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School Psychologists Experiences with Assessment of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

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Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

Department of Psychology

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS EXPERIENCES WITH ASSESSMENT OF
CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS

By Mali Y. Land

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Psychology

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**PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

Dissertation Approval

This is to certify that the thesis presented to us by Mali Y Land
on the 21 day of September, 2015, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology, has been examined and is
acceptable in both scholarship and literary quality.

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Abstract

This qualitative research study responds to school psychologists' experiences in assessment of culturally and linguistically diverse students. African Americans and other minority groups have been excessively represented in special education programs such as Mentally Retarded and Emotionally Disturbed Programs. English Language Learners have also been targeted and placed in special education programs unfairly due to culture and language. This research study used grounded theory approach in which several themes and subthemes emerged regarding the serious problem of overrepresentation of minority students in special education. The themes and subthemes included: Referrals (Behavior, Academic, Pre-referral); Materials (Tools); Culturally Competent (Reflection and Essence); Assessment (Students and Families); Overrepresentation (Bias Testing, Undetermined, Lack of skills, Language, Race/ethnicity, School culture/climate; and Roles (Duties). Based on this research study, which involved the recruitment of fifteen school psychologists (1 male and 14 female) the findings indicated the majority of school psychologists were not using all of the basic elements of a culturally competent assessment; therefore, their practices may be adding to the overrepresentation of minority students in special education programs.

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SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS EXPERIENCES

Chapter 1

Statement of Problem

African Americans have been the subject of inequality in education for over 100 years, despite legislation such as the 1954 “Brown v Board of Education” Supreme Court decision that outlawed segregation (Blanchett, Mumford & Beachum, 2005). Specifically, this inequality has been manifested in the disproportionate assignment of African American children to special education classrooms (Blanchett, 2009). Initially, recognition of this problem may be traced to Dunn’s (1968) research of African American students that were classified as mildly retarded and placed in special education self-contained programs. More than half of those students came from “low status backgrounds”. This claim has also extended to other special education classifications, such as Learning Disabled and Emotionally Disturbed. The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) in Ohio collected data from 1974-1978 and found that African American students’ enrollment in the Mentally Retarded (MR) classrooms declined overall but that there was an increase in the enrollment of students who were considered as having Learning Disabilities.

During the 1980s, overrepresentation of these students continued; Wright and Santa Cruz (1983) examined special education programs in California, in which, Latino students were overrepresented and placed in special education classrooms for students with mental retardation, learning disabilities and speech and language impairments. African Americans were overrepresented in programs for students who were learning disabled. In 1989, Meier, Stewart, and England studied 174 U.S. school districts and found that the effects of social class and race impacted African American students.

These school districts had over 15, 000 students in enrollment; however, African Americans made up only 1% of the student population. The researchers found that the school districts were using “sorting practices” associated with racial disproportions; and African American students had a three times greater probability, than a white student to be placed in a class for students with mild mental retardation. These students were also seen as discipline problems and received punishments and suspensions. In 1992, the U. S. Department of Education findings also indicated that minorities in special education programs represented a gap higher than the general school population. Grossman (1998) reported that African American and Hispanic males were more likely than their Caucasian peers to be placed in special education. Asian Americans, however, are underrepresented in special education but are overrepresented in programs for students who are gifted and talented (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Comparisons were made of ethnic or racial minorities and a disproportionate number of these groups were enrolled in special education, especially for those living in poverty or attending schools in impoverished areas (Oswald, Coutinho, Bets & Nguyen, 2001).

Law suits were filed against school boards over proper assessments and unfair placements of minority students in special education. In the early 1970s in California, a class action suit was filed on behalf of “minority children,” who were overrepresented in the Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR) classrooms. In 1979, Judge Peckham ruled that standardized intelligence tests “are racially and culturally biased”; he put a ban on IQ testing for placement in EMR classes. In 1984, the 9th Circuit court of appeals upheld

Judge Peckham's ruling. In 1986, California issued a directive to ban IQ testing of African American students for placement in all special education programs.

In 2007, The 29th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act revealed that African American students were 1.5 times more likely to be placed in special education than same aged students in all other racial and ethnic groups combined. African American students were 2.86 times more likely to be placed in programs for students who were mentally retarded and were 2.28 times more likely to be placed in programs for students who were emotionally disturbed than same aged students in other racial and ethnic groups combined.

Biased assessments are a cause of the disproportionality of minority students in special education. Grant (1992) reported problems with standardized testing, which began with the Larry P v. Riles case in 1979, in which a judge ruled that IQ tests discriminate against African American children. School psychologists are responsible for assessing students and making educational decisions for their future. Kearns et al. (2005) found that school psychologists, like teachers, received inadequate training and suffer from cultural and class insensitivities. They also found that school psychologists are not equipped with adequate tools to assess minority children.

A cultural competent approach to assessing minority students may reduce the overrepresented placement of these students in special education. The basic elements of this kind of assessment include flexible and alternative procedures which should be presented whenever a student from a non-mainstreamed culture is being evaluated. Cultural competent assessment includes knowledge and skills that integrate culturally sensitive attitudes, knowledge, and skills into their consultation, intervention strategies,

and evaluation practices. Culturally competent assessment provides a commitment to data collection that does not contribute to overrepresentation; rather, it assists in identifying possible sources of bias throughout the educational process (Skiba et al. 2002).

According to the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) (2009), using a culturally competent approach to assessing learners who are culturally and linguistically diverse reduces their risk for placement in special education. Using fair and unbiased assessment tools are highly recommended. Standardization poses a threat to minority students because most standardized and norm referenced tests have a small percentage of minority representation, yet these students are being administered similar tests. Tasks from standardized tests may be administered to determine those skills that the student knows; however, if the student's background is different from the majority group on which it was normed, then it is unfair to use the normative score to draw conclusions regarding what the student needs and the subsequent special education eligibility.

Teachers who are unbiased and aware of their own cultural stereotypes are also important in reducing special education referrals for minority students. Many teachers were referring minority students to special education based on whether or not they felt a student was unteachable or threatening (Hale-Benson, 1982; Harry & Anderson, 1995; Kunjufu, 1985). These referrals were subjective in nature and were influenced by the teachers' biased cultural beliefs, and norms. These biases were noted in referrals of male students but were less observable when the teacher was African American (Serwatka, et al., 1995). Research suggests that there is a mismatch between the culture of a school

and its diverse student body. Ford and Webb (1994) suggested that teachers needed to be trained in cultural competency. Gilbert and Gay (1985) found that African American students were being classified because the general education teachers did not meet the cultural needs of the students. Irving and Hudley (2008) suggested that African American males' cultural mistrusts and oppositional attitudes undermined their educational attainments.

The use of culturally competent assessments has been studied among school psychologists. In 1997, Ochoa, Rivera, and Ford surveyed bilingual school psychologists' use of cultural competent assessments. Nearly 70% of them believed that they did not receive adequate training and were not using a culturally competent assessment. More recently, Ochoa et al. (2004) conducted a study that examined critical components of the assessment procedures that school psychologists use when conducting evaluations for emotional disturbance of English Language Learners. They surveyed 1500 NASP school psychologists and over 90% used methods which included behavioral observations, child interviews, teacher interviews, parent interviews, and rating scales. However, Loe and Miranda (2005) surveyed 500 NASP school psychologists and found that the majority of them indicated they were satisfied with their graduate training and were confident in their skills when doing culturally competent assessments. The researchers, however, believed that diversity training and professional development was still needed because some school psychologists were dissatisfied with their training.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine school psychologists' experiences when evaluating students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, using

a culturally competent approach to assessment when a referral is made for special education. It is hoped that through this study, school psychologists will be more cognizant about using culturally competent assessments which may aid in the reduction of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse in special education.

Need of the study

The need for this research study supports the reduction of minority placement in special education programs. Placement of minority students in special education results, over time, in lower standards expectations for the student. Research suggests that special education programs lack a pedagogy which helps students to use critical thinking skills. These students also have limited access to the general education curriculum, which stifles their growth (Brown, 2010; Osher, Cartledge, Osward, Sutherland, Artiles & Coutinho, 2004). The implications of special education on minority students include higher rates of arrest and drop outs, lower rates of independent living and employment (Affleck, Edgar, Levine, & Kortering, 1990; Losen & Wellner, 2001).

Chapter Two

History of Disproportionate Representation of African American Students

The disproportionate representation of African American students exists in special education. The root of this problem can be traced back through years of segregation and oppression of African Americans in the United States (Smedley, 2007). The decision of Plessy vs. Ferguson “separate but equal” was passed, but States continued to discriminate against minorities, especially African Americans. In the beginning of the 20th century Black communities were being attacked by angry white mobs. These mobs would attack Black communities and burn schools (Harmer, 2001). It was not until the late 1960s through early 1970s, however, that researchers began to examine, closely, race differences in special education.

In 1968, Dunn wrote an article for *Exceptional Children*. In the article he described how African American students have been overrepresented in special education, self-contained classrooms. He also viewed overrepresentation of these students as a violation of their civil rights. Similar researchers such as Mercer (1973) found that public schools identified African American students as being in the mentally retarded classification more than in any other classification. This original research in this area began over 40 years ago, but disproportionate numbers continue to exist for black students.

The significant civil rights case of Brown v. Board of Education(1954) provided legislation that provided equal access to education regardless of the country’s educational practices, in which Black students were kept away from their White peers (Losen, & Welner, 2001). This legislation would be challenged over and over again in the court

system with cases such as *Hobson v Hansen* (1967, 1969). In this case African American children were assigned to lower classes in Washington D.C., based on scores of a group administered aptitude test. The judge on this case ruled that the public school district of Washington D.C. was wrong because the tracking system segregated students by race, therefore placing them in lower classes that were educationally inferior. Overall, the judge ruled that the tracking system was a violation of the equal protection laws and ordered that the system be disbanded. Other court cases surfaced, based on standardized testing and placement of minorities in special education. The case of *Diana v. State Board of Education* (1970) was a class action suit in California involving nine Mexican American children placed in special education classroom for mentally retarded children. The basis of the placement was on the Stanford-Binet and or Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children's IQ scores. Diana was tested in English but Spanish was her native language. Based on the results of the IQ test, Diana received an IQ score of 30. She was later tested in her native language and her IQ score jumped 49 points and she was no longer was eligible for special education. The Judge on this case ruled that children must be assessed in their primary languages or with sections of the tests that do not require knowledge of the English language (Reschly, 1979). That case is over 40 years old and students are still being classified MR or with other disabilities based on English-only IQ tests. The *Guadalupe Organization, Inc. v. Tempe Elementary School District* (1972) was a case filed on behalf of the Yaqui Indian and Mexican American students. The Judge also ruled that the school district must evaluate the child in the student's native language and that a comprehensive evaluation be used; this included assessments of

adaptive functioning and an interview with parents in their homes. This case also required informed consent for evaluation and placement.

A similar case *Larry, P. v. Riles* (1984) was filed in San Francisco on the basis that African American students were unfairly placed in educable mentally retarded special education classes. The claim also identified the fact that the school district used only an IQ test in determining eligibility for special education. The Judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and the San Francisco school district could no longer place African American children in educable mentally retarded, special education classrooms based solely on IQ test scores.

In the 1980s, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights began conducting surveys in attempts to collect more data on this subject, although the disproportionate numbers of minority students continued to rise. There were no clear answers about the reasons why this was happening. It was not until 1997, with Individuals Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), that policy changes were put in place to remediate disproportionality in special education at the state and local levels. It was made even clearer with the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004. Under this reauthorization, states must monitor disproportionate numbers of minority students in special education and review these practices if disproportionality is found. School districts are allowed funding (Part B) for early intervening services or programs (Skiba et al, 2008).

Measurement Issues

Disproportionality refers to the representation of one group that exceeds expectations for that group and differs substantially from the representation of other groups. Disproportionality is measured by composition index, in which one group is over

or underrepresented, compared with the general population. It is also measured by the risk index and risk ratio, in which one group is found eligible for special education services at a rate that is different from the other groups (Skiba et al., 2008). Under the composition index, the latest research indicates that African American students represent 33% of special education students classified as Mentally Retarded, but the total population is only 17 % (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Under the risk index and risk ratio, a ratio of 1.0 indicates exact proportionality but ratios above or below 1.0 means an over or underrepresentation. If African American risk for Mentally Retarded identification is 2.64% but White students are 1/18%, this suggests that African Americans are twice more likely to represent that category than white students (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

Patterns of Disproportionality

According to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR); (Chinn & Hughes, 1987; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Finn, 1982) found patterns of disproportionality, especially with African American children, who are represented in disability categories of Mental Retardation and Emotional Disturbance. American Indian and Alaskan Native students were reported to be overrepresented in the category of Learning Disabled. In 2006, the U.S. Department of Education's 26th annual report to Congress on the Implementation of the IDEA, reported that American Indian/Alaskan Native students were disproportionately represented under the category of Developmental Delay. Asian and Pacific Islander students were represented under the classification of Hearing impairments and autism, higher than other students, and Latino students were represented as higher under the classification of Hearing impaired. Despite the differences with the minority groups, African Americans were the most highly

overrepresented group in all special education programs in every state in the union (Parrish, 2002). Parrish also noted that overrepresentation increased if that minority group's population was high. Finn (1982) reported similar results; disproportionality increased in smaller school districts when the minority enrollment was high. In larger districts, it was highest when minority enrollment was 30% or less.

Although patterns of disproportionality seemed to be consistent for the African American students, it is not the same for the Latino group. Data from states such as California or New York showed overrepresentation of Latino groups; however, on a national level, this group is underrepresented (Chinn & Hughes, 1987; National Center on Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, NCCRES, 2006). There have been limited studies to evaluate these discrepancies (Klingner, Artiles, & Mendez Barletta, 2006). One reason is the difficulty in distinguishing between language acquisition problems for bilingual students and a language disability (Barrera, 2006; Ortiz, 1997). Some data exist, although minimal, which reports minorities are overrepresented in restrictive placements and underrepresented in least restrictive placements (Fierros & Conroy, 2002; Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Gallini, Simmons, & Feggins-Azziz, 2006b).

Causes of Disproportionality

Some causes for overrepresentation of minority students in special education include test bias, which was the basis in the Larry P. v Riles (1972) case. This case was based on bias IQ testing against African American students. Poverty may be considered a factor to disproportionate rate of minorities in special education. According to the National Research Council (2002) poverty is a contributing factor of poor behavioral and cognitive outcomes. However this belief is not highly supported in the literature.

Another cause for disproportionality of minority students in special education is the inequality of opportunities in general education. Students', whose educational experience is poor or limited, may be referred for special education services (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Harry, 1994). Resources in the poor districts, compared with resources in middle or upper classes, are very different. The diversity of the teaching staff also impacts disproportionality of minority students in special education. In a study done by Serwatka, Deering, and Grant (1995), as the teaching staff of African Americans increased, the classification of emotionally disturbed placement for African American students decreased. Ladner and Hammons (2001) did a similar study; when the teaching staff of White teachers increased, the eligibility numbers of minority students increased. It appears that disproportionality causes are much deeper than seems apparent on the surface, and race only continues to plague education of minority students. Other researchers list factors such as: inadequate teacher preparation and teachers' resistance to teaching in challenging areas (Darling-Hammond 2004). This researcher also suggests that minority students are more likely to be taught by teachers with less experience and expertise (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

Further examination of the resources and achievement gap between minority students and White students is needed. In a lengthy observational study by Greenwood, Hart, Walker, and Risley (1994), the inferior infrastructure of a poverty stricken school district resulted in the students receiving 57 fewer weeks of academic teaching than students in a wealthy-middle class school district. This resulted in an achievement gap of 0.3 to a gap of 3.5 grade levels by 6th grade. There appears to be unequal education

opportunities for students living in poverty, compared with those living in the wealthy or even middle classes.

Special Education Eligibility and Decision Making Processes

Overrepresentation of minority students in special education may also stem from the referrals and decision making process. Much of the research supports the idea that these problems start at the initial process, the referrals. In a study in 1991 by Gottlieb, teachers referred minority children more often than white children for behavioral issues. Referral data collected from 1975 and 2000, found that African Americans and Latinos were referred for special education more than any other minority group (Hosp and Reschly, 2003). It is uncertain if race plays a factor in these referrals. The research seems to indicate no solid reasons for teachers to make referrals other than the race of the student. That was the finding in a study by Bahr (1991), which determined that despite the differences of the students' academic and behavioral functioning, teachers described African American students as difficult, and a referral for special education was made. Intervention and referral teams seemed to impact the disproportionate representation of minority students in special education. Gravios and Rosenfield (2006) conducted a study and found that pre-referral practices can significantly change the outcomes of disproportionality among minority students. They found that school districts that used this approach and the instructional consultative model significantly reduced their special education referrals.

Despite federal legislation to protect minority students from overrepresentation, problems continued to exist. Discrepancies continue to plague disproportionality between actual practice and the due process outlined in IDEA. In a 1994 study by

Gottlieb, many of the minority students classified as learning disabled did not meet the learning disabilities discrepancy for identification. In 1998, researchers MacMillan and Reschly looked at the students in their state and found the half of them did not meet the criteria for Learning Disabled. In a study by Harry and Klinger (2006) disproportionality of minority students in special education includes: rates of special education referrals, the ethnicity of the teacher making the referral, input from the teacher at the eligibility conference, and no pre-referral strategies. More research is needed to determine if current special education eligibility determination processes contribute to inequities.

Behavior and Special Education Placement

African Americans are the most highly identified group, in comparison with any other minority group, for school suspensions. One study in a large, diverse school district found more than half of the African American males and one third of the African American females at a middle school received out of school suspensions during that school year. This was significantly less than White male students (25%) who received out of school suspensions. The middle school white female students received 9.3 % of out of school suspensions. Latino groups have not been consistently studied in this area.

Teachers who are not familiar in working with minority students often misinterpret their behaviors. Ferguson (2011), found that a teacher's stereotyping of African American males resulted in office referrals.

Strategies for Reducing Disproportionate Representation of Minority Students

In reviewing the literature it appears that there are many complex factors that explain the disproportionality of minority students in special education. But it appears

that African Americans, more than any other group, represent the majority of this disproportionality, regardless of contributing factors. Complex factors deserve complex, multifaceted strategies. In order for strategies to be carefully monitored for their effectiveness, an examination of the data is important. A standard data collection system is recommended as a universal way of assessing disproportionate rates across states. Using the data to develop interventions seems to be in the control of the people reviewing the data and depends on the cultural diversity of the audience confronting the data. Policy makers or those involved with creating interventions must consider interventions to closing the special education equity gaps and be willing to discuss culture, issues of race, ethnicity, gender and class (King, 2005; Patton, 1998).

Intervention plans to address disproportionality need to be comprehensive. They need to be carefully considered and researched in order to target disparities of minority students and must be evidence based. In order for these interventions to be successful schools districts need to have clever educational leaders. Principals need to offer teacher trainings in culturally responsive pedagogy (Klingner et al., 2005; Trent et al., 2008). Positive behavior supports are shown to be effective in addressing issues of classroom disruptions and school disciplines. But they should also be culturally sensitive (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Klingner et al. 2005). Students that are at risk should be targeted early and receive support. Heller et al. (1982) said it best, “It is the responsibility of teachers in the regular classroom to engage in multiple educational interventions and consider the effects of such interventions on a child experiencing academic failure before referring the child for a special education assessment”. In order to make fair and unbiased assessments of minority students it is suggested that a functional assessment model with a

high emphasis on context for understanding a student's behavior or academic problem be in place (Artiles & Trent, 1994). A comprehensive assessment should also include the parents of the student, who should be active participants in the pre-referral and response to intervention process (Harry, 2008; NASBE, 2002).

There clearly needs to be some kind of policy reform to eradicate the disproportionality issues. An examination of federal, state, and school district policies to create culturally responsive educational systems is highly recommended.

English Language Learners

Current research reports that the Latino population is expected to reach over 29% of the school age population by the year 2050. In 2050, the United States population is expected to increase by 50% more than in the year 2000. Other ethnic groups such as Pacific Islander and Native American populations will also increase, creating a huge diversity in the schools. According to the U.S. Census, states that are predicted to have the greatest increases in population are Florida, Texas, and California (U.S. Census, 2000). The U.S. Census reported in 2004 that nearly 20% of children five years and older speak a language other than English. There will be more and more children enrolling in public schools who need bilingual education or English as a Second Language (ESL) services. The United States Department of Education (2000) reports and describes English Language Learners as those students who were not raised in English speaking homes and have not obtained the skills needed to learn in an English environment (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). To qualify for ESL services, bilingual students must demonstrate that they are unable to learn in classrooms conducted solely in English due to insufficient knowledge of the English language in

listening, writing, speaking and reading skills. According to the National Assessment of Education Progress, 30% of eighth grade English Language Learners (ELL) in the U.S. were “basic” in reading, compared with their monolingual peers, who were 84% basic in reading (National Assessment of Education Progress, 2007).

School districts have played a major role in placing students with different backgrounds in certain categories; this is termed “tracking” (Nieto, 2004). Before this influx of bilingual students, it was African American students who had been unfairly tested and placed in tracking classes. These students are now being disproportionately tracked into remedial and lower level class in high school and are absent from honor level classes (Noguera, 2003).

Anderson et al. (2005), found that many school districts will identify and classify these students for special education, as a means of fixing the problem; this causes overrepresentation. They also found that these students were referred without receiving any kind of intervention. Ortiz et al. (1985) found that English Language learners are not special education students but, in fact, fall further behind academically when they are classified as learning disabled. In a study conducted by Reynolds et al, 2009, the number of classified English Language learners doubled. It has been reported that these students are more likely to drop out of school and be academically behind their monolingual peers. English language learners with disabilities are classified in high numbers as Learning Disabled, Mentally Retarded, and Emotionally Disturbed and are virtually nonexistent in gifted and talented classes (Losen & Orfield, 2002).

In order to assess these students properly, it is important to distinguish language/cultural differences from a disability. The student’s language acquisition or

proficiency should be determined first (Espinosa and Lopez, 2007). Research reports that students with limited English can orally communicate in social situations only after being in the U.S. one to two years, but it could take them nearly 8 years to become cognitively and academically proficient in English (Cummins 1981, 2005). Researchers have not agreed on the best way to test these students using a comprehensive language proficiency test (Klingner and Harry 2006). These tests do little to examine the stages of second language development. For example, teachers interpret a student being quiet and shy as having a disability rather than seeing that student quietly working to develop skills in the second language (Tabors, 2008). These students may learn at a slower pace due to the language differences, and should not be referred for special education.

Blanchett (2006) reported that ongoing disproportionality strongly indicates system problems, marginalization in the education system, and prejudice. Other researchers have found that no one factor alone explains disproportionality; however, demographic factors such as minority enrollment, proportion of teachers from minority backgrounds have been strong predictors of overrepresentation (Finn, 1982; Parrish, 2002; Serwatka, Deering, & Grant, 1995). Indicators of poverty (students who receive free lunch, and medium income) appear to be positively correlated with an overrepresentation of certain minority groups, such as Native Americans and African Americans (Coutinho, Oswald, & Best, 2002; Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Simmons, Feggins-Azziz, & Chung, 2005).

Other reasons include curriculum based assessments which have their foundation on standards of the English speaking culture (Huang, 2008, Popham, 2011). Questionable translations and psychometric properties of screen and evaluation measures

and the confusion by the school psychologists pose a threat to ELL students (Abedi 2006; Brown et. al. 2007), as well as insufficient sample sizes for test standardization and culturally biased test items. Some test instruments have been translated into Spanish but were normed with monolingual speakers in countries with no United States sample. The professional assessing the student is most likely the school psychologist, who may lack clarity about which assessment to use (Espinosa and Lopez 2007). A study by Hardin et al. (2007) reported that the DIAL-3 was used as a language proficiency test not as a developmental screening tool by 40% of the teachers polled. Other reasons include pressures on teachers to keep their scores up as per NCLB (No Child Left Behind). Unfortunately these students pose threats to teachers who are not specially trained in meeting these students' needs.

IDEA 2004 strongly recommends family participation. School professionals need to elicit participation from family members when assessing these students. Realizing language barriers may get in the way, school psychologists need to be creative in using other family members to help with interpretation and with advocating for services.

Samuel Ortiz (2002) suggests that culturally and linguistically diverse students should be assessed in a fair manner. Thus, nondiscriminatory assessment is considered a wide range approach that works together collectively to find as fair as possible, relevant information and data from which a fair decision can be made about whether or not a student needs special education. Ortiz best practices with nondiscriminatory assessment should be hypothesis driven. Nondiscriminatory assessments involve looking at interventions in a proactive manner instead of a reactive one. Therefore the purpose of evaluation is to enhance learning not to diagnosis it due to poor performance. Second,

assess and evaluate language proficiency. Third, assess and evaluate the opportunity for learning. Fourth, assess and evaluate educationally relevant cultural and linguistic factors. Fifth, evaluate, revise, and retest hypotheses. Sixth, determine the need for language assessment. Seventh, reduce bias in traditional testing practices. Last, utilize authentic and alternative assessment procedures, evaluate and interpret data within the context of the learning ecology.

Legislative Initiatives for Students

According to NASP (2008), No Child Left Behind initiatives were put in place to help students achieve to a greater degree. The data indicated that ethnic minorities, English Language Learners, low socioeconomic students and students receiving special education were at risk for continued failures in school. With this initiative and others mandated at the state and federal levels, teachers are faced with increased challenges in the classroom. Teachers will need to collaborate with school psychologists and other professionals in developing strategies to help these students make better academic strides. The U. S. Department of Labor (2006) has recognized a shortage of bilingual special education teachers and school psychologists. Many graduate programs have recognized this shortage and have included specialized teacher education programs with special education courses in order to better prepare teachers. Multicultural counseling and education courses have also been an asset in preparing school psychologists.

Educational Outcomes for English Language Learners

English Language Learners with disabilities gain the greatest benefits from special education teachers who can speak their native languages and have a sound understanding of their cultures and effectively address their needs (Baca & Cervantes,

2004). These students who are strong in their native languages will have an advantage in grasping the core content subject areas in English. Response for Intervention (RTI) is essential in helping these students. Documented interventions and collaborating with school psychologists and other staff personnel can put these students on the course of success. Teachers may also want to wait four or five years before considering a special education referral. Teachers should give these students enough time to learn the English language. Teachers may need to find other ways in assessing these students.

Zehler, et al. (2003) found English Language Learners with disabilities who received more instruction in English were less likely to receive ESL services or significant instruction in their native languages than were English Language Learners without disabilities. The study also reported that after three years, those English Language Learners with disabilities who were in self-contained special education programs and who received native language instruction and cultural development, attained higher levels of English language use than those students who were an inclusion class.

The goal for teaching all students is to help them reach their goals and be academically successful. The ultimate goal for teaching English Language learners with disabilities is to help them maximize their potential, cognitively and linguistically. Special education teachers who are directly involved with these students should utilize the students' languages and cultures in conjunction with a well balanced curriculum to facilitate new experiences, knowledge, and skills to be taught (Baca & Cervantes, 2004).

In 2007, Hammer et al. investigated the predictive relationships among bilingual children's receptive language abilities in English and in Spanish during their attendance at Head Start and during their emergent reading outcomes at the end of kindergarten. The

researchers specifically wanted to investigate the abilities of children who were exposed to English in the home before enrolling in a Head Start program and of children who were not expected to communicate in English until enrolling in Head Start. The results of the study revealed those children's English and Spanish receptive language abilities improved in the two years of enrolling in Head Start. The children who had been exposed to English in the home prior to enrolling in Head Start had higher English skills versus the other group who had higher Spanish skills. The study also revealed that changes in children's English language abilities during Head Start predicted abilities in identifying letters and words in English and Spanish as well as in reading abilities in both English and Spanish. It was also predicted that these students would have positive outcomes in reading when they got to kindergarten.

Educators' Beliefs about English Language Learners

Recent learning process and teaching discussions have overtly placed emphasis on teachers' behaviors and actions associated with their assumptions, motivation levels, and attitudes and perceptions (Bandura, 1993). These studies investigating teachers' beliefs are important in understanding the way that teachers organize and perceive instruction; they also provide insights into assessment and teaching practices, which have been related to students' outcomes (Johnson, 1992; Wilson & Wineburg, 1988).

Teacher efficacy is defined as "teachers' beliefs about their own effectiveness", which relates to how they teach students (Soodak & Podell, 1997). According to Bandura (1997), a teacher's sense of efficacy influences the kind of environment they create for their students as well as the ways in which they will introduce tasks in enhancing student learning.

In a study by Yilmaz (2011), who investigated self-efficacy beliefs among Turkish primary and high school English Foreign Language teachers, indicated a positive relationship between the teachers' sense of self- efficacy and their perceived levels of language proficiency. The results also indicated that the more proficient the English Foreign language teachers perceived themselves in four basic skills, the more efficacious they felt. Overall they will be true advocates for their students in helping them succeed.

Hardin et al. (2009) did a study that involved investigating parent and professional perspectives concerning special education services for preschool Latino children. They found that professionals are making efforts with Latino children but feel there are still many barriers. They also reported needing professional development on cultural practices, methods for addressing culturally and linguistic IEP goals, and second language acquisition. Professionals also reported that they need a parent tool in order to interview parents in assessing their child's language experience; they also need the use of tools that measure fidelity, that assists them in working with interpreters and providing them training and also training in helping teachers use assessment and screening tools to English Language learners.

Carlson et al. (2002) conducted an extensive nationwide survey study of personnel who had different perspectives on the educational process of students with special needs; this study found that they were not skillful in accommodating the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. However, those participants who were skillful in teaching these students reported using strategies that were different from those who were not skillful. Some of the strategies included teaching key vocabulary prior to the lesson, developing lessons specifically designed for English language development

and extending language development opportunities. The teachers who were fluent in the language that was the same as their students reported using the native language of the students to teach English language skills and academic concepts.

Paneque (2004) did a study of the efficacy of teachers of special education and English Language Learners with disabilities and found that proficiency in the native language of the student was positively correlated with high teacher efficacy and accounted for predicting teachers' perceived efficacy. The participants reported that having experienced acculturation and speaking English as a second language was most helpful because it allowed them to speak more successfully to their students. Other participants reported that knowledge of the students' language facilitated a better understanding of how to teach the students as well as how to communicate effectively with the students' parents. Teachers hold their own values, knowledge, beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes about diversity from their own experiences (Tirri, Husu, & Kananen, 1999). In a study by Lee et al. (2007), the researchers interviewed one teacher and attempted to understand her experiences in working with culturally and linguistically diverse children. The findings of the study indicated that the teacher believed that English Language Learners and their families' issues of diversity were very important to her. She also believed in the importance of interacting socially with English Language learners. Qualities such as having a positive attitude, accepting differences, having an understanding of their cultures, and having a supportive approach to instructional practices were crucial in advocating for these students.

Culturally Competent Assessment

In 1990, American Psychological Association, (APA) published *Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic, Linguistic and Culturally Diverse Populations*, to encourage psychologists to consider how language can influence behavior when working with diverse groups. These guidelines also considered the validity of the methods and procedures to assess minority groups, as well as assistance in making interpretations of the data within the context of a person's linguistic and cultural characteristics.

Being culturally competent can be defined as having skill and competence when selecting and using culturally appropriate methods, tools, and procedures that are designed to reduce bias; it also requires knowledge of and familiarity with the persons' cultural factors and having the ability to evaluate data about the content of that culture as well as understanding language development, second language acquisition, bilingual education, or English as a Second Language(ESL); it also requires their relationship with school based learning and achievement and the ability to communicate effectively and competently in the native language of the person being evaluated (Cummins, 1984; Hakuta, 1986;Krashen, 1985;Leigh, 1998).

Cultural competence reflects knowledge of direct experience with values, attitudes, beliefs, and customs of a culture that can be used as a guide and context for evaluating and collecting data for all assessment (Leigh, 1998). Linguistic competence is reflective in two ways. The first is in the ability to communicate effectively in a person's native language; the second is having knowledge of first and second language

development along with instruction methodology and pedagogy (Sandoval & Dublin, 1998).

Research has reflected the fact that both cultural and linguistic differences are significant factors that may influence an individual's performance on achievement, psychological, or language tests (Camos-Diaz & Grenier, 1998; Cummins, 1984; Frisby, 1998; Sandoval et al.; 1998; Valdes & Figuero, 1994).

The assessment process is subject to bias when there is a failure to account for cultural influences such as the concepts of time, worldviews, acculturation, beliefs, values, attitudes, normative behaviors and expectations (Frisby, 1998; Solvia & Ysseldyke, 1991).

According to National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), using a culturally competent approach to assessing diverse learners reduces their risk for placement in special education. Using fair and unbiased assessment tools are highly recommended. Standardization poses a threat to minority students because most standardized and norm referenced tests have a small percentage of minority representation, yet these students are being administered similar tests. Tasks from standardized tests may be administered to find out what skills the student knows; however, if the student's background is different from the majority group on which it was normed, it is unfair to use the normative score to draw conclusions regarding the students' needs and then, using that information for special education eligibility.

NASP also suggest that culturally competent assessments should involve the use of interpreters. Interpreters can communicate in the students' native languages and gain knowledge and information about their skills. Using interpreters or bilingual teachers can

rule out a language disorder in a student's native language and prove the strength of native language skills. Understanding the impact of second language acquisition is also needed when assessing bilingual students. If a student has previously been taught in his or her native language; school psychologists need to assess those skills first, not the skills taught in English. Students who are being taught in English need time to learn English before those language skills can be properly assessed.

According to NASP, systematic observations are important in a culturally competent approach to assessing minority students. Data that are collected in different settings can provide more information about the student's potential. In-depth parent interviews are also important in a culturally competent approach to assessing minority students. The purpose of the parent interview is to gain information about the parents' understanding of their child's behavior and needs. Parent interviews provide information on the identity, value systems and behavior standards of the student. Non biased cognitive or intellectual assessments are equally important in assessing minority students. Once again, intellectual assessments are not equally standardized on minority students. The student's degree of acculturation affects performance on these standardized methods. Nonverbal tests may be less biased because most IQ tests use vocabulary with which the student is not familiar. An example of these test are the Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test (UNIT), The Leiter International Performance Scale, Revised (Leiter-R), Differential Ability Scales, 2nd Edition (DAS II), and the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children, 2nd Edition (KABC-II). These tests are highly recommended for use with minority students as opposed to the Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children.

Finally, NASP reports that social and emotional functioning is also important when assessing bilingual students. When these students are being referred or when there are behavior problems, the team must consider their stage of acculturation. Stressors of acculturation can mimic disabilities or mental health problems. Therefore, a functional behavioral analysis, response to intervention, behavioral environmental interaction analysis at home and school, along with child psychopathology evaluation by professionals who specialize in cultural differences can minimize bias. Adaptive functioning of bilingual students is important when ruling out intellectual disability. According to federal code, if students have average adaptive functioning in their homes and communities, they would not meet the criteria for educational classification of cognitive disability at school.

In order to avoid over representation of minority students, culturally competent assessments have been highly valued and have been considered an evidence based practice for use by school psychologists when considering special education eligibility. Securing valid results includes selecting appropriate materials for the assessment as well as selecting testing materials that have been validated for the population to which the student being assessed belongs (Zins et al 2002). Culturally competent assessments should be used to analyze data fairly; therefore the importance of this type of assessment is not only to identify or classify but to also to inform appropriate instructional interventions, accommodations and teaching modalities (Zins et al, 2002).

Chapter 3

Method

Overview of Research Design

This study used qualitative research. In qualitative research, the researcher is aiming to get a deep understanding of a specific event. It looks at broad themes and patterns found among a group of participants in a social setting. Creswell (1998) recommended utilizing a qualitative method when seeking to present a detailed view of a specific topic from the perspective of the participants being studied. The procedure for conducting a qualitative study encompasses investigators composing research questions that explore participants' experiences that evoke meaning about the topic at hand (Creswell, 1998).

Grounded Theory, which was used in this study, is a general research method which guides the researcher on matters of data collection. In Grounded Theory, the researcher begins with generative questions which help to guide the research but are not intended to be confining (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Themes and patterns were also used to formulate a hypothesis. A thematic analysis is a method of investigation that allows researchers to scrutinize data for emerging patterns and themes that recur. The stimulated themes and patterns offer a basis for additional interpretation and hypothesis development. Rubin & Rubin (1995) suggest that themes assist in building comprehensive descriptions of an overarching theory.

The purpose of this research study is to understand school psychologists' experiences when using a culturally competent approach to assessing culturally and linguistically diverse learners when a referral is made for special education. Through this study the researcher will gain insight by means of school psychologists' experiences,

through themes and patterns that emerge, and reasons why students are being overly represented in special education. The study was approved by the researcher's dissertation committee at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine and Institution Review Board before any data collection began.

Participants

The participants for this study included fifteen school psychologists with license/certification in school psychology and with experience in assessing and testing culturally and linguistically diverse students. The participants were recruited via email through a sample of convenience from New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Measures

The design for this study used two varying instruments. The first measure was a questionnaire used to gather demographic information about the participants (Appendix B). The second measure was a semi structured interview, which included eleven broad and open ended questions (Appendix C).

Procedure

The participants in the study were recruited by an invitation from the researcher (Appendix A) that was sent via an email. After the participants agreed to participate in the study, the researcher contacted them either by email or by phone to schedule a time for the face to face interview. The researcher and participants later scheduled a date, time and location for the interview. During the initial meeting the researcher gave a brief introduction about the study. Then the participants were asked to complete the first measure (Appendix B-demographic questionnaire) with either a pencil or pen. After the participants completed the demographic questionnaire, they were asked eleven broad,

open-ended interview questions (Appendix C). These questions were compiled and developed in collaboration with the researcher and dissertation committee, based on the literature review. The entire interview was recorded by an audio recording device. The interviews varied in time and length, depending on the participant but no interview exceed one hour.

Participants were reassured of their rights not to answer a question if they were uncomfortable and were also informed their rights to withdrawal from the study at any time. No one withdrew from the study and the participants answered all questions asked. Participants were also informed that they would not be identified by their names or by any other identifiers because they fully volunteered to participate in the study. The taped interviews were transcribed and sent via email to participants to ensure validity. The transcribed interview sessions were analyzed by the researcher and by the dissertation committee to interpret the data and determine results.

Plan of Analysis

As part of the thematic analysis, the researcher transcribed each participant's responses which were provided during the interview process. The following process was used to capture major themes from the transcribed interviews:

1. Each transcribed interview was read by the researcher
2. Each transcribed interview was read from beginning to end
3. The researcher reviewed the transcript to identify remarkable statements such as phrases, sentences, and paragraphs
4. Noteworthy statements were then converted into meaningful units that reflected the experience of the participant

5. Categories were then grouped into themes or subthemes

Validity Process

As part of the validation process, the researcher sent each participant a copy of his or her interview via email. There were no discrepancies.

Chapter 4

Research Findings

Data Source and Collection

The interviews and transcripts from the data for this study were gathered, analyzed and interpreted over the duration of two months. The researcher sent out an invitation of recruitment via email to twenty eight school psychologists from New Jersey and Pennsylvania; fifteen school psychologists volunteered and participated in this research study. All fifteen school psychologists scheduled a time, date and place to conduct the interviews. These interviews took place in the following settings: (office, Dunkin Donuts, and personal home (living room area)). The researcher spent time prior to the interviews establishing rapport and answering any questions that the participants had before the study procedures began. All fifteen participants in the study agreed to complete a demographic questionnaire and participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher. The demographic questionnaire took approximately five minutes to complete. Some example of this questionnaire included: *In what language do you communicate on a daily basis; what ethnic group do you represent; and what type of district do you work in?* The semi-structured interviews varied in length but did not exceed one hour. The researcher used a digital recorder to record the interviews, which were destroyed after the taped interviews had been transcribed. The participants responded positively to all interactions with the researcher. During the data collection, the researcher journaled each interview about key aspects regarding this topic and any potential themes that were emerging.

Data Analysis and Strategy

The researcher used qualitative research and grounded theory approach in this study. In qualitative research, the researcher is aiming to get a deep understanding of a specific event. It looks at broad themes and patterns found among a group of participants in a social setting. Creswell (1998) recommended utilizing a qualitative method when seeking to present a detailed view of a specific topic from the perspective of the participants being studied. The procedure for conducting a qualitative study encompasses investigators composing research questions that explore participants' experiences that evoke meaning about the topic at hand (Creswell, 1998). Grounded theory is a general research method which guides the researcher on matters of data collection. In Grounded Theory, the researcher begins with *generative questions* which helps to guide the research but are not intended to be confining (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded Theory uses detailed procedures for analysis called the Constant Comparative Method. The process begins with the researcher asking a question or series of questions designed to lead to the development or generation of a theory regarding some aspect of social life (e.g. How do nurses see their role in the care delivery process in primary care settings?) It consists of three phases of coding, open, axial, and selective (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998). Grounded Theory provides a procedure for developing categories of information (open coding), interconnecting the categories (axial coding), building a "story" that connects the categories (selective coding), and ends with a discursive set of theoretical hypotheses (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process of continually collecting and analyzing data and engaging in a theoretical

sampling process are critical features of the constant comparative analysis that Glaser and Strauss describe. The comparative process continues until the researcher reaches saturation; at that point there are no new ideas and insights emerging from the data. Instead, the researcher sees strong repetition in the themes that he or she has already observed and articulated. The qualitative validation team met to review themes and to reduce bias.

Findings

Discussion of findings. The research findings were divided into two separate sections: a) demographic findings, and b) description of findings in regard to the qualitative interview responses (transcript)/research questions. The first section describes demographic areas (information derived from the demographic information questionnaire). The second section provides descriptive summaries of participants' responses to the semi-structured interview questions. The participants' descriptions are further broken down according to the dominant themes that pertained to these questions about their experiences when assessing students who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Demographic findings. The participants in this research study included (n=15) certified or licensed school psychologists from New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Specifically, 11 school psychologists lived and worked in the state of New Jersey and 4 school psychologists lived and worked in the state of Pennsylvania. There were 9 variables that were used in the demographic findings: Languages used to communicate on a daily basis; Race/Ethnic group; Gender, Type of District; Type of School; Participant Degree; Graduate Training; Years as a School Psychologist; and States.

Languages used to communicate variables included, 11 participants that spoke only English, (73.3%); one participant that spoke both English and Spanish, (6.7%); one participant that spoke both English and Hebrew; one participant that spoke English, Italian and Spanish (6.7%), and one participant that spoke English and Gujarati (6.7%).

Race/Ethnic group variable included, one Latino, (6.7%); four African American/Black, (26.7%); one Israeli, (6.7%); one Indian, (6.7%); two Italian, (13.3%); two Caucasian, (13.3%); one Hispanic (Cuban and Columbian), (6.7%); two Puerto Rican, (13.3%), and one Hispanic (Cuban) (6.7%).

Gender variable included 14 females, (93.3%), and 1 male, (6.7%).

Type of District variable included 11 participants who worked in an urban district, (73.3%); two participants who worked in suburban district, (13.3%); two participants who worked in a rural district, (13.3%).

Type of School variable included 1 participant that worked in an Early Childhood (pre-K Kindergarten) and Middle School (6th-8th grade) (6.7%). Two participants worked in an Elementary (1st-5th grade) (13.3%). Three participants worked in Pre-K – high school (20.0%). One participant worked in middle school only (6.7%). One participant worked in a prek-5th grade and High School only (6.7%). Six participants worked in a pre-K through 8th grade school (40.0%) and 1 participant worked in a Kindergarten through 6th grade school; (6.7%).

Participant Degree variable included 2 participants (13.3%) who earned a Masters Degree. Eight participants earned an Educational Specialist Degree/Professional Diploma (53.3%), and 5 participants earned a Doctorate degree (33.3%).

Graduate Training variable included 1 participant who reported no graduate training on diversity and or multiculturalism (6.7%). Three participants reported that they had at least one course on diversity and or multiculturalism in their graduate training (20.0%). Five participants reported that they had two courses on diversity and or multiculturalism in their graduate training, (33.3%). Six participants reported that they had 3-5 courses on diversity and or multiculturalism in their graduate training, (40.0%).

Years as a School Psychologist variable included 4 participants, who reported they had been school psychologists from 0- 2 years; (26.7%). One participant reported they had been school psychologist from 2-4 years; (6.7%). Three participants reported that they had been school psychologists from 4-6 years; (20.0%). Two participants reported that they had been school psychologists from 6-8 years; (13.3%). Five participants reported that they had been school psychologists from 10-15 years; (33.3%).

States variable includes the two states represented in the study, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Eleven school psychologists worked in New Jersey (73.33%). Four school psychologists worked in Pennsylvania (26.66%).

Descriptive Findings. Upon completion of face to face interviews the researcher transcribed the in-person interviews into a word document. Keywords and phrases appeared; these were analyzed with suitable category labels. This process is called open coding or initial phase. This resulted in three emerging labels: *Knowledge of Culturally Competent Assessment; Process of Assessment; Skills of the School Psychologist*. During the second level of coding, Axial Coding, the researcher recoded the data to create themes. Six themes and subthemes were created from this data: Referrals; Materials; Culturally Competent; Assessment; Overrepresentation; and Roles. Referrals include

Behavior, Academic, Pre-referral; Materials encompasses Tools; Culturally Competent includes Reflection and Essence; Assessment includes Students and Families; Overrepresentation includes Bias Testing, Language, Undetermined, Race/Ethnicity, School Culture/Climate and Lack of Skills and finally, Role includes Duties.

Theme 1-Referrals

1) Behavior. The data analysis revealed that students who are culturally and linguistically diverse are referred to the school psychologist for reasons of behavior. School psychologists were asked about the reasons why culturally and linguistically diverse students are referred to them.

Participant 14: “A lot of times it’s behavioral. Yes, that makes sense, because if the child is not being understood or does not understand, they meet with frustration and so they act out. A lot of time you find that these behavioral referrals truly are not behavioral.”

Participant 13: “Some of them behavior, because I think teachers have poor classroom management skills. Behavior is a big thing. The more and more I think about it even in our special ed. classes, we have poor classroom management.”

Participant 11: “I definitely use kid gloves for students who are referred for behavioral concerns. Sometimes it’s just that they maybe don’t have a mentor, or they haven’t had.... maybe a connection with a teacher working with the student, trying to get them to understand that we have different expectations. You have to learn to code switch. There are certain things that have to take place in the school setting, and there’s certain things that can take place at home, and that’s okay. It’s not good or bad; it’s okay. You just have to know when it’s appropriate to do what. Then also working with the teachers with

information that is appropriate to share, having them understand where the child is coming from so that maybe they have a little more tolerance for how the child express themselves.”

Participant 12: “Honestly, a lot of them are behavior issues. A lot of them are behaviors. I feel like, yeah, that would be it. A lot of behavioral and obviously academics, but I see a lot of behavior.”

Participant 5: “Behavior. Non-compliance... So, Johnny’s failing; why is he failing? He doesn’t do any work. Well, that’s not necessarily a special ed. issue. What are we doing to help Johnny get more work done?”

2) Academics. The data analysis revealed that students who are culturally and linguistically diverse are referred to school psychologists for academic reasons. School psychologists were asked about the reasons why students who are culturally and linguistically diverse are referred to them.

Participant 10: “Often it’s because they are falling behind academically. Often you’ll see the referrals come through and that they’re not grasping reading concepts. We are in an RTI model here so we get a lot of data on reading. Usually they’re falling behind in comprehension so that comes through. Writing concerns especially at like.... the three, four, five level. More writing concerns start coming up in those grades.”

Participant 1: “Teachers automatically assume that if they are 9 years old and they’ve come from X country; they should have already learned this. It’s not always the case. Education is just not a priority in a lot of countries because making money is more important. Feeding your family is more important than going to school every day. I feel

like they don't get that education, so when they come here, teachers expect that if you are a 4th grader, you should be working on 4th grade level already."

Participant 7: "Primarily for academics and then in terms of academics... for reading, so a lot of them are below grade level in reading comprehension, reading fluency skills, and that's the most reason, they are referred."

Participant 4: "Usually, it's because of poor academic performance, and by that I mean a history of it; so more than one year of failing in a particular subject area. Students who are constantly in danger of being retained and are forced to go to summer school."

3) Pre-referral. The data analysis revealed that students who are culturally and linguistically diverse are referred to school psychologists due to lack of pre-referral interventions. School psychologists were asked about the reasons why culturally and linguistically diverse students are referred to them.

Participant 15: "I think in my experience it comes back to what interventions are put in place for students prior to coming to special education. That's really where the bulk of the energy needs to be spent is pre-referral interventions. Then, when you see a student's not responding to those interventions, then that's when you need to maybe look into whether it's an actual disability or not."

Participant 1: "I think just going back to the point where people in general, teachers, whoever works with the students, to not automatically refer a student. Because we can't classify on not having prior knowledge...It's kind of... I feel unethical. We can't call this student cognitively impaired if they were never exposed to it. I think that there need to be more interventions and there need to be more classes for students who are Spanish speaking."

Participant 3: “Getting the data from RTI. If they are giving interventions, seeing if that’s helping. Trying to get the RTI teams involved before you go to formal testing. See if there is something that can be resolved informally.”

Participant 4: “After the 3rd grade, an issue that we’re running into when we have identification meetings.... to decide whether or not a student who was referred for a child study team evaluation, if we’re looking at the documentation of what has been done by the teacher to try to assist the child; there are no interventions after 3rd grade. If you come across a student who’s in 4th grade or above, chances arethere hasn’t been any kind of formal interventions because currently the district does not have anything for these students, and it’s causing a big issue because who’s to say that if these children weren’t given a proper intervention.... it could prevent them from being in special education, so it’s something that really needs to be looked at.”

Theme 2-Materials

Tools. The data analysis revealed that school psychologists use a variety of different assessment tools. These assessments tools included: observations, rating scales, nonverbal measures, WISC, UNIT, TONI, CTONI, parent interview, teacher interview, student interview, KABC, DAS, Woodcock Johnson(Cognitive/Achievement), KTEA, DKEFS, ABAS, BASC, Stanford Binet, CALPS form, acculturation forms, sentence completion, BENDER, WPPSI-IV, SCE scale, NEPSY, WRML, CTOP, PAL, WISC-Spanish, TAT, and KEY Math. School psychologists were asked about their assessment tools when assessing students that were culturally and linguistically diverse.

Participant 2: “A lot of behavioral rating scales, observations, informal questions, how does the child respond to informal questions, especially in the rapport-building time, the

WISC, WISC Nonverbal, the Stanford-Binet.” Those are the really big ones that I use on a constant basis. If I really need to get something else, I might be able to get it like the UNIT or the TONI, but it depends on the question or the referral and who is the child in front of me. If that means that I test a child and I feel like, this isn’t a true measure, then I will give another test, just to see if I gave another test and it was in a different modality but still measuring the same skills or the same concept, does the child do better or worse.”

Participant 3: “I use a standardized for cognitive. I have a WISC, a UNIT, I have DAS, a Stanford Binet, and so we have a good range. We have the TONI, the CTONI, Developmental Profile Three, which is a cognitive scale, in case for the lower kids, and if I can’t get anything it gives you an estimate, a teacher interview form, kind of adaptive. I have an ABAS...if it’s a behavior kid I have the BASC. I really don’t have much for the behavior kid, just the BASC. I do a history of how they are doing in school, a student interview, a teacher interview, that’s all I have, the projectives, which I don’t use that much and a Bender, I have a Bender.”

Participant 4: “The WISC...I’ve used the Binet. As far as the nonverbal, Wechsler Nonverbal; pretty much all of the Wechsler scales, depending on the situation.”

Follow up question? Do you use anything else? Any other types of tools?

“Student Interviews, social and emotional assessments, rating scales, like adaptive rating scales, Behavior rating scales.”

Follow up question? Do you have specific ones that you like to use?

“The ABAS for the adaptive... As far as the social/emotional, I usually do an incomplete sentence form.”

Participant 5: “Really just some sort of cognitive assessment; usually I have a WISC and I have a DAS...I do classroom observation, sometimes a teacher interview, definitely a student interview and reviewing records. All I have here are the DAS and WISC.”

Participant 6: “We use a lot of KABC, the TONI. I haven’t used that a lot. If it was an issue, they had bilingual school psychologists so they would do the assessment to do the interpretation. Most of what I used was the KABC, KTEA; they had some of the CALPS forms and acculturation forms, developmental history forms, BASC, social and emotional kinds of things.”

Participant 7: “We use the WISC and the DAS; we are limited here.”

Participant 8: “The WISC, WPPSI-IV; those are the ones that I’m most comfortable with. I also have on for the BD population. It’s called the SCE, Social and Emotional....something. It looks at how you read people’s faces and emotions because that’s a big part of the kids that I see.”

Participant 9: “I use the WISC, I use the BASC. The ABAS, I haven’t had the chance to score it.”

Participant 10: “I don’t use the WISC. I use KABC, Kaufman scales, Woodcock-Johnson scales, NEPSY, WRML, CTOP, PAL, DEKEFS, childhood memory scale, rating scales, observation, teacher input, things like that, parent input.”

Participant 11: “I do use the Wechsler scales. I’m not necessarily crazy about that, but I think that’s the primary assessment tool. I like the Woodcock Johnson. I have used the KABC. I’m not fluent in that particular assessment tool. That is something that I would like to grow in because I am on a Face book board for African American school psychologists and that is one of the tools that comes up in conversation. I know that

KABC is what I would like to grow in, and then also the DAS and get some professional development because I know that's a test is highly recommended for cultural diverse populations."

Participant 12: "I do the Wechsler, the WISC. I'm a fan of the KABC but I don't have it yet. I've used the DAS before. Certain times I pull little pieces out of the Stanford Binet, if I need to, depending on the child's needs. For social-emotional, the TAT cards, sentence completion, and student interviews."

Participant 13: "The measure that I stick to the most because I feel like it is the most appropriate for my population is the KABC. Of course, I use the WISC-IV, but not often. For my Spanish speakers, sometimes I use the WISC for Spanish."

Participant 14: "Everything, from functional assessment like student interviews, parent interviews, observations...medical histories, school records, things like that. Then whatever assessment I think I would need to establish what referral question is being asked."

Participant 15: "Typically the Woodcock-Johnson and the Wechsler Tests, also have used the CTONI, use a lot of the executive functioning measures, the NEPSY, the DKEFS. In terms of different achievement exams, if I'm looking at a learning disability in particular area, I will use some of the common achievement ones, KEY Math."

Theme 3-Culturally Competent

1) Reflection. School Psychologists were asked about their thoughts on culturally competent assessments.

Participant 1: "Culturally competent assessment means to be able to do something and to master it."

Participant 2: “Not just relying on the IQ test, or not looking at those formal assessments, but also using other means to test that child in reference to an interview with the child, to see that informal language. Including a classroom observation or unstructured observation so that you can look at the child in different settings and testing to see what are the child’s strengths and weaknesses, based on a multitude of tools and methods.”

Participant 3: “You really have to take into account all the other things. You have to take into account the assessment that you’re using and if it’s standardized on that population. There are so many things that you have to take into account and a lot of people just look at the number and go, “Oh well, he’s not performing and he’s a 60 something, cognitively impaired or communication impaired or whatever.”

Participant 4: “I’m thinking of taking into consideration the student’s ethnicity as well as their cultural background, especially if they’re Hispanic.”

Participant 5: “I don’t think that they’re necessarily used. I don’t think that assessments are completed, at least the district that I’m in, with a lot of respect for cultural diversity, in consideration of cultural differences, particularly as it relates to the kind of setting that we are in.”

Participant 6: “I think of getting the big picture. I know that I’ve worked with a lot of people who’ve done assessments. Sometimes, they go on teachers’ perceptions and don’t ask a lot of questions. I think the right questions, getting background history, language history, family history, multiple data points, and getting a little bit of their background. Multicultural can be many things. It could be race, ethnicity. It could be cultural background. It could be special interests.”

Participant 7: “I think about nonverbal assessments, because a lot of our test aren’t culturally competent, because they’re so culturally biased. A lot of our assessments that we use in American are culturally biased. Even the nonverbal are, I think. Take into consideration the culture and background that they’re coming from, what has been taught in that culture. A lot of our kids come from countries [where] they may not be exposed to something as simple as a stamp on a letter.”

Participant 8: “I think people doing the assessments, just speaking the language be it Spanish or Creole. We have kids that have just recently come in within the past few years from other countries and using our assessment tools on them, even if we are translating them are not always the best.”

Participant 9: “When I’m thinking about this term, I am thinking about how I can administer the test in being more objective, clear, not being understood in two different levels. I’m trying to be concrete.”

Participant 10: “Don’t use the WISC. I don’t use the WISC. You just want to access for language, background, exposure to environment, and the students’ experience.”

Participant 11: “I’m thinking about the assessment tools that we’re using, then also the importance of gathering a thorough background from the parents as well as when you’re doing the record review because you want to make sure that you are accounting for the background exposure the children have had in the past as well as any sort of language.”

Participant 12: “I think that we really have to take the socioeconomic status into consideration... the parent’s level of education, the languages spoken, kind of culture at home and in school.”

Participant 13: “considering language development, meaning dual language learners, considering financial background or socioeconomic status.”

Participant 14: “Is the assessor taking into consideration what the examiner brings to the table, culturally?”

Participant 15: “I think it’s assessing how proficient somebody is in the language in which you’re assessing. I think it’s kind of reflected and taking in consideration how somebody’s culture is impacting them and I think you want to make sure that their culture is not a reflection of any ill behavior or anything.”

2) Essence. School Psychologists were asked what culturally competent assessments mean to them.

Participant 1: “To be culturally competent means that it must adhere to or be on a cultural level that addresses all the cultures I assume.”

Participant 2: “I think that it’s really just looking at the child and meeting their needs, testing the child and meeting their needs. Knowing the family background... the child’s background... understanding the culture. Also not just using one assessment... being able to look at what the referral question is, selecting tests that will measure what it’s supposed to measure, but I think it’s kind of hard. You’ll see that, even when you do certain tests...that individuals are from culturally diverse backgrounds, their scores are impacted and are much lower than those that have been in this country for awhile.”

Participant 3: “The whole point would be to try to make sure your assessment is touching all of the points, not just their cognitive ability. But is it valid? After you get the results you really have to put it into the environment where they’re coming from, their background, and determine if it’s actually a disability or it’s just lack of education.

Relying on your skills as a psychologist to look into all the rest of the information, the information about the human being to determine how you can help the student.”

Participant 4: “The countries a child may come from or their parents may arrive from. I think it’s just ensuring that whatever assessment you use is going to be fair towards the student, based on their cultural background; that it’s not biased; that you’re not giving an assessment that they may perform in a limited manner due to the fact that they haven’t been exposed to our culture.”

Participant 5: “It means to me really taking into account the different things that children bring to them as a result of their cultural background. I don’t think my battery is necessarily different. The tools I use might be the same, but when I’m analyzing the data in terms of behavioral observations and interview, that understanding of their cultural background helps to inform my analysis.”

Participant 6: “Anything makes you diverse. I think not just going by numbers. I’m not just using one instrument to make decisions. I think a lot of people go, ‘This is your WISC score. This is your WIAT’. I think it’s looking and doing assessments on their language, acculturation, all sorts of assessments.”

Participant 7: “When we’re talking about culturally competent, you have to look at culture, their lifestyle, you’re looking at what they’re exposed to the technology. They may not have rapid changes in technology; they may not know what technology is. So, being culturally aware of what the lifestyle is; what the norm or the normal, average; what that is, and then going from there. Because in our culture what’s low average or average may not be low average or average in their culture that might be norm.”

Participant 8: “It means that you are using the proper tools with the proper people. Using the tools to assess students’ performance.”

Participant 9: “To assess the child based on his own culture... based on the environment that he lives in and to try to get the true intellectual abilities. I guess making it clear as much as possible.”

Participant 10: “Your assessments can’t be cookie cutter and you have to look at it... You have to case conceptualize it from the referral questions. If I know that they’re an ESL student or they’re getting those services, they have a language impairment; they are just moving to this country or coming from an impoverished background. I’m going to pick the best assessment that is going to match that to go with them. I don’t believe in just using one assessment all the time.”

Participant 11: “I think that you have to look at the tools that you’re using and be mindful of the pros and cons of each tool that you’re using. If a student performs poorly in an area, I just make note of that in the report and the ecological data to see what their language skills are.”

Participant 12: “It means you have to take into account what they might be predisposed to in the past and really use that to formulate a good assessment of their level of functioning, socially and cognitive.”

Participant 13: “It would mean considering other cultural factors. It means taking in all factors. Not just looking at a child and saying ‘This child is African American. Unfortunately, that comes with experience. I feel like our newer psychologists really need to be more aware. It’s about looking a little more deeply into this child’s background. It’s about asking questions. Having a little bit more knowledge about their

background and their family and linguistic background and their exposure to language I think is important.”

Participant 14: “It means it’s more important to understand the cultural and linguistic diversity of the person rather just the scores that I’m gonna get. I need to take into consideration the diversity with the community that I’m working.”

Participant 15: “I guess you want to consider their culture as where they’ve come from and how it’s impacting their functioning right now. You also have to make sure that you’re not stereotyping somebody based on culture. You have to make sure that you’re doing is looking at their culture but also looking as the assessment results and making sure you are not making judgments based on what you think is happening.”

Theme 4-Assessment

Students and Families. School Psychologists were asked about the steps they take before assessing, and also about experience in assessing and working with culturally diverse and linguistic students.

Participant 1: “I get a lot of students who are from Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico in general is known to not expose their students to, an appropriate and adequate curriculum. They go on lots of strikes. Students don’t go to school very often because the teachers go on strike which hinders their education. Students who come from Third World countries and some parents won’t take them to school or they don’t have a school in the area or the school is miles away. They say they’ve gone to pre-kindergarten but when they come to the US, they still don’t know their letters and numbers. I have yet worked with children who have emerging English. They’ve been here for about four or five years. They still don’t speak a dominant other language but I mostly don’t provide direct services to

children; I just do their Spanish assessment. I do parent interviews in Spanish for those who need it in Spanish, but that's really it." Before assessing them I gather information on what country they came from. I try to find out because depending on the country, you use different words. The way that I say the word banana to a student from Columbia is not the same way I would say it to a student from the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico. I also check to see up to what grade level that was attended. I try to see how long they've been in the country as well. If they had education beforehand. If we have an identification meeting, I try to gather as much information from the teacher and from the parent ahead of time. I usually end up doing the parent interviews first, then the testing, because I would like to know a history on the child. I also do classroom observations, teacher and student interviews."

Participant 2: "I think with any child whether it's culturally diverse or not, it's really understanding what the referral question is and looking at what supports have been implemented. What prior interventions have been employed? What specific strategies have been used? Evidence whether the child is being successful or not, then doing a review of records and looking at the grades, looking at standardized tests, looking at informal tests, looking at teacher tests, looking at district tests or curriculum testing...so that you can gather some background information and understand where the child has been for the past couple of years and then be able to ask those questions of language proficiency. Has the child been receiving ESL services? Things like that. When assessing, I do try to stick to standardization; I will select things that in the back of my mind I know that they are culturally biased, but not in a sense that I want to negatively impact the child, but I think being in my training, in the graduate and doctoral training,

we tests the limits. I think that even though they are culturally biased, it does give us very good information in reference to how the child processes the information or how they approach the task that we're presenting to them. Really, giving them those assessments but depending on how the child might do, maybe giving them other supplement or maybe changing the means in which you might give it to them. Let's say, for example, you might give the WISC the way that it's standardized but then you might turn around and say, 'How about if I gave the block design, but not using the integrated assessment or subtest?' Now we're measuring the exact same thing, but just in a different way, in a different modality, and seeing if the child does better or worse that way. Using a non-verbal test, so then it's not culturally biased, like the Wechsler nonverbal or a UNIT. It really just depends on the population and what is the referral question and what it is I'm trying to get. Am I just testing for eligibility or am I testing in order to link evidence based interventions to help in the classroom?" I'm a counselor for a behavioral disabilities program and that's all I do. I'm being asked to do some extra compensation bilingual assessments. One student, that was just referred, is a bilingual student who received a 2.5 score on the ACCESS testing for ESL/bilingual students. He has been classified Other Health Impaired and needed a reevaluation. I begin to test him with the WISC Spanish and I asked him, 'Which language do you feel more comfortable with.' He said English, and I asked, 'which one do you think you're proficient in or do you feel like you understand better?' He said English. 'What do you speak at home or what do your parents speak at home'. He said Spanish. I did it in English and he was fine. I was administering the test in Spanish because it was a bilingual and it's standardized in Spanish, and the child was looking at me like...he had no clue what I was

saying in Spanish. At that time I broke, standardization and I said, “I’m going to read it in Spanish and you can answer in English or Spanish. The students aren’t as challenging, more than the parents from families that are culturally diverse. I think the parents, at least when it comes to testing a child that is from a Latino background, when you approach the parents, they say, ‘School is the expert. I trust you wholeheartedly.’ It’s been my experience that families will say, ‘You guys are the experts.’”

Participant 3: “I’m Hispanic. My Spanish is not proficient so I don’t feel comfortable assessing Spanish because I feel my vocabulary is not where it should be and I don’t want to short hand someone because they used a different word. If they are Spanish speaking, they’ve been here for awhile I will also throw in a TONI or something, a non-verbal type of assessment to see what the difference is there; if language is impacting, and if I feel its impacting a lot, then I would ask for a bilingual assessment and say that I wasn’t getting the full potential or tapping into everything that they wanted to say more or couldn’t express themselves I felt in English. I think the parts, too sometimes we don’t pay too much to that piece, but the parent is really is really a good reporter. They’re with the kids most of the time, [and know] what’s happening and you just have to ask them the right questions. I think that every piece is important to make a good culturally competent assessment. When I’m working with them I try to find out what’s normal to them and what their cultural background is and let them express themselves and their ideas. I think a big thing as a psychologist, too, sometimes they say things that may come off as inappropriate, but you have to just ask them a little bit more questions and some things are different in their countries...the way parents look at education is sometimes different because it’s different in other countries or it’s just different from where they come from.

I think the planning meeting is important and just getting all the information from the parent, getting background information is the most important and then deciding what assessment you are going to do. Because it's really bad when you pick an assessment and it's bad, and you could have picked something like a TONI instead, so you just want to get good background information and pick the right tests."

Participant 4: "If I'm assessing a Hispanic student, I'm taking in consideration what language is spoken at home and also if the child is proficient in English or how their culture may impact on how they may perform on the test, especially when it come to questions that are based on their exposure."

Follow up question?-Do you have much experience in assessing other than Hispanic students?

"A few Haitian Creoles. Not many though, it's predominantly Hispanic, I would say over the course of my tenure. Maybe even a handful of Portuguese. I then would first speak to the ESL person and make sure that they're dominant in the English language. Then also speak with the parent as far as their culture outside of school. Before assessing I reach out to the ESL teacher or bilingual teacher and try to gather as much information and background from them. Also at the planning meetings...getting information from the parents. An observation of how the student performs in the classroom, and then again when selecting my assessments, seeing if it's something I feel is going to be fair to the student and give the best picture of how that student if functioning."

Participant 5: "In terms of culturally diverse, one of the things, I always try to do is, if I'm not sure, is asking the student, parent, finding someone familiar with the culture, so I can be aware of any cultural nuances....behaviorally, emotionally, how children

present...even in terms of just norms, but what's acceptable and what's not, in terms of how kids talk to adults or respond to different questions. We have a lot of Hispanic children here, from all different cultures. If a child presents with something that I'm not sure about, I might ask, either the student or someone familiar, 'What are your thoughts about this? Is this typical of a child from this kind of culture, being raised in this kind of home?' I do try and use the information that I have to inform what kind of assessment I do or to also ultimately make a decision about whether or not I have the competence to be able to perform the assessment particularly as it relates to linguistically diverse students. When working with these students, everything starts with relationship building. Having mutual respect with the kids and families, who appreciate it when they feel like you're trying to understand. A lot of time I'll say to the kids from here, 'I didn't grow up in an area like this. Tell me about your experience. What is it like?' I feel like even just having the conversations with the students around things like that because of a lot of time they don't feel we understand."

Follow up question?-You said you work with Hispanic students. Are there any other cultures that are different from your own?

"Our school is predominantly African American and Hispanic, Afro-Caribbean; actually, this year we had a family that came from Egypt and even that assimilation experience and what that was like for them and some of the circumstances around even why they left and being able to talk, get information, and support them as they made the adjustment to here". In assessing these students, I have pretty basic Spanish and they'll have some basic English and we talk. After I've done that, if they receive ESL or bilingual services, I will talk to the ESL or bilingual teacher or talk to their classroom teacher and find out

about language dominance. From there I make a choice; a lot of times, I will say, ‘This student struggles across the board in English and Spanish, so then I will chose the DAS, so that I can look at both nonverbal and verbal skills. I will usually know the student before they are referred to me, so before assessing them I will get the background and work with the guidance counselor or teacher to make sure strategies have been tried and they have done positive behavioral supports. I feel STRONGLY that IF we’re NOT doing anything, then why are we referring the student?’

Participant 6: “My last job school district was very rural. I didn’t have a lot of experience there. Prior to there I was at Allentown School District; they had a great program. I think they had almost 20,000 children and I forget how many languages that children were speaking. They had a bilingual team, assessment team. They had certain assessments; we would do the assessments if they think they didn’t need an interpreter, for the most part, we would have to consult with them. I did about 80 assessments that year and 15 were multicultural. It was a great experience. When I was at Blue Mountain School District, the first assessment I had the student had some language issues, I forget where he came from. They were going to give him a WISC; I’m like, ‘no’, you do it with a nonverbal. When I was in Allentown, we did more diverse assessments. We do a family assessment and the child history, we did acculturation scales and CALP scales, and we’d have to give to the teachers in terms of their information language or formal language observations. Before assessing I review the background, review the history and data. I think a lot of schools want to test right away. Allentown did RTI. I think; do observations, check to see if teachers provided interventions, see if you can resolve the issue before assessment.”

Participant 7: “Parents play a big role in working with these students, so we have to understand what type of culture they’re coming from; what type of background; what type of family they’re coming from. Culture is adapted by many different families in many different ways, so just because they come from India and they practice this religion doesn’t mean that family falls in that bracket *per se*; when I’m working with the students I need to know what the family values are, and that’s part of culture and how much they’ve adapted into the culture here in America. A.G. is a student who came from another country. He has a language barrier and has been in the country for 3 or 4 years, obviously a lot of cultural influences. He didn’t do well on our cognitive assessment, there are cultural implications. If he was tested in his country on a test that was standardized based on that population, maybe he would have done better. For assessment I will do a parent interview, student interview and talk about their interests, what they like, what they don’t like, motivation...In a lot of cultures, education is not as important, so it can influence their motivation level and interest in education. I do a teacher interview to see how they are doing and classroom observation. We do standardized testing and unfortunately here we are limited to the WISC and then their adaptive skills. There are nonverbal tests we can use.”

Follow up question?-When you say you’re limited are you saying that’s the only thing you have to assess, the WISC?

“No, I don’t have access to them. We have a DAS and WISC and then the others are informal measures, like the interview. Whatever I go through I can find; they’re not standardized measures; that’s all I have.”

Participant 8: “I don’t do any bilingual assessments. In this district even if the family is Spanish speaking the student tends to speak more English anyway. We always like to ask the teacher and then the parent, ‘What languages do you speak to the child and in what language do they speak to each other in?’ If the student doesn’t speak Spanish or whatever with his friends, I might then be able to go ahead and assess that student with an English assessment if the kid speaks Spanish at home. It’s actually difficult sometimes to tease that out. I feel like speaking another language in this district is a huge asset because even if you’re in the middle of an assessment and you need to translate a word or something like that, you might break standardization, but at least you get a good result from the kid. I’m pretty lucky to have a Spanish speaking speech therapist at my building, so if we’re unsure about what a student’s dominant language is, we have a speech therapist go in and kind of talk to them informally before we can determine what’s most appropriate. My social worker has also stepped in to help. I will talk to the teachers. Ask questions like, is this student in a bilingual program, or ESL program, when did they get to this country, what language do they speak at home? If it is determined that the kid needs a bilingual assessment, we go from there.”

Participant 9: “I work in an urban district; the population is more geared towards a Spanish speaker; this is the first time I worked in a district this size. First time working with Spanish population. As far as assessment, I try to keep to the script. If its intelligence, I follow the WISC, and the manual to make sure that all students get the uniform directions. Prior to testing, I usually bring the student to a nice quiet place and ask him different questions, about his life; what he likes to do; what he doesn’t; what his

goals are for the future. If it's kindergarten or first grader I usually ask him to draw some picture of different situations and then I take it from there."

Participant 10: "My first district was all ESL and was mostly Russian. I did a lot of background research on that culture specifically. I always stuck to assessments that did not have a high language load on it. It was more like using the UNIT or KABC. Again, I don't like Wechsler scales in these cases; I did not use them. Even when I did my internship in Philadelphia, I used more the Woodcock-Johnson than the Wechsler scales."

Follow up question? The cognitive?

"Mm-himm (affirmative). I've had a lot, some low socio economic status, and ethnic diversity: African American, Asian American, and not too much Hispanic American; my biggest population was probably Russian. Working with these students in interesting because I think I readily get where they're coming from and where I need to differentiate things. It almost goes to supporting the teachers and other professionals that are working with them. Help them to understand that they might be code switching with their language activity, so processing might be slower. Their level of exposure to our everyday norms or culture is not there yet. Working with them more directly involves me collaborating with other professionals. As far as assessment, I usually go with a cross battery approach, so I use a bunch of different assessments. I might shy away from a full scale profile. Just doing a more of an inner variable between the sub scales. I will most likely stay away from the WISC. I'm probably going to pull a KABC looking at processing information. Use things from the Woodcock-Johnson to look at a CHC model. Looking at memory and learning or the WRML. Using a cross battery approach instead of a full scale IQ. Before assessing I would listen to the teacher at the meeting

and probe for more background information. I would be looking to see if they used classroom based interventions. Listening to gain any cultural or linguistic factors and probing at that. Classroom observations and parent interviews are important, making sure interventions were put in place before testing and making sure that they gave it some time. Always implanting interventions and doing progress monitoring before moving to an evaluation.”

Participant 11: “I started my career in the urban setting, predominately African American; however, I worked in an elementary school that had a large population of Vietnamese families. Part of that assessment process was working with the ESL teacher to help as far as translation during meetings in order to communicate with parents, so that they understood what was going to take place during the assessment process. Particularly for culturally diverse populations, I think that I’m extra sensitive to what their experience is like. It’s not just a matter of here are the rating scales and here is the parent information, I sent it out in the mail. I really try to make sure to go through the rating scales with the parents when I make appointments to meet with them. So you have that personal touch because often times, these communities don’t have a strong link with the school personnel or the school staff; being able to bridge that gap in a personal way, helps the assessment process. I’ve done a couple of ESL cases where my findings were not popular and that I did not find the student eligible because we know that the English language learning and expression can take up to 7 years. If we are at year 1 or 2, we can’t make the children eligible. The student spoke, Tagalong. I also had a student from Sierra Leone, which was difficult; we wanted to get an extensive background history, retrieving report grades and speaking with the parents about her education back there. I

think you need to do a thorough job with those kinds of assessments, gathering background information. As far as assessments, I think the developmental history and background history is going to be one of the primary things that you really want to tease apart. When you are picking your assessment tools, you can use what you like but you just have to be aware of what the pros and cons are and make sure that your audience understands that. For the pre-referral process, making sure that I can with a clear conscience walk away from the table and know that we truly did all the interventions that we could and that we've monitored prior to an assessment. This is a team approach with the parent pressing for that. I want to make sure that I have a good connection with the parents and get a true understanding of how they see their child, really taking it apart, looking at the data and the interventions that have been put in place and again noting strengths and weaknesses of the particular assessment tool as I'm using that throughout the process."

Participant 12: "The experiences that I've had have been with mainly bilingual students.

Follow up question? Where are the students from?

"South American, Caribbean, I just assess their cognitive level of functioning. I find out where they come from, level of education they've had, the family. I usually do psycho-social assessment, just seeing how they grew up and what the difference between the levels of education they received in the other, versus what they're being represented with now. I find that there are some differences with their cultures that you really have to take into account. Before I even talk to a child, I like to go in there and observe. Just in their classroom in a structured environment because I just want to see how socially out there they are. Then I will collect information from the teachers as far as academic and social

information. I just speak to the parents depending on what it is. Sometimes we meet beforehand. I review the records and just see more or less where they've been if it's a student who has been transferred, often from school to school. I want to see the level of stability. I will go in there with the formal assessment, doing the cognitive assessment using whatever tool. We still look at social, emotional just to see how they're doing socially and emotionally, if they're well adjusted, maybe if they're not well adjusted. You never know. It could be some kind of experience in their life that could be throwing them off academically, which is where we would see it. Before, the first thing I do after the identification meeting or re-evaluation meeting I will observe and see how they are faring, especially in a social setting with other kids. I like to see how they compare with the rest of the students. I will review demographic information. How long have they been in this country and this school setting? The time they moved to this country, their parent's level of education which I think has a lot to do with it, just doing the social background. I like to review the records and the grades, academically how they are functioning, get feedback from teachers and all stakeholders. I want to know if they've been referred for any kind of behavior or anything that really stands out from the rest. I will do a student interview before the cognitive. I will also meet with the teachers, observe the student."

Participant 13: "I've always been considered a bilingual psychologist. I've not received any special training but I speak Spanish. I've had to seek out measures that were more appropriate, and normally they just give you the WISC and that's it or the Spanish WISC; sometimes, depending on the nature of the child's language development, I use the KABC because I feel like the kid's still acquiring English. I've always worked in

culturally diverse, economically, diverse settings in Florida. I wouldn't say that my assessment approach isn't different from a kid who is not culturally or linguistically diverse because you really start from the same place, just reviewing the background and finding out if they are. What is it that's going on for them? What have their experiences been up until now? I always start with the teacher, since they are making the referrals and do a psychosocial interview and background diving, then I decide my measures, in selecting the most appropriate which may include a cross battery assessment, deciding on how many tests to give. Before assessment, I interview the parents, teachers, students. I ask them about their home life, what they do for fun, what their typical day looks like when they go home after school. I ask them about their experience. Some kids in my district have never ridden in a vehicle. They have never ridden in a car and they are in 3rd grade. That says something. Their parents don't own a vehicle. They've probably never been in a taxi. So I recognize with those kids are coming from homes where they probably have limited experiences and they are not exposed to a lot. Parents I think give certain information, but interviewing the kids is so important to know what experiences they have, what they don't have and what they are exposed to."

Participant 14: "I have worked in a very diverse urban district for the past 14 years. I come from a different cultural background. I do speak more than one language so I think I bring more to the table....I hope I bring to the table, culturally competent practices when I assess students...I provide them with an objective assessment. I take into consideration language barriers or cultural barriers and what they might be feeling, sitting across from me. I was born and raised in this city so I tend to get the culture and there is more than one dialect in the Hispanic community. It's nice when you can relate to the

examinee or the parents on that level. Before assessment I would get someone that speaks their language. If I can't, that's first and foremost. If I have a translator there, that'd be doing the work for me, I think is very...like a cold interaction. It's very intimidating. I would educate myself on the country of origin, or dialect, if there is any religious affiliation that I need to respect, like boundaries. Before assessment I like to look at the student records. Where they come from, what language is spoken at home; socioeconomic status, maybe some educational level of the parents, so I know where to meet them."

Participant 15: "I've had some experience working in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Typically the students that I have assessed have been proficient within the English Language. I think there was one student when I first started doing assessments who I actually gave a CTONI just to make sure that I was covering all bases, even verbal test as well to see how that was in comparison or contrast. Usually as part of the background, there's a survey in every district. At least I do all the information that's relevant and look from their development to where they've lived to how many school they've attended, just demographic information about their caregivers. I think I tend to took a little bit more. I think when you're trained to do that you follow suit. I look for discrepancies. Before assessment I always do a file review. I want to make sure that I have as much background information and not only for culture but I want to make sure I have the student's academic record. Developmentally, what was their prenatal period like? What was their period of development like in the infancy, toddler stages, anything that could be relevant to the evaluation? Then I also make sure that the student is proficient in the language that he is being assessed. For me, it's English. If there is any

type of ESL information, I look for that. Then it's picking just the kind of general cognitive measures, the achievement measures, executive functioning measures. If the student might struggle with the assessment then you need to stop and re-evaluate, but at least try them first to see what's going to go on there. Before assessment I have to make sure that I have an understanding of how diverse a student is from me and what assessing a particular student entails. I do a file review; I talk with the student's parents or caregivers. Of course you always have to get consent. When you talk to a parent you can get a good feeling if you would be an appropriate assessor or not and need to refer out. What I try to do is to get as much information from the caregiver as possible. I will try to meet with the child, before the actual test. If I see that there are concerns emerging from the test I will probably stop. That has never happened to me, but I think I would probably stop and make sure that I would seek consultation first as to what might be needed and whether I would be the appropriate assessor. I certainly think that from my background, I do try to be as comprehensive as possible and looking at all the information that I have available to me."

Theme 5-Overrepresentation

1) Bias Testing. School psychologists were told that the research explains that culturally and linguistically diverse students are overrepresented in special education and they were asked about their thoughts.

Participant 8: "I think we are not using the right assessments to test them. I think that if we were testing them with instruments in either their native language at minimum. Also the test themselves do not lend themselves for different populations. I think I got caught off guard about the specific pictures in some of these booklets during the assessment that

some students might not have never seen before. Students in this district are urban kids, who may have never seen a tractor before.”

Participant 7: “I agree with that. I think it’s because of a lack of tools that we have to properly assess them.”

Participant 2: “I think it’s because of that score and those culturally biased assessments. The testing isn’t meeting the needs of the children because they are culturally biased. Many of the kids that have a low or borderline IQ in the 70’s look lower than they really are, so people will assume they have a learning disability, and low IQ, but in reality, many of the test are culturally biased, so when children look like they are cognitively impaired they may not be. If we give them another test, they might do better.”

2) Undetermined.

Participant 15: “I think because there’s so many different facets that you look at when you’re looking at having a child receive services that you also have to look at the general demographics of that area. Is that the majority of a minority? I could see where there could be an argument for it, but I think that you still have to meet certain criteria to be able to receive services. If someone is meeting that criteria, there’s a reason for it. I might be culturally independent or it might not be. I don’t know. I think there are just so many factors that go into an assessment that it could be a disproportion but there might be other reasons why other than just culturally.”

3) Lack of Skills.

Participant 14: “I agree, ignorance on the part of the examiner, one would say, yes, he’s borderline intelligence, when in reality, you didn’t pose the questions correctly, or you

didn't give this individual an opportunity to answer what you were looking for in a different way."

Participant 1: "I feel like we're quick to judge and we don't give the children a chance and don't realize where they've come from and the struggles they had. Definitely we over represent."

Follow up question?-Is that something that you think is mainly the school psychologist responsibility for that?

No I think it's the teachers mainly They have pressure from benchmarks and SGO and they do not give the child an opportunity, they do not intervene or reach out to ESL teachers or bilingual teachers to ask about interventions to use. They automatically assume if they don't know, then its special education.

4) Language.

Participant 13- "Kids will have dual language development or dual language learners. There is a process of language development or perhaps they've lost some of their native language and they are gaining their new, acquired language. They're a dual language learner, which means when we look at them and we assess them we need to say, "Do you know the answer to this in English? If you don't, what is it in Spanish? Do you know the answer to this in Spanish?" Oftentimes, we'll see that they know some things in one language and not the other. Most times, a bilingual language learner who may be is in a monolingual setting or even in a bilingual setting in school will know that a spoon is cuchara, but they won't know it's a spoon because they're not exposed to a spoon in school. They'll know that a desk is a desk and not un escritorio because they don't have a desk at home so their parent never refers to their desk as a desk or an escritorio."

Participant 12: “My thoughts are that we don’t understand the cultural background on some of these students. We’re quick to identify them as special education students without really turning stones and discovering what they need and have been exposed too. It’s just that they simply haven’t been exposed to it. It’ does not mean that they’re lower function. It just means that they haven’t been exposed to the verbal; they tend to score really low in that index. They haven’t really been exposed to language so it’s not fair for us to take that into account. I think it’s really important for us to look at non-verbal indexes so that we can make that comparison and really dissect whether the test that we are assessing is something that requires a lot of verbal commands or a lot verbal information, that maybe they’re not processing; that’s why I am a fan of the KABC.”

5) Race/Ethnicity.

Participant 11: “I think that certainly that’s not new information; that’s been around the whole time. As a school psychologist I have an extra eye on that because I am African American. Even in the pre-referral process, when teams are bringing up recommendations for retention or testing, I’m vocal about it. This child is hitting all those markers-he’s a boy; he’s young and African American; he comes from an economically disadvantaged background, so we have to be aware of that before we just jump into an assessment. Have we truly exhausted all of the interventions?”

Participant 5: “What I have seen with a lot of Hispanic and Black American kids is that behaviors result in classification and that’s something that I do take issue with. I think when you look at the kids and the environment, that a lot of their behaviors are adaptive in their environments. We are bringing them into the schools and asking them to behave a different way. A lot of them come from homes where they are taught a different way.

Parents come in and they will behave in a way and the kid acts the same. I think there's a lot of behavioral training that needs to take place, a lot of changing expectations, a lot of increasing the value for education in the community and so I don't think that ever kid that misbehaves is a special education kid. I think understanding the context is really important in terms of deciding whether this is really a special education learning issue or not. I think that's why so many kids are classified because there are a lot of behaviors."

Participant 4: "I do see the numbers are increasing, especially for our Hispanic population when it comes to being Communication Impaired, so I think that it is an issue, but when you look at how they perform on the test, it's like they do perform low and they do meet qualification, but then it's a question of are they truly communication impaired or is it just a lack of exposure; so, it's many factors to take into consideration, but I do agree that certain special education categories that there are over presentation of minorities."

Participant 1: "I agree because these students come with no prior knowledge or very little knowledge and when they get to the United States they look like they are really behind, but in reality, it's just that they weren't taught the information. When we classify them, we're looking at them as Communication Impaired, mostly for Hispanics. Sometimes it's just that their English is not emerging or they weren't taught that. I definitely think that specifically when we're looking at Hispanics, we are over represented."

Follow up question? What other categories would you say that you see that over presentation other than Communication Impaired?

“Not so much SLD. Cognitively Impaired, I can say when I worked in another building; it seemed like there were a lot of African American students predominately in those types of programs. It seemed like they were over represented in OHI; as far as the ADHD classification again a lot of the Hispanic and African American kids were classified under those classifications.”

6) School Culture/Climate

Participant 10: “It’s accurate, but also I think it’s a bigger problem than just assessment. I think it goes into school culture. Where I’m currently working we have a direct initiative to address school culture and school climate, because of how that could be supporting or feeding into the achievement gap. When a student comes up for evaluation and that is either culturally or linguistically diverse, sometimes you feel locked as a school psychologist. You are seeing where the student needs help but then the school environment isn’t supporting that. You know that the kid can get it in special education, but do they need special education. You’re making that decision based on your school environment. Sometimes it’s hard because your school environment doesn’t support your initiatives, but you need to support that student. I think it’s a big picture of the school environment, assessment, everyone’s knowledge of what’s going on to support the child and the parent piece to support.”

Participant 9: “I feel sad that it’s not represented in equal representative for the entire population. I also believe that there is a lot to look into. As a staff member and as an educator, the system is handled inappropriately. Maybe some politics. I don’t know exactly who divided the budget; we have to look deep into how the finances are divided.”

Participant 6: “I absolutely agree. Sometimes the teacher just wants them tested and out of the classroom. A lot of times it’s language too. They are trying to learn even with a lot of emotional problems. If I were sitting in a different country or a different place and I didn’t understand the language I’d be like, ‘What are they talking about?’ I think teachers are just like, “They’re learning disabled; they’re ADHD because they can’t sit in this class. They can go to the store and ask for something but they can’t sit in a formal classroom. I definitely think teachers are goodhearted, but they just don’t understand; they don’t have the training.”

Participant 3: “We don’t have enough support. We have the high school going from 7:30-4 which is a long day; research doesn’t really support kids getting up that early and being there for that long. Why not instead of making everyone do 160 credits, have remediation where you can have a reading course or a math course where these kids could go instead of placing them in special education? The teachers are upset and rightfully so because they want to help the kid, but there is nowhere they can put them. They kids are falling behind year after year and by the time we get them, it’s been 3 or 4 years of failure. They are way behind and there’s really not that many support in regular education to help them catch up, so they get stuck in that trap of sending them to special education. There is different culture between the teachers and the students and it’s all about approach and you really need to respect students. There are no supports in academics but behavior could be avoided with a different approach, with classroom management strategies.”

Theme 6-Roles

6) Duties. School psychologists were asked about their current role as a school psychologist.

Participant 1: “My role as a school psychologist currently involves case managing, LLD classrooms and in the MC program. I don’t have a social worker, so I do parent interviews. I write up social histories. I also do bilingual assessments for the district. I do counseling when I can, hold IEP meetings, meet with parents whenever needed. I contact other agencies if I have children who are in the day program or half day program.”

Participant 2: “I work as a counselor for the behavior disabilities program. I do the counseling, individual and group for five classrooms, self-contained for grades kindergarten through fourth. I follow the IEP. When an IEP meeting is coming up, incorporating the related services, what my recommendations are, providing a counseling update and then putting goals and objectives. [I also have]...as well as responsibilities of a “traditional” school psychology role, a lot of consultation between administrators, teachers, staff, parents and the child, and outside providers. I will do a lot of trying to connect the parents with those outside providers to meet the needs of the family. I will follow up with the psychiatrist or therapist or the CMO worker, or DYFS or the psychologist to make sure we are on the same page. When I was on the team, it’s a lot of case management. A lot of IEP writing, having identification or initial evaluation planning meetings. I [do] a lot of consultation. I want to say that I believe the client is the child. Sometimes I feel like the adults are more my client than anything because I think the children are really resilient. The adults cause problems, which are across the

board, between the administrators, teachers, parents, outside providers; they're really the ones sometimes that hinder the child's progress."

Participant 3: "I'm on the out of district child study team. I've been on the team eight or nine years and before that I was on the elementary child study team. Right now I do a lot of consultation with out of district schools. I consult with parents for services, even some guidance type of things for the high school; make sure they get their credits, make sure they receive the services in their IEP, doing their IEP, setting up transportation on a daily basis and if there is some afterschool or sports transition coordinating. I don't do any counseling right now. The only counseling I do is if I have a student who's not doing well either with attendance or behavioral issues... and I will go to the school and talk to them and see what's going on and try to work those out with a school counselor or just individually. I would say that I talk to adults for most of the day because I'm consulting with the schools and that's the majority of what I do."

Participant 4: "The way we work here in Elizabeth is the case management, such as overseeing that the students in their programs and related services...being responsible for counseling and making sure there are no mental health concerns as it pertains to their performing in school...connecting with the family and trying to refer them to outside services if it's something that cannot be addressed at school. As far as evaluations to make sure that they are in the appropriate program."

Participant 5: "In this building I do a lot of counseling...I do a lot of character development and team building. I work with both general ed. and special ed. to address my identified social or emotional needs. I push into the classrooms and run groups. I do a lot of behavioral consultation in both regular ed. and special Ed. I work with teachers

on developing class wide plans and assessment in order to determine initial or continuing eligibility for special education.”

Participant 6: “In Allentown, I would sometimes be on the crisis team. ... It was always assessment...99% of the time.”

Participant 7: “I am a case manager, I am a counselor, I am an advocate for my kids. I am a lot of times a parent liaison because I have to listen to what the parents want for their kids. I’m an advocate for families too, because it’s more than the child. It’s a lot of times collaboration with families.”

Participant 8: “So right now I case manage 2 BD classrooms. I have 2nd, 3rd....”

Follow up question? What does BD mean?

“BD is behavior disabilities. Those students range from different classification including Other Health Impaired, which usually entails, ADHD and ODD. I have some students that are communication impaired, some are even Autistic. They all have behavioral difficulties. They cannot function in a gen ed. classroom, so they are put into a behavioral classroom and they work on a point system. We also have language disabilities classes and co-taught kindergarten class and then various grade levels of in-class support. I write IEP’s every year, at least once a year if not more. We take on re-evaluations, and initial assessments (which I will perform the cognitive assessment). If we come across a student that needs a bilingual cognitive assessment, we swap with another school psychologist who speaks that language. I also do crisis intervention, lots of it. If a student is having an issue and they need to come in the room and talk to me about something, I have space and hopefully, time available to do that. I also do scheduled counseling, which is usually overtaken by crisis counseling. Then a lot of

consultation with the teachers and then the guidance department, school social worker, administration...I'm just trying to make sure everybody is getting what they need and progressing appropriately."

Participant 9: "It's to provide the student with the appropriate services for them. It is to help them to do better in academic settings. Include talking to them in counseling sessions, trying to figure out why they behave this way and if I can help them in the classroom setting...doing the test so they can be classified if necessary and placed in appropriate placement. Observing and creating a behavior intervention plan with kids to improve social skills."

Participant 10: "In this district... it's testing heavy...it's more assessment."

Follow up question-You want to be more specific?

"This is Southeastern Pennsylvania...suburban district...It's predominately Caucasian...It's about anywhere from 75-80% Caucasian with probably a 10% African American, Black population...10% Asian and very small other...maybe 1% Hispanic...it's a high achieving, high SES, generally it's fluent. We do have a pocket that is not as affluent, with a lower SES. We are talking issues surrounding the achievement gap, with our African American students. In this district I sit on school based teams like the child study teams, the core teams, at the high school and elementary level. Primarily I do assessments... we do a little bit of counseling."

Participant 11: "In this district it's assessment heavy, so I'm primarily doing assessments. We also serve on the pre-referral team, so I try to help with the regular education teachers and consult with them and the rest of the school team."

Participant 12: “My role aside from case management, it would be to assess the students for the initial evaluation, provide counseling services to students for either social skills or when they become impulsive like their ADHD, teaching them to self-regulate. I collaborate with the schools, stakeholders, and children’s parents.”

Participant 13: “Currently I spend the most part of my day writing IEP’s. I do case management, something that I didn’t do in Florida, so that was an adjustment for me to New Jersey. This year, I had a lower case load so I really could get to know my kids. This was the first year that our district required psychologists to do counseling. I do counseling as per IEP mandates. I consult with teachers on a regular basis. I also do some administrative roles.”

Follow up question-What type of role, like a disciplinarian?

“Some disciplinarian for special ed. student, sometimes not. I also have been a mentor for the LDTC on my team.”

Participant 14: “My role as a school psychologist is multifaceted. I work as a case manager...I am a community liaison, providing the parents with resources for things that really have nothing to do with education, like healthcare. Helping the parents with public transportation...getting them mental health services that they might not otherwise have access to and things like that...in addition to the traditional roles as a school psychologist.”

Participant 15: “I think typically you're the assessor with that student but I think you also have to, when you notice that there could be a difference, it could be best explained by a cultural difference that you have to help the people working with that student to understand the difference, especially around behavior. What might be a behavioral norm

for the major culture might not be a behavioral norm for the culture of origin. Explaining and then especially in my role now as a school psychologist, we're really enforcing and reinforcing with the adults and caregivers, teach the behavior. Then, co-switching, what might be acceptable in one particular setting might not be important in a different setting. You have this multi-tiered responsibility I guess, not only as the assessor but when you're delivering results or whatever, you have to do, a little bit of consultation and that kind of thing as well.”

Chapter 5

Summary of the Findings and Comparison to Existing Literature

School Psychologists are responsible for assessing students and making educational decisions for their future. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine school psychologists' experiences when assessing students who are diverse, culturally and linguistically, using a culturally competent approach to assessment when a referral is made for special education. Twenty-eight school psychologists were invited to participate in this study. However, fifteen school psychologists contacted this researcher and voluntarily participated in this study. The majority of the participants spoke English and four of them were bilingual and trilingual. There was one male participant and the remaining participants were female. The participants represented many diverse race/ethnic groups: African American, Caucasian, Italian and Puerto Rican, Cuban, Columbian, Israeli, Indian, and Latino. The majority of the participants worked in urban school settings and a small percentage worked in rural and suburban settings. The participants also worked in various types of schools, ranging from pre-school through high school. The majority of the participants worked in a pre-school through 8th grade setting. The participants represented various degrees of education: the majority had earned an Educational Specialist Degree/Professional Diploma and the second highest had earned Doctorate degree. The majority of the participants reported they had three to five grade courses in multicultural or diversity studies. The majority of participants had ten-fifteen years working as school psychologists and the second highest worked in the field zero to two years.

The results of this current study are remarkably different from the 2010 study by National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) membership study. NASP surveyed 2, 885 members and the results of the study revealed that 90.7% of the members were Caucasian, 3.4% Hispanic, 3% Black/African American, 1.3% Asian American/Pacific Islander and .6% Native American/Alaskan Native. The ethnic/race group of this current study revealed that 26.7% were African American/Black and the total Hispanic group, 33.3%. This indicates that culturally and linguistically diverse students are being assessed by school psychologists that represent their same race/ethnic group. These students may feel more comfortable in sharing their experiences with someone who shares the same culture and background. The result of this current study revealed that 13.3% were Caucasian and 13.3% Italian; if these were combined it would represent 26.7%, which is equal to the African American/Black group. Therefore the results indicated that Hispanic school psychologists represented the highest percentage of the ethnic/race group, 33.3%. The NASP study indicated that 78.1% were female and 21.9% male. These results were consistent with this current study, 93.3% female and 6.6% male. These results indicate that school psychologists are primarily female. These results also indicate that male students will probably be tested by female psychologists who may not understand gender differences. Research indicates that more males than females are placed in special education. According to the NASP study, 80.6% of their members are practicing school psychologists. The study also revealed that 45.76% of the members reported earning Educational Specialist Degree and 24.17% earned Doctorate degree. The results of this current study are consistent with NASP; 53.3% earned Educational Specialist Degrees and 33.3% earned Doctorate. This indicates that more

school psychologists are working in the field with an Educational Specialist Degree than with a Doctorate. The NASP study revealed that 83.7% worked in public schools as opposed to other settings. The results of this current study revealed all 100% of the participants worked in public schools. This indicates that school psychologists are employed in America's school districts. Last, the NASP surveyed revealed that nearly 98% of the school psychologists surveyed serve students who are diverse, culturally and linguistically. These results are consistent with the current study in which all the participants indicate that they have worked with students from various cultural backgrounds.

Significance of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine school psychologists' practices and experiences about evaluating students who are diverse, culturally and linguistically, using a culturally competent approach when a referral is made for special education. It is hoped that through this study school psychologists will be more cognizant about using culturally competent assessments, which may aid in the reduction of students in special education who are diverse, culturally and linguistically. The goal of this study is to raise awareness on how culturally competent assessments can help minority students receive support rather than referral, including identification and placement in special education programs. A further goal is to help identify the degree to which culturally competent assessments are being utilized and barriers to utilization can be used as a needs assessment to identify professional development and training needs of school psychologists working with culturally diverse students.

According to NASP (2009) a culturally competent approach to assessment of learners who are diverse, culturally and linguistically may reduce their risk for placement in special education. NASP recommends the following: using fair and unbiased assessment tools; use of nonverbal tests or tests that are less verbally loaded such as the Differential Ability Scale 2nd Edition(DAS II), Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children, 2nd Edition(KABC II), Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test(UNIT), and Leiter International Performance Scale, Revised(Leiter-R). NASP also recommends using behavior and adaptive rating scales, RTI (response to intervention), and FBA (functional behavioral analysis). NASP also recommends consultation with bilingual teachers, use of interpreters, parent, teacher, student interviews and observations.

This is a qualitative study that utilized grounded theory in order to develop an understanding of school psychologists' experiences when using a culturally competent approach to assessing learners who are culturally and linguistically diverse. The data revealed six major themes and sub themes: *Referrals*-Behavior, Academic, Pre-referrals; *Materials*-Tools; *Culturally Competent*-Reflection and Essence; *Assessment*-Students and Families; *Overrepresentation*-Bias Testing, Undetermined, Lack of Skills, Language, Race/Ethnicity, School Culture/Climate and *Roles*-Duties.

Theme 1-Referrals

The participants were asked about the reasons why students who are culturally and linguistically diverse are referred to them. The Referrals theme had three subthemes: Academic, Behavior, and Pre-referral. The academic referral means that the students were referred for an academic concern (ex. Failing over time, poor grades). The behavior referral means that the student was referred for behavior problems (ex. Outburst in class,

aggressive behavior, and poor peer relationships). The pre referral means that students were referred after an intervention was in place for a period of time.

1) Academic.

The data analysis of this research study revealed that 33.3% of participants reported that students were referred to them for academic reasons. Perhaps these teachers are inadequately prepared to teach these students, as indicated by Darling and Hammond, (2004), when they found inadequate teacher preparation and teachers' resistance to teaching in challenging areas as a possible cause to disproportionality. Ford and Webb (1994) suggested that teachers needed to be trained in cultural competency. For example, Participant 7 reported, " Primarily for academics and then in terms of academics...for reading , so a lot of them are below grade level in reading comprehension, reading, fluency skills, and that's the most reason they are referred." Research reported that there is a disconnection between the culture of a school and its diverse student body. Gilbert and Gay (1985) found that African American students were being classified because the general education teachers did not meet the cultural needs of the students.

2) Behavior.

The data analysis of this research study revealed that 40% of participants reported that students were referred for behavior reasons. These students are "acting out" and are frustrated in class because they are having trouble academically. The participants reported that teachers who had poor classroom management skills would often refer because they did not know how to manage their classes properly and did not know how to deal with student behaviors. These students were often sent out of the classroom, either

to the main office or to student personnel. This subtheme yielded the highest response among all of the participants. It appears that minority students are referred for behavior more than for academic or pre-referral reasons. For example- Participant 14 stated, “A lot of times it’s behavioral. Yes, that makes sense, because if the child is not being understood or does not understand, they meet with frustration and so they act out. A lot of times you find that these behavior referrals truly are not behavioral.” This quote rings true in what other researchers have found because many teachers were referring minority students to special education based on whether or not they felt a student was un-teachable or threatening (Hale-Benson, 1982; Harry & Anderson, 1995; Kunjufu, 1985). Another example came from Participant 1: “Behavior, non-compliance-...so Johnny is failing, why is he failing? He doesn’t do any work. Well, that’s not necessarily a special ed. issue. What are we doing to help Johnny get more work done?”

The school psychologists in this study did not reveal if these teachers were from a race/ethnic group different from the students, but it can be inferred that they were. The study by Ladner and Hammons (2001) showed that when the teaching staff of white teachers increased, the eligibility numbers for minority students increased. Referral data collected from 1975 and 2000 found that African American and Latino students were referred for special education more than any other minority group (Hosp and Reschly, 2003). Teachers who are unbiased and are aware of their own cultural stereotypes made valid referrals to the school psychologists, instead of arbitrarily referring them.

3) Pre-referral.

The data analysis of this research study revealed that only 13.3% of the participants reported that students were referred after a pre-referral process or

intervention period. This would indicate the minority students are not being screened through the pre-referral process first, which is documented by other researchers. Gravios and Rosenfiled (2006) found that pre-referral practices can significantly change the outcomes of minority students who are disproportionately referred. The data analysis of this study can conclude that students who are culturally and linguistically diverse are not being referred for pre interventions. For example, Participant 1 said, "I think just going back to the point where people in general, teachers, whoever works with the students, to not automatically refer a student. Because we can't classify on not having prior knowledge. It's kind of unethical..I think that there needs to be more interventions." Another example of this is the statement of Participant 6: "Getting the data from RTI. If they are giving interventions, seeing if that is helping. Trying to get the RTI teams involved before you go to formal testing. See if there is something that can be resolved informally."

Culturally diverse and linguistic students face many challenges but if school districts employ a strong pre referral process, this could reduce referrals and overall rates of overrepresentation of these students' placements in special education. Harry and Klinger (2006) received similar results in their study of disproportionate rates of minorities in special education; these results included higher rates of special education referrals, ethnicity of the teacher making the referrals and no pre-referral strategies. Teachers are recommended to document interventions, collaborate with school psychologists and other staff personnel, and monitor students' progress. Working together can put these students on the course of success. Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu (2008) reported that 83% of elementary school teachers in American are White and female; 6%

of teachers are African American and 1%, African American males. In efforts to help teachers, Kunjufu recommends that teachers must admit that culture and race are factors in the reason why these students do poorly. He also recommends that teachers must try to understand their students' cultures. This is consistent with Kearns (2005), who revealed that school psychologists as well as teachers received inadequate training and suffered from cultural and class insensitivities.

Theme 2- Materials

The participants were asked during the interview about the kinds of psychological tools they use to assess students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. This theme resulted in sub theme-Tools- which includes the actual cognitive test.

1) Tools.

The data analysis of this research study revealed that 73.33% of the participants reported that they use the WISC or other Wechsler Tests. According to NASP, nonverbal tests such as the Unit and Leiter-R are recommended to use for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. The KABC II and DAS II are also recommended to use with these students because these tests tend to be less verbally loaded rather than the WISC-IV or Weschler tests. The data analysis also revealed that 33.3% of participants reported that they also use a nonverbal test (CTONI, TONI, UNIT). The data analysis also revealed that 13.3% of the participants use the DAS II, and also revealed that 20% of the participants reported that they use the Stanford Binet. The data analysis revealed that 20% of the participants reported that they use the KABC II. One participant reported that she wanted to use the KABC II but the district where she works did not have the test. Two of the participants reported that they also use the Woodcock Johnson Tests

(Cognitive and Achievement). The data analysis also revealed that 46.6% of participants reported that they use behavior and adaptive rating scales; it also revealed that 13.3% of the participants reported that they also use other psychological tools such as the KTEA, WRML, PAL, NEPSY, and DKEFS.

Based on these findings, it is important to divide the participants from New Jersey from those from Pennsylvania. There were eleven participants from New Jersey and four participants from Pennsylvania. The participants from Pennsylvania reported that they use psychological tools other than the WISC or Weschler scales. For example, Participant 10 said, "I don't use the WISC, I use the KABC, Kaufman scales, Woodcock-Johnson scales, NEPSY, WRML, CTOP, PAL, DEKEFS; children memory scales, rating scales, teacher input, parent input." Participant 11 also reported, "I do use the Weschler scales, I'm not crazy about that but I think that's the primary assessment tool. I have used the KABC but I'm not fluent in that particular assessment tool. I know that the KABC is what I would like to grow in, and then also the DAS and receive some professional development because I know that's a test that is highly recommended for cultural diverse populations."

Based on the data analysis, some of participants from New Jersey use psychological tools other than the Wechsler scales. For example, Participant 5 stated, "All I have here are the DAS and WISC." Participant 7 said, "We use the WISC and the DAS, we are limited here." Participant 13 is currently working in New Jersey but she was trained in Florida. "The measure that I stick to the most because I feel like it is the most appropriate for my population is the KABC; I use the WISC-IV but not often." Participant 2 also from New Jersey reported using psychological tools other than the

WISC: “Nonverbal and the Stanford Binet...a lot of behavioral rating scales, observations, and informal questions. I might be able to get the UNIT or the TONI”.

Another participant from New Jersey uses tools other than the WISC- Participant 3 indicated, “I have a DAS, Stanford Binet, the TONI..CTONI...Developmental Profile Three...” However, there are some participants from New Jersey who use only the WISC...Participant 4- remarked, “The WISC...pretty much all of the Wechsler scales, depending on the situation”. Participant 8 said, “The WISC, WPPSI-IV, those are the ones that I’m most comfortable with”. Participant 9 indicated, “I use the WISC, I use the BASC”. All of the participants used some kind of rating scale, whether it is adaptive or behavioral.

Based on NASP’s recommendations of using a non verbal test or the KABC or DAS, it appears that 50% of the New Jersey participants are using other psychological tools such as a nonverbal, KABC or DAS and 50% are using only the WISC or Wechsler scales. Based on this fraction of culturally competent assessments as it relates to psychological tools, half of the New Jersey psychologists are not using it. It is important to point out that in Pennsylvania, school psychologists are not part of a team; they have the responsibility of testing the child for the social emotional, cognitive, and educational aspects. However in New Jersey, the school psychologists are responsible only for the cognitive portion and other members of the team will evaluate for educational concerns and social and emotional areas. Despite this important factor, half of the New Jersey school psychologists who use only Wechsler scales would benefit from professional development on other psychological tools. Perhaps these school psychologists feel comfortable using only the WISC because they have not had enough exposure or training

in other psychological tools. Perhaps these school psychologists did not have exposure to other psychological tools in their graduate training programs. These findings are consistent with the Ochoa et al. (1997) study of bilingual school psychologists' uses of cultural competent assessments. However, nearly 70% of them believed that they did not receive adequate training and were not using a culturally competent assessment.

Theme 3- Culturally Competent

The participants were asked about their thoughts on the term cultural competent assessment and what the term means to them. This was divided into two sub themes, reflection and essence. Culturally competent can be defined as skills and competence when selecting and using culturally appropriate methods, tools, and procedures that are designed to reduce bias ; it also involves knowledge of and familiarity with the person's cultural factors and the ability to evaluate data with the content of that culture, as well as understanding language development, second language acquisition, Bilingual Education, or English as a Second Language ; their relationship to school based learning and achievement is vital, including the ability to communicate effectively and competently in the native language of the person being evaluated (Cummins, 1984; Hakuta, 1986; Krashen, 1985; Leigh, 1998).

Data analysis revealed that 26% of the participants did not provide sufficient information for cultural competency, based on this previously stated definition. For example, Participant 1 said, "Culturally competent assessment means to be able to do something and to master it." This response indicates that this participant is completely unaware of the term and its implications. As another example, Participant 8 stated-"I think people doing the assessments just speaking the language be it Spanish or Creole.

We have kids that have just recently come in within the past few years from other countries and using our assessment tools on them, even if we are translating them are not always the best.” This response lacks the definition of cultural competency. Another example is from Participant 9: “When I’m thinking about this term, I am thinking about how I can administer the test in being more objective, clear, being understood in two different levels. I’m trying to be concrete.” This response also lacks the definition. Participant 12 said, “It means you have to take into account what they might be predisposed to in the past and really use that to formulate a good assessment on their level of functioning, socially, and cognitive.” It is unclear why these four participants did not provide sufficient examples of cultural competency; perhaps that have never heard the terminology or definition; or perhaps they have no background knowledge in multiculturalism or diversity. Because these participants gave poor examples of cultural competency, it is inferred that they are not conducting culturally competent assessments. However, the data analysis revealed that 73.33% of the participants did have sufficient knowledge on the term cultural competency. For example, Participant 2 indicated, “I think that it’s really just looking at the child and meeting their needs; testing the child and meeting their needs. Knowing the family background, child background, understanding the culture. No just using one assessment...being able to look at what the referral question is, selecting tests that will measure what it’s supposed to measure. You’ll see that, even when you do certain tests....that individuals are from culturally diverse backgrounds, their scores are impacted and are much lower than those that have been in this country for awhile.” Another example, from Participant 3 indicates, “The whole point would be to try to make sure your assessment is touching all of the points, not just

their cognitive ability, but is it valid. After you get the results you really have to put it into the environment where they're coming from, their background, and determine if it's actually a disability or just lack of education. Relying on your skills as a psychologist to look into all the rest of the information." Another example, one from Participant 4 said, "The countries a child may come from or their parents may arrive from. I think it's just ensuring that whatever assessment you use is going to be fair towards the student based on their cultural background, that it's not biased, that you're not giving an assessment that they may perform in a limited manner due to the fact that they may perform in a limited manner due to the fact they haven't been exposed to our culture."

Research reports that this assessment process is subject to bias when there is a failure to account for cultural influences such as concepts of time, worldviews, acculturation, beliefs, values, attitudes, normative behaviors and expectations (Frisby, 1998; Solvia & Ysseldyke, 1991). Although this theme yielded the information that almost 75% of the participants had knowledge of culturally competency, they still lack use of using a culturally competent approach to the assessment of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Theme 4 -Assessment

School Psychologists were asked about the steps they take before assessing, and also about their experiences with working with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. The data analysis revealed that 93.3% of the participants took various steps before assessing these students, which include interviewing parents and students; consulting with ESL teachers/bilingual teachers to make sure the student is competent in his or her own language, and observing and reviewing each student's

records. These are steps that NASP recommends when conducting a culturally competent assessment. Participants described working with students and families from diverse backgrounds in countries such as Russia, Caribbean, Thailand, Africa, Latin America, Puerto Rico, Portugal, South American, Haiti, Dominican Republic and other Spanish speaking countries. The data analysis revealed 6.6% of the participants had very little experience working with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. For example, Participant 9 indicated, "I work in an urban district; the population is more geared to a Spanish speaker; this is the first time I worked in a district this size. First time working with Spanish population. As far as assessment, I try to keep to the script. If its intelligence, I follow the WISC, and the manual to make sure that all students get the uniform directions. Prior to testing, I usually bring the student to a nice quiet place and ask him different questions, about his life, what he likes to do, what he doesn't, what his goals are for the future. If its kindergarten or first grader I usually ask him to draw some picture of different situations and then I take it from there." This participant appears to have little experience in understanding steps prior to assessing culturally and linguistically diverse students. These findings are consistent with Kearns et al. 2005 study in which they found that school psychologists, like teachers, received inadequate training and suffer from cultural and class insensitivities.

Theme 5 -Overrepresentation

The participant school psychologists were told during the interview that current research reports that minority students are overly represented in special education. They were asked to give their thoughts on the topic. This resulted in resulted in six subthemes:

Bias Testing, Undetermined, Lack of Skill, Language, Race/Ethnicity, and School Culture/Climate.

1) Bias testing.

The data analysis of this study revealed that 20% of the participants indicated that bias testing is a factor of overrepresentation of minority students in special education. This is linked to what Grant (1992) found concerning problems with standardized testing of African American students. The most significant case regarding IQ testing being biased against minorities was the Larry P v. Rise case of 1979. The Judge in the case found that IQ tests discriminated against African American children. IQ testing is outlawed in the state of California because of this and other lawsuits. Despite these lawsuits, there are many psychological tools, such as the Wechsler test, that are considered culturally biased because these tests are not equally normed in cases of minority students. School psychologists that choose to administer Wechsler tests are recommended to use a cross battery approach; meaning using other kinds of tests along with the Wechsler scales in order to bring a broader perspective of the students' strengths and weaknesses.

2) Undetermined.

The data analysis of this study revealed that only 6.66% of the participants did not know the reasons why overrepresentation occurs. The participant did reveal, "I think there's just so many factors that go into an assessment that it could be a disproportion but there might be other reasons why other than just culturally". The existing literature explains that indeed there are many factors to overrepresentation but certain factors are

established, such as race, teachers' biases, poverty, biased testing, and cultural insensitivities.

3) Lack of skills.

The data analysis revealed that 13.3% of the participants suggest that school psychologists lack skills and training. This is not surprising, based on the data of the participants' lack of knowledge concerning assessment practices when using a culturally competent assessment.

4) Language.

The data analysis revealed that 13.3% of the participants revealed that language was a reason these students were being overly represented in special education. These participants believed that because of dual language concerns these students fall behind their English speaking peers. They have not mastered the vocabulary fast enough for the teachers; therefore they are referred for special education. These students have not been exposed to enough language. This is consistent with researchers' Baca & Cervantes' study that found English Language Learners with disabilities benefit the most from special education teachers who can speak their native languages and have a sound understanding of their cultures in order to address their needs effectively. These students who are strong in their native language will have an advantage in grasping the core content subject areas in English. School psychologists should work with bilingual or ESL teachers before a referral is made. Bilingual and ESL teachers are crucial in identifying language acquisition; this is what Espinosa and Lopez found in 2007: that a students' language acquisition or proficiency should be determined first. These teachers should be present on the Student Assistant committee or Intervention and Referral team.

These teachers can be helpful to other English speaking teachers because collaboration and consultation can pinpoint students' needs, expectations and goals. Teachers may also want to wait four or five years before considering a special education referral. Teachers should have patience and work with these students. They need to give them time to learn the English language.

5) Race/ethnicity.

The data analysis revealed that 26.66% of the participants revealed that race/ethnicity is a factor for overrepresentation of minority students in special education. These participants reported that certain minority groups seemed to be classified in specific special education categories. The participants reported that Hispanics seem to be classified as Communication Impaired and African American students were being classified and placed in Mental Retarded classrooms. African American students were also seen as behavior problems. These students were also classified more frequently under Other Health Impaired and for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. These findings are consistent with other researchers' findings regarding race and discrimination of African Americans and other minority students in special education. Dunn's 1968 research of African American students being classified as mildly retarded and placed in self-contained classrooms. More recently, the United States government data collected in 2007 revealed that African American students were 1.5 times more likely to be placed in special education than the same aged students in all other racial and ethnic groups combined. Despite legislation and also monitoring from states, race factors continue to be a significant, major reason why these students are overrepresented in special education.

6) School culture/climate.

The data analysis revealed that 26.66% of the participants reported that culturally and linguistically diverse students were overly represented in special education due to the lack of support from school building personnel. One participant reported that teachers are not supportive; therefore, the students are not supported. Another participant revealed the idea that politics in the education system is also a factor. Still another participant reported that lack of teacher training in behavior management and in diversity contributes to overrepresentation of these students in special education. These results are consistent with Blanchett (2006) which suggests that ongoing disproportionality strongly indicates system problems and marginalization in the education system and prejudice.

Theme 6- Roles

The data analysis revealed that the participants' duties in this study ranged from case manager of student Individual Education plans (IEP), counseling, consultation and assessor. Further data analysis revealed that 53.3% of the participants reported that their main duties as school psychologists involved being case-manager of students' IEP's. A further 13.3% of the participants reported that their main duties as school psychologists involved counseling. Another 26.6% of the participants reported assessment as the main duty and 6.6% of the participants reported consultation as the main duty. It is interesting to note that the most of the New Jersey participants revealed that they primarily did case-management of IEP's, but Pennsylvania participants did assessments. According to the NASP (2010) membership surveyed, 47.01% reported that their main duties as school psychologists involved assessments of initials and re-evaluations.

Limitations to the Present Study

There are several limitations to this present study. The researcher would like to have had more participants in the study. The researcher recruited only twenty-eight school psychologists, which presents as a limitation. Ideally, the study should have had more participants to bring a broader range of experiences to the study. Another limitation is the geographical situation of the participants. The participants were current school psychologists in the states of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Ideally, the researcher would like to have gathered a sample of participants from other states in America, which may have brought a different aspect of experiences. Another limitation to this study would be the amount of male representation. The female participants were largely represented in the study. Therefore it was mainly a female experience of culturally competent assessment. This researcher would have liked to have more males participate because their experiences may have been different from the females and would have brought different results. And last, the participants reported that they worked in urban districts more frequently than in suburban or rural districts. This researcher would have liked a more even distribution of places where the participants worked. Obviously, a suburban district versus, rural district, would have brought different results.

Recommendations

School districts need to provide school psychologists with a variety of testing materials to evaluate students who are culturally and linguistically diverse in a fair and nondiscriminatory manner. It is recommended that with diverse student populations across this country, assessment materials should reflect those factors. Directors of Special Education, administrators and principals, staff, teachers, etc, need revolving training on

multicultural and diversity and special education, especially on future outcomes of these students. Community leaders should also be involved. These students are eventually going to grow up in the same communities where they went to school. Why not invest in their future? Unfortunately, principals look only at the small picture and not the 'big' picture or future of these students. These individuals should collaborate with the school psychologist in finding unique ways to reach these students' needs. It is important to have greater collaboration with special education departments and general education departments. Teachers should have trainings on behavior and classroom management, learning disabilities, attention deficits/executive functioning deficits and assistance with behavior plans and modifications. School principals need to be concerned about classroom teachers that excessively refer students for special education. It is recommended that school psychologists would benefit from more training in culturally competent assessments and ethics in school psychology. School psychologists should be open minded in trying different psychological tools. A few of the participants in the study discussed the fact that they use only the WISC or that their districts have only the WISC, but I would recommend that they advocate for other psychological materials that meet the diverse needs of students. The following trainings are offered by the National Association of School Psychologists and are helpful to school psychologists in a variety of roles: Culturally Competent Evaluations of SLD with English Language Learners; Working with diverse students such as LBGTQ and Transgender students; Multicultural counseling; Response to Intervention, Teaching Modifications; Helping Children at Home and School; Assessment of English Language Learners and Ethical Training for School Psychologists. School psychologists need ethical training and supervision.

Ethical training would keep psychologists on their toes and supervision will provide them with support when they need it.

Suggestions for Further Research

Further research should be conducted to determine if psychological tools such as the DAS II and KABC are helpful in evaluating culturally diverse and linguistic learners; specifically for special education. It would be helpful to learn if using these two tools has been helpful either in declassifying or in finding student ineligible. Administrators should also pressure further research to determine the best ways to evaluate students for special education. It is unfortunate that many of these principals have low tolerance for students' behaviors and they just want them classified or want them out of their buildings. More research with administrators may also guide school psychologists in finding better ways to collaborate and strengthen the home to school relationship with parents.

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APPENDIX A:

Letter to Recruit Participant

Date:

Dear Participant:

My name is Mali Y. Land, and I am a doctoral student in the School Psychology program at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM). I would like to recruit school psychologists to participate in my doctoral dissertation study. With your participation, I would like to learn about school psychologists' experiences towards assessing students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. If you are interested in becoming a participant, these are the requirements:

- Commit to meeting in a neutral place from 1-1/2 hour
- Discuss your experiences in assessing culturally and linguistically diverse students
- Provide a clarifying formation follow up phone interview
- Allow for audio taping for data collection
- Discuss demographic questions about yourself

You will be offered a summary of the research finding following the completion of the study and your answers will be confidential and will only be used for data collection. If you are interested in meeting to discuss the requirements or need any more information, please contact Mali Y. Land at malila@pcom.edu or 973-517-3781.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Mali Y. Land
PCOM Doctoral Student

APPENDIX B:
Demographic Questions

1. What language do you use to communicate on a daily basis?

2. What ethnic group do you represent?

3. What is your gender?

4. Describe the district you work in?
 - a. Urban
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Rural

5. What type of school/agency/practice do you work in?
 - a. Early Childhood (pre-k-kindergarten)
 - b. Elementary (1st-5th grade)
 - c. Middle School (6th-8th grade)
 - d. High School (9th-12th)
 - e. Private Practice/Agency

6. What is the highest degree you completed?
 - a. Masters Degree
 - b. Eds. Degree/PD
 - c. Doctorate
 - d. Post Doctorate/Specify

7. How many classes have you had in your graduate training on diversity and or multiculturalism?
- a. none
 - b. one
 - c. two
 - d. three or more
8. How many years have you been a school psychologist?

APPENDIX C:

Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your thoughts on culturally competent assessments
2. Tell me about your experience in assessing a student who is culturally and linguistically diverse.
3. Tell me about your experience with working with culturally and linguistically diverse students
4. What is your role as a school psychologist?
5. What does culturally competent assessment mean to you?
6. How do you assess a student who is culturally and linguistically diverse?
7. What kinds of psychological tools do you use?
8. In the current research it is noted that culturally and linguistically diverse students are overrepresented in special education. What are your thoughts on this?
9. What steps do you take before assessing a student who is culturally and linguistically diverse?
10. Why are these students referred to you?
11. Are there any comments you would like to make?

Table 1
Languages Spoken by the Participants

Language	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Per
English	11	73.3	73.3
English and Spanish	1	6.7	80.0
English and Hebrew	1	6.7	86.7
English and Italian and Spanish	1	6.7	93.3
English and Gujarati	1	6.7	100.0
Total	15	100.0	

Table 2
Race/Ethnic group the participants represent

Group	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Per
Latino	1	6.7	6.7
African Ameer/Black	4	26.7	33.3
Israeli	1	6.7	40.3
Indian	1	6.7	46.7
Italian	2	13.3	60.0
Caucasian	2	13.3	73.3
Hispanic (Cuban And Columbian)	1	6.7	80.0
Puerto Rican	2	13.3	93.3
Hispanic(Cuban)	1	6.7	100.0
Total	15	100.0	

Table 3
Gender of the Participant

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	14	93.3	93.3
Male	1	6.7	100.0
Total	15	100.0	

Table 4
Type of District

Type	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Urban	11	73.3	73.3
Suburban	2	13.3	86.7
Rural	2	13.3	100.0
Total	15	100.0	

Table 5
Type of School

Type	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Early Childhood (Prek-kindergarten)	1	6.7	6.7
Middle school (6 th -8 th)			
Elementary (1 st -5 th)	2	13.3	20.0
Prek-High School	3	20.3	40.0
Middle School only	1	6.7	46.7
Pre-k-5 th grade/High Sch	1	6.7	53.3
Pre-k-8 th grade	6	40.0	93.3
Kindergarten-6 th grade	1	6.7	100.0
Total	15	100.0	

Table 6
Type of Degree

Type	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Masters	2	13.3	13.3
Educational Specialist/ Professional Diploma	8	53.3	66.7
Doctorate	5	33.3	100.0
Total	15	100.0	

Table 7

Number of Graduate Courses in Multiculturalism or Diversity

Number	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	1	6.7	6.7
1	3	20.0	26.7
2	5	33.3	60.0
3-5	6	40.0	100.0
Total	15	100.0	

Table 8
Years as a School Psychologist

Number	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0-2	4	26.7	26.7
2-4	1	6.7	33.3
4-6	3	20.0	53.3
6-8	2	13.3	66.7
10-15	5	33.3	100.0
Total	15	100.0	

Table 9
Participants from New Jersey

Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
11	73.33	73.33

Table 10
Participants from Pennsylvania

Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
4	36.36	36.36
