

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 430 360

EC 307 213

AUTHOR Butler, Douglas M.
 TITLE Social Skills and Problem Behaviors as Contextual Variables in African American Education: Students with and without Disabilities.
 INSTITUTION Virginia Univ., Charlottesville.
 SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC.
 PUB DATE 1999-00-00
 NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 19-23, 1999).
 CONTRACT 5-34261
 PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Problems; *Black Students; Elementary Education; *Emotional Disturbances; Interpersonal Communication; *Interpersonal Competence; Interviews; *Learning Disabilities; Males; Minority Group Children; Social Development; Socialization; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Expectations of Students
 IDENTIFIERS African Americans

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the outcomes of a study that examined social skills as a contextual factor of African American male students with and without behavior problems. Forty-four African American male students (grades 3-5) reported three placement designations: mainstreamed with learning disabilities, mainstreamed with emotional disturbances, or general education students. The study included 22 general education teachers, participants who were homeroom teachers for special education, and a general education student participant in the mainstream classroom. Data were gathered through examiner interviews of student participants and teacher ratings of a minimum of two student participants (one special education student and one general education student). Results found no significant difference in teacher ratings of typical students and students with emotional disturbances in either social skills or problem behaviors. While there were significant differences in teacher ratings of social skills of typical students versus students with learning disabilities, no significant differences were found on problem behaviors. Additionally, there were no significant relationships when comparing teacher versus student ratings of social skills across groups. (Contains 23 references.) (CR)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

ED 430 360

SOCIAL SKILLS AND PROBLEM BEHAVIORS AS CONTEXTUAL
VARIABLES IN AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION: STUDENTS WITH AND
WITHOUT DISABILITIES

By

Douglas M. Butler, Ph.D.

American Education Research Association 1999 Annual
Meeting in Montreal, Canada

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
 This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
 Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

Butler

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

This presentation was made possible by Grant No.

5-34261 U.S. Department of Education, The Center of
Minority Research in Special Education, University of
Virginia, Charlottesville

307213



SOCIAL SKILLS AND PROBLEM BEHAVIORS AS CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES
IN AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION: STUDENTS WITH AND WITHOUT
DISABILITIES

Within the multicultural context of the educational experience, there is the culture of the teacher, the school and that which the student brings. It has been observed that where there is not a match between what the student brings and the expectations of that teacher within the context of the classroom, the child is met with constraints to educational opportunity (Comer, 1988). The importance of contextual factors has been displayed in special education referral and placement. The purpose of this study was to examine social skills as a contextual factor of African American male students with and without behavior problems.

Over the last several decades there has been a concern that African American students with disabilities are over represented in Special Education placement without these students meeting the criteria of a handicapping condition as defined by the law (Ysseldyke, Algozzine and Thurlow, 1992). This has been found to be particularly true of African Americans who are male and perceived to have a behavioral or discipline problem (Harry and Anderson, 1994). For example, in their analysis of national data, Harry and Anderson (1994) found that African American male

students' special education placement was well over 10% of their representation in the population. They were overrepresented as a whole (69%) and particularly in Learning Disabled (LD) (73%) and Emotionally Disturbed (ED) (76%). It is conceivable that teachers perceive minority students, particularly African American males, as being more aggressive and generally lacking acceptable characteristics, social skills, or behavior to be successful in student/teacher interactions (Willis, 1989). While there are a number of studies documenting the nature and impact of students' social skills, there has been little attention in the social skills research on specifically African American male students (Gresham and MacMillan, 1997).

The significance of social skills development in the educational system has long been recognized (Dusek, 1985; Gresham, et. al., 1987). It has been suggested that the behavioral characteristics of African American male students conflict with what is expected of students in school systems (Sigmon, 1990); however, few studies have focused on African American male students and special class placement. Deutsch (1967) noted 30 years ago that African American male children's aggressive behavior is more threatening than African American female children. More

recently, the behavior of African American male students has been observed and analyzed by Majors and Billson (1992). They provide a conceptualization of "cool posing" as a way to describe how behavior can be misinterpreted by those in authority. Specifically, Majors and Billson (1992) suggest that the "expressive" lifestyle displayed by African American males is threatening, considered aggressive and is intimidating. For these reasons, they assert, African American male children are suspended more frequently and for longer periods of time, and are more likely to be assigned to remedial courses and classes for the children who are retarded and learning disabled.

The relationship between the teacher and the student is important in the educational process. There is a need for and lack of research directly examining teacher perception of social skills and/or problem behaviors of identified disabled and general education non-disabled African American male students. The purpose of this study was to examine social skills as a contextual factor of African American male students with and without behavior problems.

Methodology and Analysis

Forty-four African American male students from third, fourth, and fifth grades were the student participants and they represented three placement designations mainstreamed learning disabled, mainstreamed emotionally disturbed or general education non-disabled. There were 22 general education teacher participants who were homeroom teachers for a special education and a general education student participant in the mainstream classroom. Data were gathered through examiner interviews of student participants and teacher ratings of a minimum of two of their student participants (one special education student and one general education student).

A series of t-tests ($p < .05$) and a correlation were calculated along with supplemental analyses to address the research questions. The social skills of African American male students with and without identified behavioral problems were explored by using a Quasi-experimental design. For the purposes of this study, social skills served as the dependent variable. This variable was

operationally defined by teacher and student ratings of social skills on the SSRS-T and SSRS-S instruments respectively. Correspondingly, student placement (mainstreamed LD, ED or general education) was the independent variable and defined by the student's actual school placement and diagnostic label. The research questions were:

1. Does the General Education teacher perception of students' social skills and problem behaviors differ for African American male students without a disability and those African American male students with emotional disturbances?
2. Does the General Education teacher perception of students' social skills and problem behaviors differ for African American male students without a disability when compared to those African American male students with learning disabilities?
3. What is the relationship of student self-perception of social skills and teachers' perception of student social skills for non-disabled, learning disabled and emotionally disturbed?

Results

There was not a significant difference in teacher ratings of ND vs. ED students in either social skills or problem behaviors. While there were significant differences in teacher ratings of social skills of ND vs. LD students, no significant differences were found when teachers rated ND vs. LD students on problem behaviors. Additionally, there were no significant relationships when comparing teacher vs. student ratings of social skills across groups (ND, ED or LD).

Discussion

No one study can address all school contextual variables important in the complex issue of special education referral and placement. However, while this study's small sample size is a limitation, some useful information has been provided by this study and can be the basis for future explorations of African American male student referral and placement in special education. In earlier studies, the SSRS Teacher form successfully discriminated the non-disabled from the disabled students in social skills and problem behaviors. However, in this study, when general education teachers were asked to use the SSRS to rate the levels of social skills and problem

behaviors of a group of mildly disabled African American male students in comparison to a control group of non-disabled African American male students, few differences were found. Specifically, teacher social skills ratings were not different for a ND sample of African American males when compared with a sample of African American males with ED.

In contrast, teachers rated the social skills of the LD group lower than the matched sample of GE African American males. Interestingly, when the mean for the SSRS norm sample was compared to the social skills ratings for LD and ND African American students, there were significant differences. It is suggested that the norm sample used to develop standards for the SSRS Teacher form - social skills subscale is different from the sample pool rated in this study. The question of instrument validity is repeated with analyses of additional findings from this study.

It is not certain from this study whether teacher perceptions were based on harbored stereotypes of African Americans. However, it is interesting that both students labeled as LD and the ND sample received significantly lower than average (i.e. a score of 100 is average) social skills ratings by their teachers. Perhaps, their ratings

were based on harbored stereotypes which were strengthened when the student was labeled (Prieto and Zucker, 1980).

Student Perception of Social Skills

In this study, there was not a significant relationship between student and teacher perception of social skills. While this reported lack of relationship could be due to small sample size, it also may reflect a difference in student and teacher perception of social skills. Comer (1988), for example, writes about the importance of bridging the communication gap between school and home as a way toward improved student achievement. The finding that teachers' ratings did not relate to students rating themselves could be representative of such a communication /culture gap between the teacher and student. Teachers, in other words, have expectations that are not clearly communicated to students and the African American students do not satisfy the teacher's expectations, which as Comer (1988) suggests, creates interaction conflicts. Such conflict could relate, in part, to placing African American male students at-risk for referral and subsequent placement into special education.

Problem Behaviors and Special Education Placement

When disabled ED and LD African American male students were compared to a control group of non-disabled African American male students on teacher perception of their problem behaviors, no differences were found between the disabled and the non-disabled groups in teachers ratings of problem behaviors. These findings are quite different from earlier studies which clearly distinguished the disabled from the non-disabled; particularly, the ED from the non-disabled (Gresham and MacMillan, 1997). These findings may reflect general education teachers' perception of African American male students, regardless of disability status, as threatening, aggressive and intimidating. This is consistent with Majors and Billson (1992) observations. Perhaps the findings reflect a conflict African American male students present to school in that they are "different" from what is expected in school systems (Sigmon, 1990). It also may reflect the impact of student ethnicity teachers' attitude, perception, expectations and special education referral of their students (Dunn, 1968; Rist, 1979; Cosden, 1990 and Majors and Billson, 1992).

Another possibility is that the SSRS Teacher form is not an appropriate instrument for distinguishing disabled from non-disabled African American male students. While the SSRS was chosen because it was the best instrument available to assess teacher perception of social skills, it may not have been appropriate for assessing the social skills of African American male students. In support of this notion, all the sample subgroups including the ND African American males were rated as evidencing more problem behaviors than the norm sample.

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation and t for Non-Disabled vs. Students with Emotional Disturbances on the Dependent Measures.

Dependent Measures	Student Groups				
	Non-Disabled		Emotional Disturbance		t
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
Social Skills Ratings	94.50	12.41	92.70	17.07	.27 NS
Problem Behavior Ratings	109.20	11.16	116.70	9.39	1.63 NS

N= 20 (10 students per group)

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation and t for Non-Disabled vs. Students with Learning Disabilities on the Dependent Measures.

Dependent Measures	Student Groups				
	Non-Disabled		Learning Disabilities		t
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
Social Skills Ratings	95.91	8.73	83.58	11.56	*2.95 sig.
Problem Behavior Ratings	109.50	10.71	116.91	12.92	1.53 NS

*p<.05; N= 24 (12 students per group)

References

Achenbach, T., & Edelbrock, C. (1987). Manual for the youth self-report and profile. Burlington, VT: University of Vermont Department of Psychiatry.

Comer, J.P. (1988). Educating poor minority children. Scientific American, 259(5), 42-48.

Cosden, M.A. (1990). Expanding the role of special education: Challenges of the next decade. Teaching Exceptional Children, 22(2), 4-7.

Deutsch, M. (1967). The disadvantaged child. New York: Basic Books.

Dunn, L.M. (1968). Special education for the mildly retarded-Is much of it justifiable? Exceptional Children, 35, 5-24.

Dusek, J.B. (1985). Teacher expectancies. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Gresham, F.M. (1983). Social skills assessment as a component of mainstreaming placement decisions. Exceptional Children, 49, 331-336.

Gresham, F.M. (1992). Social skills and learning disabilities: Causal, concomitant, or correlational? School Psychology Review, 21, 348-360.

Gresham, F.M. & Elliott, S.N. (1989). Social skills deficits as a primary learning disability. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 22, 120-124.

Gresham, F.M. & Elliott, S.N. (1990). Social skills rating system. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.

Gresham, F.M., Elliott, S.N. & Black, F.L. (1987). Teacher-rated social skills of mainstreamed mildly handicapped and nonhandicapped children, School Psychology Review, 16(1), 78-88.

Gresham, F. M. & MacMillan, D. L. (1997). Social competence and affective characteristics of students with mild disabilities, Review of Educational Research, 67(4), 377-415.

Gresham, F.M. & Reschly, D.J. (1987). Sociometric differences between mildly handicapped and nonhandicapped

Black and White students. Journal of Educational Psychology, 79, 195-197.

Harry, B. & Anderson, M.G. (1994). The disproportionate placement of african-american males in special education programs: A critique of the process. Journal of Negro Education, 63, 602-618.

Hays, W.L. (1988). Statistics for the social sciences. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc.

Majors, R. and Billson, J.M. (1992). Cool pose: The dilemmas of black manhood in america. New York: Macmillan, Inc.

Merrell, K., Johnson, E., Merz, J., & Ring, E. (1992). Social competence of students with mild handicaps and low achievement: A comparative study, School Psychology Review, 21, 125-137.

Prieto, A & Zucker, S. (1980). Are teachers' perceptions of race a factor in the placement of children in special education? Behavioral Disorders, 7(1), 34-38.

Rist, R.C. (1979). Desegregated schools. New York: Academic Press.

Sigmon, S.B. (1990). Critical voices on special education: Problems and progress concerning the mildly handicapped. State University of New York Press.

Willis, M.G. (1989). Learning styles of African American children: A review of the literature and interventions. The Journal of Black Psychology, 16(1), 45-65.

Ysseldyke, J., Algozzine, B. & Thurlow, M. (1992). Critical issues in special education (2nd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



REPRODUCTION RELEASE
(Specific Document)

AERA
1999

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: <i>Social Skills and Problem Behaviors as Contextual Variables in African American Education: Students with and without Disabilities</i>	
Author(s): <i>Douglas M. Butler, Ph.D.</i>	
Corporate Source: <i>Prairie View A&M Univ.</i>	Publication Date:

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 1

Level 2A

Level 2B

↑

↑

↑

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, please →

Signature: <i>Douglas M. Butler</i>	Printed Name/Position/Title: <i>Douglas M. Butler Ph.D. Ass't Prof.</i>	
Organization/Address: <i>Prairie View A&M Univ. PO Box 40219 Prairie View, TX 77446</i>	Telephone: <i>409-857-4420</i>	FAX: <i>409-857-4414</i>
	E-Mail Address: <i>Douglas-Butler@PVAMU.edu</i>	Date: <i>4/20/99</i>



(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
1100 West Street, 2nd Floor
Laurel, Maryland 20707-3598

Telephone: 301-497-4080
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-953-0263
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: <http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com>