In the pilot study, two independent focus groups of school psychologists (focus group #1) and school psychology students (focus group #2) completed the on-line questionnaire developed by the researcher. In an effort to strengthen the measure, the participants were then invited to a focus group meeting to provide feedback on each questionnaire item. After the pilot study data were analyzed, and the questionnaire was refined, the measure was administered to a larger population of school psychologists recruited via postcard and email for the main study. The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) approved both phases of the study (Approved May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007).

### Research Participants

As gatekeepers of special education (Curtis & Stoller, 2002; Lam & Mak, 1998), school psychologists are the unit of analysis in this study. This section includes the participant demographic and recruitment information.

#### *Phase One: Pilot Study*

In order to attain a 95% confidence interval, an alpha level of .05, a power level of .80, and the ability to detect a small effect size of .25, at least 30 school psychologists were recruited for the pilot study (Howell, 2002). This phase of the study included two sub-groups. The first sub-group consisted of 11 practicing school psychologists from schools in a Metropolitan area in the Midwest. The second sub-group consisted of a separate group of 19 school psychology Ph.D. and Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) students from Michigan State University. Participants in this phase of the study were recruited via email to complete the on-line questionnaire and provide feedback on all of the items at a focus group meeting. Of the 30 participants who started the on-line questionnaire, 28 completed it. The majority of participants who completed the

demographics portion of the on-line questionnaire in the pilot study were between the ages of 21-29 (71.43%), identified as White/European American (78.57%), and female (85.71%). Graduate students in training represented 64.29% of participants, and practitioners represent 35.71% of the respondents. The majority of the study's participants reported that they either have or seek to obtain their Educational Specialist Degree (Ed. S.) (35.71%) or their Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) (35.71%). The majority of participants from the pilot study also indicated that they are experiencing field-based practice in public schools (53.57%). Table 10 (Appendix A) provides all of the demographics from the pilot study.

#### *Phase Two: Main Study*

Within the main study, school psychologists were recruited via postcard and email in an effort to provide a wider sample coverage (Yun & Trumbo, 2006). A thousand members of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) were recruited via postcard followed by a reminder postcard. In an effort to increase the response rate for the study, an additional thousand email addresses for school psychologists were obtained via the 2008 NASP Convention and various school psychologists publicly listed on University websites associated with NASP. As a result of the 2000 individuals associated with school psychology and NASP who were recruited via postcard and email, 389 participants started the on-line questionnaire and a total of 338 (87%) completed it. The resultant sample of 338 participants represents a 19.5% response rate.

The NASP membership list is the largest and most inclusive of the different kinds of school psychologists, and the participation rates have been estimated to be 50% of those invited to participate (Reschly, 2000). Table 11 (Appendix B) provides all of the demographic information as a result of the postcard recruitment process. A separate copy of the questionnaire was developed to recruit participants via email and determine the demographics of the increased

number of responses. Table 12 (Appendix C) provides all of the demographic information as a result of the email recruitment process.

The overall demographics analyzed in the results for this study are illustrated in Table 1. The majority of the participants who were represented in the final sample were between the ages of 21-29, identified their race as White, female, and just over half were university faculty. The majority of the participants also indicated their educational level to be doctoral and more than half of the participants had been practicing in the field for ten years or less. Data from 338 participants who completed the questionnaire were utilized to address the majority of the research questions and hypotheses in the study; however, the demographic characteristics of particular interest were participant's race (Black or White) and their gender (male or female). In the final analysis, the race distribution for the sample was, 81% White/European American, 11% Black/African American. With respect to the analysis variables of interest, the gender balance was 85% female and 15% male.

Table 1

*Overall Demographics for Completed Questionnaires*

<b>Participants' Demographics</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Total Participants Completed Questionnaire	338	100%
<b>Age</b>		
<21	1	.3%
21-29	176	52%
30-39	78	23%
40-49	30	9%
50-59	43	13%
>60	10	3%
<b>Racial Identity/Ethnicity</b>		
White/European American	274	81%
Black/African American	37	11%
Latino	8	2%
Hispanic	5	1%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	6	2%
American Indian/Native American	0	0%
Other (please specify)	8	2%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	50	15%
Female	288	85%
<b>School Psychology Position</b>		
Graduate Training	16	4%
University/Trainer	178	53%
Practice	107	32%
Retired	37	11%
<b>Educational Level (received or in progress)</b>		
Educational Specialist Degree (EdS)	85	25%
Certificate of Advanced Graduate Standing (CAGS)	33	10%
Advanced Graduate Studies Certificate (AGS)	1	.3%
Masters Degree	11	3%
Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD)	199	59%
Other (please specify)	9	3%
<b>Years in practice</b>		
None	0	0%
<2 years	157	46%
2-5 years	37	11%
6-10 years	44	13%
11-20 years	30	9%
21-30 years	34	10%
31-40 years	26	8%
>40 years	10	3%

## Measure

The questionnaire used in this study consisted of five main parts, combining newly developed items with adaptations from well-established surveys (e.g. D’Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991; see Appendix D). A consent statement was provided on the introduction page on the web-based questionnaire. Participants were encouraged to print a copy for their records and were informed that clicking “next” at the bottom of the page was verification of their consent for participating in the study.

### *Part I: Demographic Information*

The first part of the questionnaire elicited basic demographic information. The demographics consisted of school psychologists’ position (i.e. graduate training, practice, etc.), status (i.e. Ed.D, Ph.D, etc.), school district type (i.e. public, private), school location (urban, rural, suburban), and years in practice (<2 to >40). As a result of pilot study testing and postcard participant responses, an effort to elicit the participation of various types of school psychologists was made by adding positions to the school psychologist position option (University/Trainer and Other (please specify)) and for status, “received or in progress” was added to avoid confusion regarding whether the degree has been obtained or is sought. This data were important for determining the participants’ experiences, activities, and relationship to the profession of school psychology.

Participants were also asked to identify their age, gender, and racial/ethnic identity to analyze commonalities and differences in perceptions by these personal characteristics. The age ranges are from <21 to >60 and listed in ten year time spans (30-39, 40-49, etc.). Both racial and ethnic identities were available for selection and additional space was provided (“Biracial/Other - please specify) out of respect and in recognition of the fact that some identities may not be listed

or presented in the manner in which the individual would prefer. Given the fact that this country was founded upon and currently functions by social status and categorization (Miranda, 2002), knowing the identity of the participant is relevant and extremely important in exploring the different perceptions regarding the school and social outcomes for Black boys.

### *Part II: Knowledge Questions (Statistics)*

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of seven multiple choice items and four options under each question to gather school psychologists' prior knowledge of the statistics related to the school and social outcomes for Black boys. There were seven questions to represent the outcomes commonly experienced by Black boys. This part of the measure helped to answer part of the first research question: *What are school psychologists' knowledge of the statistics and terminology relevant to the negative school and social outcomes for Black boys?* Each *knowledge question* item was transformed into a variable to indicate the percentage of correct and incorrect responses. An additional variable was created to indicate the overall average of correct *knowledge questions*. Descriptive statistics were then computed.

### *Part III: Ecological Systems Examination*

The third part of the questionnaire utilized Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological view of human development. This framework recognizes the various causal attributions that make significant contributions to the human experience. This comprehensive model of ecological influences on development was utilized to explore various direct and indirect factors at each level of the model (*individual child, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem*) that influence the schooling experiences of Black boys.

The researcher created 21 statements addressing various ecological factors that may contribute to the school and social outcomes for Black boys and two questions regarding the role

that school psychologists can play in reducing special education overrepresentation and negative school and social outcomes. It used a four-point Likert-type response format ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” School psychologists were asked to indicate the degree to which they attribute various factors at each level of the ecological system to the common outcomes experienced by school-age Black boys, such as low self-esteem (*individual child*), teacher perceptions and interactions with students, peer influences (*microsystem*), parent-involvement (*mesosystem*), the structure of school and the subsystem of special education (*exosystem*), political philosophies, social conditions, cultural values, attitudes and ideologies (*macrosystem*). Variables accounting for direct and indirect explanations across the ecological system were developed to address the second research question: *How do school psychologists view the role of the ecological systems in the school and social outcomes for Black boys?*

#### *Reliability of the Subscales*

To ensure that the questionnaire items for the different ecological systems were statistically reliable, subscales representing the ecological systems were created and internal reliability statistics were run. Table 2 presents Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients for the dependent variables in the study. Nunnally (1978) has indicated .70 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient, however lower thresholds are also sometimes used in the literature and are generally accepted to indicate that the items have sufficient internal consistency to be considered scales. As shown in Table 2, the Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficients for this study range between .69 and .79. The *Individual Child* subscale was found to have a Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient of .72, the *Microsystem* items resulted in an alpha of .74, and the *Mesosystem* alpha was found to be .69. The strongest alpha’s were found for the *Exosystem* level items (.78) and the *Macrosystem* level



items (.79). The *knowledge questions (statistics)* and *lexicon* were found to have Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients of .66 and .71, respectfully.

Table 2

*Knowledge and Ecological Scales with Corresponding Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients*

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients</i>
<i>Individual Child</i>	.72
<i>Microsystem</i>	.74
<i>Mesosystem</i>	.69
<i>Exosystem</i>	.78
<i>Macrosystem</i>	.79
<i>Knowledge Questions (Statistics)</i>	.66
<i>Knowledge Lexicon</i>	.71

*Note:* This table provides the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the knowledge and ecological composite variables presented in the study.

For additional analyses, participants were also presented with the following statements: "School psychologists can play a role in reducing the overrepresentation of Black Boys in special education" and "School psychologists can play a role in reducing the patterns of negative school and social outcomes for Black boys." Participants were asked to provide a response using the same four-point Likert-type response format.

*Part IV: Knowledge Lexicon (Terminology)*

In the fourth part of the questionnaire, twenty items were identified as the study's *knowledge lexicon*. The *knowledge lexicon* covers *macrosystem* level terms, concepts, and issues literary canon of sociology and racial/ethnic/cultural studies were listed. Utilizing a four-point Likert response format, participants identified their understanding of the 18 items from "Very

Good” to “Very Limited.” The style of this portion of the questionnaire was adopted from the *Multicultural Awareness Knowledge and Skills Survey* (MAKSS; D’Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991). School psychologists were also asked at the end of this part to indicate where they obtained this information (graduate training, professional development/In-service opportunities, personal interests/inquiry, or other (please specify). This analysis involved a review of the mean responses and standard deviations for each knowledge lexicon item. Additionally, a variable describing the overall level of familiarity among participants was created.

#### *Part V: Open Ended Question*

The fifth part of the measure was an open ended question that will be explored in a future study with more of a specific focus on areas in training and practice that are in need of a shift in order to reduce the overrepresentation of Black boys in special education.

#### *Part VI: Thank You Page*

The sixth part of the questionnaire ended with a “Thank You Page.” This page served the purpose of not only thanking participants for completing the questionnaire, but it also reminded participants of the study’s importance and included a section that provided the correct statistics on the school and social outcomes for Black boys.

### **Procedures**

Data collection included a number of steps and procedures. Steps included gaining University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) approval and consent for pilot and main study participation followed by pilot testing for the study’s questionnaire and revising the newly created Special Education of Black Boys (SEBB) questionnaire. Data

collection commenced followed by the filtering of data through the SurveyMonkey.com system into an SPSS dataset.

### *Phase One: Pilot Study*

All focus group participants were asked to provide written consent (Appendix E) for their involvement in the study. In the first phase, ten practicing school psychologists from a Metropolitan school district in the Midwest received an email and paper invitations to participate in the first focus group in the Spring semester of 2007 (see Appendix F). The school psychologists who participated in this phase currently have relationships with the school psychology program at Michigan State University (MSU). They serve as practicum and internship supervisors and adjunct professors. These individuals have been selected based on the diverse settings (urban, rural, & suburban) in which they serve in order to resemble the diverse practice settings of the practitioners who were expected to participate in the main study.

Participants in the first pilot sub-group were asked to complete the on-line questionnaire utilizing the web-based provider [www.SurveyMonkey.com](http://www.SurveyMonkey.com). They were also invited to a focus group meeting to provide the researcher with detailed feedback on the questions and the design of the questionnaire. Focus group participants were asked to rate the level of clarity using a 3-point response Likert format. Participants were also asked to comment on the readability, wording, length, and the aspects of multicultural social desirability that may be of concern (Edmund, 2001; Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, Richardson, & Corey, 1998). In particular, they were asked to respond to each questionnaire item by answering the following: “Is this question clear? Does it make sense?” Participants were asked to respond by selecting, “No,” “Somewhat,” or “Yes.” In addition, participants were encouraged to provide verbal and written feedback on possible issues related to multicultural social desirability. In previous studies, multicultural

social desirability refers to when individuals profess that they are always positive when personally and socially interacting with and speaking of minorities (Anderson, 1990; Sadowaky, et al., 1998). These data were used to revise eleven items to improve the measurement of the instrument.

The second pilot sub-group consisted of inviting twenty school psychology students from MSU in Spring 2007 to complete the original on-line questionnaire. This group was also invited via email (see Appendix G) to attend a separate focus group meeting to rate the clarity of the questionnaire, and also comment on its readability, wording, length, and the aspects of multicultural social desirability that may be of concern.

#### *Revisions to the Instrument*

Data gathered in the focus group feedback meetings was provided by a total of four school psychologists in practice and sixteen school psychologists in training. The focus group participants were given a small remuneration (lunch) for their involvement in the study. As a result of the focus group meetings, the questionnaire items with low clarity ratings (at or below a response two-thirds of the way between “Somewhat” and “Yes”) were examined. There were no items on the scale that had clarity ratings below the cut-off, however, 11 out of the 63 items were deemed “somewhat” unclear or rewording was suggested.

After the feedback was reviewed, various items were altered. Three items under *Part I: Demographics* were altered: “Training” under “School Psychology Position” was changed to “Graduate Training”; “Certificate of Advanced Graduate Standing (CAGS)” and “Advanced Graduate Studies Certificate (AGS)” were added to the “Status (received or in progress).”

### *Phase Two: Main Study*

The main study utilized a combination of recruitment strategies. A separate set of participants were recruited via postcard and email in an effort to provide a wider sample coverage. The refined questionnaire was advertised to members of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) via a postcard invitation (Appendix 5) followed by a reminder postcard two weeks after the original mailing.

As mentioned earlier, in an effort to increase the response rate for the study, 1000 school psychologists were recruited via email (Appendix I). The email addresses for these school psychologists were obtained via the 2008 NASP Convention and various school psychologists publicly listed on University websites and directories associated with NASP. The demographic portion of the questionnaire advertised via email was altered to incorporate and recognize a larger community of school psychologists. Specifically, under the School Psychology Position option participants were provided with more options (Graduate Training, University/Trainer, Practice, Retired, Other -please specify). The researcher and committee members agreed that providing more positions that school psychologists hold would encourage greater participation.

Multiple contacts via email have been found to produce higher response rates (Smith, 1997). Mehta and Sivadas (1995) had a higher response rate with four contacts, and Schaefer & Dillman (1998) received more responses by increasing contact frequency. Anderson & Gansneder (1995) and Dillman (1978) conducted surveys with mail follow-up being sent at one, three, and seven weeks from the initial mailing date. Considering the much faster delivery speed of e-mail, it is recommended that researchers should send follow-up email one week earlier than recommended for traditional mail surveys (Anderson & Gansneder, 1995; Dillmans, 1978; Yun

& Trumbo, 2000). Thus, participants were contacted via email after week one, two, and six from the initial email invitation.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Guided by the research questions, this chapter provides the study's results from the school psychologists' responses to the different parts of the questionnaire. Data analysis included examination of descriptive statistics for questionnaire items, including the means, standard deviation, and percentages. In addition, correlational analysis was used to examine the relationships between participants' knowledge-base and the causal attributions endorsed by school psychologists. In an effort to identify all of the significant main effects the results from the data analysis also included Factorial Analysis of Variance.

*Question One: What are school psychologists' knowledge of the statistics and terminology relevant to the negative school and social outcomes experienced by Black boys?*

In determining school psychologists' knowledge of the negative school and social outcomes relevant to Black boys, there were two strategies implemented. The two strategies included assessing the knowledge of specific statistics through the *knowledge questions* and assessing knowledge of relevant terminology with the *knowledge lexicon* items. Table 6 and Table 7 provide the data on the two approaches implemented used to assess school psychologists' knowledge.

In the first method for assessing school psychologists' knowledge the participants' answered seven *knowledge questions* on outcome statistics for this population. Table 6 presents the seven *knowledge questions* asked in Part II of the questionnaire, illustrates the percentages associated with the participants' responses, and highlights the correct percentages in bold. The correct percentages reflect statistics in line with the time period in which this study was conducted and were gathered from Rosa Smith's (2004) article entitled *Saving Black Boys: The*

*Elusive Promises of Public Education* and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) data-base (2007).

I hypothesized that school psychologists would have limited knowledge of the statistics relevant to the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys. Participants were viewed as having a higher level of knowledge if they identified at least 50% of the questions correctly. More than one-third (33%) of the participants identified five out of seven of the statistics correctly, more than one-half (50%) of the participants identified three out of seven of the statistics correctly, and less than one-third (33%) of participants identified two out of seven of the statistics correctly. Based on an overall average score of 71% correct (five of seven items answered correctly), the hypothesis was disconfirmed.

The specific distribution of responses on the *knowledge questions* illustrated in Table 6 indicates that 39% (n=132) of participants correctly answered the question about Black boys representing 8.6% of the school-age population in the United States, and 20.7% (n=70) knew that Black boys represent 15% of the entire special education population in the United States. Among school-aged children enrolled in special education, 35.5% (n=120) of participants knew that Black boys represent 20% of the population identified as educably mentally retarded (EMR); the majority of participants, 70.4% (n=238), correctly responded that Black boys represent 21% of the population identified as emotionally disturbed (ED); and 22.8% (n=77) of participants also knew that Black boys represent 12% of the population identified as having a specific learning disability (SLD). Finally, more than half of the participants in the study also correctly responded that less than 50% of Black boys graduate from high school and that federal prisons comprise at least 51% of Black males.



Table 3

*Knowledge Questions Results*

<i>Knowledge Questions</i>	A	B	C	D
KQ#1. Black boys represent what percentage of the school-age population in the United States?				
Answer Choices	3.7%	<b>8.6%</b>	15.4%	23.2%
Participant Selections	5.92%	39.10%	36.98%	18.05%
KQ#2. Black boys represent what percentage of the entire special education population in the United States?				
Answer Choices	3%	7%	<b>15%</b>	20%
Participant Selections	.89%	3.85%	20.71%	74.56%
KQ#3. Black boys represent what percentage of the population identified as educably mentally retarded (EMR)?				
Answer Choices	5%	12%	<b>20%</b>	41%
Participant Selections	10.95%	22.19%	35.5%	31.36%
KQ#4. Black boys represent what percentage of the population identified as emotionally disturbed (ED) population?				
Answer Choices	2%	7%	14%	<b>21%</b>
Participant Selections	2.07%	7.10%	20.41%	70.41%
KQ#5. Black boys represent what percentage of the population identified as having a specific learning disability (SLD)?				
Answer Choices	6%	<b>12%</b>	18%	30%
Participant Selections	10.95%	22.78%	32.25%	34.02%
KQ#6. What percentage of Black boys graduate from high school in the United States?				
Answer Choices	10%	25%	<b>50%</b>	75%
Participant Selections	5.03%	18.93%	57.99%	18.05%
KQ#7. What percentage of federal prison inmates are Black males?				
Answer Choices	13%	24%	<b>51%</b>	85%
Participant Selections	.29%	8.58%	58.28%	32.84%

*Note:* The table above illustrates the multiple choice items for each knowledge question and the percentage of participants who selected each answer choice. The percentages highlighted in bold represent the correct statistics based on data presented between 2004-2007 (IDEA database, 2007; Smith, 2004).

The second method for assessing knowledge was determined by participants self-reported level of familiarity with the *knowledge lexicon*. The *knowledge lexicon* consisted of a list of 18 *macrosystemic* terms relevant to historical, sociological, and political issues related to power and privilege in this society. Participants rated themselves on a four-point Likert scale: 1 = “Very Limited,” 2 = “Limited,” 3 = “Good” and 4 = “Very Good” on the 18 *knowledge lexicon* items. Table 8 illustrates the mean response and standard deviation calculations for each of the *knowledge lexicon* items.

In analyzing participants perceived knowledge of the terminology relevant to the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys, I hypothesized that school psychologists would report themselves to have limited familiarity with the *knowledge lexicon*. The results indicated that school psychologists identified their knowledge of 12 out of the 18 *knowledge lexicon* items to be “good.” In other words, school psychologist in this study reported their knowledge to be “good” on two-thirds (roughly 67%) of the terms within the *knowledge lexicon*. A composite score was also calculated for the *knowledge lexicon* and the results indicated that, on average, school psychologists rated their overall level of familiarity to be “Good” ( $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = .489$ ). Based on the participants self-reports of familiarity with two-thirds (roughly 67%) of the knowledge lexicon items presented, the hypothesis was disconfirmed.

Table 4

*Knowledge Lexicon Mean Responses and Standard Deviations*

<i>Knowledge Lexicon</i>	Mean Responses	Standard Deviation
Racial Identity	3.51	.567
Culture	3.40	.564
Ethnicity	3.38	.582
Institutional Racism	3.28	.623
Social construction of gender	3.15	.740
Cultural Hegemony	3.14	.744
Acting White	3.14	.764
Pluralism	3.11	.711
Burden of Blackness	3.11	.751
Social construction of race	3.10	.738
Involuntary/Caste-like minority class	3.02	.789
White Privilege	3.02	.830
Intersection of Race & Class	2.82	.874
Ethnocentrism	2.70	.850
Achievement Ideology	2.62	.915
Anti-Racism	2.55	.884
Race	2.30	.883
Human agency	2.25	.862
LX Composite	2.93	.489

*Note:* The table above lists the items in the *knowledge lexicon*, their mean, and standard deviation in order from most familiar to least familiar (1 = Very Limited, 2 = Limited, 3 = Good, and 4 = Very Good).

*Question Two: How do school psychologists view the role of ecological factors in the school and social outcomes for Black boys?*

In an effort to analyze school psychologists' perceptions of various ecological factors that may contribute to the school and social outcomes for Black boys, the participants' responses for all of the items within each system from the *individual child* to the *macrosystem* were calculated. Table 9 presents the order of endorsement from highest to lowest, the number of items with more than 50% endorsement, total number of items, and the percentage of items endorsed within each

of the systems. Table 9 presents the numbers and percentages of participants' responses for each item from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

I hypothesized that overall school psychologists would endorse more factors within the *individual child* and *microsystem* than factors within the *exosystem* and *macrosystem*. Tables 8 and 9 illustrate that school psychologists endorsed *microsystem* level factors, such as a lack of a nurturing teacher-student relationships, and *exosystem* level factors, such as the special education eligibility process, to explain the negative school and social outcomes experienced by Black boys. Therefore, the hypothesis was partially supported, given the endorsement of the *microsystem* and the lack of endorsement of *macrosystemic* factors. However, the hypothesis was not supported, due to the endorsement of items within the *exosystem* and lack of endorsement of *individual child* factors.

Table 5

*Ecological Systems Endorsement Data*

Ecological System	Number of items with > than 50% endorsement	Total # of items	% of items endorsed within the system
<i>Microsystem</i>	5	5	100%
<i>Exosystem</i>	5	5	100%
<i>Mesosystem</i>	2	3	67%
<i>Macrosystem</i>	2	4	50%
<i>Individual Child</i>	1	5	20%

*Note:* The table above provides the order of endorsement from highest to lowest, the number of items with more than 50% endorsement, total number of items, and the percentage of items endorsed within the system.

Table 8 illustrates that the majority of school psychologists agreed with all of the items in both the *microsystem* ( $5/5 = 100\%$ ) and *exosystem* ( $5/5 = 100\%$ ). The next system endorsed by school psychologists were factors within the *mesosystem*, such as a lack of parent involvement. Out of the three items within the *mesosystem*, the majority of school psychologists agreed with

two (67%). The *macrosystemic* level factors (i.e. “institutional racism”) followed, as the majority of participants agreed with two out of the four items (50%). The ecological system endorsed the least was the *individual child* (e.g. low effort and ambition). Out of the five items, only one item, “... their internalized feelings of inferiority,” was agreed upon by the majority of the school psychologists participating in the study. Table 9 provides the specific results for each item under the different systems within the ecological framework.

Table 6

*Participant Responses to Ecological Systems Section (N = 338)*

Ecological Systems	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>INDIVIDUAL CHILD- I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...</b>								
...their low self-esteem	76	22%	177	52 %	79	23%	6	2%
...their low effort/ambition	113	33%	165	49%	55	16%	5	1%
...their internalized feelings of inferiority	36	11%	118	35%	158	47%	26	8%
...their angry/oppositional/aggressive behaviors	43	13%	159	47%	126	37%	10	3%
...their lack of value for education	59	17 %	158	47%	110	33%	11	3%
<b>MICROSYSTEM- I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...</b>								
...a lack of nurturing, encouraging, & positive relationships with teachers	1	.3%	41	12%	185	55%	111	33%
...their lack of interest/connection to the curriculum	5	1%	61	18%	207	61%	65	19%
...their lack of trust/sense of belonging/connection to school	0	0%	19	6%	197	58%	122	36%
...a lack of positive self-images	7	2%	63	19%	200	59%	68	20%
<b>MESOSYSTEM -I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...</b>								
...a lack of parent involvement with school	9	3%	75	22%	187	55%	67	20%
...families lacking value of education	56	17%	145	43%	112	33%	25	7%
...teacher stereotypes/negative beliefs/assumptions about Black families	4	1%	34	10%	185	55%	115	34%

Table 6, Continued.

*Participant Responses to Ecological Systems Section (N = 338)*

Ecological Systems	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>EXOSYSTEM- I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...</b>								
...biases in tracking/ability grouping processes	10	3%	66	20%	170	50%	92	27%
...biases in special education processes (i.e. referral)	5	1%	48	14%	151	45%	134	40%
...the cultural biases in special education test batteries	25	7%	115	34%	146	43%	52	15%
...the exclusionary factors (cultural/environmental) in identifying a disability	15	4%	144	43%	148	44%	31	9%
...the segregated nature of schooling	20	6%	135	40%	132	39%	51	15%
<b>MACROSYSTEM- I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...</b>								
...the fact that school mirrors a highly individualistic social structure	16	5%	166	49%	127	38%	29	9%
...socially constructed perceptions of race and gender that grant them an inferior status	8	2%	83	25%	190	56%	57	17%
...institutional racism	11	3%	93	28%	153	45%	81	24%
...a political agenda	64	19%	189	56%	64	19%	21	6%

A review of specific results in ecological endorsement provided in Table 9 indicated that out of the factors relevant to the *individual child*, more than 50% of participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed that educational and social outcomes could be attributed to low self-esteem (62%), low effort/ambition (82%), angry/oppositional/aggressive behaviors (60%), or a lack of value for education (64%) to the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys. However, roughly 55% of participants “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that internalized inferiority interferes with school and social success for Black boys in this country.

*Microsystem* results illustrate that nearly 80% of the participants attribute these negative outcomes to Black boys lacking sense of belonging in schools (94%), lacking nurturing relationships with teachers (88%), disinterest/disconnection from the curriculum (80%), and limited positive self-images (79%). *Mesosystem* level results indicate that the majority of participants “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that a lack of parent involvement (75%) and teacher stereotypes, negative beliefs, and assumptions about Black families (89%) can help to explain some of these negative patterns. However, roughly 59% of participants disagreed with the idea that Black families lack value for education.

More than half of the participants attribute the negative school and social outcomes to all of the *exosystem* level factors (i.e. the structure of schools and subsystem of special education) presented in the questionnaire. The majority of participants (84%) were in agreement with the idea that biases exist in the special education processes (i.e. referrals), and 78% agreed that biases in tracking and ability grouping contribute to these negative outcomes. Participants were in agreement that cultural biases in special education batteries (59%), exclusionary factors (cultural/environmental) in identifying a disability (53%), and the segregated nature of schooling (54%) can help to explain some of the patterns experienced by many Black boys.



The items within the *macrosystem* also illustrate that the majority of participants were in agreement that the socially constructed perceptions of race and gender that grant Black boys an inferior status (73%) and the existence of institutional racism (68%) impacts the school and social experiences of this population. However, 53% disagreed with the idea that school mirrors a highly individualistic social structure and 75% disagreed that a political agenda could explain these experiences. Finally, over 95% of the participants were in agreement that school psychologists can play a role in reducing special education overrepresentation and the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys.

*Question Three: Is there a relationship between school psychologists' causal attributions and their perceived knowledge of outcomes relevant to Black boys?*

I hypothesized that school psychologists who endorse the indirect explanations (i.e., *exosystem*, *macrosystem*) would also report their knowledge-base to be higher compared to school psychologists who endorsed the more direct causal attributions (i.e., *individual child* and *microsystem*). The results confirmed the hypothesis, as Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients revealed significant relationships between knowledge and causal attributions determined by ecological endorsement. In addition, the participants input on the potential role that school psychologists may contribute to change the negative patterns was included. The correlation matrix indicating the strength and direction of the relationships among the variables is illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7

*Correlation Results*

Pearson Correlations	<i>Individual Child</i>	<i>Microsystem</i>	<i>Mesosystem</i>	<i>Exosystem</i>	<i>Macrosystem</i>	<i>School Psychologist Role</i>	<i>Knowledge Lexicon</i>
<i>Individual Child</i>	--						
<i>Microsystem</i>	.300*	--					
<i>Mesosystem</i>	.405*	.366**	--				
<i>Exosystem</i>	-.190**	.282**	.012	--			
<i>Macrosystem</i>	-.209**	.257**	-.025	.688**	--		
<i>School Psychologist Role</i>	-.075	.083	.061	.264**	.180**	--	
<i>Knowledge Lexicon</i>	.126	-.097	-.068	.178**	.217**	.144**	--
<i>Knowledge Statistics</i>	-.043	-.080	-.135	-.096	-.004	-.013	.002

*Note:* The table above illustrates the Pearson correlations between the composite variables for the Knowledge indicators and each Ecological System.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between school psychologist's knowledge of the lexicon items and their endorsements across the ecological systems, *individual child*, *microsystem*, *mesosystem*, *exosystem*, and the *macrosystem*. Significant correlations were found between the *knowledge lexicon* and *exosystem* variables ( $r(336) = .178, < .01$ ), and *knowledge lexicon* and *macrosystem* variables ( $r(336) = .217, < .01$ ). In other words, participants who reported themselves to have greater familiarity with the terminology relevant to the negative patterns experienced by school-age Black boys also tended to endorse larger structural (*exosystemic*) and political (*macrosystemic*) explanations for such patterns. Although these positive correlations were weak, as hypothesized, school psychologists who rated their knowledge to be high also endorsed larger structural and cultural factors as explanations for such negative patterns. Additional analyses revealed that there was a relationship between participants responses to the potential role that school psychologists may play in reducing these negative patterns, their perceived knowledge of relevant terminology ( $r(336) = .144, < .01$ ), and their endorsement of larger structural ( $r(336) = .264, < .01$ ), and cultural ( $r(336) = .180, < .01$ ) factors to explain the negative school and social outcomes commonly experienced by Black boys.

*Question Four: Is there a difference among school psychologists by race and gender as it relates to their knowledge and the causal attributions made to explain the patterns of school and social outcomes associated with Black boys?*

Table 11 provides a demographic profile highlighting the characteristics of the 338 school psychologist participants by race (Black, White, other), gender (male, female), and the interaction between race and gender. The “other” category was not calculated in the results

related to race, as it represented by the participants in the study who did not identify with “Black” or “White” under “racial/ethnic identity.”

Table 8

*Demographic Data by Race and Gender*

<b>Demographic Category</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage (Rounded) of Population</b>
<i>Race</i>		
Black	37	11%
White	274	81%
Other	27	8%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	50	15%
Female	288	85%
<i>Race x Gender</i>		
Black Male	6	2%
Black Female	31	9%
White Male	43	13%
White Female	231	68%
other	27	8%

*Note:* The table above illustrates the demographic data by race and gender out of a total of 338 participants in the study.

Finally, I hypothesized that there would be a difference in responses to the three research questions discussed above, by the race (Black/White) and gender (male/female) of the participants in this study. More specifically, I hypothesized that the participants who identified as Black **or** male, compared to participants who identified themselves to be White or female, would report themselves as more knowledgeable about outcomes and terminology related to the schooling experiences of Black boys. I also hypothesized that participants who identified with Black **and** male, compared to participants who identified themselves to be Black and female, White and female, and White and male, would also report themselves to be more knowledgeable about outcomes and terminology related to the schooling experiences of Black boys. The

multiple hypotheses discussed under this research question were confirmed. Table 12 illustrates the results from the Factorial ANOVA calculated to answer the final research question.

Table 9

Factorial ANOVA Results

Race	Male		Female		ANOVA <u>F</u>		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	Race (R)	Gender (G)	R x G
<i>Individual Child</i>					0.04	0.21	1.01
Black	11.50	4.51	10.61	2.60			
White	10.77	2.71	11.10	2.46			
<i>Microsystem</i>					6.43	0.99	1.38
Black	11.70	1.55	13.10	1.54			
White	13.17	1.72	12.56	1.70			
<i>Mesosystem</i>					1.68	0.06	0.05
Black	8.83	1.94	8.84	1.61			
White	8.30	1.41	8.47	1.44			
<i>Exosystem</i>					13.29**	1.02	1.90
Black	18.50	4.81	18.23	2.74			
White	14.79	3.54	16.55	3.01			
<i>Macrosystem</i>					13.12**	2.83	0.24
Black	8.67	2.66	9.19	1.78			
White	6.86	1.76	7.81	1.85			
<i>School Psychologist-Role</i>					5.07*	1.64	4.23*
Black	8.67	0.41	6.94	1.34			
White	6.86	1.34	7.81	1.10			
<i>Knowledge Statistics</i>					0.44	3.81*	0.79
Black	3.83	1.60	2.98	1.37			
White	3.33	1.52	2.90	1.11			
<i>Knowledge Lexicon</i>					20.93**	1.24	2.71
Black	3.54	0.55	3.24	0.59			
White	2.84	0.44	2.89	0.47			

Note: \*\* =  $p < .01$  & \* =  $p < .05$

A 2 (race) x 2 (gender) between-subject factorial ANOVA was calculated comparing the causal attributions of participants. A significant main effect for race was found ( $F(1, 307) = 13.29, p < .01$ ). Black school psychologists' endorsed *exosystem* ( $m = 18.36, sd = .69$ ) and *macrosystem* ( $M = 8.93, SD = .41$ ) level factors statistically significant higher level compared to

their White counterparts ( $M = 15.67$ ,  $SD = .26$ ;  $M = 7.34$ ,  $SD = .15$ ). Responses to statements regarding the role that school psychologists may play had a significant main effect for race ( $F(1, 307) = 5.07$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Black participants agreed with the potential role of school psychologists at a higher level ( $M = 7.38$ ,  $SD = .25$ ) compared to the White participants ( $M = 6.78$ ,  $SD = .09$ ).

The interaction between race and gender was also found to be significant ( $F(1, 307) = 4.23$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Black male school psychologists agreed that school psychologists can play a role in strengthening the schooling experiences of Black boys at a statistically significant higher level ( $M = 7.83$ ,  $SD = .41$ ) compared to Black female school psychologists ( $M = 6.94$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ), White male school psychologists ( $M = 6.94$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ), and White female school psychologists ( $M = 6.88$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ). A significant main effect for gender was found ( $F(1, 307) = 7.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Male school psychologists ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = .30$ ) reported having greater knowledge about the negative school and social outcomes experienced by Black boys compared to female school psychologists ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = .13$ ). A significant main effect was also found for race ( $F(1, 307) = 20.93$ ,  $p < .01$ ) when analyzed with the knowledge base lexicon. As hypothesized, Black school psychologists reported themselves to be more knowledgeable about the lexicon ( $M = 3.39$ ,  $SD = .11$ ) than White school psychologists in the study ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = .04$ ).

In conclusion, this study's results revealed a number of findings. The first major finding was that school psychologists had a strong knowledge-base of both statistics and terminology relevant to the social and social outcomes for many Black boys. School psychologists were overall knowledgeable about 5 out of 7 (71%) of the statistics and were familiar with 12 out of the 18 (67%) *knowledge lexicon* items. This study also suggested that school psychologists primarily endorsed *microsystem* (i.e. a lack of nurturing teacher-student relationships) and *exosystem* level factors (i.e. the special education eligibility process) in explaining the negative

school and social outcomes commonly experienced by Black boys. A relationship was also found between school psychologists' causal attributions and their perceived knowledge of the terminology presented in the *knowledge lexicon*. Finally, these data revealed that there are differences in school psychologist's causal attributions and level of knowledge-base by race, gender, and the interaction between race and gender.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

This study's examination of school psychologists' current level of awareness and beliefs about the various ecological factors that may contribute to the schooling experiences of Black boys, along with their understanding of historical, sociological, and political terminology related to power and privilege, represents a unique and potentially significant contribution to the empirical literature in school psychology and special education. This chapter provides an analysis of the study's major findings, presents implications, acknowledges possible limitations, and concludes with suggestions for future directions in the training, research, and practice of school psychology.

#### School Psychologists' Knowledge-Base

Overall, school psychologists were knowledgeable about the majority of the statistics and terminology assessed in the study, that were relevant to the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys. The researcher's hypothesis regarding school psychologists' knowledge and perceived knowledge was disconfirmed. The hypothesis was generated after reviewing multiple studies revealing limited exposure to a larger sociocultural curriculum within school psychology programs (Miranda, 2002; Rogers, Hoffman, & Wade, 1998; Rogers, 2006). D'Andrea, Daniels, and Heck (1991) present a link between a practitioner's knowledge and level of acceptance, therefore, the self-selected nature of the study may explain that those who volunteered to participate already have a level of acceptance around these issues.

There were certain details about school psychologists' knowledge-base that were more striking than others. For example, school psychologists were more knowledgeable about facts



concerning Black boys and the emotional disturbance (ED) special education classification, the high school graduation rate, and the federal prison enrollment of Black males.

Several researchers have acknowledged the consistency in negative media image portrayals of Black males (Davis, 2003; Kunjufu, 2005; Noguera, 2003) and an explicit fear of their presence (Hilliard, 1991; Lewis, 2003). According to Jackson (2007), “in many social domains of American society, [Black boys] have been recognized to hold a peculiar but uncertain status. Endangered, uneducable, dysfunctional, and dangerous are many of the terms often used to characterize African American males” (p.335). These widespread views popularized by the media may help to explain why the majority of participants correctly selected five out of seven outcome statistic facts linked to negative images and expectations of Black males. Three of the statements were selected correctly at a higher rate (emotionally disturbed special education classification, high school drop-out rate, and federal prison enrollment). It is possible that these three negative outcomes are most commonly known by the general public because the outcomes show a high frequency and the image associated with them are regularly reported in various forms of media (i.e. television shows, news, movies, music videos, etc.). In this study, participants agreed that Black boys experienced patterns of negative outcomes due to a lack of positive self-images and negative stereotypes and general perceptions about the population.

Roger’s (2006) research on exemplary multicultural training in school psychology programs presented the importance of awareness and sensitivity to issues of race, gender, language, and sexual orientation. Although previous research has concluded that programs in school psychology provide little systematic attention to diversity issues (Rogers, Ponterotto, Conoley, & Wiese, 1992) and uneven implementation of multicultural curriculum models and

program initiatives (Rogers, 2006), the participants in this study demonstrated a higher general knowledge-base than expected. This could be a function of several factors. It is possible that those who volunteered to participate in a study about Black boys have a special interest in this population or are simply more socially conscious about these issues.

Research by D'Andrea, Daniels, and Heck (1991) indicated that gathering information regarding psychologists' level of knowledge regarding issues of diversity is critical to fostering awareness and acceptance in practice. Through their focus on multicultural training in counseling psychology, D'Andrea et al, (1991) emphasized the acquisition and ongoing development of effective counseling skills for a diversified and pluralistic society. The measure used in the current study's was based the design of the Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge-Skills Survey (MAKSS) presented in the D'Andrea et al (1991) study. The MAKSS was originally utilized as a pre- and post-test to determine the impact of a multicultural training program and D'Andrea et al (1991) found that participants were initially less knowledgeable about multicultural issues and terminology on a larger *Macrosystemic* level (e.g. racism) prior to exposure to a multicultural training program. The D'Andrea et al. (1991) study provided evidence that explicit training on multicultural issues had a positive impact on level of knowledge compared to those who don't get exposure to such training. There is no evidence, however, regarding the long-term impact and practical use of the knowledge obtained from the multicultural training. Although work by Sheridan and Gutkin (2003) purports that *Macrosystemic* level conversations and conscientiousness are limited in school psychology research, training, and practice, participants may have reported a strong knowledge-base about the school and social outcomes of Black boys due to a special interest, more experience, and more exposure to the *Macrosystemic* issues associated with this population over time.

## School Psychologists Causal Attributions Across the Ecological Systems

This study integrated theoretical models from Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Wiener (1986, 1995) to examine the school psychologists' causal attributions for the negative school and social outcomes commonly experienced by Black boys. An examination of this specific problem and the potential explanations has not been studied in school psychological literature. Graham (1997) described "causal attributions, or cognitions about why outcomes occur, [to be] important determinants of behavior" (p. 22). The assumption underlining this theoretical integration is that school psychologists' causal attributions across the ecological systems influences their professional judgment and decision-making processes for the educational programming assigned to school-age Black boys.

It was hypothesized that school psychologists would endorse the *individual child* and/or *microsystem* level explanations at a higher rate than they would for explanations relevant to the *macrosystem*. The order of causal attributions endorsed by school psychologists in this study to explain the negative outcomes was *microsystem*, *exosystem*, *mesosystem*, *macrosystem*, and finally *individual child*. The hypothesis regarding a high level of endorsement for factors relevant to the Individual Child was disconfirmed. As hypothesized, participants did endorse the *microsystem* level explanations over all other systems including the *macrosystem* level explanations.

Under the *microsystem*, the majority of participants in this study viewed a "lack of nurturing, encouraging, and positive relationships with teachers" as contributing to the negative outcomes for school-age Black boys. In fact, according to research conducted by both Mickelson (1989) and Noguera (2000), school-age Black boys have reported feeling that their teachers do not support or care about their success in class. A large body of research has also

indicated that teachers often report lower and more negative expectations of their Black male students compared to other groups of students (Chang & Demyan, 2007; Cooper, Baron, & Lowe, 1975; DeMeis & Turner, 1978; Partenio & Taylor, 1985; Plewis, 1997). Teachers have even described Black boys to be “un-teachable” (Hale-Benson, 1991; Skiba et al., 2006). In an effort to explore contextual variables that create and maintain the conditions leading to unequal placement in special education, teachers in the Skiba et al, (2006) study admitted to not necessarily believing that children they refer have a disability, but that they were struggling to teach them. In reflecting on the endorsement of *Microsystemic* level factors, school psychologists could play a role in mediating and strengthening the teacher-student relationship to establish more successful learning experiences for Black boys in the classroom.

The endorsement of the *exosystem* found in this study sheds light on the policies and structures that might dictate expectations within the classroom. The endorsement of the *exosystem* encourages the examination of traditional practices, structures, procedures, and systems that are currently in place. Special education is an example of a socially created structure within the *exosystem* because it is designed to fulfill a specific social and cultural need by transmitting a body of prescribed knowledge, skills, values, and norms (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Irvine, 1990; Noguera, 2008). Special education reinforces a hierarchical structure that Noguera (2008) states “mirrors a larger trend in education for African Americans generally” (p. 22).

In this study, school psychologists rated biases in special education and assessment processes to explain the patterns of school and social outcomes for many Black boys. This finding supports the research conclusions of both Sharpe (1996) and Skiba et al (2006) who found that teachers, administrators, and psychologists attribute special education

disproportionality to factors such as limited resources for teachers in addressing children's needs and a highly idiosyncratic assessment process for determining eligibility.

Another way that school psychologists can strengthen the special education eligibility process is by developing ways to ensure that parents and their input are incorporated in various ways. The *mesosystem* (e.g. home-school relationship; parent involvement) was endorsed by school psychologists in this study, in addressing causal attributions for the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys. Participants acknowledged how teacher stereotypes about Black families are related to these negative outcomes. It is important and refreshing to note however, that the school psychologists in this study disagreed with attributing these negative outcomes to "... families lacking value of education." This finding gives hope that practitioners are not operating on stereotypes about Black families. Black boys are likely to benefit from practitioners who provide resources and various strategies to support parent involvement and strengthen the relationship between home and school.

Practitioners are accustomed to providing resources that focus primarily on an individual's ability, but in this study the *individual child* was endorsed least by the school psychologists in this study. Participants disagreed with explaining the negative outcomes experienced by many Black boys to low self-esteem, low effort, low ambition, an angry/oppositional demeanor, or a lacking value for education. It was also interesting to find that under the *individual child* system the majority of participants only agreed that Black boys internalized feelings of inferiority influence their negative school and social outcomes. These findings lead the researcher to a few questions. Is the field of school psychology moving away from relying solely on the traditional medical model? Were the school psychologists who participated in the study more aware of the external forces that impact this population compared

to typical school psychologists? What is the relationship between Black boys' feelings of internalized inferiority and negative experiences and conditions across the ecological system? School psychologists were expected to endorse *individual child* factors because traditional practice involves identifying students with special education eligibility categories (i.e. ED) utilizing measures that primarily address *individual child* factors.

Scholars have expressed concern that identifying Black boys with a special education disability label or simply deciding that they are un-teachable has become habit and a social norm (Kunjufu, 2006; Mehan, 1992; Noguera, 2008; Oakes, 1982; Skiba, Bush, & Knesting, 2002). Skiba et al. (2006) uses the *macrosystemic* notion of "cultural reproduction" as a theoretical concept to explain how inequities by race are...

. . . reproduced over time through institutional and individual actions and decisions that maintain the status quo at the expense of less privileged groups . . . One important implication of cultural reproduction is that such actions or processes may be driven by individual and institutional habit patterns without ever reaching a conscious level of awareness on the part of those who participate in institutional actions (p. 1426).

Similarly, in this study, school psychologists identified a level of familiarity with *macrosystemic* concepts, such as "institutional racism" and "cultural hegemony." Ibrahim (1996) defines "institutional racism" as any societal law or structural criteria that consciously or unconsciously produces racial inequalities, while "cultural hegemony" has been defined as ". . . cultural styles, beliefs, and practices of the mainstream of a society that infiltrate the values and behaviors of all sectors of the society and are valued and privileged above all others" (Harry & Klinger, 2006, p.42). Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasized that change at the level of the *Macrosystem*, such as addressing the reality and impact of institutional racism and cultural hegemonic practices, is very challenging, yet particularly important because it gives the most far-reaching impact. By explicitly addressing school psychologists' knowledge and perceptions, this

study brings the *Macrosystemic* level conversation about the schooling and social experiences of Black boys to a conscious level

#### Relationships between School Psychologists Knowledge-Base & Causal Attributions

The results from this study shed light on the significant relationships between the participants' perceived knowledge of the terminology relevant to the outcomes experienced by school-age Black boys and the attributions made to explain these negative patterns. Although the relationships were found to be weak, the findings indicated that school psychologists' causal attributions were related to their knowledge, as originally hypothesized. More specifically, school psychologists who perceived their level of knowledge to be high, attributed the negative outcomes to *exosystemic* and *macrosystemic* level factors. Overall, the results suggested that school psychologists who felt like they have a good understanding of historical, sociological, and political issues related to power and privilege also tended to believe that Black boys commonly experienced negative school and social outcomes because of processes at the *exosystemic* and *macrosystemic* level, such as the special education eligibility process and relevant issues around institutional racism.

#### School Psychologists Race and Gender

As hypothesized, the findings indicated that knowledge and explanations of the negative school and social outcomes often experienced by Black boys were different based on the race, gender, and interaction between the race and gender of participating school psychologists. Consistent with the original hypothesis, school psychologists who identified their race as Black reported themselves to be more knowledgeable about the issues presented in this study.

Research has consistently reported race and ethnicity to be a strong predictor of perceived knowledge and competence around multicultural issues (Constaintine, Juby, & Liang, 2001; Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, & Nielson, 1995; Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, & Ottavi, 1994; Sadowsky, Kuo-Jackson, Richardson, & Corey 1998).

Black participants also primarily endorsed external and structural factors (*Exosystem, Macrosystem*) to explain the negative patterns experienced by many Black boys. A similar finding applied to the school psychologists who identified their gender as male. These findings are consistent with research indicating that it is more common for people to identify themselves as being familiar with issues relevant to their cultural identity (Constaintine, et al., 2001) and are likely to attribute the failures experienced by those who match this identity to external and structural (*exosystem, macrosystem*) causality (Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967; Weiner, 1974, 2005).

Scholars have addressed how it is a common perception in Black communities that negative school and social experiences for Black children derive from external and structural foundations (Noguera, 1996; Ogbu, 1994). Although the school psychologists who identified as Black were found to endorse *exosystemic* and *macrosystemic* factors at a significantly higher rate compared to the school psychologists who identified as White, the majority of the participants recognized the ways in which the negative patterns experienced by many Black boys can be explained by indirect, external, structural explanations, such as biases in the special education process and the socially constructed perceptions of race and gender that grant Black boys an inferior status.

In examining the contextual factors attributed to the disproportionality of minority students in special education, Skiba et al. (2006) focused on the causal attributions made by



Black and White psychologists, administrators, and teachers as their unit of analysis. Skiba et al. (2006) found, what they considered to be, “surprising reticence” among respondents in discussing race and especially discussing Black boys. Black participants, however, were markedly less reticent in discussing the topic of race and its relationship to classroom dynamics that lead to special education classification. As a result of their findings both Sharpe (1996) and Skiba et al. (2006) attribute many of the struggles experienced in classrooms and disproportionality to negative attitudes about race and an overall cultural mismatch between White teachers and children of color, especially Black students. Skiba et. al. (2006) further explains that “conversations concerning disproportionality are inherently difficult because they bear directly upon the complex and emotionally loaded issue of race” (p. 1427). One possible contributing factor influencing the inability, unwillingness, and overall difficulty in discussing the topic of race on school and social outcomes may be the result of limited authentic exposure in training and research. In this study, White and female participants were not reticent to respond and engage in a questionnaire explicitly about Black boys. Perhaps the self-selected nature of the study also influenced these outcomes, as the White female participants in this study may have a higher level of critical consciousness about these issues compared to the general population of White female school psychologists in this country.

The current study stimulated a novel conversation in school psychology, as it required participants to address the experiences of a specific racial group. Previous studies requiring input from school psychologists on race do not identify “race” directly, instead umbrella terms such as “cross-cultural” (Lopez & Rogers, 2001) or “multicultural” (Rogers, Hoffman, & Wade, 1998; Rogers & Ponterotto, 1997; Rogers, 2006) are used to represent race, ethnicity, gender, language, sexuality, etc. However, there are decades worth of literature in counseling and

developmental psychology gathering information from psychologist regarding cultural competence (Constantine & Ladany, 2000; Falicov, 1984; Helms, 1984; Neufeldt, et al., 2006; Sadowsky, et al., 1998; Sue et al., 1982; Pope-Davis et al., 1995; Worthington et al., 2000), especially as it relates to race-related attitudes (Constantine, Juby, & Liang, 2001), racism and anti-racism (Carter, 1990; Corvin & Wiggins, 1989; Spanierman, et al, 2008), White privilege (Pinterits, Poteat, Spanierman, 2009), White racial identity (Gushue & Constantine, 2007; Helms & Carter, 1990; Rockquemore, 2002), gender (Mellinger & Liu, 2006), and specifically Black males (Chavous, et al., 2003). In this study, school psychologists identified “race” as one of the least familiar and understood terms in the *knowledge lexicon*. Compared to school psychology, counseling and developmental psychology dominate the field of psychology with literature regarding multicultural and cross-cultural competency directly addressing the topic of race and *Macrosystemic* issues as they relate to the practice of psychology.

The field of school psychology has been largely represented by White practitioners throughout its history (Fagan, 1988). Curtis, Grier, and Hunley (2003) believe that school psychology in the United States will continue to be characterized as primarily White and female through 2020. Curtis, et al. (2003) also state that “without question, the field of school psychology is lagging behind in minority membership” and is expected to “...remain very limited for some years to come” (p. 413). Thus, addressing school psychologists’ knowledge and perceptions of race related issues is critical. This study begins to tackle the need for more explicit conversations about race and *macrosystemic* level issues in school psychology in order to authentically address the school and social outcomes for school-age Black boys.

## Limitations

The generalizability of this study is limited based on a lower than expected response rate. The original recruitment process, involving multiple postcard invitations to the on-line questionnaire did not result in the expected return rate. In an effort to increase the number of participants, the research team agreed to a different recruitment method to a separate pool of school psychologists through email invitations. As a result, the number of participants more than doubled to 172 within two weeks. Having a diverse form of recruitment practices was beneficial because it engaged a wider variety of school psychologists, however, it is possible that the response rate would have increased with a multi-modal method providing access to both post-mailing addresses and email addresses for the same individuals. Despite this limitation, the low response rate, the demographics of the participants resembles the national demographics for school psychologists.

Another limitation pertains to possible response biases. Participants who completed the questionnaire may have had a particular interest in the study's topic, and they may have differed from individuals who did not respond or finish the questionnaire. It is also difficult to determine whether subjects provided honest answers, given the study's web-based format and self-reported nature of data collection. Many of the web usage data procedures to determine the activity of participants (e.g. searching other websites while completing the questionnaire) were not applicable and had the potential to breach the level of privacy intended for participants. Cook and Campbell (1979) indicated that subjects often report what they think the researcher wants to see or what makes their own abilities, knowledge, beliefs, or opinions reflect a positive perspective. Despite the global concerns regarding self-reported data, the major outcomes found in this study revealed some variability in responses and is likely to generate conversation and a

desire among school psychologists to explore issues regarding the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys.

### Implications for School Psychologists

The findings from this study have several implications for school psychologists and the potential role that they can play in strengthening the school and social outcomes experienced by Black boys. The study was assumed that gathering school psychologist's knowledge and perceptions of this populations outcomes is critical in fostering awareness and acceptance in practice. School psychologists in this study primarily endorsed two systems in which they have the potential to have an influence, the *microsystem* and *exosystem*. School psychologists have potential influence within the *microsystem* because of their relationships and access to teachers, students, and their families. School psychologists must serve as stakeholders with a variety of resources, such as helping teachers design classroom management plans, individual behavior plans and tools for establishing healthy rapport with students, running groups or class lessons to help strengthen student sense of belonging, managing conflicts with peers, and offering community resources for families to help their children at home.

The social processes in schools and the special education eligibility determining process were examples of *exosystem* level factors explored in this study to illustrate the schooling experiences of Black boys. As data-based decision makers and gatekeepers of special educational programming for children, school psychologists are directly linked with the *exosystem*. Because of this link, school psychologists can play an active role in school-wide, proactive, prevention, and early intervention initiatives that enhance the academic and social experiences of all children. The results from this study suggest that school psychologists should

serve as agents of decision-making within the *exosystem* while actively involved in strengthening the *microsystemic* interactions by supporting teachers and families with tools and resources that result in successful school and social outcomes for children.

This study suggests that school psychologists should alter the way that they think about their prevention, intervention, and assessment practices for determining special education eligibility. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model postulates a thorough examination of multifaceted influences on behavior and outcomes. School psychologists in this study agreed that they can play a role in reducing the negative school and social outcomes experienced by many school-age Black boys. It is the researcher's belief that school psychologists can examine and present prevention and intervention possibilities at all levels of the ecological system. This study encourages school psychologists to utilize Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as a guide in developing authentic and comprehensive assessment processes in determining student needs and the most effective methods of educational programming. The phenomenon at the root of this investigation is that what school psychologists know and where they attribute outcomes across the ecological systems influences their decision-making. As a result of this study, school psychologists should be encouraged to reflect on their perceptions of why a problem may be occurring and commit to examining a child's school functioning through an ecological lens. This thorough examination is likely to help school psychologists serve as agents of social transformation for Black boys.

This study also demonstrates how race and gender influence knowledge and perceptions of group experiences. Given the findings from this study, regarding race and gender, it is important to examine the recruitment and retention efforts for students of color, particularly Black males, training to be school psychologists. The data from this study implies that it is

essential for school psychologists to be aware of how their own race and gender may influence their values, beliefs, and worldview (Ysseldyke, et. al., 2006). With race and gender in mind, school psychologists should recognize where they fall within a social hierarchy and explore how this position or social category may influence their practice and interactions with students and families served. A series of courses, and field-based experiences, professional development, and research opportunities, with explicit focus on issues around race, gender, and disability may be particularly effective in increasing critical analyses regarding the current social structures as well as cultural responses. These opportunities should strengthen school psychologists' knowledge of statistics and terminology that will help them present and apply interventions at all levels of the ecological system. Opportunities for this exploration should be presented throughout training and professional development in school psychology.

As noted by Sheridan and Gutkin (2003), the information gathering and research involved in school psychologists' decision-making has primarily been invested in illustrating and responding to problems with an individual based on within-child and *microsystem* factors, while *macrosystemic* issues have been virtually ignored. School psychologists need authentic training and professional development opportunities to support them with how to explore, conduct, and interpret research and exposure to the literature around *macrosystemic* issues (e.g. historical, sociological, and political dynamics) that are relevant to a child's school functioning. Utilizing Bronfenbrenner's ecological view on human development will likely enhance school psychologists' ability to critically analyze the programs and systems that influence the experiences of school-age Black boys and institute effective interventions and educational programming to meet their needs.

## Future Directions

The results from this study offer several suggestions for future research as well as an urgent implication for a shift in practice. With skills in traditional and nontraditional assessment, intervention, and consultation, school psychologists are science-practitioners and therefore research is the nature of their craft. An abundance of research can be generated given the findings from this study because school psychologists are always identifying problems, asking questions, and exploring possible answers and solutions. How can school psychologists utilize their craft as science-practitioners to reduce the negative school and social outcomes commonly experienced by Black boys? What specific roles can school psychologists play in proactive and early intervention efforts to reduce the negative school and social outcomes commonly experienced by Black boys?

This study demonstrates that school psychologists are knowledgeable about the problem underlying the premise of this investigation. School psychologists should not only be knowledgeable about the problem, but they should also be knowledgeable about interventions. What evidence-based interventions have been found to be effective specifically for Black boys experiencing academic or social difficulties in schools?

Utilizing Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework on human development, it is important to address interventions at different levels throughout the model. Scholars in school psychology have emphasized the need for a paradigm shift away from traditional assessments of within-child and *microsystemic* level factors (Reschly & Ysseldyke, 2002; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2003; Thomas & Grimes, 2002; Ysseldyke, et al., 1997; Ysseldyke, et al., 2006). This study encourages the development of an ecological examination tool/protocol (e.g. a checklist or set of specific questions) that can provide authentic and comprehensive traditional and nontraditional

assessment and intervention practices across the ecological framework. The development of an ecological examination tool/protocol for school psychologists to use will likely enhance decision-making that leads to positive school and long-term social outcomes for children. Researchers should study the effectiveness of an ecological examination tool/protocol by engaging in longitudinal case-studies that follow documentation of its use with school psychologists in schools with high numbers of Black boys typically experiencing negative school outcomes (e.g. Emotional Disturbance classification, drop-out, etc.). Guided by an ecological view of human development, there is great potential for a paradigm shift in school psychology.

While, practices in school psychology have traditionally focused on the capabilities of individuals and *microsystemic* level factors, school psychologists endorsed and can influence *exosystem* level factors. Those who felt most knowledgeable about the issues related to Black boys also attributed the pattern of negative outcomes to both *exosystem* and *macrosystem* level factors. *Exosystem* and *macrosystem* level issues in the special education eligibility assessment process will require research and discussions on historical, sociological, and political issues around power and privilege. School psychologists should be able to identify and discuss the socially constructed nature of race, gender, and disability as it relates to the student in question. Various questions acknowledging social status and the cultural cost of certain decisions made in schools should be addressed in the assessment process and school psychological research, for example: What are the school and social consequences for labeling Black boys with an emotional or behavioral disability label?

Graham (1997) argued that an individual's causal explanations for an outcome has an impact on his/her behavior. How do school psychologists' knowledge-base and explanations for the negative patterns experienced by many Black boys affect the educational programming



decisions that are made? As agents of a sorting and classification structure school psychologists have a lot of decision-making power within the *exosystem*. The *exosystem* can be described as a setting designed to fulfill specific social and cultural needs by transmitting a body of prescribed knowledge, skills, values, and norms considered to be essential for society (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Irvine, 1990). In analyzing these sorting practices it has been argued that “race has been an essential ingredient in the construction of American public education, and inevitably, of special education” (Harry & Klinger, 2006, p.10). Can school psychologists recognize and discuss the link between the historical and current structure of school, special education, the negative outcomes experienced by many Black boys, and institutional racism?

Future research should examine the cultural competence of school psychologists, specifically as it relates to race. How do school psychologists reflect on race in their assessment, intervention, and consultation practices? Future research in this area should expand beyond the quantitative framework. Further investigations should also be linked to courses in school psychology programs and professional development workshops for practitioners. These opportunities should also include pre and post-tests illustrating school psychologists’ knowledge, awareness, and skills before and after a course or workshop has been completed. In an effort to strengthen school psychologists’ knowledge-base and ability to critically analyze the various causal attributions across the ecological systems, a course for those in training or a series of workshops for those in practice should present an ecological examination of the schooling experiences of Black boys with an emphasis on *exosystem* and *macrosystem* level issues relevant to school and social outcomes.

Overall, this study suggests that school psychologists’ knowledge and causal attributions across the ecological systems influences the educational programming decisions made for Black

boys. Increasing school psychologists' knowledge-base and ability to critically analyze the causal attributions made across the ecological systems, especially the *exosystem* and *macrosystem*, will aide them in providing authentic and comprehensive assessment and intervention practices. In short, as gatekeepers of educational programming, school psychologists must take an active role in transforming the negative school and social outcomes commonly experienced by Black boys.

## APPENDIX A

Table 10

### *Pilot Study Demographics*

Participants' Demographics	Total Number	Percent
Total Participants	28	100%
<b>Age</b>		
<21	0	0%
21-29	20	71%
30-39	4	14%
40-49	2	7%
50-59	2	7%
>60	0	0%
<b>Racial Identity/Ethnicity</b>		
White/European American	22	79%
Black/African American	4	14%
Latino	0	0%
Hispanic	0	0%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	2	7%
Native American/Indian American	0	0%
Other (please specify)	0	0%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	4	14%
Female	24	86%
<b>School Psychology Position</b>		
Training	18	64%
Practice	10	36%
Retired	0	0%
<b>Educational Level (received or in progress)</b>		
Educational Specialist Degree (EdS)	10	36%
Masters Degree	7	25%
Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD)	10	36%
Other degree type (please specify)	1	4%
	28	100%

## Appendix B

Table 11

### *Postcard Demographics*

Participants' Demographics	Total Number	Percent
Total Participants Started	172	100%
<b>Age</b>		
<21	0	0%
21-29	71	41%
30-39	40	23%
40-49	11	6%
50-59	39	23%
>60	11	6%
<b>Racial Identity/Ethnicity</b>		
White/European American	137	80%
Black/African American	16	9%
Latino	5	3%
Hispanic	1	1%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	8	5%
Native American/Indian American	0	0%
Other (please specify)	5	3%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	23	13%
Female	149	87%
<b>School Psychology Position</b>		
Training	11	6%
Practice	89	52%
Retired	12	7%
Other (please specify)	60	35%
<b>Educational Level (received or in progress)</b>		
Educational Specialist Degree (EdS)	62	36%
Certificate of Advanced Graduate Standing (CAGS)	13	7%
Advanced Graduate Studies Certificate (AGS)	2	1%
Masters Degree	12	7%
Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD)	79	46%
Other degree type (please specify)	4	2%
<b>Years in practice</b>		
None	0	0%
<2 years	66	38%
2-5 years	23	13%
6-10 years	31	18%
11-20 years	21	12%
21-30 years	13	8%
31-40 years	10	6%
>40 years	8	5%

## Appendix C

Table 12

### *Email Demographics*

Participants' Demographics	Total Number	Percent
Total Participants Started	217	100%
<b>Age</b>		
<21	1	.5%
21-29	117	58%
30-39	47	22%
40-49	20	9%
50-59	26	9%
>60	6	2%
<b>Racial Identity/Ethnicity</b>		
White/European American	178	82%
Black/African American	21	10%
Latino	3	1%
Hispanic	4	2%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	6	3%
Native American/Indian American	0	0%
Other (please specify)	5	2%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	30	14%
Female	187	86%
<b>School Psychology Position</b>		
Graduate Training	22	10%
University/Trainer	122	56%
Practice	47	22%
Retired	26	12%
Other (please specify)	0	0%
<b>Educational Level (received or in progress)</b>		
Educational Specialist Degree (EdS)	41	19%
Certificate of Advanced Graduate Standing (CAGS)	21	10%
Advanced Graduate Studies Certificate (AGS)	3	1%
Masters Degree	7	3%
Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD)	138	64%
Other degree type (please specify)	7	3%
<b>Years in practice</b>		
None	0	0%
<2 years	103	47%
2-5 years	31	14%
6-10 years	28	13%
11-20 years	17	8%
21-30 years	17	8%
31-40 years	16	7%
>40 years	5	2%

## Appendix D

### The “Special Education” of Black Boys On-Line Questionnaire

## The "Special Education" of Black Boys

### Introduction

#### ON-LINE STUDY CONSENT FORM

As a school psychologist in practice or training, you are invited to participate in this study for the dissertation work of Nia Nunn Makepeace. The title of the project is The “Special Education” of Black Boys: An Ecological Examination. Please read the following consent statement, print a copy for your records, and click on “next” below if you consent to participating in the questionnaire. The reason for this research is to explore the overrepresentation of minorities, particularly Black boys, in special education. There are 60 items and we estimate that it will take 15 minutes or less to complete.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate at all or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. Your participation is anonymous; no specific names or identification numbers are requested. General demographic information is requested (i.e. age, gender, years in practice, etc.). The Internet Protocol (IP) address from which you complete the questionnaire is recognized by the provider of the online survey (www.surveymonkey.com), however, this information is not shared with the researchers. There are no risks or individual benefits associated with completing this questionnaire.

The data will be secured by the two investigators listed below and will be kept for five years. If you have any questions about this study you may call or e-mail the investigators. You are encouraged to ask questions.

- Nia Nunn Makepeace, B.A.; Michigan State University, Department of Counseling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Special Education, East Lansing, MI, 48824. Telephone: (517) 432-0843. E-mail: [nunnnia@msu.edu](mailto:nunnnia@msu.edu)

- Dr. Jean A. Baker; Michigan State University, Department of Counseling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Special Education, East Lansing, MI, 48824. Telephone: (517) 432-0843. E-mail: [jbaker@msu.edu](mailto:jbaker@msu.edu)

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this research and have your answers included in the data set by completing this on-line questionnaire. Research at Michigan State University involving human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Boards

(IRBs). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact - anonymously, if you wish - Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Director of the Human Subject Protection Programs at Michigan State University, by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, email: [irb@msu.edu](mailto:irb@msu.edu), or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

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Demographic Information
<b>Age</b> <input type="radio"/> <21 <input type="radio"/> 21-29 <input type="radio"/> 30-39 <input type="radio"/> 40-49 <input type="radio"/> 50-59 <input type="radio"/> >60
<b>Racial Identity/Ethnicity</b> <input type="radio"/> White/European American <input type="radio"/> Black/African American <input type="radio"/> Latino <input type="radio"/> Hispanic <input type="radio"/> Asian American/Pacific Islander <input type="radio"/> Native American/Indian American <input type="radio"/> Biracial/Other: (please specify) _____
<b>Gender</b> <input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female
<b>School Psychology Position</b> <input type="radio"/> Graduate Training <input type="radio"/> University/Trainer <input type="radio"/> Practice <input type="radio"/> Retired <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) _____
<b>Status (received or in progress)</b> <input type="radio"/> Educational Specialist Degree (EdS) <input type="radio"/> Certificate of Advanced Graduate Standing (CAGS) <input type="radio"/> Advanced Graduate Studies Certificate (AGS) <input type="radio"/> Masters Degree <input type="radio"/> Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD) <input type="radio"/> If your degree type is not listed above or you did not receive graduate degree in school psychology, please specify degree received or in progress _____
<b>School District Type (whether in practice or in current training field placement/practicum/internship)</b> <input type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private <input type="radio"/> Not in a school
<b>School Location (whether in practice or in current training field placement/practicum/internship)</b> <input type="radio"/> Urban <input type="radio"/> Rural <input type="radio"/> Suburban <input type="radio"/> Not in a school
<b>Years in practice</b> <input type="radio"/> none (currently in training) <input type="radio"/> <2 <input type="radio"/> 2-5 <input type="radio"/> 6-10 <input type="radio"/> 11-20 <input type="radio"/> 21-30 <input type="radio"/> 31-40 <input type="radio"/> >40

## What do you think?

**Black boys represent what percentage of the school-age population in the United States?**

- ☐ 3.7%
- ☐ 8.6%
- ☐ 15.4%
- ☐ 23.2%

**Black boys represent what percentage of the entire special education population in the United States?**

- ☐ 3%
- ☐ 7%
- ☐ 15%
- ☐ 20%

**Black boys represent what percentage of the population identified as educably mentally retarded (EMR)?**

- ☐ 5%
- ☐ 12%
- ☐ 20%
- ☐ 41%

**Black boys represent what percentage of the population identified as emotionally disturbed (ED) population?**

- ☐ 2%
- ☐ 7%
- ☐ 14%
- ☐ 21%

**Black boys represent what percentage of the population identified as having a specific learning disability (SLD)?**

- ☐ 6%
- ☐ 12%
- ☐ 18%
- ☐ 30%

**What percentage of Black boys graduate from high school in the United States?**

- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 25%
- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 75%

**What percentage of federal prison inmates are Black males?**

- ☐ 13%
- ☐ 24%
- ☐ 51%
- ☐ 85%



### Why do you think this happens?

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**... their low self-esteem.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**... their low effort/ambition.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**...their internalized feelings of inferiority.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**...their angry/oppositional/aggressive behaviors.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**...their lack of value for education.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

### Why do you think this happens?

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**... a lack of nurturing, encouraging, & positive relationships with teachers.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**... their lack of interest/connection to the curriculum.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**...their lack of trust/sense of belonging/connection to school.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**... a lack of parent involvement with school.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**... families lacking value of education.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

### Why do you think this happens?

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**... teacher stereotypes/negative beliefs/assumptions about Black males.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**... a lack of father figures/positive Black male role models.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**...biases in tracking/ability grouping processes.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**... biases in special education processes (i.e. referral).**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**...the cultural biases in special education test batteries.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

### Why do you think this happens?

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**.... the exclusionary factors (culture/environmental) in identifying a disability.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**.... the segregated nature of schooling.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**... the fact that school mirrors a highly individualistic social structure.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**... socially constructed perceptions of race and gender that grant them an inferior status.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**... institutional racism.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

### Why do you think this happens?

I believe that the patterns of school and social outcomes for Black boys are due to...

**.... a political agenda.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

**School psychologists can play a role in reducing the overrepresentation of Black boys in special education.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

**School psychologists can play a role in reducing the patterns of negative school and social outcomes for Black boys.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

### How familiar are you with the following terms & concepts?

Rate your understanding of the following terms & concepts:

Term/Concept	Very Limited	Limited	Good	Very Good
Culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethnicity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Race	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural Hegemony	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethnocentrism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pluralism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Institutional Racism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Racial Identity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
White Privilege	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anti-Racism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Burden of Blackness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acting White	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intersection of race & class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Involuntary/caste-like minority status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social construction of disability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social construction of race	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social construction of gender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Achievement Ideology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Human agency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social reproduction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Please select where you learned about these terms, concepts, and issues (may select more than one):**

- ☐ Graduate training
- ☐ Professional development/In-service opportunities
- ☐ Personal interest/inquiry
- ☐ Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### OPEN ENDED QUESTION

**What areas in training and practice are in need of attention in order to reduce the overrepresentation of Black boys in special education? (Optional)**

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## **Thank you for your participation!**

The information provided will be helpful in addressing and reducing the special education overrepresentation patterns, and negative school and social outcomes experienced by many Black boys. Please read the following passage, as it illustrates some of the vexing realities experienced by this population:

Black boys make up 15% of the special education population, despite comprising only 8.6% of the national public school population. Despite the conclusion of the Larry P. v. Riles (1979) case, in which the courts supported the charge that cultural biases are embedded in IQ tests and assessment procedures and therefore place Black children, particularly boys, at a significant disadvantage, the traditional assessment processes generally remain the same.

Black boys constitute 20% of the special education population classified as educable mentally retarded (EMR), 21% of those classified as emotionally disturbed (ED), and 12% of those diagnosed with a specific learning disability (SLD). Black students have been noted to be at the highest risk of receiving a disability label in schools, with a risk index of 14.28% compared to 12.10% for White students. Twenty-percent of teachers make 80% of the special education referrals and of the Black students referred. Of these, 92% of referred children are tested and 73% are placed.

Black boys are represented disproportionately in many markers of poor school outcomes, including school drop out, academic underachievement, and special education placement. Less than 50% of Black boys graduate from high school, over 51% of inmates in state and federal male prisons are Black. Of Black males with special education labels, 75% of those who graduate are found to be unemployed two years after graduation and 40% are arrested. For many, success in life is greatly dependent upon success in school.

## Appendix E

### PILOT STUDY CONSENT FORM

As a school psychologist in practice or training, you are invited to participate in this pilot study for the dissertation work of Nia Nunn Makepeace. The title of the project is *The “Special Education” of Black Boys: An Ecological Examination*.

- 1) The reason for this research is to explore the overrepresentation of minorities, particularly Black males, in special education. From this research, we hope to understand how special education overrepresentation can be authentically examined in school psychology practice, training, and research.
- 2) If you choose to participate in this pilot study, you will be asked to attend a one-hour focus group meeting after having completed the 30 minute [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) on-line questionnaire. In this focus group meeting participants will provide feedback on the clarity and design of the questionnaire. More specifically, participants will be asked to rate the level of clarity, and comment on the readability, wording, length, and aspects of multicultural social desirability that may be of concern. These data will be used to refine the questionnaire for the second phase of the study which will be advertised to National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) members.
- 3) Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate at all or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty.
- 4) The results of your participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without your prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. No one will be able to identify your results from this study. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will not in any way penalize you. You may have the results of the participation, to the extent that they can be identified as yours, returned to you, removed from the research records, or destroyed at any point prior to the end of the study.

The investigators will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project. You are encouraged to ask questions. You may talk with anyone on the research team during the study, or you may contact the researchers:

- Nia Nunn Makepeace, B.A.; Michigan State University, Department of Counseling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Special Education, East Lansing, MI, 48824.  
Telephone: (517) 230-5206. E-mail: [nunnnia@msu.edu](mailto:nunnnia@msu.edu)
- Dr. Jean A. Baker; Michigan State University, Department of Counseling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Special Education, East Lansing, MI, 48824.  
Telephone: (517) 432-0843. E-mail: [jbaker@msu.edu](mailto:jbaker@msu.edu)

If you agree to participate in the research, please sign below and return this form, with your questionnaire, in the attached postage-paid envelope.

Participant Signature

Date

Signatures of Investigators

Date

Research at Michigan State University involving human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact - anonymously, if you wish - Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Director of the Human Subject Protection Programs at Michigan State University, by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, email: [irb@msu.edu](mailto:irb@msu.edu), or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.



## Appendix F

### Pilot Study Recruitment Letter- Focus Group #1

Greetings School Psychologists,

My name is Nia Nunn Makepeace. I am a fourth year graduate student in the school psychology doctoral program at Michigan State University. I am inviting you to participate in the first phase (pilot study) of my dissertation. The title of the project is *The “Special Education” of Black Boys: An Ecological Examination*. The project explores the overrepresentation of minorities, particularly Black males, in special education.

Participation in the pilot study consists of completing a 30 minute (52 questions) on-line questionnaire on [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). The on-line questionnaire can be completed at anytime.

Participants who complete the on-line survey are also invited to one focus group meeting. In this focus group meeting participants will provide me with feedback on the clarity and design of the questionnaire. More specifically, participants will be asked to rate the level of clarity, and comment on the readability, wording, length, and the aspects of multicultural social desirability that may be of concern. These data will be used to refine the questionnaire for the second phase of the study which will be advertised to National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) members.

\* *Date: Thursday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007*

\* *Time: 4:00-5:30PM*

\* *Location: Intermediate School District (ISD) main Building Room 101*

Also.... snacks and beverages will be served!

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Nia Nunn Makepeace  
Michigan State University  
School Psychology Doctoral Candidate  
[nunnnia@msu.edu](mailto:nunnnia@msu.edu)  
#517-230-5206

## Appendix G

### Pilot Study Recruitment Letter- Focus Group #2

Greetings Fellow Students in School Psychology,

My name is Nia Nunn Makepeace. I am a fourth year graduate student in the school psychology doctoral program at Michigan State University. I am inviting you to participate in the first phase (pilot study) of my dissertation. The title of the project is *The “Special Education” of Black Boys: An Ecological Examination*. The project explores the overrepresentation of minorities, particularly Black males, in special education.

Participation in the pilot study consists of completing a 30 minute (52 questions) on-line questionnaire on [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). The on-line questionnaire can be completed at any time.

Participants who complete the on-line survey are also invited to one focus group meeting. In this focus group meeting participants will provide me with feedback on the clarity and design of the questionnaire. More specifically, participants will be asked to rate the level of clarity, and comment on the readability, wording, length, and the aspects of multicultural social desirability that may be of concern. These data will be used to refine the questionnaire for the second phase of the study which will be advertised to National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) members.

I would like to have this focus group meeting by the end of May. If you are interested in participating please contact me. In your reply please also include your availability on the following dates:

Monday 5/28 thru Friday 6/1

*\*Location- TBA*

*\*Expected focus group meeting time frame- 1 hour*

Also.... Coffee and hot tea will be served!

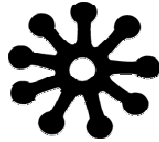
Thank you!

Sincerely,

Nia Nunn Makepeace  
Michigan State University  
School Psychology Doctoral Candidate  
[nunnnia@msu.edu](mailto:nunnnia@msu.edu)  
#517-230-5206

## Appendix H

### Main Study Postcard Recruitment



As a school psychologist in practice, graduate training, or retired you are invited to participate in this dissertation study. The title of the project is  
***The “Special Education” of Black Boys:  
An Ecological Examination.***

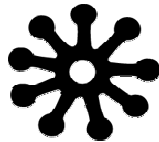
The project explores school psychologists’ perceptions of the overrepresentation of minorities, particularly Black boys, in special education.

*Questionnaire Web link:*

**<http://www.surveymonkey.com/SEBB>**

15 minute survey  
(60 items)

Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous; no specific names or identification numbers are requested.



**Research Team Contact Information:**

Nia Nunn Makepeace  
nunnnia@msu.edu

Jean A. Baker, Ph.D.  
jbaker@msu.edu

*Michigan State University*

## **Appendix I**

### **Main Study Email Recruitment**

As a school psychologist practitioner, graduate student, graduate trainer, or retired you are invited to participate in this dissertation study. The title of the project is: The “Special” Education of Black Boys: An Ecological Examination. The project explores school psychologists’ perceptions of the overrepresentation of minorities, particularly Black boys, in special education.

Questionnaire Web-Link:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/SEBB>

15 minute survey  
(60 items)

Your email address was obtained from the NASP 2008 Convention booklet. Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous; no specific names or identification numbers are requested.

Research Team Contact Information:

Nia Nunn Makepeace – [nunnnia@msu.edu](mailto:nunnnia@msu.edu)

Dorinda Carter, Ed.D. – [dcarter@msu.edu](mailto:dcarter@msu.edu)

Michigan State University

The late Dr. Jean A. Baker was my advisor, dissertation director, and mentor. Before she passed this survey was developed and cannot be changed. Dr. Baker’s contact information is still provided on the on-line consent form but Dr. Dorinda Carter ([dcarter@msu.edu](mailto:dcarter@msu.edu)) is the new director for this study.

Thank you kindly in advance!

Nia Nunn Makepeace  
Michigan State University  
School Psychology Doctoral Candidate  
[nunnnia@msu.edu](mailto:nunnnia@msu.edu)  
[niamakepeace@gmail.com](mailto:niamakepeace@gmail.com)  
[nnunmak@icsd.k12.ny.us](mailto:nnunmak@icsd.k12.ny.us)

"We must be active critiques of existing systems" ~Asa Hilliard, Ph.D.

"Schools must be the engine of social transformation" ~John Dewey

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