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## *Gender Differences in Emotional or Behavioral Problems in Elementary School Students*

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### *Abstract*

The purpose of this study was to look at teachers' perceptions of challenging behaviors in the classroom, including students who had emotional or behavioral disorders and students who were at-risk for developing these problems. In the format of the survey, teachers were asked to consider the behaviors of their students in respect to gender. For male externalized behaviors, the strongest support was for students who lose their tempers during the school day. Regarding internalized behaviors, a majority of participants believed that both males and females seem to be withdrawn during lessons and activities. Teachers were asked to reflect on the screening and identification process as well as on ways to accommodate students. Based on the participants' responses, there was support for reexamining how students were identified, revealing the necessity for gender-based procedures. The survey also suggested that there was a need for gender-based considerations for working with students.

## *Gender Differences in Emotional or Behavioral Problems in Elementary School Students*

One of the most compelling issues in special education today is the number of identified males and females who receive special education. It is almost common knowledge, as noted in much education literature, that there are higher numbers of males identified in comparison to females. One of the disability types or categories that receive the most attention in regard to this dilemma is the category of emotional or behavioral disorders, in which the population of males with emotional or behavioral problems outnumbers females (Taylor, Smiley, & Richards, 2009). On the surface, this appears feasible, that perhaps there is a genetic link that could cause such a pattern in the ratio of males to females. However, the value of this data becomes more important as one considers the factors that could contribute to these numbers. Most interestingly, research supports the notion that males tend to have externalized disorders, including antisocial habits and aggressive tendencies, whereas females typically exhibit disorders that are internalized, such as being anxious or depressed (Romano, Tremblay, Vitaro, Zoccolillo, & Pagnani, 2001; Sachs-Ericsson & Ciarlo, 2000). These implications may seem logical, considering what is known about the nature of males and females. If male students tend to exhibit more externalized behaviors than female students, then perhaps these behaviors are more visible in the classroom (Taylor et al., 2009).

The rationale of this study was to inform a larger question: are there gender differences in the way teachers perceive behavior in students who have emotional or behavioral problems or who are at-risk for developing these problems? The purpose of the research was to investigate whether teachers perceived specific classroom behaviors that they found to be more common in males than females, or vice versa. It was important to consider the basis for this perception, which has influenced the need for further research in this category.

Taking into account the ratio of males to females with emotional or behavioral disorders and the types of externalized and internalized behavior problems, it was necessary to examine or determine the identification and support provided these students, with respect to gender. It was also imperative to consider screening procedures used to identify students with emotional or behavioral disorders. Additionally, the overrepresentation, underrepresentation, and misrepresentation of certain students with emotional or behavioral problems or students exhibiting at-risk behaviors were important aspects or variables to consider. It was also valuable to study the behaviors of these students and the types of supports and strategies used, with respect to gender.

In this study, the researcher used a questionnaire, in which special education teachers, general education teachers and other certified professionals in an elementary school setting were surveyed about their perceptions of the atypical or aberrant behaviors of their students. The survey included four parts, the first of which asked for general teacher information, such as gender and years teaching. The second part required respondents to consider typical challenging and disruptive classroom behaviors of male and female students. The third part reflected the screening and identification processes for emotional or behavioral problems. Lastly, the fourth part identified considerations for addressing male and female student behaviors. The following literature review provides a historical basis for the dilemma, establishes the need for the current study and explains the typical types of behaviors, screening and identification procedures used in establishing the presence of emotional or behavioral disorders, the demographics of students with emotional or behavioral problems, and the considerations that should be taken into account when working with male and female students who exhibit behavioral disorders.

### **Externalizing and Internalizing Behaviors**

When discussing externalizing behaviors and internalizing behaviors, it is important to define the concepts as they appear in literature. Externalizing behaviors can be described as including “antisocial behavior, fighting, and high activity levels” (Young, Sabbah, Young, Reiser, & Richardson, 2010, p. 226). In contrast, internalizing behaviors contain “anxiety, shyness, withdrawal, hypersensitivity, and physical complaints” (Young et al., 2010, p. 226). Another example suggests that internalizing disorders can include anxiety and depressive disorders, while externalizing disorders can include Conduct Disorder (CD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Romano et al., 2001). According to a different study, students with emotional disturbance are described in a similar manner: internalizing behavior may mean that a student is “shy, anxious, depressed and withdrawn” (Rice & Yen, 2010, p. 601). Students with externalized behavior may be “noncompliant, defiant, coercive, and aggressive” (Rice & Yen, 2010, p. 601).

### **Screening Procedures and Identification**

While considering the factors that contribute to identifying the need for special education, the screening procedure is immensely important and can reveal significant data about the process itself. Before students are identified as having disabilities, they usually qualify based on certain screening procedures. As recently as 2010, there have been reservations about the screening process in schools. In fact, the different measures used to screen adolescents for emotional or behavioral problems are still controversial, as these processes are still being assessed (Young et al., 2010). Researchers are still evaluating the validity of screening instruments for adolescents

(Caldarella, Young, Richardson, Young, & Young, 2008). Despite the controversies about the screening processes, there is not much information about how screening affects males and females respectively. However, there is one piece of evidence that provides interesting insight into the high number of men who are considered at-risk for emotional or behavioral problems or issues. Using a Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD), within a sample of 15,932 participants, “The average ratio (across the 3 years) of males to females nominated was [found to be] approximately 5:1 for externalizing behaviors, 2:1 for internalizing behaviors, and 3:1 for total students nominated” (Young et.al, 2010, p. 230). At a glance, these numbers may seem to indicate strong support for the notion that there are a high number of males who are at-risk compared to females; however, the authors of the study propose quite the opposite. The authors suggest that these numbers contribute to the dilemma about the overrepresentation of males. In one respect, teachers may notice these types of behaviors more frequently. It is also possible that the behaviors seen in a school setting are limited to the scope of a child’s behavioral problems (Young et al., 2010). Regardless, research supports the presence of gender disproportionality for males with serious emotional disturbance, which is a national concern (Coutinho & Oswald, 2005).

At the second level of positive behavior support, it is estimated that 10% to 15% of students in one school setting may be in danger of developing substantial problems that can be emotional, behavioral, and/or academic (Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005). Cumulative prevalence of students with emotional or behavioral disorders reveals additional information about the difficulties in identifying students properly. Certain factors, such as under-identification, misidentification and underservice, seem to influence which children are eligible for services (Forness, Freeman, Paparella, Kauffman, & Walker, 2012). Specifically, gender is a factor for females who are often considered to be under-identified, especially when taking into consideration the much greater number of males who are identified (Forness et al., 2012). Further, general education teachers and administrators may not recognize the true problems behind home behaviors. For instance, a student who has externalized behaviors may be recommended to improve his discipline, when in reality the student suffers from ADHD (Walter, Gouze, & Lim, 2006). Quite similarly, depression or anxiety may be misidentified as difficulty with learning (Forness et al., 2012).

### **Demographics of Males and Females with Emotional or Behavioral Problems**

Emotional or behavioral problems reflect “gender-specific disorders” (Sachs-Ericsson & Ciarlo, 2000, p. 622). Females tend to have a great incidence of disorders that are rooted in anxiety and depression, whereas males tend to have antisocial behavior and abuse substances more readily (Sachs-Ericsson & Ciarlo, 2000). The incidence of internalized problems or disorders is very complex in respect to both genders, but research supports the notion that females are considered to be more susceptible to developing internalized disorders if they do not perceive themselves as being attractive amongst their peers (Hoftmann, Powhshta, & White, 2004).

It is extremely important to note that the demographics of gender and behavior are not limited to culture. A Dutch study that sampled adolescent twins and their non-twin siblings from the ages of 12 to 20 found age and sex to be important when taking into account emotional or behavioral problems. The rate of females with internalized problems was found to be greater, especially for certain areas within internalized symptoms: anxiety/depressed, withdrawn/depressed and somatic

complaints. Quite differently, males receive high scores for externalized behavior, especially in the area of breaking rules (Bartels, van de Aa, van Beijsterveldt, Middeldorp, & Boomsma, 2011). Despite the age of the Dutch adolescents mentioned, there are similarities seen in the international demographics of preschool children, based on parent reports from 24 societies. Compelling data reveals the gender of preschoolers with externalized and internalized problems. Internalizing and externalizing, along with additional scales used in the study, reveal more variation within a country than between countries. In relation to externalized behaviors, females and children who are older had lower scores than males and children who are younger (Rescorla et al., 2011).

When looking at the demographics and numbers of males and females identified with specific emotional or behavioral problems, the question of genetic influence is important to consider. Compelling information suggests that children's behavior may be influenced by a mother who has a history of depression. A recent study found support that a mother's history of depression can influence the proportion of internalized and externalized problems in males and females, showing that no one gender has a greater chance of developing either type of problem. There has been data supporting the idea that a mother's history of depression may reverse the typical stereotype of male and female behaviors and that a greater proportion of males externalize their problem behaviors (Watson, Potts, Hardcastle, Forehand, & Compas, 2012).

### **Considerations for Females with Emotional of Behavioral Problems**

Despite differences in externalized and internalized disorders, there are more males than females who are identified with emotional disturbance and learning disabilities (Cullinan, Osborne, & Epstein, 2004). In certain instances, the larger number of males who are classified and receiving services in special education may imply that females are hidden because they are not as prevalent in the numbers of special education students (Osler & Vincent, 2003). Based on these numbers, it appears as though there is a need to look at behaviors as they typify in women. Research based on physiological and environmental components indicates that females may be under-identified for emotional disturbance and that there is not much information in the field that explains developmental differences that may occur in students with emotional disturbance (Callahan, 1994). Research suggests that females with serious emotional disturbance did not meet the criteria in public schools, but their behaviors were so critical that they attended private psychiatric hospitals for assistance (Caseau & Lackasson, 1994).

Unfortunately, the needs of females with emotional or behavioral disabilities can only be located in six publications that span from 1997 to 2006 (Rice, Merves, & Srsic, 2008). The acknowledgement of these problems is not limited to one specific culture, as indicated by a study that interviewed girls living in England who are considered to have struggles that are categorized as behavioral, emotional and social (Clarke, Boorman, & Nind, 2011). According to the research, girls are given a voice by allowing them to speak their minds in a diary room, which records their behaviors and thoughts (Clarke et al., 2011, p. 769). The study underscores the importance of giving females a chance to speak out instead of allowing other professionals to be more vocal about their behaviors (Clarke et al., 2011).

In exploring the differences between the genders, there is a definite need to improve the diagnoses for females, while providing proper support for these students based on their unique

needs. In light of the limited information about females with emotional or behavioral disabilities, research done in the format of semi-structured interviews with professionals provides interesting examples about instruction based on gender (Rice et al., 2008). The study suggests the following characteristics are more typical of girls with emotional or behavioral disabilities: having struggles that are not as noticeable but are more aggressive when expressed, being removed from others, and behaving much more aggressively when physical and not forming as many relationships with others (Rice et al., 2008). However, despite the unique characteristics appearing in females, research supports the notion that when gender is controlled, there is no direct correlation between gender and whether symptoms are externalized; neither females nor males have a greater risk of developing externalized symptoms if both genders are equally communicative. Although gender roles and internalized symptoms can be controlled, females continue to be more at-risk for having internalized disorders (Hoffman et al., 2004).

### **Considerations for Males with Emotional or Behavioral Problems**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) definition of emotional or behavioral disorders is rather ambiguous in its usage of terms, such as the gravity of the behaviors and the length of time that they are present in a student, which makes the classification of students with emotional or behavioral disorders quite subjective (Serpell, Hayling, Stevenson, & Kern, 2009). The vagueness in the definition of emotional disturbance can be identified when examining the terminology used in the federal definition:

*Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:*

- (A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.*
- (B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.*
- (C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.*
- (D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.*
- (E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (IDEA, 2004).*

One must wonder if the ambiguity of the definition itself can affect the rate of students classified, showing an overrepresentation in males or in certain cases perhaps an under-identification in males. This definition is pivotal in looking at the numbers of males and females identified or considered to be at-risk for emotional or behavioral problems.

Emotional disturbance in males, especially in serious cases, has a relation to social conflict, including in the development of aggressive tendencies, interference and additional issues that may result in conflict with others (Sabornie, Cullinan, & Epstein, 1993). However, more recently, there has been some dispute about the methods of identifying students with behavior disorders, and whether there is a need to take gender into consideration in determining if students should receive supports and services. In a study that examines a birth cohort of just under 1,000 New Zealand-born persons, there was little data supporting developmental differences in respect

to gender with students who have CD, ODD and ADHD (Fergusson, Boden, & Horwood, 2010). These three disorders certainly connect to aspects of social conflict.

In terms of culture and race, there is compelling research about the behaviors of nonwhite and white male students with emotional or behavioral disorders. Research supports the belief that nonwhite males with emotional disturbance experience more social conflict than white males with emotional disturbance (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1986). In an effort to reform aspects of education, research supports the need to take into consideration culture when identifying African-American adolescent males with emotional or behavioral disorders. Based on additional research, cultural considerations should be taken into account for types of interventions, assessments and placement of students. Specific recommendations that can improve the outcome for African-American male students include strengthening relations between teachers and students (especially when there are cultural differences), creating assessments that respect culture, collaborating with students' families and placing an emphasis on mental health across the field of education (Serpell et al., 2009).

The emphasis on mental health is not limited to African-American males; it could be seen as an important intervention used for both males and females. In a study that implements an Intensive Mental Health Program (IMHP) for 50 students (42 males and 8 females) who experience serious emotional disturbance, 84% of the students in the study benefit from the intervention (Vernberg, Jacobs, Nyre, Puddy, & Roberts, 2004). Although this study includes both males and females, the proportion of males to females is much higher, which is why it is imperative to consider how male students may benefit from these types of interventions. Certain aspects of the IMHP include keeping children at their respective homes and schools, using evidence-based interventions, teaching cognitive and behavioral skills, helping students make connections across various settings and helping students learn to generalize skills (Vernberg et al., 2004).

### **Study Rationale**

All five categories explored in this section provide a basis for this study. At least one other study has discussed behavior and the types of internalizing and externalizing symptoms, noting that internalizing behavior includes anxiety and withdrawal, while externalizing behavior includes defiance and aggression (Rice & Yen, 2010). When crafting this study, an intention was to gather more information about classroom behaviors in asking teachers about their perceptions of male and female student behaviors. Equally important in this study was the need to consider the screening and identification procedures used in schools today. In fact, research supports the notion that screening instruments result in an over-identification of males with emotional or behavioral problems. These instruments are also limited to the school setting, not taking into account a child's behaviors in other areas outside of school (Young et al., 2010). In this study, asking teachers about their perceptions of over-identification and under-identification based on gender provided additional points of view regarding this dilemma. Other studies have focused on age and sex in relation to types of behaviors, noting gender differences in certain areas related to internalizing and externalizing problems (Bartels et al., 2011). In light of these dilemmas in education, the considerations for students based on gender also became pivotal to examine. Research suggests that females with behavioral, emotional or social struggles may benefit from speaking about their feelings (Clarke et al., 2011). On the other hand, there is an emphasis on culture and the need to accommodate African-American males with emotional or behavioral

disorders (Serpell et al., 2009). In the next section, information about the method used to conduct the study is explained.

### *Method*

#### **Participants**

The respondents of this study were randomly selected from an elementary school in a culturally and economically diverse area. In this school, students come from various homes where many parents do not have the free time or finances to be as involved in their students' lives as they might like to be. The school is known to have a high population of students who are either at-risk for developing emotional or behavioral problems or who have emotional or behavioral disorders. On average, in kindergarten through grade three, there are four to five students per classroom who are at-risk for developing emotional or behavioral problems. In grades four through six, the number of at-risk students decreases to two per classroom, but these select students often exhibit more aggressive behaviors as they get older. With the knowledge that most teachers service students who are at-risk for developing emotional or behavioral problems or who are diagnosed with emotional or behavioral disorders, the population of teachers became an important consideration for collecting data.

At the conclusion of the survey period, more specific information about the participants' background was revealed; this was the content of the first part of the survey. For item one, regarding certifications that the teachers obtained, 28.6% of the respondents were certified in general education, 14.3% were certified in special education, 42.9% were certified in general and special education and 14.3% had certifications that were not listed. For item two, the certifications in which the participants were employed at the time of the survey, revealed that 28.6% were general education teachers, 57.1% were special education teachers and 14.3% were teachers in other certification domains. The years of teaching experience, which was item three, indicated that the teachers had between six and 20 years of teaching experience. Gender of the respondents, item four, indicated that 100% of the participants were female. Item number five asked if teachers had experience working with students who had emotional or behavioral problems, to which 85.7% of the participants responded yes and 14.3% responded no. Lastly, item six (which was only for the teachers who responded yes to the previous item) recorded the years or months that respondents had experience working with students who had emotional or behavioral problems. Certain participants had several years of experience working with this population, ranging from 5 to 20 years. Only one participant had no more than two months of experience working with students who had emotional or behavioral problems.

#### **Procedures**

In conducting this study, a survey was determined to be the most appropriate way to assess teachers' perceptions of behavior. The survey went through many revisions and at one point was only going to be used for special education teachers; however, it was expanded to be appropriate for all teachers who service students. The topic of the survey was expanded to include challenging student behaviors in the classroom. In the final revision of the survey, the language was revised and several sections were established (see Appendix A, p. 32). The language of the survey, specifically for each item, was crafted in a very specific way so that teachers were not asked to be diagnosticians, but were instead asked to give their input about the types of challenging behaviors that they saw in the classroom.



In developing the sections, certain items were crafted based on the logic and experience of the researcher; however, there were several items based on research. The first section asked for teacher information, such as teacher certification and years of experience working with students who had emotional or behavioral problems. The second, third and fourth parts of the survey required teachers to rate their agreement or disagreement with each item. There were five different responses to select: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or unsure. The second section of the survey identified types of challenging behaviors. The first and second groups included externalized symptoms for males and females. The third and fourth groups contained items for internalized symptoms for males and females. Certain types of items used for externalized symptoms included breaking class rules, arguing with the teacher and being physically aggressive. The externalizing behaviors included in items 11, 12, 17 and 18 were based on the research of Rice and Yen (2010). Items for internalized symptoms included having anxiety, worrying when completing school assignments and appearing fatigued. Items 19, 22, 23, 25, 28 and 29 were internalized symptoms based on the research of both Rice and Yen (2010) and Young, Sabbah, Young, Reiser, and Richardson (2010). The third section took into consideration the screening procedures and types of identification, such as overrepresentation and underrepresentation of males and females with emotional or behavioral problems. Within this section, items 31, 32 and 37 were based on the research of Young et al. (2010). Items 33 through 36 were based on the work of Forness, Freeman, Paparella, Kauffman, and Walker (2012). Lastly, the fourth section included considerations for students, such as strategies used for females and males with emotional or behavioral problems. Most of the items in this section were based on the logic and experience of the researcher, specifically items 38 through 40. Item 41, a strategy for working with female students, was based on the research of Clarke, Boorman, and Nind (2011).

After the survey was constructed, the researcher wanted to ensure that the survey was both reliable and valid. In order to test for reliability, three people completed the survey once, and on the very next day, they were asked to complete it a second time – without looking at their answers from the previous day. For each participant, the survey taken the first day was compared to the survey taken on the second day, looking at the differences between both versions. Out of the three people who participated, there was a 4.9% difference, a 7.31% difference and a 21.95% difference, in respect to each of the three participants. Although the last difference was rather large, the survey met the reliability requirements based on the first two results. The research also tested for validity, where an expert reviewed the survey to assess the face validity and found that the survey met this requirement.

The survey was placed online, at Survey Monkey, which was determined to be a confidential and anonymous way to provide the survey to participants. At Survey Monkey's website, a hyperlink to the survey was created. A disseminator in the elementary school agreed to send the survey off of her email server to the randomly identified participants in the school, ensuring that the researcher would have no knowledge of the participants' identities. In the email sent to the participants, a brief message about the purpose of the survey was provided. Participants were notified that their participation was voluntary and that their responses were confidential, as Survey Monkey does not report IP addresses. Once the disseminator sent the survey to the randomly identified participants, they had one week and two days to complete it.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Survey Monkey collected the data online, allowing the participants to complete the survey in any location where they felt comfortable. The survey was open for about one week, starting on a Friday and ending on a Sunday. After this point, the researcher closed the survey. The website provided aggregated results, reporting the raw scores and converting them into percentages. Based on the results, the researcher was able to look at the items and analyze the data by using the provided percentages. In the section that follows, the results of the survey are reported and described, based on the three significant sections of the survey.

## Results

### Challenging Student Behaviors

The first part of the survey asked for teacher information. All of the respondents were females and many of the teachers had several years of experience working with students who had emotional or behavioral problems. In total, there were seven respondents who completed the entire survey. These participants reported their level of agreement or disagreement relative to each statement; specifically, they reported their agreement in relation to specific male and female students in their classes. The second section of the survey focused on challenging behaviors in the classroom. Section two was broken up into four areas: males with externalized symptoms, females with externalized symptoms, males with internalized symptoms and females with internalized symptoms. For item seven, regarding the statement that male students break class rules, 71.5% of participants strongly agreed or agreed, 14.3% strongly disagreed and 14.3% were unsure. Some male students argue with the teacher, item eight, indicated that 71.5% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed, 14.3% strongly disagreed and 14.3% were unsure. Item nine is represented below in Table 1, regarding the statement that some male students lose their tempers during the school day. For this item, 83.3% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed, while 16.7% strongly disagreed. Regarding item 10, some male students annoy classmates, 71.5% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed, 14.3% disagreed and 14.3% were unsure. Next, in item 11, which stated that some male students are verbally aggressive, 57.2% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed, 28.6% disagreed and 14.3% were unsure. Some male students are physically aggressive, item 12, showed that 42.9% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed, 42.9% strongly disagreed or disagreed and 14.3% were unsure.

Table 1. Item 9: Some of my male students lose their tempers during the school day.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
33.3%	50.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%

Item 13 began with the female externalized symptoms, starting with the statement that some female students break class rules, to which 71.5% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed, 14.3% disagreed and 14.3% were unsure. In relation to item 14, the statement that some female students argue with teachers, 71.5% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed, 14.3% disagreed and 14.3% were unsure. Regarding item 15, some female students lose their tempers during the school day, 71.4% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed, while 28.6% disagreed. In item 16, some female students annoy classmates, 57.2% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed, whereas 42.9% disagreed. Some female students are verbally aggressive, item 17, showed that 60% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed, meanwhile 40% disagreed.

Item 18, some female students are physically aggressive, resulted in 71.4% of the participants strongly agreeing or agreeing; however, 28.6% disagreed.

Internalized symptoms for males began with item 19 and ended with item 24. For item 19, some male students seem to be anxious during daily school routines, 42.9% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed, 28.6% disagreed and 28.6% were unsure. In relation to item 20, some male students seem to worry when asked to complete school assignments, 33.3% of participants agreed, while 66.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Some male students seem to be fatigued during the school day, item 21, revealed that 57.2% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed, whereas 42.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Regarding item 22, some male students seem to be withdrawn during lessons and activities, 83.3% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed; however, 16.7% disagreed. The next statement, item 23, some male students seem to be shy when interacting with classmates, showed that 14.3% of the respondents agreed, meanwhile 85.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The last item for males was item 24: some male students seem to be sensitive to teacher recommendation. For item 24, 57.2% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed, in contrast with the 42.9% who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The first statement for female students, item 25, was for some students who seem to be anxious during daily school routines, revealing that 57.2% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed, 14.3% disagreed and 28.6% were unsure. Item 26, some female students seem to worry when asked to complete school assignments, resulted in 71.4% of the participants strongly agreeing or agreeing, while 28.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Some female students seem to be fatigued during the school day, item 27, revealed that 28.6% of the respondents agreed and 71.4% disagreed. Item 28 is represented below in Table 2, concerning the statement that some female students seem to be withdrawn during lessons and activities. For item 28, 85.7% of the participants agreed, whereas 14.3% strongly disagreed. Regarding item 29, some female students seem to be shy when interacting with classmates, 71.4% of the respondents agreed; however, 28.6% disagreed. Item 30, which was the last item for female internalized symptoms, some female students seem to be sensitive to teacher recommendations, revealed that 71.4% of respondents agreed, while 28.6% disagreed.

Table 2. Item 28: Some of my female students seem to be withdrawn during lessons and activities.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
0.0%	85.7%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%

Section three, based on screening procedures and identification, was seven items long, from item 31 to item 37. In a similar manner to the previous section, these statements were crafted for select male and female students that the teachers had seen in their classrooms. For item 31, the statement that there seem to be more male students with emotional or behavioral problems, 71.4% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed, 14.3% disagreed and 14.3% were unsure. The statement for item 32, that there seem to be more female students with emotional or behavioral problems in participants' classes, revealed that 14.3% of respondents agreed, whereas 85.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In item 33, the statement that there seems to be an overrepresentation of male students with emotional or behavioral problems in respondents' classes, 57.2% strongly agreed or agreed, 28.6% disagreed and 14.3% were unsure. There seems to be an overrepresentation of female students with emotional or behavioral problems in

participants' classes, the statement for item 34, showed that 28.6% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed, while 71.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Item 35 can be found below in Table 3, which stated that there seems to be an underrepresentation of male students with emotional or behavioral problems in respondents' classes. For item 35, 100% of participants' disagreed or strongly disagreed. Regarding item 36, the statement that there seems to be an underrepresentation of female students with emotional or behavioral problems in respondents' classes, 14.3% of the participants agreed, 71.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 14.3% were unsure. The statement that male behaviors seem to be more noticeable than female behaviors in participants' classes, item 37, revealed that 71.5% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed, 14.3% strongly disagreed and 14.3% were unsure.

Table 3. Item 35: There seems to be an underrepresentation of male students with emotional or behavioral problems in my class.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
0.0%	0.0%	28.6%	71.4%	0.0%

The remainder of the survey, items 38 to 41, marked the final section, which took into consideration participants' opinions of the ways in which they worked or could work with male and female students in their classes. Item 38, regarding how strongly participants believed in the need to study behaviors that appear more frequently in males, indicated that 71.4% of respondents agreed, 14.3% disagreed and 14.3% were unsure. In a similar manner, item 39 required participants to level the need for more research to study behaviors that appear more frequently in females, to which 71.4% respondents agreed, 14.3% disagreed and 14.3% were unsure. Item 40 is represented below in Table 4, regarding the statement that there are specific strategies, such as positive reinforcement, that can help males with emotional or behavioral problems. Item 40 revealed that 85.8% of participants strongly agreed or agreed, whereas 14.3% disagreed. Lastly, item 40, which is portrayed below in Table 5, stated that there are specific strategies, such as allowing students to speak about their feelings, which can help females with emotional or behavioral problems. Item 40 resulted in 85.8% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing, while 14.3% strongly disagreed. The next section, the conclusion, contains the discussions, limitations and recommendations for future research.

Table 4. Item 40: There are specific strategies, such as positive reinforcement, that can help males with emotional or behavioral problems.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
42.9%	42.9%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 5. Item 41: There are specific strategies, such as allowing students to speak about their feelings, that can help females with emotional or behavioral problems.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
42.9%	42.9%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%

For the second part of the survey, externalizing and internalizing symptoms, many of the results did not reveal much significant information. However, item nine, the statement that some male students lose their tempers during the school day, indicated that 83.3% of participants believed that this item was true of their students. The teachers' responses to item nine were significant in implying that some male students had trouble regulating their tempers in the classroom.

Item nine was valuable because it represented one of the externalized symptoms of ODD, as described in the *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-IV-TR)* (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Although the population of students taken into consideration for this survey may or may not have been classified, the link to ODD was crucial to mention, depending on the severity of these behaviors. In learning about antecedents and providing teachers with target behaviors, teachers could become better prepared to work with male students who display these behaviors, adopting specific strategies to regulate the male students' tempers.

Two of the items for internalizing symptoms for males and females revealed very compelling information. Items 22 and 28 were similar, as they were based on male and female withdrawal during lessons and activities. Both of these items supported both male and female students exhibiting these symptoms: 83.3% for males and 85.7% for females, regarding teachers who strongly agreed or agreed. This information was valuable because it implied that teachers should look at the whole student, rather than targeting only externalizing or internalizing symptoms specifically. These items also provided support for the notion that withdrawal may not be a gender-specific indicator. For this reason, a cause for withdrawal should be studied on an individual basis when working with a student who displays these types of behaviors, especially when taking into consideration students who come from economically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

The most valuable information from this study came from the third section of the survey, particularly items 32 and 35. These items were related in the sense that they questioned the screening and identification procedures used in schools. Item 32 indicated that 85.7% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that there seem to be more female students with emotional or behavioral problems in their classes. Very similarly, item 35 showed that 100% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that there seems to be an underrepresentation of male students with emotional or behavioral problems in their classes. These items were related because they implied that there were more male than female students who displayed emotional or behavioral problems that were noticed in the classroom. Item 32 implied that female students were not a majority in participants' classes, while item 35 indicated that many males who had emotional or behavioral problems were identified, providing these students with the interventions that they needed to succeed. Both of these items were significant because they supported the need to reexamine the types of screening and identification procedures used in schools. However, this does not mean that females should outnumber males; rather, it implies that females should be given equal opportunity to be identified and provided with services. Similarly, it may be possible that male students are targeted more frequently because their behaviors are more noticeable.

The final section of the survey aimed to synthesize the content of the sections prior, taking into consideration how to work with specific male and female students. Item 40, which stated that positive reinforcement can help male students, revealed that 85.8% of respondents believed that this was a valuable tool. Similarly, 85.8% of respondents believed that allowing female students to talk about their feelings can be helpful. Such strong support for both gender-specific interventions was pivotal, implying gender did matter when selecting interventions. These items provided support for teachers not only examining the unique behaviors of the student, but also the gender and personality of the student before selecting what might be the most appropriate strategy. For instance, positive reinforcement could be very useful for certain male students, but perhaps a female student would benefit from a strategy that targeted her gender and type of behavior.

In examining the study, a limitation was the small number of respondents. The results would have been strengthened if more participants responded to the survey. Although the survey was sent to many teachers, several of them did not respond, as doing so was voluntary.

### *Recommendations*

Based on the results of this study, there are several recommendations for future research in the field of education. Using teachers as a population for a survey about students with emotional or behavioral problems was and will continue to be very practical, as they were and are in constant contact with students. Another suggestion might be to survey special education teachers who work in culturally and economically diverse areas. In this way, the teachers could participate in a similar survey, intended to gather data about their perceptions of gender specific behaviors as well as successful strategies used in the classroom. In this way a greater number of schools could be included with similar demographics. Including more schools may also increase the number of respondents.

Another very important suggestion might be to further evaluate the types of screening and identification procedures. Additional research might look at the ways that females and males respond to the same types of instruments used to identify students. Similarly, if there are gender specific instruments used in certain locations, it might be helpful to test the validity of these instruments at large. In doing so, it is hoped that a clear and concise way of identifying students might develop, tightening the number of males identified and giving females a greater chance of receiving services.

A final suggestion for further research might be to look at additional gender-specific strategies that might be useful for students with emotional or behavioral problems. The research from this study did reveal that teachers believed in certain interventions that worked well with male and female students. Researching the strategies that exist and other possible options may provide teachers with more material that they can use when they work with students.

This study was valuable as a means of understanding gender differences through teachers' perceptions of challenging student behaviors. The study suggested student withdrawal may not be gender-specific and that the whole student should be considered, not just the behaviors. Additionally, the study provided support for the need to reexamine screening and identification

procedures in an effort to give females equal opportunity for identification. Lastly, the study suggested that gender and personality should be carefully considered when selecting interventions and strategies for working with students.

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