CALIFORNIA SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS' ASSESSMENT PRACTICES WITH CLD
STUDENTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

School psychologists are tasked with assessing students to qualify them for special education, typically using standardized tests. Standardized testing, like IQ testing, routinely used in the psycho-educational process, serves to justify prejudices, as they often mark people of color as intellectually inferior to White people. A closer look at school psychologists' assessment practices with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students is necessary, as these students have historically been placed in special education at a higher percentage, likely due to misperceptions related to their race, ethnicity, or linguistic background. While IQ tests are regarded as tools that identify the needs of students who require educational support, IQ tests can perpetuate faulty ideals about intellect.

Using tenets of DisCrit and phenomenology, I deployed an open-response questionnaire, individual interviews, and analytic memos to understand practicing school psychologists' (n=10) thoughts, beliefs, and experiences, assessing CLD students for special education. Salient findings demonstrate that the participating school psychologists intend to be culturally aware. Even with good intentions, several issues confound the way they handle referrals of CLD students for special education (e.g., lack of school resources) and leave them with no choice but to assess them for special education. Viewing the findings through the lens of DisCrit, I discuss how psycho-educational assessment practices perpetuate ableist ideas and how special education as a system impacts school psychologists' service delivery. I offer recommendations for practitioners, school psychology trainers, policymakers, and administrators in relation to the assessment of CLD students for special education.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to all school psychologists who are pushing boundaries,

seeking justice, and acknowledging the change that is possible when you raise your voice.

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Everybody Says Don't Walk On The Grass/Don't Disturb The Peace/Don't Skate On The Ice/

Well I Say "Do".

-Stephen Sondheim

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Intelligence quotient (IQ) testing is a tool that legitimized the field of psychology as an important field, comparable to the sciences like biology and physics (Murdoch, 2009). However, the routine use of IQ tests in various industries and sectors is considered controversial (Au, 2013; Murdoch, 2009). IQ tests have been regarded as a revolutionary tool that helped quantify human intelligence and provide an unbiased approach to identify a person's cognitive strengths and weaknesses (Huebner, 1994). However, IQ testing and other standardized tests in schools have added to biased and prejudiced practices that further disenfranchise marginalized populations, like culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. The military, employment agencies, and Nazi Germany have utilized IQ tests to separate "lower functioning" people and label those who are "intellectually fit"; the same function has been implemented in schools (Blanton, 2003; Miguel & Valencia, 1988; Murdoch, 2009). Unfortunately, labeling or mislabeling people for the purposes of separating people is still in use today, which continues the use of IQ testing in its original iteration.

Brief Background on IQ Testing Issues

IQ testing, along with other standardized measures, continues to be administered in schools. Specifically, IQ and standardized testing are continually used to determine if a student a.) presents with a disability(ies) and b.) is entitled to specialized academic instruction and/or related services (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 2004). However, the proper use of psycho-educational assessments for disability and special education identification is a topic that continues to be scrutinized. Psycho-educational assessment is rooted in prejudice and bias. Specifically, Eurocentric ideals, such as those that esteem White and upper-class people as

intellectually superior to poor people or people of color, helped establish the need for psycho-educational assessment in the schools (Au, 2014; Kaufman, 2000; Fagan & Wise, 1994; Holman et al., 2021; Merrell et al, 2012; Murdoch, 2009). At the turn of the 20th century, these ideals pushed schools to employ methods to identify students who were "different", or who did not appear to handle school well (Murdoch, 2009; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Hence, the routine use of the IQ test became a necessary part of identifying students with supposed disabilities and separating them from their "typical", usually White peers (Blanton, 2003; Miguel & Valencia, 2009; Murdoch, 2009).

Identifying and segregating students is still part of our school system today and the role largely has become a duty of the school psychologist. As described by McNamara et al (2019), a large part of school psychologists' assigned duties involve assessment for special education identification. Therefore, school psychologists spend a significant amount of time administering IQ and other standardized measures to students. Even with criticism regarding the bias of IQ tests for CLD students, as noted by *Larry P vs. Riles* (1979) and *Diana vs. State Board of Education* (1970), school psychologists continue to use IQ and standardized measures not only with White students, but with students labeled as second language learners and CLD students (Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014). Yet, with more awareness of these problems in schools, school psychologists attempt to create fairness in the assessment process by adapting standardized assessment procedures to account for CLD students (Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014).

There are established procedures recommended by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), case laws, and research by experts in IQ testing to ensure standardized assessments/measures are fair and represent students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. However, some issues could arise through the routine use of standardized testing.

For instance, adaptations to standardized measures do not always account for the nuanced and varied backgrounds of CLD students (Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014). Even with necessary adaptations to standardized testing, students of color, led by American Indian and Black students, outnumber other racial subgroups in special education in the US (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], *Students with Disabilities* 2019; O'bryon & Rodriguez, 2010; United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2021, as cited in Proctor & Rivera, p. 149). Additionally, questionable and unethical assessment practices aid in the disproportionate number of students of color in special education (Dombroski et al., 2021; Kranzler et al., 2020). The scores obtained from the various standardized measures are not always markers of proper recommendations for special education placement, but instead feed personal judgements and biases that reign supreme in these decisions (Sullivan, Sadeh, & Houri, 2019).

Problem Statement

Because the underpinnings and origins of the IQ test and subsequent standardized measures are rooted in Eurocentricity, tenets of White supremacy are still impacting the use of the IQ test for special education identification and placement (Au, 2014; Kaufman, 2000; Fagan & Wise, 1994; Holman et al., 2021; Merrell et al, 2012; Murdoch, 2009). The creation and routine use of the IQ test is based within the eugenics movement, a movement founded on false notions of race and intelligence (Murdoch, 2009). As the IQ test gained traction first in Europe then the US, the IQ test found its place in schools, especially when compulsory schooling purported schools to consider how to better support students with or regarded with disabilities (Fagan & Wise, 1994; Murdoch, 2009). Yet, as previously stated, the IQ test has problematic roots that have complicated the relationship between the school psychologists' passion to help students and the prejudiced foundations of the IQ test.

As school psychology has evolved to become more wary of bias and prejudice in the school system, students of color continue to be identified with a disability and subsequently placed in special education. Per NCES, students of color continue to surpass White students in special education placement. Specifically, Black, and Native American students represent 17% and 19% of the special education population, compared to White students, who comprise 15% of students in special education (*Students with Disabilities,* 2019). Along the same notion, students of color are more likely to be referred to the assessment process at higher rates than White students (Irvine 2012). With special education placement, students of color in special education are at risk for falling into adverse situations, like expulsion from school, dropping out of school, engaging in criminal activity, etc. (Irvine, 2012; Murdoch, 2009; Skiba et al., 2002, 2006; Woodson & Harris, 2018). Likely, their placement in special education may not be based on having a disability, but may be based on preconceived notions, ideals, and prejudices, related to their race, ethnicity, and language background (Proctor & Rivera, 2021). If the problem is not addressed, it can be deduced that school personnel and stakeholders will continue to refer and place students in special education that do not present a disability (Sullivan et al., 2019), disproportionate representation of CLD students will continue to be the norm in the US, and the continued inherent bias in the assessment process and decision-making process will continue to be deemed as a normal byproduct of routinely administering IQ tests to CLD students.

Lastly, IQ test performance impacts the educational experiences of students subjected to IQ tests. Student performance on IQ tests impacts the interactions between students and teachers. Specifically, teachers may contribute to a self-fulfilling prophecy. When students' IQ test scores come to light, especially if the test scores are deemed high, the teacher may believe that the child is capable of sound academic performance and in turn, treat the child with more

support (Link & Ratledge, 1979). If the child performs low on an IQ test, then the teacher lessens their expectations about the student's academic performance (Link & Ratledge, 1979). The expectations that may arise from IQ test performance, especially with students of color, impacts the overall educational experience, as students of color may be subjected to prejudice and mistreatment from peers and school staff (Irvine, 2012; Link & Ratledge, 1979).

Purpose

Since school psychologists are mainly tasked with handling psycho-educational assessments with the hope to provide educational recommendations for the child, I sought to understand practicing school psychologists, with varied years of experience, on their points of view on the psycho-educational assessment process with CLD students and how the intersection of race and disability impact the assessment process. Additionally, the special education system may complicate school psychologists' assessment practices, which was necessary to identify. Understanding their perspectives provided context to not only how they define equitable psycho-educational assessments within their practice, but also explain how CLD students' backgrounds impact the assessment process, and what specific systemic issues impede the assessment process.

Additionally, school psychologists' perspectives on the assessment process have been well captured through quantitative and mixed methods designs; solely using interviews has not been customary for this research endeavor. Utilizing interviews to obtain a richer, deeper understanding of the problem provided more context to the systemic issues that are plaguing schools with the use of IQ tests. Quantitative methods, while impactful in also providing more understanding of a problem, only provide snippets of information, whereas qualitative methods may provide readers with more perspectives that could not be captured through methods like

answering a survey (Rahman, 2020). School psychologists' perspectives are needed to understand what factors may lead to selection and use of assessments and how conceptions of race and disability impact decision-making, especially since students of color continue to comprise high numbers in the special education population.

Research Questions

The study and the developed research questions align with the theoretical framework of DisCrit (discussed in Chapter 2, Literature Review) and facets of descriptive phenomenology (discussed in Chapter 3, Methodology). The research questions devised are:

1. What does equitable assessment mean to school psychologists as they work with CLD students?

    a. What systemic issues impact their assessment practices with CLD students?

    b. How do school psychologists adjust their assessment practices with CLD students?

The research questions inherently acknowledge the issue that CLD students continually comprise large sums of the special education population in the US. Plus, since school psychologists are mainly tasked with assessments for special education identification and placement, school psychologists have the knowledge on what factors and concerns lead to a referral for assessment. The research questions were developed to not only acknowledge and analyze the practicing school psychologists' interactions with CLD students through psycho-educational assessment process but also to acknowledge that the way special education is built inherently leads to mistreatment and further marginalization of CLD students (Annamma et al.,

2013, 2018; Proctor & Rivera, 2021). Overall, I centered the study and the research questions around the notion of equity and what that means to the practicing school psychologists as they assess CLD students for special education.

<div align="center">**Rationale**</div>

In school psychology research, quantitative methods are usually employed. However, qualitative research has the potential to unwrap the phenomenon that cannot be accessed through quantitative methods (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008; Rahman, 2020). Employing qualitative methods, especially delving into school psychological topics related to social justice, was appropriate to answer my research questions. Qualitative analysis is appropriate for studies/research topics that concern social justice issues, to achieve a deeper understanding of factors influencing the psycho-educational assessment practices (Moy et al., 2014). The qualitative methods I employed in this study included an open-response questionnaire, individual interviews, and analytic memos. Each phase of the data collection was impactful in understanding the various values, attitudes, and beliefs that the participating school psychologists have that related to their assessment practices with CLD students.

Garnering multiple perspectives led me to understand various issues that may be of conversation to the research/educational problem, which was the goal in using qualitative methods to answer the research questions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Rahman, 2020). School psychologists from California were invited to participate in the study. Although the study focused on practicing school psychologists in California, the varied responses to the open-response and interview questions provided insight into the participating school psychologists' assessment practices with CLD students, but also provided insight surrounding the various issues that make the psycho-educational assessment process complicated to navigate. The responses

helped understand the implications from the data, as well as recommendations for various personnel centered around psycho-educational assessment (discussed in Chapter 6, Conclusions).

Significance of the Study

The current study and the subsequent findings, implications, and recommendations, especially since qualitative methods were employed, can lead other practicing school psychologists and school psychologist trainers to consider other factors that contribute to the educational problem. The study provides more understanding about some of the issues that impact school psychologists' assessment practices with CLD students, that could pique the interest of school psychology training programs (Ding, Cho, Wang, & Yu, 2019), special education personnel/administrators, and policymakers to better their treatment of CLD students in their schools and fortify school psychologists' current breadth of their assessment skills when used with CLD students.

Through all phases of the study, I uncover various issues, systemically, that plague school psychology, through the eyes of the participants. The study addresses the current concerns with IQ testing in schools and may identify some recommendations to better support CLD students not just in special education, but within education. As NASP (2021) has acknowledged that CLD students have not only been historically marginalized but continue to be marginalized in other manners apart from special education assessment. There, I understood what issues related to assessment with CLD students, and identified systemic issues that may lead or have led to faulty assessments that falsely made CLD students eligible for special education. Additionally, I understood what equity within psycho-educational assessment means to the participants and what their viewpoints on equity could mean for other practicing school psychologists.

The current literature illustrates that race, ethnicity, and linguistic background are legitimate factors in special education eligibility decisions. However, as mentioned previously, the research has not included specific and varied reasons how the aforementioned factors related to CLD student's background impact the assessment selection process, through the eyes of the school psychologist. The responses from the participants and the analytic memos helped identify how the participating school psychologist navigates a student's background during the assessment process.

Nature of Study.

For the purposes of the current study, I implemented facets of descriptive phenomenology and DisCrit, a critical theory. School psychologists' assessment practices with CLD students is the phenomenon that was studied, and phenomenology helped me understand the phenomenon from the participating school psychologist' perspectives, beliefs, and lived experiences (Mertler, 2019; Riessman, 1993). Additionally, I used phenomenology to understand the beliefs, values, and attitudes of practicing California school psychologists, in relation to the phenomenon of assessing CLD students for special education, along with what an equitable psycho-educational assessment looks like. Phenomenology is an appropriate qualitative inquiry, as phenomenology allows for participants the opportunity to provide nuanced responses that provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon at hand (Mertler, 2019, p. 302).

In terms of the study's implementation, I built mutual respect between myself and participants since we may have had similar experiences in going through school psychology preparation programs and understanding the psycho-educational assessment process. Rapport was established through communications prior to the completion of the open-response questionnaire and the individual interview. Participants were also encouraged to reach out to me

at any point during their participation in the study if they had questions, wanted to raise concerns,

The data collection consisted of transcribing the initial interviews, analyzing responses from the open-ended response questionnaire, and identifying themes, codes, and categories, to make sense of the data and define the phenomena. Interviews were recorded and held through a video-conferencing application, Zoom. Then, the interviews were transcribed. The transcriptions were analyzed through NVivo. To obtain relevant codes, provisional coding helped establish more permanent codes, create hierarchies, and group the codes into the hierarchies (Saldana & Saldana, 2021), Lastly, analytic memos served as another data point. The analytic memos helped me create and establish codes for further analysis, as well as identify the commonalities that arose amongst the participants. (Saldana & Sandana, 2021; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Additionally, memos were used as a form of bracketing, which is essential in phenomenological research, so that my biases as a practicing school psychologist and researcher did not interfere with the data collected from the interviewees/participants (discussed in Chapter 3, Methodology; Fouche, 1993; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007)

Relevant Jargon in Lay Language

The following terms will be used throughout this dissertation, as they pertain to the research problem and broadly, within the field of school psychology.

The American Educational Research Association (AERA), with the collaboration of American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME; 2014) define *assessment* as:

Methods that are used to obtain inferences about characteristics of people, to "measure or evaluate the characteristics or performance of individuals". Sometimes, the term "test" is used interchangeably with assessment (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014).

Merrell et al (2012) and NASP (2016) define a *psycho-educational evaluation* as:

An evaluation process used to determine if a child demonstrates a type of disability and requires special education services. The evaluation may consist of both formal and informal methods such as: standardized assessments, interviews, observations, curriculum-based measurements, review of records, etc. (Merrell et al., 2012; NASP, 2016).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) is:

A federal law denotes that students who meet special education criteria, under one or more 13 disability categories, are entitled to a free, public, and appropriate education. Students between the ages of 3-21 are protected by IDEA. IDEA also ensures that public local education agencies (districts) abide by IDEA standards and regulations to protect children with disabilities (IDEA, 2004).

Rao (2015) defines *culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) student(s)* as:

A student who is assimilating into a new culture, is a second language learner, or brings a diverse set of experiences to the school system.

Holman et al (2019) define *therapeutic assessment* as:

A collaborative evaluation process that disbands the power struggle between the family and educational stakeholders. The evaluator(s) and the family have equal power and say in the

evaluation process to identify a disability and provide solutions and interventions to support the student's academic or behavioral needs (Holman et al., 2019).

AERA, APA, and NCME (2014) define *cognitive assessment* as:

The collection of test scores used to determine capacity for mental tasks such as: "processing, acquisition, retention, conceptualization, and organization of sensory, perceptual, verbal, spatial, and psychomotor information" (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014)

AERA, APA, and NCME (2014) define *intelligence test* as:

A test meant to measure an individual's cognitive skills, in accordance with an established intelligence theory (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014).

AERA, APA, and NCME (2014) define *standardization* as:

In testing/assessment administration, standardization refers to the adherence of procedures and practices to ensure that all testing sessions are uniformed across various participants and students.

AERA, APA, and NCME (2014) and IDEA (2004) define an *individualized education plan/program* as:

A legal document that delineates services, educational goals, accommodations, modifications, etc., that must be implemented and followed in the school/classroom setting, to ensure educational benefit (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014; IDEA, 2004).

Annamma et al., 2018, Annamma & Morrison (2018), and Mahon-Reynolds & Parker (2016) define *DisCrit* as:

A critical theory that intersects between race and disability. DisCrit provides a framework that acknowledges facets of ableism in society. Additionally, DisCrit also acknowledges that White Supremacy and ableism work in tandem and that disability is a social construct.

Disability is defined as:

"Disability is not an attribute of an individual. but rather a complex collection of conditions, many of which are created by the social environment" (WHO, 2001, p. 28, as cited by Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012).

Within special education, IDEA (2004) defines *disability* as:

"A child with a disability means a child evaluated in accordance with §§300.304 through 300.311 as having an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this part as "emotional disturbance"), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services".

Assumptions and Limitations

Throughout the planning, writing, data collection, and analyzing phases of the study, I identified some assumptions. The first assumption is that the participating school psychologists accurately recounted their experiences working with CLD students during the psycho-educational assessment process, to help answer the specific research questions through the open-responses questionnaire and individual interview. Second, practicing school psychologists have the experience and knowledge for appropriate assessment practices and procedures for CLD

students. Therefore, it is assumed that practicing school psychologists would have answered and provided context to their own procedures and practices for psycho-educational assessment. Lastly, it was assumed that the participating school psychologists may believe that some standardized assessment batteries and assessment procedures, both formal and informal, are less biased and less harmful when used with CLD students.

The current research study is not immune to some potential limitations. During the psycho-educational assessment process, many other relevant stakeholders may provide some assessments, too (e.g., speech and language pathologists, and special education teachers). Other stakeholders may also have rich insight into their perspectives during the assessment process, like speech/language pathologists and special education teachers since they also assess students with standardized measures. This is a limitation, as there may be other factors impacting the psycho-educational assessment process that may not be divulged from practicing school psychologists. Although school psychology is an international field, the perspectives of school psychologists practicing in other countries or states within the US were not invited to participate. Since the research question is based on the US's high numbers of CLD students in special education, the routine use of IQ testing in US schools, and the various systemic issues that may impact the psycho-educational assessment process, I found it necessary that the participating school psychologists practice in the US, specifically California. However, using purposive sampling, practicing California school psychologists were accessed as a convenience to me as a researcher, which is a limitation. Another limitation was the small sample size of the current study. I initially hoped to have 16-20 practicing California school psychologists; however, 10 participants were eager to participate. Lastly, the individual interview is another limitation. I

employed a structured interview, which may not have fully allowed the participants to expand on their responses.

Summary

IQ and standardized testing have had a tumultuous legacy in psychology and public schools. As the invention, construction, and routine use of IQ testing was successful in formalizing psychology as a science, the underpinnings of the IQ test are problematic. IQ tests stem from a Eurocentric perspective that used White Supremacy ideals as a marker of intellectual functioning. As subsequent case laws argued the inherent bias of IQ tests, especially when used on students of color, there continues to be unfairness in special education testing and placement. Student populations that have historically been marginalized continue to be overrepresented in special education, even with more knowledge on bias and multiculturalism that run rampant in public education.

Previous studies have looked at the intersection of race and disability, where bias is prevalent during the psycho-educational process. Additionally, previous studies have shown that not only is bias present, school psychologists, at times, utilize problematic or unethical practices in identifying a student with a disability. In terms of school psychologists' perspectives on the psycho-educational assessment process, studies mainly examined the specific types of assessments used, how much time is devoted to assessment in their jobs, and specific types of assessment methods used. Few studies have used qualitative approaches to have school psychologists divulge their perspectives on the intersection of race and disability and its impact during the psycho-educational assessment process.

Since the IQ test and other standardized measures continue to be normal tools in the psycho-educational assessment method, given the IQ tests' rocky history, aspects of White Supremacy and Eurocentricity may impact the selection of the IQ test and other standardized assessments when assessing CLD students for special education. Therefore, it was necessary to identify how school psychologists define psycho-educational assessments, assessments, how race and disability play a part within the assessment process, and what systemic issues impact proper and equitable psycho-educational assessment practices.

I used a qualitative design to answer the research questions. Specifically, interviews with practicing school psychologists were employed. The interview questions, open-response questionnaire answers, analytic memos, and the subsequent data analysis used facets of descriptive phenomenology and tenets of DisCrit, to answer the research questions, understand the values, beliefs, and attitudes relayed by the participates, create codes, and organize codes.

Chapter 2 provides insight into the relevant literature of the research/educational problem. The review of the literature discusses with more detail the rise of IQ testing in psychology, the use of DisCrit as a critical theoretical framework, the rise of school psychology, the historical uses of IQ tests in public schools, previous research that undertook the educational problem, relevant case laws, recommendations for school psychology training programs, and alternatives to the psycho-educational assessment. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology, participant recruitment, description of the participants, interview protocols, analytic memoing protocols, and the open-response questionnaire protocol. Chapter 4 discusses the findings, followed by the discussion in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 serves as the concluding chapter, which provides a summary of the study, limitations of the study, implications, and recommendations for

future research and for practitioners (school psychologists, school psychology trainers, policymakers, and administrators).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The chapter presents the relevant literature related to psycho-educational assessment and CLD students. Specifically, I discuss the IQ test in its early iterations, pioneers of IQ testing, IQ testing in the USA, further criticism of IQ testing, and IQ testing within the school system. I also delve into the history of compulsory schooling, which spawned the sub-discipline of school psychology and special education. In understanding the wide breadth of the relevant literature, I employed tenets of DisCrit that identify how race and disability interact to further disenfranchise racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse communities. Next, I discussed the history of IQ testing and its worrisome underpinnings, followed by a discussion of the influence of compulsory schooling and the need for school psychological services. The transformation of school psychology in its infancy and in its current state are reviewed. Relevant federal laws and landmark court cases are also explained, in relation to the protection of CLD students during the assessment and decision-making process.

Previous research that examined bias in both the special education referral and decision-making processes are discussed, followed by research that examined school psychologists' assessment practices, and subsequently the systemic issues that impede school psychologists in service delivery. Recommended assessment process, the Therapeutic Assessment (TA) and Response to Intervention (RTI), and its utility in schools are discussed. Finally, NASP's stance on social justice and equity within psycho-educational assessments is discussed.

IQ Testing: A Summary

IQ testing and its use in schools has a troublesome history with underpinnings in Eurocentricity and false notions of the types of people who are considered intelligent. The IQ test, though its inception and use are built on racist, prejudiced, and faulty claims about intelligence, was used to justify a need for determining and identifying individuals who were fit to reproduce and identify which individuals were genetically predisposed to intelligence (Collins, 2016; Gillham, 2001; Godin, 2007; Murdoch, 2009). Additionally, IQ testing and its introduction in American schools and clinics supported the goal of endorsing psychology as a legitimate field and science; the tool seemed revolutionary (Fagan & Wise, 1992; Merrell et al., 2012; Murdoch, 2009; Proctor & Rivera, 2021). Today, IQ tests, along with other standardized tests that measure academic achievement, behavior, and cognitive processing, are continually used in clinics for psychological diagnoses and in schools for the purposes of special education identification.

The IQ test gained traction in the US during the era of compulsory schooling that continues today. School officials, desperate to identify methods in how to support students with mental and physical disabilities, began to use the IQ test to figure out ways to better support students with disabilities (Fagan & Wise, 1992; Merrell et al., 2012; Murdoch, 2009). Yet, the IQ test was not always used with good intentions. Mexican Americans in the US's southwest (circa 1920), experienced the drawbacks of IQ testing due to preconceived and biased notions, embedded in the tests, that races other than White people were intellectually subordinate (Miguel & Valencia, 1988). IQ tests were used to underscore that Mexican American students were intellectually inferior to their White counterparts (Miguel & Valencia, 1988). The IQ test was also used as justification for excluding Mexican American students and placing them in classrooms to learn how to be more "American", teach them English, and erase their Mexican heritage (Miguel & Valencia, 1988).

Similarly, Black students have fallen victim to the racist, prejudiced ideology that supports the use of IQ tests. Subject to IQ tests, Black students were also excluded from instruction with their White counterparts; Black students were placed in restrictive settings due to a supposed disability (Blanton, 2003; Proctor & River, 2022). The performance of Black students on IQ tests further cemented the idea that White people are superior in intellect, compared to other races (Blanton, 2003; Miguel & Valencia, 1988; Proctor & Rivera, 2021). Even with evidence that shows that the IQ test has shown itself to be culturally insensitive to people with different linguistic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, CLD students represent a large portion of the special education population. (*Diana vs. State Board of Education*, 1970; Gunderson & Siegal, 2001; Klinger et al., 2009; *Larry P. vs. Riles*, 1979; Salend & Duhaney, 2005).

Recently, Black and American Indian students represent large numbers of the special education population in public schools in the US (Annamma, Feri, & Connor, 2018; O'Bryon & Rodrigez; Klinger et al., 2009; Losen et al., 2015; *Students with Disabilities*, 2019; Tefera & Fischman, 2020). Specifically, Blacks students and American Indian students comprise 17% and 19% of students in special education, respectively (*Students with Disabilities*, 2019). The statistic is alarming, as Black and American Indian students comprise 15% and 1%, respectively, of the student population in the US (*COE - Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools*, n.d.). Although case laws and revisions to federal law have been made to further protect students of color and students with linguistic differences during the assessment process, there continues to be an overrepresentation of students of color in special education. Previous research has examined racial, ethnic, and linguistic bias in special education referrals and in the decision-making process, where there is evidence that bias is present in both processes. However, there is limited

research that examines the factors contributing to bias in the assessment administration and selection process for CLD students.

Gaps in the Current Literature

School psychologists' perspectives on psycho-educational assessment practices is well researched and documented. Research studies have addressed how much time school psychologists devote to psycho-educational assessment and other related tasks (e.g., counseling; Fagan & Wise, 1994; McNamara et al., 2019; Smith & Mealy, 1998; Reschly & Wilson, 1996). Additionally, previous studies have also examined the types of assessments and assessment methods that school psychologists implement in their current practices (Benson et al., 2019; Hutton et al., 1992; Klassen et al., 2005; Reschly & Wilson, 1996; Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014). Specifically, previous research studies have looked at the specific brands of standardized IQ tests and other standardized measures (e.g., using the Weschler brand IQ test or the Kaufman batteries) and have looked at what other psycho-educational assessment methods are employed during the process (e.g., observations, interview, reviewing student/cumulative records). Vega, Lasser, and Afifi (2016) employed quantitative methods to identify school psychologists' specific practices while assessing CLD students and barriers to their assessment process. However, their quantitative methodology, surveys, provided limited insight into the problem, due to the fixed response choices and the limited qualitative features of their survey.

In relation to the influence and intersection of race, ethnicity, and linguistic factors during the assessment process, there are some studies that have studied this using quantitative or experimental methods. Sullivan et al (2019) used vignettes of fake students to determine if race influenced faulty decisions for special education eligibility. Sullivan et al (2019) found that there

was little significant evidence that race influenced bias, but the authors found that other factors influenced the decision-making process, However, previous studies, as cited by Sullivan et al (2019), revealed that racial and ethnic bias play a large role in faulty decision-making procedures for initially referring students for evaluation/assessment, identification, and placement; some students' results presented a "false positive" as needing special education, and ultimately led to continued disproportionate numbers in special education (Algozzine, Christenson, & Ysseldyke, 1982; Macmillan, Gresham, & Bocian, 1998; Shepard & Smith, 1983). But the perspectives from school psychologists, based on their own beliefs, values, or attitudes, have not been uncovered through previous research endeavors.

Qualitative studies that addressed similar issues of unfair, faulty decision-making after testing is completed, observed that bias continues to compromise the decision-making process. Yet, research seldom looks at the actual assessment selection process. Research studies rarely look at the factors that lead school psychologists to choose or forgo certain standardized assessment and practices when assessing CLD students for special education. Additionally, research does not necessarily focus on the systemic issues that impact the school psychologist's assessment practices when assessing CLD students for special education. Moreover, school psychologists, in previous research, have been asked to discuss obstacles to service delivery, where some obstacles like high testing caseloads, were uncovered, but systemic issues, that range from laws, policies, and district procedures are not always discussed.

Theoretical Framework: DisCrit

I use critical theory as a basis for this work. Because students from diverse backgrounds who also have a disability have varied experiences that differ from the experiences of White

students with disabilities, the critical theory of DisCrit examines the intersection of race and disability and the treatment of both by people in society and in schools (Annamma, Feri, & Connor, 2013 and 2018; McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 2006; Proctor & Rivera, 2021; Rubin & Noguera, 2004). Specifically, racism and ableism, discrimination based on perceived disability(ies) (Hehir, 2002) are discussed within DisCrit. Racism and ableism work in tandem to bar diverse people with disabilities the same opportunities that White people with disabilities are afforded (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Ableism marks some individuals as productive, desirable, and overall, fit to be meaningful citizens; those who do not present with the aforementioned traits are devalued as people (Lewis & Arday, 2023). Racist and ableist discourse is found in policy, human response, procedures, and in education (Collins et al., 2016). Additionally, racism and ableism have become normal aspects of society and education, so DisCrit seeks to uncover their normalcy in daily interactions.

DisCrit offers seven tenets that are meant to identify and respond to notions of racism and ableism that have been normalized in our society and educational systems (Annamma, Feri, and Connor, 2013; 2018; Proctor & Rivera, 2022, p. 37-40). Calling for action to identify and rectify the manners in which students from diverse racial, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds are treated in schools and society (Collins et al., 2016), DisCrit tenets as described by Annamma et al (2013; 2018) are:

Tenet 1: "DisCrit focuses on ways that the forces of racism and ableism circulate interdependently, often in neutralized and invisible ways, to uphold notions of normalcy":

Tenet 2: "DisCrit values multidimensional identities and troubles singular notions of identity such as race or dis/ability or class or gender or sexuality, and so on".

Tenet 3: "DisCrit emphasizes the social constructions of race and ability and yet recognizes the material and psychological impacts of being labeled as raced or dis/abled, which sets one outside of the western cultural norms' '.

Tenet 4: "DisCrit privileges voices of marginalized populations, traditionally not acknowledged within research.".

Tenet 5: "DisCrit considers legal and historical aspects of dis/ability and race and how both have been used separately and together to deny the rights of some citizens".

Tenet 6: "DisCrit recognizes Whiteness and ability as property and that gains for people labeled with dis/abilities have largely been made as the result of interest convergence of White, middle-class citizen".

Tenet 7: "DisCrit requires activism and supports all forms of resistance".

DisCrit in School Psychology and Special Education

DisCrit can be an impactful critical theory within the practice and research in school psychology. Fisher et al (2021) explains that school psychologists can place a critical eye on the policies and practices they encounter. For example, in the manifestation determination (MD) process, a process in which the IEP team must determine if the child's disability is the reason why misconduct occurred (IDEA, 2004), rules and regulations surrounding the MD process are vague. Color evasiveness in the process is common, which discounts the child's racial and ethnic

background. Remaining race-neutral allows for overt, unnecessary punishment of CLD students and justifies extreme punishments, like expulsion (Fisher et al., 2021). Hence, DisCrit can be applied by school psychologists, since the MD process does not account for the interaction and intersection of race and disability; this may also apply to other pertinent special education procedures (Fisher et al., 2021). Discrit is a critical theory that school psychologists should begin to understand, as school psychology and special education are founded on principles surrounding typicality, intelligence, ability, and differences.

Proctor and Rivera (2022) recommend that DisCrit be applied to school psychological duties and services and critically examine the role of IQ testing on CLD students (p. 43). They suggest school psychologists should understand how the role of Eugenics plays in current practices as they relate to testing for special education identification. Additionally, school psychologists need to understand the role Eugenics plays even in other forms of assessment and testing like in using behavior rating scales, another typical assessment technique used by school psychologists. Lastly, Proctor and Rivera (2022) describe how academic or behavioral issues stem from Eurocentric values that name some students fit and intelligent and vilify students who do not fit within the norm (e.g., students who are considered energetic are seen as problematic).. School psychologists who use a critical theory like DisCrit can identify how CLD students are mistreated in schools, even within special education. As urged by NASP (2019), school psychologists have the duty to analyze systems, procedures, and practices that harm CLD students and advocate for equitable procedures and treatments of this vulnerable student population.

To address racial discrimination, prejudice, and ableism in school psychology, Sabnis and Proctor (2021) propose a new critical theory and concept called Critical School Psychology

(CSP). CSP urges school psychologists and school psychology researchers to understand the value of implementing critical theories in their work. CSP has the power to disrupt unjust procedures and practices, faulty thinking, harmful discourse, and help identify prejudices that are upheld in education and society (Sabnis & Proctor, 2021). CSP allows school psychologists to question how they can make the field more equitable and how others can understand issues that surround social justice in school psychology. It can be deduced that concepts like DisCrit or CSP are not actively used within school psychological practices. Students, especially CLD students, continue to overrepresent students in special education, are expelled or suspended from school at higher rates than their white counterparts, etc. Although NASP provides position statements with guidance on how to address issues, like those mentioned by Sabnis and Proctor (2021), there is little evidence that an overhaul of faulty procedures and practices has taken place.

To help facilitate understanding of how DisCrit is situated within school psychology and special education, Table 1 describes each tenet's features along with an example of how each tenet manifests itself in school psychology. Table 1 is adapted from Proctor and Rivera's (2022) explanation and application of DisCrit to school psychology and special educationP.

Table 1

DisCrit in School Psychology and Special Education

Tenet Number	Features	Example

1	DisCrit focuses on ways that the forces of racism and ableism circulate interdependently, often in neutralized and invisible ways, to uphold notions of normalcy.	Notions of what it means to be raced and disabled are based on definitions of typicality that reinforce ideals of Whiteness and Eurocentricity. (Sullivan et al, 2021, p. 121).
2	DisCrit values multidimensional identities and troubles singular notions of identity such as race or dis/ability or class or gender or sexuality, and so on.	Standardized testing, like IQ tests, do not consider intersections of student identities, including race, gender, social/economic status, etc.
3	DisCrit emphasizes the social constructions of race and ability and yet recognizes the material and psychological impacts of being labeled as raced or dis/abled, which sets one outside of the western cultural norms.	Students of color who are classified as a student with an Emotional Disturbance (ED) are at risk for developing low self-esteem, conflicts with peers, mistreatment by their teachers, and are at risk for adverse post-secondary outcomes (e.g., dropping out of school; Sullivan et al., 2021, p. 121). Yet, notions about typical behaviors are based on oppressive, prejudiced ideals (Proctor & Rivera, 2022).
4	DisCrit privileges voices of marginalized populations, traditionally not acknowledged within research.	Researchers should highlight people with disabilities in research through methodologies like counternarratives, ethnography, etc., to share experiences of their time in special education (Annamma et al., 2013, 2018).

5	DisCrit considers legal and historical aspects of dis/ability and race and how both have been used separately and together to deny the rights of some citizens.	IQ testing continues to be legally allowed for use on CLD students, despite the controversial history of its use, which continues to disproportionately place CLD students in special education (Proctor & Rivera, 2022).
6	DisCrit recognizes Whiteness and ability as property and that gains for people labeled with dis/abilities have largely been made as the result of interest convergence of White, middle-class citizens.	Per Annama et al (2018), behavior issues, when applied to White boys, are met with a "boys will be boys" mentality. Yet CLD students with the same behaviors are labeled as problematic students.
7	DisCrit requires activism and supports all forms of resistance.	Resistance can look like engaging in policy reform, engaging families, and school personnel to help dismantle oppressive practices, opening spaces for historically marginalized populations that have not been previously invited to engage in before, etc. (NASP, 2019; Sabnis & Proctor, 2021)

DisCrit as a theoretical framework was advantageous for this study. DisCrit allowed for this study to base itself within the injustices CLD students may have faced while being in special education, as well as how the special education assessment process is used to further oppress CLD students who may or may not have a disability. I used DisCrit to consider how CLD students are not monoliths. CLD students themselves are situated within many identities,

however, their identities are not always fully captured and considered during the psycho-educational assessment process (Sullivan et al., 2021, p. 121). Participating school psychologists in this study not only were encouraged to analyze how a student's racial background influences their assessment practices, but also asked to think beyond race and analyze how linguistic factors change their approach to psycho-educational assessments. Legality and historicity, another key feature I used from DisCrit, was necessary to uncover, as legal and historical underpinnings of special education have been used to further oppress CLD students from progressing in their education (Irvine, 2012). It was necessary for the participating school psychologists to consider how the current state of legal mandates and their own district policies/procedures continue to implicate how CLD students are situated within psycho-educational assessments.

IQ Testing: Historical and Modern Uses

As described previously, IQ tests have a controversial history. Although impactful in fortifying psychology as a science, the IQ tests' origins stem from prejudice, racism, and ableism. Many pioneers of IQ testing like Sir Francis Galton, Charles Spearman, Alfred Binet, and Theodore Simon helped to legitimize psychology and human intelligence, but in turn, perpetuated faulty ideals about intelligence, which thrives on Eurocentric ideals.

IQ Testing Pioneer: Sir Francis Galton

The father of IQ tests, Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911; Galton & Galton, 1998) was instrumental in cementing the purpose and utility of the IQ test. In the late 1800s, Galton coined the term "eugenics". The term he coined stems from Greek roots, which meant well-born (Godin, 2009; Langkjær-Bain, 2019; Murdoch, 2009). Galton believed that people's physical and mental traits stemmed from genetic predispositions (Gillham, 2001; Kevles, 2016). Galton believed that

women, Black people, and those in lower classes were less intelligent. Galton led a movement that deemed it important to identify which people should procreate so that formidable citizens could be born. Galton believed that criminals and people deemed as "feeble-minded" must be kept away from society (Galton & Galton, 1998; Murdoch, 2009). He believed that breeding should be selective so that the potential to birth healthy, intelligent people would be greater (Gillham, 2001; Murdoch, 2009). Hence, Galton sought out to create an assessment tool that would help identify intelligent and talented people (Gillham, 2001). Although Galton was instrumental in quantifying intelligence, Galton adhered to Eurocentric, White-centered ideals about intelligence, which conveyed that non-White, and non-male characteristics demonstrate an inferior level of intelligence. Galton's perspective on intelligence upheld racist and ableist ideals. His perspective and perpetuation of a false stereotype inspired future iterations of his own intelligence tests and other pioneers in IQ testing.

Galton, circa 1884, spearheaded the first test that quantified a person's mental ability. People paid threepence to be scrutinized by Galton. He examined their physical fitness so that he could determine their "innate" ability to procreate and breed talented citizens (Murdoch, 2009; Richardson, 2002). Galton also believed that the size and circumference of one's head was a marker of intelligence (Fancher, 2009; Murdoch, 2009). Because men tended to have larger head sizes than women, Galton believed that head shape was valid in his bias that men were more intelligent than women. In his own study, Galton (1888) measured the heads of male students at Cambridge University. Galton determined that the larger the head size was, the more likely the individual would have high academic achievement. While his study is one of the first correlational studies, Galton's head shape test lacked measurability and statistical foundation (Fancher, 2009).

As described by Tenet 2 of DisCrit, people are not just one sole identity; people fall into different categories, not just identities related to their race or disability (Annamma, Connor, & Feri; 2013; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Galton did not consider the multidimensional identities of the people he assessed; he solely focused on gender, highlighting that one aspect of their bodies demonstrated intelligence. He mainly relied on one facet of them, which discounted other traits that could have demonstrated their talent and ability. In turn, Galton cemented the idea that intelligence is singular and representative of masculine traits. He thrived off the idea that people from lower classes, people of color, and women could not be as intelligent as men. This idea of a singular identity of supposed low intelligence provided psychology and intelligence testing with legitimacy.

IQ Testing Pioneer: Charles Spearman

Charles Spearman is another pioneer in intelligence testing and statistics. Spearman attached Galton's Eugenics theory to his own intelligence theory. Spearman tested various children to identify their differences and found statistical relationships between intellectual skills and performance in various areas and talents; this would later become Spearman's correlational coefficient (Murdoch, 2009; Porter, 2009; Richardson, 2002). Spearman coined the idea of a general intelligence, denoted as "g" (Murdoch, 2009; Porter, 2009; Richardson, 2002). Spearman believed that testing in various areas of intelligence such as abstract thinking, would provide a better indication of an individual's true intelligence, however he stressed that the concept of "g" was the most important marker of innate intelligence, as "g" represented a person's overall intelligence (Murdoch, 2009; Porter, 2009; Richardson, 2002). Binet and Simon created a test that measured various intelligences like Spearman's (Richardson, 2002).

IQ Testing Pioneer: Alfred Binet. Because Galton had become influential, other individuals began to look to Galton for inspiration. Alfred Binet, a French researcher, is another prominent figure in the IQ testing movement. While Galton paved the way for tools established in evidence and utility, Binet cemented a multifaceted tool to quantify intelligence, that assessed theorized cognitive functions (e.g., problem solving skills, verbal comprehension, working memory, etc.; Fancher, 2009; Murdoch, 2009; Proctor & Rivera, 2022, p. 147). In 1905, Binet was tasked by the French government to establish a tool to help teachers identify school-aged children with the needs of typical and atypical students (Doll, 1917; Fagan & Wise, 1992; Merrell et al., 2012; Murdoch, 2009, Richardson, 2002). In turn, he created the Binet scales (Au, 2014; Kaufman, 2000; Murdoch, 2009; Porter, 2009; Siegler, 1992). Unlike Galton's previous work with using a tool to measure ability, Binet's scales were more complex and included several subtests that measured other mental abilities (Siegler, 1992). Binet's theory on intelligence was different from Galton's in the sense that Binet's general idea of intelligence is varied and comprises the following traits: 1. intelligence is a constructive process, 2. intelligence is based on interactions with socialization and experience, 3. intelligence is malleable based on experiences, and 4. intelligence has active roles in both simple and complex tasks (Siegler, 1992). These ideas that Binet upheld solidified the utility of his scales. Still, due to the need to identify lower functioning students, the descriptors that were used to describe the child's performance continued to propagate demeaning titles. For example, the term "moron" was used to describe the lowest functioning students that performed poorly on his tests; the utility and common use of Binet's tool justified categorizing these students based on their sole performance (Doll, 1917; Murdoch, 2009). Although this term was meant to be less harsh than "fool", "moron" as a marker of intelligence, provided further justification to identify underdeveloped

students. At the time of Binet's tenure, circa the 1890s, France needed reputable tests that identified intellectually disabled students; Binet was the French government's way to solidly identify underperforming students (Murdoch, 2009).

Intelligence classifications, like "morons", helped understand which students would fail or struggle with school and to determine what tasks are considered developmentally appropriate in concordance with age ranges (e.g., distinguishing wood from chocolate; Murdoch, 2009). As described by Tenet 3 of DisCrit, there are consequences from being labeled as someone raced and disabled (Annamma, Connor, & Feri; 2013; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Binet was tasked to identify intellectually disabled students per the French government, under the guise that they needed to help students who were underdeveloped, per his test (Murdoch, 2009). However, the testing and labeling intellectually inferior students as "morons" impacted how they are treated in schools. Per Murdoch (2009), students who could answer questions within their age range, per Binet's test, were considered fit students who will have successful careers. Students who were considered underperforming or underdeveloped intellectually are at the brunt of misjudgement, like being seen as defective.

IQ Testing Pioneer: Theodore Simon. Theodore Simon is another influential figure in the IQ testing movement. Simon was instrumental in the IQ tests application to school children (Richardson, 2000). In the early 1900s, Theodore Simon teamed up with Binet to publish Binet-Simon scales to be used on Parisian schoolchildren (Richardson, 2002). These scales were diverse in their subtests. The scales were theorized and constructed to measure various cognitive processes (Richardson, 2009; Siegler, 1992). Again, the tool was meant to help teachers identify the needs of schoolchildren (Doll, 1917; Fagan & Wise, 1992; Merrell et al., 2012; Murdoch, 2009; Richardson, 2002). In the early 1900s, The Binest-Simon scale became a common

assessment tool in North America and France (Boake, 2002; Richardson, 2002). In later versions of new IQ tests, facets of the Binet-Simon scale were adapted into IQ tests, like the Wechsler scales, that are continued to be widely used by school psychologists today (Boake, 2002; Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014). However, Simon did not want the scales to be used as the sole indicator of intelligence and was perturbed to know that people used the tool as the sole marker of intelligence (Richardson, 2002).

Unlike Galton, Simon understood that quantifying intelligence through one single marker is problematic. As noted by Tenet 3 of DisCrit, there are legitimate repercussions of being labeled as disabled (Annamma, Connor, & Feri; 2013; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). While Simon was wary about the misuse of IQ testing, the continued use and possible misuse leads to adverse impacts. As noted by Richardson (2002), the basis of IQ tests and what intelligence is is not widely agreed upon. There is subjectivity on how a person is considered intelligent. In turn, individuals who are considered up to par with intelligence are labeled with positive markers of intelligence like "efficient" if they are able to answer test items correctly, for instance (Richardson, 2002). Additionally, as noted by Tenet 2 of DisCrit, people considered raced and disabled are situated within multiple identities. Richardson (2002) and Proctor and Rivera (2022) stress that IQ tests are and have been created by a small subset of the human population, the upper class. Therefore, IQ tests do not fully consider the nuances of human culture, as they are based on what is believed to be superior, Eurocentric values. There is no regard for how people, no matter the background, are nuanced. Instead, intelligence and IQ tests continue to adhere to White-centered ideals about intelligence.

IQ Testing in the US

With mandatory schooling, the US also had their own movement for intelligence testing. In the early 1900s, Lewis Terman became the American pioneer for IQ testing. Terman adapted Binet-Simon's scales of intelligence to be used on American schoolchildren (Hally, 2015; Kaufman, 2000; Murdoch, 2009; Terman, 1916; Warne, 2018). Like his predecessors, Terman (1916) believed that an intellectual disability was a growing social problem in the US, and saw a need to identify it. Terman (1916) not only translated the Binet-Simon's scale from French to English, but also adapted the scales to fit American ideals about intelligence like adding analogies popularized in the US or adding in historical events that are taught in American schools like identifying what continent Egypt is in, what degree does water boil at, etc; he wanted the American version to have its own fame apart from his French counterparts (Kaufman, 2000; Murdoch, 2009; Porter, 2009; Richardson, 2002).

IQ Tests: 20th Century and Beyond

As American education evolved into the system that is implemented today, school professionals believed that IQ testing was a mandatory tool to use to identify children as lower functioning (Fagan & Wise, 1992; Jensen, 1980; Murdoch, 2009; Proctor & Rivera, 2022; Terman, 1916). And so, it is no surprise that an IQ test that places value on some bodies/minds over others, has continued to be used in a prejudiced way. Performance of Mexican American students on IQ tests was used as the basis for discrimination and exclusion from their White counterparts. Some of these students spoke little to no English, yet their performance on an English test labeled them as intellectually disabled (Miguel & Valencia, 1988).

Placing these students in educational settings meant to teach them English and American mannerisms, the system attempted to erase their culture and language (Miguel & Valencia,

1988). Black students, like their Mexican American counterparts, were also administered IQ tests to determine their ability levels. They too were deemed as lower functioning and segregated from their White peers (Blanton, 2003) because of the IQ test's insensitivity to their racial, ethnic, and cultural background (Blanton, 2003; Proctor & Rivera, 2022, p. 147).

Tenet 3 of DisCrit posits that being raced and disabled in Western culture has negative impacts (Annamma, Connor, & Feri; 2013; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Mexican American students who spoke Spanish or who were not acclimated to Western/US culture, were labeled as less than to their White counterparts. In turn, Mexican American students were punished and made to look subservient to White students. In trying to make these students more "American", their language and culture was devalued. As noted by Miguel and Valencia (1988), the indoctrination Mexican American students sustained allowed for the punishment of Mexican American students by prohibiting Spanish from the curriculum, promoting an Anglo-only curriculum, and overall had less access to adequate educational opportunities (Miguel & Valencia, 1988). In summation, their status as an immigrant, non-American student cost them not only the respect from school personnel but included the erasure of what made them unique.

The routine use of IQ tests goes beyond its use in the school system. A graduate student under Terman, Otis adapted the scales as a multiple-choice format. This new format was used to determine the intelligence of military soldiers during World War I (Kaufman, 2000; Murdoch, 2009; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Depending on the soldiers' performance, military duties were assigned (Murdoch, 2009). IQ tests for military enlistment and recruitment seemed to be somewhat successful in assigning tasks to military recruits, but the military was not sold on its effectiveness for identifying strong soldiers (Murdoch, 2009). Similar forms of IQ tests were used as entrance exams for immigrants coming to the US through Ellis Island, circa the early

20th century (Hally, 2015; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Due to the various languages spoken from newly immigrated individuals, the notion that people from different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds were less intelligent was further cemented by their performance on IQ tests (Hally, 2015; Proctor & Rivera, 2021). The use of IQ tests on immigrants upheld the racist, xenophobic, and prejudiced ideals set forth by Galton and Terman (Murdoch, 2009). The IQ test and its frequent use continued to perpetuate faulty ideals of intelligence on non-White populations, which became a normal part of American society, beyond the school system.

As noted by Tenet 3 of DisCrit, racism and ableism work in tandem to further cement that people of color, people from lower classes, and people who speak languages other than English are categorized as less than their White counterparts (Annamma, Connor, & Feri; 2013; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Additionally, as noted by Tenet 1 of DisCrit, racism and ableism are so ingrained into society that systems, like the American public education system, continue to use ability and Whiteness as markers of typicality (Annamma, Connor, & Feri; 2013; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). In turn, people who did not align with Western values faced major repercussions just for being different from the norm. They faced ostracization as they tried to integrate into society, a potential psychological impact of being different than Western standards (Annamma et al., 2013; Murdoch, 2009).

Further Issues in IQ Testing

The misuse and prejudiced underpinnings of the IQ test has been discussed. Yet, IQ testing continues to be a routine duty of school psychologists. In the preceding sections, I discussed how IQ tests, although helpful in establishing psychology as a science, have a negative connotation (Merrell et al., 2012). While IQ testing, and the entire psycho-educational

assessment process for that matter, is seen as a process to drive data-based decision making to identify supports and interventions (e.g., accommodations, modifications, relevant services, etc.), for students in need (Merrell et al., 2012). Yet, per Merrell et al (2012) and Proctor and Rivera (2022), standardized testing should not always be the default in identifying supports. School psychologists should be wary of the various issues and negative history of IQ tests (Proctor & Rivera, 2022). IQ testing is plagued by financial issues, cultural insensitivity, bias, and misuse on CLD students, like discussed previously.

IQ testing has its fair share of valid criticism due to this basis in prejudiced ideals. One criticism is a financial one. IQ testing is a mainstay in education, as there are financial benefits for test publishing companies (Proctor & Rivera, 2022, p. 43). IQ test publishing companies, profitable businesses continually promote IQ testing as an important tool in the psycho-educational process (Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Additionally, school psychology conferences receive sponsorships to promote IQ tests from various testing companies, which capitalize on the idea that IQ tests and other standardized tests are necessary (Proctor & Rivera, 2022, p. 43).

Another important criticism is that the norming sample used to construct IQ tests is usually limited. Students from diverse backgrounds and linguistic variability seldom comprise the norming samples (Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014). Also, the norming sample of IQ tests do not always account for differences in disabilities and impairments; there continues to be a focus on Western, Eurocentric ideals that form standardized IQ tests. Omichinski et al (2008) explained that students with impairments that impact language abilities or motor abilities may not always have their strengths and weaknesses captured through their performance on IQ tests. Limitations to students' test-taking skills apply to both White students and students of color. In

turn, students whose performance was compromised by their impairments could lead to over or under identification for special education.

Cultural bias and inherent bias in testing are other criticisms related to IQ testing. As described by Dent (1995), W.E. Dubois noted that the IQ test solely assesses one's ability to adhere to White standards of social acceptance and intelligence. Hence, a Black child's intelligence could not be accurately captured through IQ tests that are meant for White kids. This notion is supported by the case law *Larry P. vs. Riles* (1979), where IQ tests were said to be solely beneficial for White individuals (Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Thus, the IQ test appears to only measure social background, not intelligence (Richardson, 2002). Dent (1995) also describes that cultural sensitivity could have been at the forefront of discussion surrounding IQ test construction if Black experts were involved. However, according to Dent (1995), the American Psychological Association (APA) did not seek to include Black experts and practitioners for support in establishing cultural sensitivity in new iterations of IQ tests. Again, ideals about Whiteness seek to discount the skills, experience, or expertise surrounding people of color.

As noted by Proctor and Rivera (2022), IQ tests have evolved since Terman's, Binet's, and Galton's iterations. Proctor and Rivera (2022) urge practitioners that test items on standardized IQ tests are a representation of Whiteness. For example, IQ tests rely on language, terminology, and knowledge that represents White, middle-class Americans. Even when removing language-loaded questions on IQ tests with nonverbal measures, the test items are still a by-product of knowledge based on Whiteness. Even when attempting to level the field for CLD and White students, White students have the advantage to enter programs, like gifted education programs (Proctor & Rivera, 2022; p. 151).

In turn, school psychologists must consider if the IQ test is even a tool that should continue to be of use in schools, as there continues to be an emphasis on Whiteness to quantify intelligence. Any gains made to diversify IQ testing so that a fair result is applied to CLD students, continues to be based on oppressive ideals about behavior, intelligence, and social norms (Proctor & Rivera, 2022). IQ tests, even in their current iteration, continue to benefit White students, as IQ tests continue to be based on experiences that only a small subset of students experience, typically White students. Even with varied IQ tests that are translated into various languages or are administered language-free (nonverbal tests), which could be argued is a gain for CLD students with disabilities, continue to be based on White-centered societal norms (Proctor & Rivera, 2022; Richardson, 2002). White students, despite the changes with current IQ tests, continue to be known as intellectually superior to their CLD counterparts.

Yes, IQ tests have been used to further marginalize Black students, with White students having better opportunities afforded to them, like enrollment in specialized bilingual programs (Martinez-Alvarez, 2019; Proctor & Rivera, 2022), however, White students also face issues with IQ tests. IQ tests and other educational standardized measures are meritocratic (Au, 2013; Au & Gourd, 2013). Au (2013) and Au and Gourd (2013) describe that IQ tests have been used, historically, to track and sort students into educational pathways. Black students were not the only students to succumb to tracking, White students were too. White students, due to their performance on IQ tests, are subjected to placement in restrictive classroom settings, and fall victim to false stereotypes of people with disabilities (Au, 2013).

Because IQ tests perpetuate class inequities, White students who are within lower socio-economic statuses, experience discrimination or bias due to their performance on IQ tests, which in turn can lead to judgment by peers, teachers, and other educational staff. Despite the inherent

problems with the establishment and routine use of IQ tests, the IQ test was a tool that helped solidify school psychology and special education as regular components of the American educational system. Again, as noted by Tenet 3 of DisCrit, there are legitimate "material and psychological" impacts that impede the progress or safety of students in school, as students may be subjected to further marginalization in their educational career (Annamma et al., 2013; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Such adverse impacts could include misjudgment by school personnel, prejudices held against students of colors with disabilities (e.g., teachers assuming the student will struggle with the curriculum, an overall lack of connection between families and teachers, etc. (Irvine, 2012). The following section discusses other adverse impacts being raced and disabled in the US caused.

School Psychology History and the Evolution of the School Psychologist

In considering how IQ testing and other forms of standardized testing became mainstays in the American educational system, it is important to understand the historical and legal underpinnings of school psychology, special education, and special education laws, which is relevant to Tenet 5 of DisCrit, where it is necessary to understand how legal and historical race and ability have been used to disenfranchise communities, like CLD students (Annamma et al., 2013; Proctor & Rivera, 2021).

School Psychology in the Early 20th Century

School psychology is a relatively new subdiscipline in psychology. School psychology gained further traction as a necessity in education due to mandatory schooling. As cited by Fagan and Wise (1992), Field (1976) hypothesized that as industries in the early 20th century were booming, it was necessary to mold skilled workers through schooling. This in turn led to

mandatory schooling (Merrell et al., 2012; Murdoch, 2009). As attendance at school was also

deemed compulsory, there was more prevalence of students with disabilities. Students with

disabilities needed specialized support in schools (Fagan & Wise, 1992; Merrell et al., 2012). In

turn, a small number of schools in rural and urban cities in the US established special education

programs, by 1910, to teach students with physical, mental, and moral impairments (Fagan &

Wise, 1992).

Psychological testing was usually completed outside of schools, in clinics. The purpose

of the psychologist was to justify labeling a student with a disability who could be placed in a

segregated educational setting, again another form of a material or psychological impact of being

labeled with a disability (Tenet 3 of DisCrit; Annamma et al., 2013; Fagan & Wise, 1992;

Proctor & Rivera, 2021). At the onset of the compulsory schooling movement, circa 1900-1930,

school psychologists were not in existence just yet (Fagan & Wise, 1992). Lightner Witmer,

regarded as the father of clinical and school psychology (Fagan & Wise, 1992), believed, and

advocated for a multidisciplinary approach to diagnosing disabilities and psychological

disorders. Witmer believed that each assessment of the child should be individualized for the

child's needs (Fagan & Wise, 1992; Witmer, 1907). Stanley Hall, who later founded APA, had a

similar manifesto to Witmer's. Hall spearheaded the child study movement, which included each

assessment as a case study, where various sources of information supported a diagnosis or

identification for a disability (Fagan & Wise, 1992).

Due to compulsory schooling for both typical and disabled students, school systems

invested in their own "psychologist" to sort students. Although there was no official title for his

duties, Arnold Gesell is considered the first school psychologist between 1915-1919 (Fagan &

Wise, 1994; Merrell et al., 2012). Additionally, school psychology had no official organization,

license, credential, or formal discipline of study (Merrell et al., 2012). In 1930, Gertrude

Hildreth, school psychologist, wrote a book on what school psychology is and what the functions

of the job entailed. Hildreth (1930) explained that her duties included assessments with students,

conferencing with teachers, report writing, and case studying. Hildreth's main job function was

assessing students for disabilities, a function that continued to be the main role of school

psychologists in the early 20. century.

Between the 1940s-1950s, school psychology as a career gained more traction.

Credentialing and licensing of school psychologists became more concrete, even though the

actual requirements for licenses varied by state (Merrell et al., 2012). As the growth in the

student population grew, especially with students with disabilities, school psychologists were

continually employed in public schools (Fagan & Wise, 1992; Merrell et al. 2012). In the 1960s,

consensus on accreditation for school psychology masters and doctoral programs was drafted.

The National Council on Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE) and NASP established

guidelines to accredit school psychology training programs. APA also solidified their guidelines

for school psychology doctoral programs (Fagan & Wise, 1992; Merrell et al., 2012).

School Psychology Today

In the 21ˢᵗ century, school psychology is reminiscent of Hildreth's experiences and job

functions. Although job functions have grown more diverse, assessment continues to be a large

part of the school psychologist's job. McNamara et al (2019) surveyed practicing school

psychologists and found 91.4% of respondents engaged in initial psycho-educational assessments

for special education identification. The statistic has shown an increase in the main tasks of

school psychologists, as previous studies indicated fewer engaged in psycho-educational

assessment: 54% (Smith, 1984), 52% (Smith and Mealy, 1988), and 55% (Reschly and Wilson, 1992).

Today, school psychologists possess diverse skills that range from counseling, consultation, and home-school collaboration (Fagan & Wise, 1992; Merrell et al., 2012). School psychologists are trained in providing academic, behavioral, and social/emotional interventions. They are experts in how mental health and behavior impact learning and in using data to inform educational decisions, beyond psycho-educational assessment (*Who Are School Psychologists.*, n.d.). NASP (2016) also explains that within the realm of assessment, school psychologists are trained in using a variety of data sources to inform decision making, along with expertise in assessment selection. Therefore, the proposed research study would garner insight on the various assessment techniques practicing school psychologists use beyond traditional practices, as assessment for special education applies to CLD students.

Special Education History: Policies and Case Laws

Providing support for students with disabilities became a legal mandate in the mid-20 century (Fagan & Wise, 1992; Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996; Merrell et al, 2012). Martin et al (1996) explained that prior to legal mandates for special education, the specialized support afforded to students with disabilities was meager and poor quality. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965) allowed for specialized services for students who were considered socioeconomically depressed and English Language Learners. Title 1 funds, federal dollars spent on resources, programs, and interventions for students to meet academic standards, did not grant large sums (Martin et al., 1996). The US Office of Education then mandated a Bureau for the Education of the Handicapped (BEH) under Title VI, to help extend monetary

resources to improve or start programs for students with disabilities, like establishing classrooms for visually impaired or blind students (Martin et al., 1996).

A court case, *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) vs. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971), paved the way to modern special education law. *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) vs. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971), determined that schools cannot deny enrollment for students with disabilities, schools must provide services to children up to 21 years of age, and the education should be tailored to the student's individual needs. *Mills vs. Board of Education* (1972) also upheld the ruling of *PARC vs. Commonwealth of f Pennsylvania* (1971). *Mills vs. Board of Education* (1972), after advocacy from students aged 8-16 in Columbia schools, found that students with disabilities were wrongfully expelled or denied enrollment. The court case also set the precedent for special education procedures that are commonplace now like provision of a prior written notice and provision of procedural safeguards for parents and students.

Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA)

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975 established clearer guidelines and legal mandates that public schools were to follow, in accordance with the rights of students with disabilities. EAHCA (1975) mandated that public schools shall provide a free and appropriate public education for students with disabilities. Extra funding to school districts to support the needs of their disabled student's population was also mandated.

After EAHCA's reauthorization in 1986, which provided legal mandates for interventions for families and children born with disabilities, EAHCA was renamed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This reauthorization added Traumatic Brain Injury as a

special education eligibility category and required that an individual transition plan be added to a child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). IDEA, including its most recent iteration (2004), mandated that schools identify students with suspected disabilities and provide a free psycho-educational initial and triennial assessment, complete an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to address the child's needs, and renew the IEP annually via a collaborative meeting that includes the family. IDEA (2004) also mandates that parents be involved in all educational decisions, like educational placement. IDEA (2004) also mandates that school districts provide services to children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, provide modifications in the classroom, and provide related educational services, such as counseling, speech therapy, etc., should it be deemed necessary.

Landmark Court Cases: Diana and Larry P.

Within special education history, there have been a multitude of court cases that sought to rectify the wrongdoings and injustice that harmed CLD students, like Black students and English-language learners. In line with Tenet 5 of DisCrit, it is imperative that relevant court cases and case laws be reviewed to better understand how standardized testing adversely impacted CLD students. Two landmark court cases attempted to rectify discriminatory assessment practices for the purposes of special education identification. *Diana vs. State Board of Education* (1970) and *Larry P. vs. Riles* (1979) exposed faulty assessment practices, which subsequently led to changes in federal and state laws.

Diana vs. State Board of Education (1970) attempted to rectify improper use of IQ tests on CLD students. Through this case law, it was identified that children whose primary language is not English, shall be administered standardized tests in their primary language. In the case law,

Diana was identified as intellectually disabled, due to her performance on an English-language IQ test; Diana did not speak English (Proctor & Rivera, 2022, p. 150). Diana did not understand the test items, hence her performance on the test was compromised. In turn, students like Diana were excluded from general education and placed in a restrictive special education setting. The court determined that the test items were culturally irrelevant to Diana and students in the same population, Spanish-speaking students (*Diana vs. State Board of Education,* 1970). IDEA was then amended to include a clause that assessors, for the purposes of special education identification should provide nondiscriminatory assessments; assessments practices and tools should be mindful of one's language proficiency. Section 300.304.c of IDEA denotes:

(1) Assessments and other evaluation materials used to assess a child under this part—

(i) Are selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis.

(ii) Are provided and administered in the child's native language or other mode of communication and in the form most likely to yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally, unless it is clearly not feasible to so provide or administer.

(iii) Are used for the purposes for which the assessments or measures are valid and reliable.

(iv) Are administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel; and

(v) Are administered in accordance with any instructions provided by the producer of the assessments.

Larry P. vs. Riles (1979)*,* another impactful case law, found that IQ tests that were administered on Black students were culturally insensitive to Black students. Black students, mainly boys, were identified for special education at disproportionate numbers, compared to White students (Proctor & Rivera, 2022, p. 150). The court ruled that the IQ test scores did not accurately depict the students' cognitive functioning and were wrongly placed in special education (*Larry P. vs. Riles*, 1979). The court case was successful in highlighting the problematic use of IQ tests on Black students, like mentioned by W.E. Dubious discussed (Dent, 1995). The court cases also identified how a single performance on IQ tests justified discriminatory segregation of students of color in special education (Proctor & Rivera, 2021, p. 150). Facets of White supremacy were noted through this court case. White Supremacy and Eurocentric values have been continually used as an indicator of intelligence and typicality.

In 1986, the California Department of Education and plaintiffs reached a settlement. IQ tests for special education identification and placement for Black students were outlawed (Dent et al., 1987; Proctor & Rivera, 2022, p. 150). School psychologists and other assessors shall not use IQ tests, or tests resembling an IQ test on Black students (Dent et al., 1987; Proctor & Rivera, 2022, p. 150). However, other racial subgroups can still be administered IQ tests for the purposes of special education identification. California school districts were subsequently informed of the ruling and the ban on IQ tests on Black students continues (Proctor & Rivera, 2022, p. 150). No other state has implemented any laws or regulations because of the *Larry P v. Rile*s (1979) ruling. Therefore, that case law raises questions like, do other states follow the ruling? Do school psychologists use the ruling to inform their assessment practices?

While progress was made to legalize special education protections or support, it is important to note that the gains made as the interests to support students with disabilities

stemmed from other court cases, like *Brown v Board of Education* (1954). Segregation in schools based on students' skin color, had been commonplace. Once the supreme court ruled that "separate but equal" was deemed unlawful, integration in schools became law. Integration was a huge gain for students of color. Similarly, when students with disabilities were being denied entry into schools, a domino effect of lawsuits to integrate them were filed. But it is important to consider the gains made for people of color to fight for integration, as the interests align with the social majority, White people (Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Tenet 6 of DisCrit highlights that interest convergence needs to be understood, as the gains made by people of color became important once White students and families noticed the inequality experienced by students with disabilities.

Previous Research: School Psychologists and Assessment

As already discussed, the use of the IQ test is rooted in bias and prejudice. Previous research studies have examined how bias influences the special education referral process and the decision-making process. Bias of students of color and CLD students has been prevalent since the onset of the referral process (Cherkes & Ryan, 1985; Irvine, 2012; Knotek; 2003; Santamaria Graff et al., 2020). As described by Irvine (2012), parents from diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds may be wary of the referral process due to fear of discrimination, targeting, and ill-protection. Not only could the child endure judgment from educational stakeholders, but families may also fall victim to bias.

Familial Interactions and Special Education

In discussing familial dynamics, teachers and other educational stakeholders use biased language that stemmed from untrue assumptions (Knotek, 2003; Santamaria Graff et al., 2020).

Additionally, in discussing students' academic strengths and weaknesses, a deficit perspective has been found to be the norm (Knotek, 2003; Santamaria Graff et al., 2020). Specifically, according to Knotek (2003) and Santamaria Graff et al (2020) teachers, mainly, judged a child's educational shortcomings based on their background. For example, Santamaria Graff et al (2020) reported that a teacher in their study linked a student's socio-economic status as the reason why a Black mother was unable to cope with her child's academic issues. Similarly, Knotek (2003) indicated that socio-economic status, parents' marital status, and parents' educational level held heavy weight in referring the child for a special education evaluation.

Additionally, due to other familial factors, Student Study Team (SST) members suggested special education eligibility categories prior to the completion of the evaluation, without the completion of any assessment. This in turn impacted school psychologist's ability to correctly identify a correct disability for the student. It is evident that racism and ableism continued to become normal parts of the special education referral process, which of course is the foundation of many unsound referrals for special education testing (Proctor & Rivera, 2021). Additionally, there is little concern or regard for the students' multiple dimensions of their identity, which was not valued in this discussion by school personnel (Tenet 2 of DisCrit, Annamma et al., 2013).

After the assessment is completed, bias continues to be prevalent in the decision-making process for special education eligibility, which can lead to adverse outcomes like false eligibility for special education (Collins et al. 2016; Ferri & Connor, 2005). Like the research completed in bias in the referral process, teachers, and some school psychologists held onto false biases (Huebner, 1990; Mendelson, 1987; Golson et al., 2022; Sullivan et al., 2019). Mendelson (1987) indicated that teachers' referral concerns held a significant amount of weight in eligibility

decision making. Decisions that included disability category and educational placement were influenced by teacher input. Plus, other educational stakeholders' decisions, like the school psychologist's, were also influenced by the teachers' input. As noted by Sullivan et al (2019) and Irvine (2012), family interactions with school personnel can be contentious and tense. Some families of color, namely Black families, may be hesitant to divulge information about their child, for fear of their child's mistreatment in school (Irvine, 2012).

School Psychologists' Bias

School psychologists are not free from bias in the decision-making process either. Two experimental studies that used fake assessment scores from false students indicated that school psychologists engaged in questionable practices (Huebner, 1990; Sullivan et al., 2019). Sullivan et al. (2019) explained that fake Black students in their vignettes were found eligible for special education at higher rates than the fake White students. The assessment scores did not fall in line with decisions that were made by the school psychologists (Sullivan et al., 2019). Arbitrary use of data and special education eligibility categories coincided with previous studies, where in sum, school psychologists engaged in unethical practices related to data-based decision making for special education (Algozzine & Ysseldyke, 1981; O'Reilly et al., 1989; Singer et al., 1989).

Golson et al (2022) examined bias, too, but also discussed partially how cultural bias influences decisions. The authors found that Asian students were more likely to be found eligible under the category of Autism, compared to Black students with similar profiles. The authors also found that school psychologists in their study did not share how cultural and linguistic factors impacted their decisions. Like the studies by Knotek (2003) and Santamaria Graff et al (2020), school psychologists carried assumptions about the student's background that influenced their

eligibility decisions. Golson et al (2022) stressed that school psychologists need to be aware of their bias and complete exercises and reflection to help identify how their biases influence their decisions. Additionally, the authors described that school psychologists may lack further training in cultural responsiveness, which may lead to over and under special education identification of certain racial groups. Lastly, the authors reported that their participants did not discuss how cultural responsiveness, or lack thereof, impacted their assessment process. A discussion and identification of cultural responsiveness in the assessment process would hopefully be addressed through this research study. The lack of cultural responsiveness in psycho-educational testing and decision making perpetuates race and ability as social constructs that do not merit placement in special education. False labeling of a disability may also lead to further material or psychological impacts like low self-esteem, lack of self-efficacy, or feelings of unwantedness by teachers or peers (Irvine, 2012).

School Psychologists: Responsibilities and Barriers. School psychologists are well-equipped to tackle tasks besides assessment (*Who Are School Psychologists,* n.d.). However, participation in other duties may be compromised due to heavy assessment caseloads. There are other factors that influence obstacles in service delivery, like administrative support, and disparities in implementation in programs. Systemic issues in special education that have implicated the psycho-educational assessment process has been covered by previous researchers.

Demands within psycho-educational assessment is a common barrier or systemic issue that complicates school psychology service delivery (Filter & Ebson, 2013; Newman et al., 2018). Newman et al (2018) and Filter and Ebson (2013) explain that even though school psychologists may want to partake in tasks that entail consultation with teachers, parents, and administrators, and intervention, they must divert their attention to the amount of testing they

must complete for special education identification. Additionally, administrative support in relation to expanding job duties, creating, and adhering to intervention models and guidelines, and disagreement on how general and special education personnel should use the school psychologist are also systemic issues at the district or school level, that prevent school psychologists from foregoing assessments (Filter & Ebson, 2013; Gonzalez, 2019; Newman et al., 2018; Shernoff et al., 2017).

While the barriers to school psychologists' service delivery is a worthwhile topic, a review of the literature does not demonstrate that there is research on other systemic issues that impede school psychologists from partaking in assessment practices that are culturally responsive. Gonzalez et al (2019) attempted to show some insight, but mainly discussed how there is a disconnect in the training and implementation of culturally responsive evidence -based assessment practices and methods. However, Gonzalez et al (2019) and Ding et al (2019). attributes to the disparity due to lack of agreement on how to use the school psychologist, varying degrees in training within this area, and an overall lack of uniformity in how culturally responsive assessment practices are taught.

Lastly Vega et al (2016) provided some insight into barriers that impact assessment practices. Some participants relayed that barriers to sound assessment practices range from limited availability of standardized assessments in their districts, faulty district practices, and feeling it is easier to assess and qualify for special education instead of asking teachers to modify the curriculum. Additionally, issues with understanding and navigating special education law regarding psycho-educational assessment is not heavily researched. It is imperative, as mentioned by Tenet 5 of DisCrit, to consider legal issues that continue to harm CLD students, as understood by practicing school psychologists. Therefore, it is necessary to employ qualitative

methods so that there is a deeper and richer understanding of the issues that may play a heavy role in appropriately assessing CLD students for special education.

 School Psychologists' Assessment Preferences. School psychologists' assessment preferences and practices are well-researched. Previous studies have examined the specific types of assessment practices and assessment methods used (e.g., observations, interviews). In general, school psychologists across various studies routinely use standardized assessments that assess for cognitive functioning, IQ, academic achievement, adaptive behavior, and behavior/social/emotional functioning (Aiello et al., 2017; Benson et al; 2019; Kennedy et al., 1994; Nathanson & Rispoli, 2022; Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014; Stinnet et al., 1994; Wilson & Reschly, 1996). Additionally, across different studies, school psychologists reported that for cognitive and IQ tests, the Wechsler scales in its various editions were the common tool used for assessing cognitive skills to obtain an overall IQ (Benson et al; 2019; Kennedy et al., 1994; Klassen et al., 2005; Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014; Stinnet et al., 1994; Wilson & Reschly, 1996).

 In terms of other alternative methods, methods that do not entail standardized measures, interviews with teachers and family members were the common methods employed by school psychologists (Benson et al., 2019; Nathanson & Rispoli, 2022; Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014; Stinnet et al., 1994; Wilson & Reschly, 1996). Outside of the US, Australian school psychologists reported using other assessment methods, like analyzing response to intervention data, but still used traditional assessment methods, like standardized IQ tests, just not as frequently (Klassen et al., 2005).

Sotelo-Dynega and Dixon (2014) examined school psychologists' assessment methods and practices when assessing CLD students for special education. 87.2% of respondents assessed CLD students, 55.8% of respondents preferred to use informal assessments to determine language proficiency. Additionally, the authors (2014) identified that many of their respondents adapt their assessment practices when assessing CLD students. Adaptations included using interpreters to help administer assessments in the child's primary language, using assessments in the child's primary language, etc. (Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014). While the linguistic background of the student was discussed as having influence on the assessment administration and selection, racial and ethnic factors were not examined by the authors. Therefore, it is vital that race and ethnicity as they relate to abilities be addressed. There needs to be an understanding of how race as a social construct impacts the interactions people have with CLD students, especially when there is a suspected disability.

Vega et al (2016) also delved into school psychologists' assessment practices with CLD students. Like Sotelo-Dynega and Dixon (2014), Vega et al (2016) also reported that the respondents also made adaptations to standardized tests, like the use of an interpreter. However, some of the respondents reported that the interpreters used were not trained in standardized testing and very few respondents felt that the interpreters understood the characteristics of standardized testing (Vega et al., 2016). Additionally, the authors described that their respondents shared that when assessing CLD students, they assessed for language proficiency and acculturation, along with typical standardized tests (e.g., cognitive abilities, academic achievement, etc.). However, the authors noted that the respondents did not share which assessments they use for language proficiency or how they assess for acculturation. Since there were limited responses to their survey, the authors were unable to reach a better understanding of

the other types of assessment methods used by their participants. A qualitative study that directly asks the specific measures and methods employed, as well as what those assessments mean, is necessary to provide insight into the educational problem.

In summation, the few studies include how racial, ethnic, and linguistic factors impact assessment selection. Aiello et al (2017) explain predictive factors, like number of years working, what region school psychologists may practice in, etc., that may indicate the proper use of evidence-based assessment practices, but do not offer insight on how cultural responsiveness, or training in cultural responsiveness, impacts the implementation of equitable assessment practices. Nathanson & Rispoli (2022) discussed that the gap in training and practice for assessing CLD students for coexisting Autism and Anxiety is lacking. CLD students are overlooked as to how special education categories like Autism manifest in non-White, linguistically diverse student populations (Harris et al., 2020; Nathanson & Rispoli, 2022). Thus, Nathanson and Rispoli (2022) urged future researchers to use qualitative methods like open-ended questions through interviews and focus groups to gauge school psychologists' perspectives, experiences, and needs within the area of assessing CLD students.

Through the current study, I sought to fill this gap left in the literature. I found that it was imperative that the voices of practicing school psychologists are accounted for, especially since racial, ethnic, and linguistic bias are notably prevalent in the referral and decision-making process. But there needs to be better insight on how racial, ethnic, and linguistic bias and what school psychologists believe are the barriers in employing sound assessment methods with CLD students. Furthermore, the suggestions by Nathanson and Rispoli (2022) on using qualitative methods to provide richer insight on school psychologists' perspectives in this area were implemented through this research study.

NASP's Stance on Equity and Social Justice in Psycho-Educational Assessment

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is the national board that oversees proper implementation of school psychology's practices in assessment, counseling, consultation, and other relevant job functions. NASP has provided guidance through position papers/statements and through the Ethical Principles for School Psychologists (2020), a set of guidelines to help guide ethical decision making. The recommendations set forth by NASP are aligned with the tenets of DisCrit, where exposing faulty practices, procedures, and discourse are paramount in identifying inequity in schools. Additionally, the recommendations set forth by NASP, like DisCrit, not only calls for the exposition of faulty practices, but acknowledge the need to support CLD students with disabilities and engage in practices that resist the common practices that have harmed this student population. As noted by Tenet 7 of DisCrit, it is imperative to engage in activism and resistance (Annamma et al., 2013; Proctor & Rivera, 2021). Per NASP (2020) it is necessary for practicing school psychologists to engage in forms of resistance to advocate for equitable practices and policies in special education and school psychology. It is within school psychologists' ethical duties and responsibilities to analyze how systems have routinely harmed historically marginalized populations, like CLD students, and seek communities and like-minded people to engage with new ways to support these populations.

The School Psychologist as the Advocate

NASP's (2021) position statement explains that the school psychologist is mainly known as the gatekeeper for special education due to their expertise in assessment and special education law. Thus, the school psychologist has some power in disrupting faulty, discriminatory practices, policies, and procedures in their respective school sites. NASP (2021) stresses that data, not

personal biases, should help guide school teams in making educational placement decisions for all students. NASP (2021) also indicates that interventions should be culturally relevant to the respective student population; this is to ensure that school teams are mindful of multiculturalism that comprises their student population. In terms of psycho-educational assessments, as cited by NASP (2021), the school psychologist must be wary of the subjectivity that is innate and inevitable during various phases of the assessment process (Sadeh & Sullivan, 2017; Sullivan et al., 2019). School psychologists, per NASP (2021), should seek to identify root causes of educational issues that persist in their school policies, practices, and procedures. NASP (2021) encourages that school psychologists take an active approach in including all relevant educational stakeholders (e.g., administrators, teachers, counselors, etc.) to dismantle oppressive practices, especially ones that are not culturally responsive. The school psychologist as a disability advocate, as recommended by NASP, encourages a critique of the historical treatment of students with disabilities and how school psychologists approach their practices.

NASP (2019), another position statement, describes similar guidelines for school psychologists. NASP (2019) explains that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds have historically been marginalized through various oppressive practices and laws and in their interactions with school officials. Therefore, NASP (2019) recommends that school psychologists seek support from administrators to critically analyze policies that surround practices like disproportionate special education referrals, with the intent to eliminate or eradicate oppressive policies and practices. The position statement deems it imperative that the school psychologist help promote systems-level change like normalizing an open dialogue with educational stakeholders about faulty educational practices and policies (NASP, 2019). As posited by Tenet 5 of DisCrit, it is necessary to consider how race and disability have historically

and legally been used to disenfranchise already oppressed communities (Annamma et al., 2013; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Conversing with relevant stakeholders helps acknowledge how past practices have aided in segregating, mistreating, etc., CLD students, even under the guise of helping them (Annamma et al., 2013; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). In doing so, the school psychologists may help establish policies and practices that acknowledge the disparity of marginalized student populations and draft and implement policies and practices that are sensitive to their diverse backgrounds.

NASP's Ethical Standards for Psycho-Educational Assessment

NASP's Ethical Principles for School Psychologists (2020) also denotes guidelines for ethical assessment practices with CLD students. Specifically, Domain 8: Equitable Practices for Diverse Student Populations, tackles this area. Standard II.3.2: Assessment Techniques, indicates that assessment techniques used for the purpose of special education identification should be research based. Describing similar guidelines, Standard II.3.3 explains that school psychologists should choose tools that are reliable and valid for the child's racial, ethnic, and linguistic background. Plus, the school psychologist should adhere to the rules and regulations laid out by the publisher. However, if modifications are made to standardized testing procedures (e.g., using an interpreter), the school psychologist has an ethical obligation to be transparent and describe all adaptations and modifications used in testing administration. Standard II.3.6 and Standard II.3.7 indicate that all assessments that lead to disability identification must derive from various sources of data and should comprise a comprehensive evaluation. Not one source of data or one single score shall be the sole determinant in disability and special education decision-making (Standard 11.3.6). Lastly, the school psychologist has an obligation to be wary of the child's cultural background in choosing specific assessment tools (Standard 11.3.8). NASP is aware of

the issues that may complicate testing for all students, so it is important to note that the field of school psychology is active in providing school psychologists with a blueprint for equitable assessment practices.

Alternative Assessment Methods

Although school psychologists tend to use other assessment methods that do not entail standardized measures, school psychologists adhere to traditional methods that include standardized tests that assess cognitive, academic, processing, and social/emotional skills. As described in the preceding sections, the routine use of IQ testing stems from prejudiced, Eurocentric ideals that discount the inherent intelligence of CLD students. Therefore, some alternative assessment methods that will be discussed are the Therapeutic Assessment (TA) and Response to Intervention (RTI). The alternative assessment methods tend to acknowledge the disparity set forth by Eurocentric ideals and attempt to provide Additionally, recommendations that school psychology training programs can undertake to teach equity in special education assessment is discussed. Alternative assessment methods that include active approaches to support CLD students and their families is tantamount, which is a necessary part of DisCrit, supporting CLD students in all forms (Tenet 7; Annamma et al., 2013; Proctor & Rivera, 2023).

Therapeutic Assessment (TA)

Families of CLD students may feel disillusioned with schools (Irvine, 2012). Parents of CLD students may feel targeted by the school, may be fearful of unfair treatment by school staff, and that the school harms their children (Irvine, 2012). Additionally, families of CLD students may not feel supported during the special education referral, assessment, and decision-making process (Irvine, 2012). Traditional psycho-educational assessment methods may perpetuate these

sentiments, which can lead to further disillusionment. Yet, there is an alternative assessment method that has proven to identify the needs of students, include family members in an active role, provide long term support and can lead to long term change: the Therapeutic Assessment (TA). TA is an evidence-based assessment methods that includes having the family as equal parties with assessors, provides short- and long-term intervention, and establishes trust between assessors and families, which is paramount to its effectiveness (Hamilton et al., 2009; Holman et al., 2022; Tharinger et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2010). Furthermore, TA is an act of resistance that denies the longstanding role of the traditional psycho-educational assessment procedures, where the collaboration breaks down the barriers that impede family-school or family-assessor relationships, so that full support is provided to CLD students.

Tharinger et al (2009) provides thirteen key steps and techniques that explain the utility of TA that include intentional involvement of the family in each step of the process, clearly describing the methods used, providing feedback to the assessor at all steps, help parents guide their thinking to identify the child's needs, observing parents' reactions throughout each step, and overall, fostering a healthy, equal relationship with the family. Smith (2010) details the six phases of TA: assessment questions and rapport building, test administration, intervention phase, summary/discussion, feedback, and follow-up. Unlike the traditional psycho-educational method, even when assessment has been completed, the assessors continue communication with the family to ensure that interventions are continually implemented (Smith et al, 2010).

A large reason why TA is a recommended assessment method is due to the large role the family plays in the assessment process. Haydel et al (2011) described that with TA, the families are provided with better insight into why certain assessment procedures are used, which leads to better understanding of the interventions that the assessment will inform (Hamilton et al., 2009,

Tharinger et al., 2009). In each step of the process, the parent is witness to everything the assessor is doing, even during standardized tests (Haydel et al., 2011; Hamilton et al., 2009; Tharinger et al., 2009).

In practice, TA has shown to be effective in identifying the needs of children and in teaching the family a plethora of skills. Hamilton et al (2009)'s single case design demonstrated that through TA, the family was able to learn how to empathize with each other, learn better child rearing techniques, and how to connect with the family. Tharinger et al (2009) and Smith et al (2010)'s respective studies with children with behavioral issues found that TA was successful in skill building for the families and in reducing problematic behaviors. Both Tharinger et al (2009) and Smith et al (2010) used the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC), a behavioral rating scale, to identify problem behaviors prior to TA and after. Both studies demonstrated a change in the parents' reported problem behaviors (hyperactivity, aggression, conduct problems, etc.). Behaviors that were deemed negative were either no longer rated as a problem or were not as significantly rated. Additionally, families in both studies were satisfied with the treatment they received throughout all phases of TA (Smith et al., 2010; Tharinger et al., 2019).

Because Eurocentric ideals can be found in traditional assessment methods (Holman et al., 2019; Rosenberg et al, 2012), TA disrupts the power imbalance that may be seen in a traditional assessment model. Rosenberg et al (2012) described that an assessor who used TA with a Black student was able to not only empathize with the student but understand the Eurocentric ideals that run rampant in schools. Relationship building with the student and family was paramount in identifying needs and allowing the family to find meaning in the process (Rosenberg et al., 2012). Including families within the process is an act of resistance to disrupt

what the typical role of the family is in the traditional psycho-educational assessment process. There is equal partnership between assessors and families, which is not always seen during the typical psycho-educational assessment process. The use of TA in schools can help families trust school personnel, as many families of CLD students have distrust with the school system (Irvine, 2012).

TA in Schools

TA, as mentioned previously, is advantageous in determining the needs of students and helping support families. However, it should be noted that TA in the studies were completed in clinical, controlled settings. Therefore, Holman et al (2019) explains how TA can be adapted for the school setting. In terms of assessment methods, Holman et al (2019) indicate that a clinical interview is a method that school psychologists can undertake. A clinical interview is structured, which can be advantageous to identify the true needs and problems of the student. Again, it is imperative that the assessor(s) remain transparent throughout each step of the process. This can include providing reasons for choosing a specific standardized measure, how each test related to the referral question, etc. Next, feedback provided at many points is another important aspect of TA in schools. This includes providing a jargon-free assessment report, allowing the student to share their thoughts at the IEP meeting or at other points in the TA process. This is important to note as students who have active roles in the TA process and at the IEP meeting are likely to self-advocate in the classroom (Gentry, 2017; Holman et al., 2019). TA, as adapted for the school setting could be a sound alternative to the traditional psychoeducational assessment methods.

Response to Intervention (RTI). Under the newest iteration of IDEA (2004), RTI was authorized as a method to identify students with a specific learning disability. RTI refers to multiple tiers of intervention, a proactive method to support students' academic or behavioral needs (Barret et al., 2015; Batsche et al., 2005). An intervention is delivered to students, then progress monitoring data is routinely collected to measure student growth and intervention effectiveness (Barret et al., 2015). As cited by Barret et al (2015), RTI provides a more proactive, sensitive approach to supporting CLD students' academic needs (Klingner & Edwards, 2006; Linan-Thompson et al., 2022). With traditional assessment models that fall in the "refer-test-place" method, interventions may not always be completed prior to a referral, so RTI provides students with active support prior to consideration for special education. Again, instilling and implementing an RTI program in schools is an act of resistance to the traditional referral process for special education identification. RTI allows all students to receive structured support, tailored to their needs and background. CLD students could receive culturally sensitive interventions that would improve their educational outcomes, and not box them into special education, which can lead to serious adverse outcomes (Irvine, 2012).

Curriculum-based measures (CBMs) are another manner for special and general education teachers to assess student academic progress (Shinn, 2002). CBMs can also provide insight on students' growth and progress. CBMs can be evaluated every four to six weeks to determine growth or lack of progress (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2005; Shinn, 2002). To provide effective interventions and skill building, the CBM should be used before and after placement in special education, to provide IEP teams with sound evidence (Shinn, 2002). Additionally, for RTI to be effective, the interventions carried out must be empirically sound and implemented with fidelity (Barnett et al., 2006) which can be difficult to ensure.

As Batsche et al (2005) and Shinn (2009) describe, RTI is a proactive approach. However, RTI usage is solely permitted, per IDEA (2004), for suspecting a child with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and does not apply to the other 12 disability categories. But schools can utilize RTI as another data point to help guide eligibility decision-making.

Summary

The use of standardized tests for the purposes of special education identification is fraught with problems. While compulsory schooling deemed the need for IQ testing as a necessity, there are several drawbacks to routine IQ testing and using other standardized measures (e.g., standardized academic achievement tests, behavior rating scales, etc.). IQ tests are biased beings that contain remnants of White Supremacy and Eurocentricity, where being White is the standard of intellect (Collins et al., 2016; Gillham, 2001; Godin, 2007; Murdoch, 2009; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Court cases and amendments to federal special education law have tackled the insensitive use of IQ tests on CLD populations, but there is continued overrepresentation of CLD students in special education and the overall intent to segregate students with disabilities from their nondisabled peers (Annamma, Feri, & Connor, 2018; O'bryon & Rodrigez; Fenton, 2013; Klinger et al., 2009; Losen et al., 2015; *Students with Disabilities,* 2019; Tefera & Fischman, 2020).

Applying DisCrit to form the theoretical framework, the dissertation topic acknowledges that racism and ableism, both of which are social constructs, are the driving force as to why White and CLD students with disabilities are mistreated by school personnel and their peers (Annamma, Feri, & Connor, 2013 and 2018; Hehir, 2022; McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 2006; Proctor & Rivera, 2022; Rubin & Noguera, 2004). The evidence of racism and ableism is

not only found in the history of Eugenics, but in early iterations of the IQ test (Au, 2013; Kaufman, 2000; Murdoch, 2009). Additionally, ableism and racism are rampant in special education referral procedures and eligibility decision-making, which research shows that racism and ableism are apparent in forming prejudices, skewing decision-making, and adding to arbitrary decisions (Huebner, 1990; Knotek, 2003; Santamaria Graff et al., 2020; Sullivan et al., 2019).

While there is consistent research completed in preferred assessment practices and typical assessments employed by school psychologists, there is limited research on how race, language, and ethnicity impact selection of assessment tools and methods. Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon (2014) delved into this topic and found that some assessment adaptations are made for students whose primary language was not English and that certain standardized assessments are selected for use. While that was insightful, the authors (2014) have limited discussion on how race and ethnicity impact assessment selection. Similarly, there is extensive research on the obstacles that impede school psychologists from engaging in services besides assessment, but the research shows little evidence discussing other systemic issues that impact proper use and selection of assessment materials and methods, like understanding, navigating special education law to psycho-educational assessment practices.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology to address the research questions, which stem from the overall problem: selection of assessment methods and tools for CLD students. Chapter three will provide justification for using descriptive phenomenology for the research questions, justification for the selected participants (practicing school psychologists in California), and the data collection methods that ensure triangulation (structured interview, researcher memos, and an open-ended questionnaire). Additionally, the subsequent chapter discusses the data analysis

procedures, coding procedures, recruitment procedures, and participants' demographic

information.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Chapters one and two provided insight into the educational problem, historical perspectives, relevant case laws, previous related research, and alternative methods for assessing CLD students that helped form the methodology for this study. In this chapter, I discuss the methodology to answer the following research questions:

1. What does equitable assessment mean to school psychologists as they work with CLD students?

        a.   What systemic issues impact their assessment practices with CLD students?

        b.   How do school psychologists adjust their assessment practices with CLD students?

To answer the research questions, the chapter will discuss how qualitative research methods, the preferred method for understanding the lived experiences of school psychologists assessing CLD students and their inherent values and beliefs surrounding assessing CLD students, answered the researched questions. Structured interviews with a phenomenological lens, open-responses questionnaire, and analytic memos were advantageous in obtaining insight into the specific values, attitudes, beliefs, and practices the participating school psychologists revealed about assessing CLD students for special education. Additionally, I will discuss why practicing California school psychologists were the optimal population for the proposed study. Methods to access participants and the criteria for participants will also be discussed. Next, data

collection and data analysis procedures will be discussed. Finally, I identify the limitations of the methodology.

Methodology

In the current study, I used qualitative methods that entailed individual interviews, analytic memoing, and written responses from the participants. Qualitative research methods also helped describe the social relationship between the participant and the problems discussed (Quierios et al., 2017). In this case, phenomenology was applied to discuss the social relationship between the practicing school psychologists and the phenomenon of CLD students they have assessed for special education. Phenomenology is a research method and philosophical paradigm that explores a specific phenomenon using qualitative methods, like individual interviews (Mertler, 2019, p. 302; Qutoshi, 2018). A phenomenon is what appears to someone, which could include the interpretation of experiences, events, and ideas (Willis, 2001). Per Valle and Halling (1989, p. 13), as cited by Willis (2001), a phenomenon is experienced and interpreted in many ways. There is not one correct way to understand and make sense of a specific phenomenon, as each person has their own subjectivity that guides their interpretation (Willis, 2001). For the current study, the phenomenon of assessing CLD students for special education was investigated.

Descriptive Phenomenology

Descriptive phenomenology is the method that best aligns with the goals of the study, as well as the research questions. The main purpose of the study is to understand the specific beliefs, experiences, and viewpoints of practicing school psychologists within a specific phenomenon, assessing racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students for special education (Mack, 2010). Previous research studies have employed quantitative methods like

surveys to identify preferences for assessment batteries or methods. However, there is little research that divulges into the experiences school psychologists have had when assessing CLD students. Although Vega et al (2016) and Sotelo-Dynega and Dixon (2014) attempted to provide insight on school psychologists' practices and beliefs when assessing CLD students, specific insight into school psychologists' practices was not addressed. Although the researchers asked more questions into the specific roadblocks or systemic issues that impede school psychologists from using other assessment methods, the responses were limited or unclear. For example, Vega et al (2016) revealed that some of their participants reported testing for acculturation, but the researchers were unclear as to how school psychologists assess acculturation.

Additionally, Vega et al (2016) touched on the other methods in which school psychologists attempt to consider cultural and linguistic factors but were not able to extract specific information from their surveys. For instance, Vega et al (2016) indicated that in the open-ended portion of their quantitative study, school psychologists reported they assess for CLD students' acculturation and language dominance, but there was meager information on their reasons behind assessing for that and the types of assessments used. Other researchers also solely identified specific assessment brands they use, adaptations that are considered, and other informal methods they have used when assessing CLD students (Benson et al., 2019; Hutton et al., 1992; Klassen et al., 2005; Reschly & Wilson, 1996; Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014). In terms of race, ethnicity, and linguistic factors that impact special education eligibility decision-making, there are countless research studies that address the referral process and the result, making children eligible for special education (Algozzine, Christenson, & Ysseldyke, 1982; Macmillan, Gresham, & Bocian, 1998; Shepard & Smith, 1983). Yet, studies have not discussed how CLD students' racial, ethnic, and linguistic background impacts the assessment process

when selecting assessments or adapting school psychologists' assessments for CLD students. Additionally, previous studies have addressed school psychologists' adaptations to testing procedures through surveys, mainly. However, the use of an interview and open-response questionnaire extracted further information to fully understand how racial, ethnic, and linguistic factors impact the assessment process. Thus, using qualitative methods to answer the research questions addressed the gaps in the current literature, where there is currently little insight into the actual assessment administration and selection process and the methods school psychologists employ to address how race, ethnicity, and linguistic backgrounds impede assessment procedures and practices.

Phenomenology impacted my understanding of the various perspectives held by California school psychologists on the phenomenon of assessing CLD students for special education, as well as their experiences they have had when assessing CLD students for special education identification. Phenomenology entails the use of individual interviews to help explain events, experiences, beliefs, and values from different individuals, pertaining to a certain phenomenon (Mack, 2010; Padilla Diaz, 2015). It is important to note that phenomenology has a background within the discipline of philosophy. Phenomenological research has two branches: descriptive and interpretive. For the current study, I used aspects of descriptive phenomenology. Descriptive phenomenology is derived from Husserl, a German Philosopher. Husserl explained that descriptive phenomenology entails how to understand the meaning of experiences people have every day (Padilla Davis, 2015; *Phenomenology (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2013). Husserl also indicated that descriptive phenomenology emphasizes that the experiences had by individuals need to be separated from to fully understand the examined phenomenon (Fouche, 1993; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Additionally, phenomenology is the appropriate qualitative method, as the participating school psychologists provided specific insight into a specific phenomenon (Mertler, 2018, p. 302). Phenomenology is not a method that requires generalization to the public; the goal of phenomenology is to understand that each individual participant will have a unique viewpoint on the phenomenon (Mack, 2010). The individual school psychologists have unique viewpoints on assessing CLD students for special education. I identified the specific beliefs about assessing CLD students and the procedures they undertake, systemic issues that impede the process, and their diverse insights on the relationship between ethnicity, race, and language and the school psychologist's assessment practices.

Phenomenology in School Psychology Research

School psychology researchers routinely use quantitative measures, like surveys, correlations, psychometric reviews, etc. Surveys are typically used to identify school psychologists' assessment practices. Phenomenology has been used in the field of psychology, but not yet in revealing the specific experiences school psychologists' have had when assessing CLD students. School psychology researchers have employed phenomenological studies in understanding other populations' lived experiences and perspectives, related to other sectors relevant to school psychology. For example, Parker et al (2021) conducted a phenomenological study to identify the experiences of graduate students' involvement in a peer mentorship program for Black boys. Bradshaw et al (2010) used phenomenology to understand the stressors the teenage children of mobile military families have endured. Marracini (2020), also used phenomenology to understand the lived experiences of suicidal students transitioning from a crisis hospitalization back to school. While all the research studies provided rich data and insight

on the specific phenomena, there are no identifying studies that used phenomenology to understand school psychologists' lived experiences regarding anything related to the job.

Additionally, a search on School Psychology Review, the main research database related to school psychology research, yielded two results that discussed phenomenology in a different context. Specifically, the two articles discussed phenomenology as clusters of symptoms that describe mental health disorders. Reynolds (1984) discussed phenomenology in his paper related to anxiety and depression in teens and children, describing the cluster of symptoms that comprise the conditions. Similarly, Ford et al (1998) use phenomenology to describe the clusters of symptoms that comprise selective mutism. Each paper, while helpful in their own regard, does not align with phenomenology as a research paradigm. Therefore, an opportunity exists for school psychology research to lend itself to studies that diverge from the typical studies and methodology. Therefore, phenomenology and its philosophical underpinnings was vital in fully understanding the values, beliefs, and attitudes about what it means to complete an equitable psycho-educational assessment.

Data Collection Methods

Three methods of data collection were used for the current study: open-ended written questionnaire, a structured individual interview, and analytic memos. Once participants were recruited (recruiting procedures are described in the subsequent section), and if they agreed to participate, participants completed an "Interest in Participating" Google Form, where they filled out some information. Once completed, they were provided with the "Informed Consent Form". Then, they were provided with another Google Form to answer the three open response

questions. Once those questions were answered, the participants were then contacted to schedule the individual interview.

Open-ended Written Questionnaire

As described in the preceding section, the first step of the study was to complete the open-ended written questionnaire, via a Google Form. The questionnaire asked the participants about specific assessments they use, strategies employed to address bias during assessment administration, and what barriers they have noticed when assessing students for special education. (see Appendix A). Their responses guided some of the interview questions that followed, in which part of their responses were embedded into some of the interview questions for clarification purposes and to obtain a better understanding of their responses. The use of open-ended questionnaires provided a diverse set of responses and more flexibility in responses that would not be possible in using surveys with fixed responses (Jackson & Trockim, 2002). As noted by Vega et al (2016), the one open-ended question that comprised their survey, left them with questions about what the participants meant. Therefore, providing the questionnaire before the interviews allowed me to establish a connection to the participants and devise some of the interview questions that needed follow-up.

Structured Interviews

I used structured interviews for this study. Structured interviews are a type of interview procedure where each participant is asked a predetermined set of questions that provide insight into the phenomenon of assessing CLD students for special education (Mertler, 2019, p. 305). A set of interview questions was developed, consisting of 12 interview questions (see Appendix B). Using an interview guide to facilitate the interviewing process ensured that each individual

interview is administered consistently but will continue to allow each participant to provide insight into their own reality (Mertler, 2019, 172). Since the study also delved into perceptions of race and disability as a social construct, as described in the theoretical framework DisCrit, the interviews align with the tenets of DisCrit, specifically Tenet #1 and Tenet #3, which describes how the social construction of race and disability further aids in oppression of students of color with disabilities. While the questions will be the same for each participant, it was necessary that I maintained flexibility, where I asked clarifying questions, to ensure that I understood the participants' words (Mertler, 2019, p. 172).

In forgoing a quantitative method, like a survey, there was room to discuss specific experiences, as response choices will not be limited (Atieno, 2009; Horton et al., 2004; Mertler, 2019; Quierios et al., 2017; Soafer, 1999, p. 1104). Issues that pertain to race, ethnicity, and language are difficult to access through fixed response sets on a survey. Since I was interested in specific beliefs, attitudes, and values that school psychologists have when assessing CLD students, a structured interview can help achieve that. Perceptions, beliefs, and specific experiences are not something that can be quantified, so a qualitative approach is an appropriate study for the research inquiry.

Memoing. To account for my own biases, the process of bracketing was employed, which is necessary for phenomenological research. Bracketing is a process involving the researcher putting aside biased, preconceived ideas about the phenomenon under investigation (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). Bracketing is especially important as the investigator(s) may have experience, their own beliefs, and their own values related to the phenomenon in question (Chan et al., 2013). Bracketing is conducted in all phases of the research process, not just in the collection process (Chan et al. 2013). Bracketing can take many forms such as the use of field

notes, analytic memoing, journaling, etc., which helps account for assumptions the researcher may have during all phases of the study (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). For this study, I used my memos that were collected throughout the research process as another form of data.

  Triangulation and Maintaining Reliability and Validity. Triangulation refers to the process of using various methods to ensure reliability, validity, and overall trustworthiness in the study (Mertler, 2019, p. 306). Some types to ensure triangulation of data include data collection, methods, theory, and investigator triangulation (Denzin, 1973; Mertler, 2019, p. 306). For this study, data collection triangulation will be used. The three methods included open-ended responses provided prior to the initial interview, responses from the interview transcript, and analytic memos that will be collected throughout the entire research process. Memos are instrumental in the triangulation process, as I will be able to be clear with the readers on my impressions of the responses I have received, including thoughts that arose during the interviews and written responses.

  To ensure reliability and validity of the formation of codes, along with ensuring the codes are clear, it was imperative that I engaged in the process of bracketing. As described previously, bracketing involves engaging in practices where I separated my biases from the data I collected (Fouche, 1993; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Additionally, I engaged with colleagues, who reviewed my codes and provided feedback on the meanings of the codes. My colleagues asked me questions to ensure if the codes' true meaning was accurate.

  Memoing was a crucial aspect of the data analysis process, as it is a source of data. Memoing is a process and technique that involves writing journals or memos throughout the research process (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008). Memoing was not only for the analysis

portion of the research process but included preparing the research process and to ensure that ideas that are extracted throughout the process are recorded (Birks et al., 2008). Memoing requires that the researcher maintains reflexivity in each aspect of the analysis process (Birks et al., 2008)

Participants and Recruitment

For the study, school psychologists in California, who have been practicing in public, private, or charter schools for a minimum of one year were invited to participate. The participants must hold a Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credential in school psychology, a credential that affords school psychologists to provide school psychological services in California. Additionally, school psychologists who were interested in participating must also have job duties that include psycho-educational assessment. School psychologists who are in counseling, consultation, or leadership roles, where they do not assess special education eligibility were not eligible to participate. They were invited to participate in the study via one of two modes: responding to a flier emailed by school psychology training programs they attended or via posts on special interest Facebook groups, geared towards practicing school psychologists.

Purposive Sampling

Recruitment began in July 2023 with emails to 26 school psychology training programs in California. The programs were accessed through NASP's *School Psychology Program Information (*n.d.) webpage, which details the active school psychology training programs in CA. As few participants demonstrated interest through this method, a modification to the IRB application was added in August 2023, in which using social media special interest groups to

advertise the study was added. Table 2 demonstrates the 26 school psychology training programs in California that I attempted to recruit participants from.

Table 2

School Psychology Training Programs in California (Masters, Education Specialist [EdS], or doctorate).

Training Program	Type of Program
Azusa Pacific University	EdS
Alliant University	Masters, EdS, Doctorate
Brandtman University	Masters, EdS
California Baptist University	Masters
California Polytechnic, Humboldt	Masters
California State University, Chico	Masters
California State University, East Bay	Masters
California State University, Long Beach	EdS
California State University, Los Angeles	Masters
California State University, Monterey Bay	Masters
California State University, Northridge	Masters
California State University, San Bernardino	EdS

Chapman University	EdS
Fresno State University	EdS
La Sierra University	Masters, EdS, Doctorate
Loyola Marymount University	Masters, EdS
National University	Masters
Sacramento State University	EdS
San Diego State University	Masters, EdS
San Francisco State University	Masters
St. Mary's College of California	EdS
University of California, Berkely	Doctorate
University of California, Riverside	Doctorate
University of California, Santa Barbara	Doctorate
University of Laverne	Masters
University of the Pacific	EdS

Purposive sampling was used, as the sample that was accessed (practicing school psychologists) is convenient to me as a school psychologist and researcher (Acharya et al., 2013; Padilla Diaz, 2015), which is common in phenomenological research. Although I am a practicing school psychologist in a district in California, I did not access my colleagues as participants. Although I might already have trust with my colleagues, I wanted to remain as a neutral part of

the study, where personal, social relationships do not hinder the responses I hoped to receive with the participants.

Since I am especially interested in the ways in which assessment practices affect racial and linguistic minorities, I decided to focus my recruitment within California. California is a unique state, as there are many racial, linguistic, and ethnic groups that comprise California's population. California school districts, specifically the special education student population, are diverse, too. The California special education population is 58.1% Hispanic students, 22% White students, and 7.5 % Black students (*Special Education Enrollment, by Race/Ethnicity*, n.d.). The special education student population in California also mirrors the national special education population (NCES, 2019). Therefore, I deduced that California school psychologists have experience with assessing diverse student populations and would be able to provide robust responses across the open-response questionnaire and the individual interview.

Participant Characteristics

Of the 10 participants in the study, 9 participants reported working for public schools, whereas 1 participant reported working in a charter school. Table 3 provides a breakdown of which type of schools the participants represented.

Table 3

What type of school do you work at? (Public, Private, or Charter)

Type of School	n	%
Public	9	90
Private	0	0

Specific demographic information was not collected on the initial Google Form, but participants were provided an opportunity to share their experiences as school psychologists. Participating school psychologists represented different grade levels, such as preschool through 12th grade. Table 4 presents summaries of the participants' experiences as school psychologists. Participant 9 submitted a signed consent form but opted to not continue with their participation in this study.

Table 4

Information provided by participants.

Participant Number	Background Information
1	This is their 3rd year in the field. They were previously an educational psychologist in Hong Kong before immigrating to the US.
2	This is their 3rd year in a large district, where they have worked with high income and low-income populations.
3	This is their 9th year in the field. They were previously a corrections counselor in a Juvenile Hall for boys.
4	They work in a Kindergarten-12th grade district. They have had multiple experiences assessing various disability categories like Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and Other Health Impairment (OHI).
5	This is their 2nd year in the field. They have been at the same elementary school for the past 2 years.

6	This is their 2ⁿᵈ year in a large urban area. Previously, they worked in a suburban school district. Additionally, Participant 6 self-identified as neurodivergent.
7	This is their 8ᵗʰ year in the field. They mostly work with English Language Learners and Spanish-speaking families.
8	This is their 17th year in the field. The participant also reported working for 10 years in a smaller district.
9	Withdrew participation
10	This is their 3ʳᵈ year in the field. They have experience in both high school and elementary settings.
11	This is their 3ʳᵈ year in the field. They reported working in an independent/nontraditional charter school.

Data Collection and Analysis

Official data collection began in August 2023 and ended in October 2023. With the open-response questionnaire, the responses were recorded once the participant submitted their completed questionnaire. The individual interview was transcribed by Zoom, then was transcribed manually by me to ensure that the transcriptions were accurate. Using provisional coding, codes that are malleable, I constructed provisional codes (Appendix C) before the actual analysis process and added, deleted, or clarified more codes as data collection continued (Saldana, 2021). Since I am a working school psychologist that works directly with assessing students, I drafted some codes beforehand. I can also derive codes from other studies, like from Sotelo-Dynega and Dixon's (2014) or Vega et al (2016), as the research studies have provided some insight on assessment practices and some barriers to proper assessment practices.

Additionally, the open response questionnaire provided insight into certain codes and key phrases that may arise during the initial and follow-up interview. The analytic memos (Appendix D) provided a way for me to understand the data that I had been collecting, thoughts that I had that may point to a new code, add codes, or clarify the codes that existed already.

The data presented in Chapter 4 is based on the 10 participants who completed all phases of the study, along with my analytic memos. The interviews averaged 35.5 minutes in duration with 5-19 pages of transcript per interview. For the open-response questionnaire, the responses were 2-3 pages total. Amongst the participants, the length of responses varied. Some respondents wrote multiple paragraphs for each section, some provided bullet-point responses, and some provided 3-4 sentences per question. Each of my analytic memos was 2 pages in length, which included 1-3 paragraphs of text, along with a section for potential codes that were developed through the analytic memoing process.

Coding Procedures

To analyze the collected data from the interviews, I used the NVivo Data Analysis program to code and analyze the data. To analyze, I began with values coding after each interview, a qualitative coding method that seeks to identify a person's inherent beliefs, attitudes, perspectives, and values about a certain aspect of the person's viewpoint on their experiences and worldview (Hedlund-de Witt, 2013). Values coding is appropriate for this study, as the school psychologist participants may share certain beliefs and attitudes about the procedures they undertake when they evaluate CLD students for special education (Saldana, 2021, p. 168). Each code will be categorized with an "A" for attitude, "B" for belief, or "V" for value. Per Saldana (2021, p. 169), attributing whether a code is a value, attitude, or belief, is necessary, so that a

researcher can identify how each intersects with each other, which can be displayed through a Venn diagram.

During the actual data collection process, 34 codes were created through first-cycle coding. During second-cycle coding, 4 codes were removed, as the codes were either unclear or closely related to other codes. Items were then reassigned to one of the remaining 30 codes. Appendix E indicates the codebook for this study, containing the codes and their respective definitions. Inductive coding was used to brainstorm, create, and modify codes throughout the data analysis process. Inductive coding refers to making sense of the data from the lived experiences and beliefs, which is a hallmark of phenomenological research and analysis (Medelyn, 2023; Vagle, 2014). Hierarchical coding was also used to establish how the codes connect with each other. Hierarchical coding helps facilitate and demonstrate how the codes identified through data collection interrelate with each other and with the main research question, "What does equitable assessment mean to school psychologists as they work with CLD students?". Appendix F demonstrates the three salient hierarchical codes that relate to the main research question.

To help identify recurring phrases or keywords, I used NVivo's word frequency feature, which finds the words or phrases that are used frequently in a single transcription, or in all of them. Throughout the data collection process, there will be continuing analysis to help identify if other codes better capture the beliefs and perceptions of the participants. This is an important process, as the categories reveal collective meaning and the interaction of the codes as a collective system (Saldana, 2021, p. 170).

Memoing Procedures

As mentioned previously, memoing allowed me to better understand the nuances of the collected data and the overall meaning of the data. Since it is imperative that as a practicing school psychologist and researcher, I had to acknowledge that I have my own biases and beliefs regarding the phenomenon, memoing helped with the bracketing process of descriptive phenomenology. Bracketing and memoing helped put my own biases at bay, which is necessary in descriptive phenomenology (Chan et al., 2013; Fouche, 1993; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Since interviews were one source of data, it was necessary that the data collection process is consistent across all interviews. To conduct the interviews, a video conferencing platform, Zoom, was used. As detailed in the informed consent sheet, the interview was only audio-recorded via the videoconferencing application. Zoom provides users with two versions of a recorded Zoom session, voice, or video recording. The participants will be apprised of the recordings' use, extracting a transcript of the interview, storing the recording in a password-protected folder, and not disseminating the recording to outside parties. The participants were informed that their real names would not be used, and instead their username would be changed to "Participant 1", for example. They are referenced throughout the findings and discussion chapters by their participant number.

Limitations

While the study revealed more insight into the educational problem and filled in a gap in current research, the study is not free from limitations. A major limitation stems from the chosen research methodology. While it is expected that phenomenological research revealed the specific values, attitudes, and beliefs from the participants, the data cannot be generalized to the entire California or national school psychologist population. Additionally, my sample size was not as

robust as planned. While I obtained much insight and obtained responses that answered the research questions, a larger sample size would have provided a larger breadth of varied response that would have aided or provided more details related to the research questions. As school psychologists from other states will not be invited to participate, there may be a lack of information or perspectives surrounding the topic that may affect other parts of the US. Another limitation is that some of the terminology, words, ideas, and statements may take different meanings or connotations in the study. Therefore, it was necessary that I continue to ask clarifying questions to fully understand and capture the true meaning of the words, experiences, and stories conveyed by the participants (Atieno, 2009).

Summary

The purpose of chapter three is to discuss the research methodology that I used in the current study. The methodology includes qualitative approaches of a descriptive phenomenological study, including the use of individual interviews. Phenomenology allowed the participants to discuss their lived experiences, perspectives, and beliefs that surround their practices assessing CLD students for special education, a specific phenomenon. An open-ended questionnaire, an individual interview, and analytic memos were employed, as it was necessary that the participants' experiences, beliefs, and values shape the interview questions. To ensure triangulation of data, along with the interview, an open-ended response sheet will be provided to participants prior to the interview, to provide insight into school psychologists' practices and shaped some of the interview questions for each individual participant. My memos were also used as a source of data, which was triangulated with the other two methods. Practicing school psychologists in California were invited to participate in the study. The participants were recruited through alumni listservs through school psychology training programs, and from

special interest social media groups. Data was collected through a videoconferencing program to record the interviews. Transcripts were collected through the Zoom feature and reviewed by me for accuracy. Data was analyzed through NVivo, where values coding was used. Memos also helped facilitate the analysis process. The next chapter, Findings, details the results that answer the research questions. Chapter 5 serves as the Discussion chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from the present study. Practicing CA school psychologists were invited to participate in the study through open-response questionnaires and an individual interview. Additionally, I engaged in analytic memos to help identify commonalities across all participants and identify codes. In this chapter, I discuss the overarching findings, along with the sub findings to the following research questions:

1.)   What does equitable assessment mean to school psychologists as they work with CLD students?

a.)   What systemic issues impact their assessment practices with CLD students?

b.)   How do school psychologists adjust their assessment practices with CLD students?

Findings and Subfindings: A General Overview

The chapter is organized by three overarching findings. The first finding is that school psychologists believe equitable psycho-educational assessments include using multiple tools/methods. The participating school psychologists discussed ensuring a comprehensive, equitable psycho-educational assessment as one that includes the use of standardized tests, uses qualitative measures, and includes the student and family during the process. The second finding is that the participating school psychologists believe that the psycho-educational assessment process should be dynamic and should be sensitive to CLD student's background; there should be consideration for using alternative measures and methods, and CLD students' acclimation to

Western/US Culture. The third finding denotes that the participating school psychologists believe that district procedures, lack of resources and interventions, and vague special education laws implicate the assessment process. Lastly, the third finding is Figure 1 demonstrates how each of the findings, along with the subfindings, are interrelated to school psychologists and their work with psycho-educational assessments. Major findings are in blue, while the sub findings are in yellow.

Figure 1
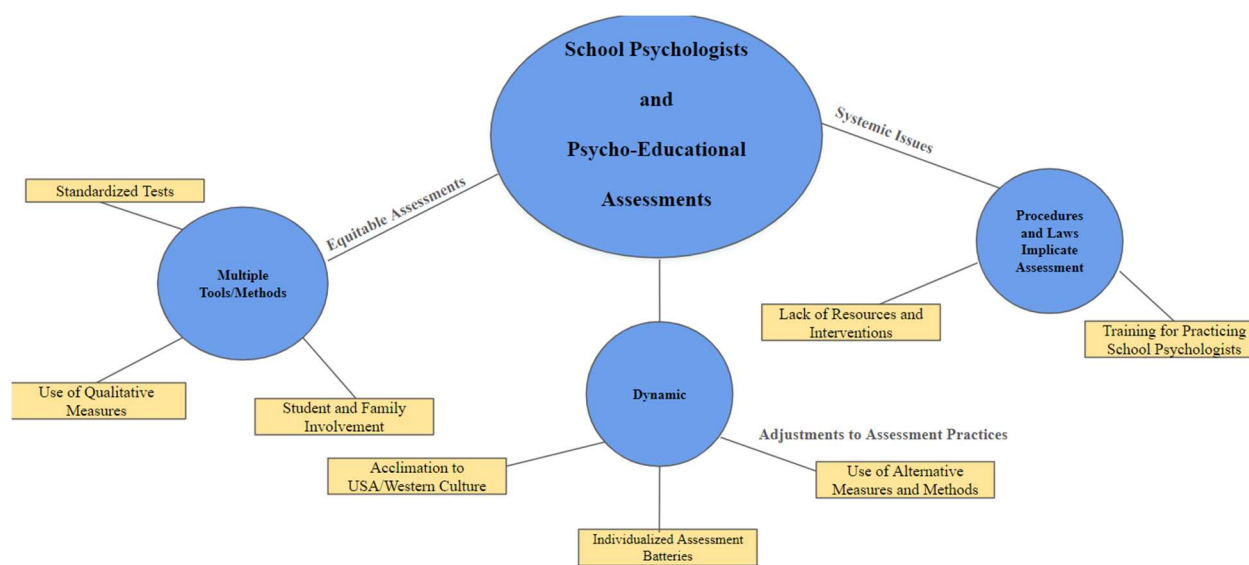
Findings and Subfindings: School Psychologists and Psycho-Educational Assessment

The findings identified from the open-response questionnaire, individual interviews, and analytic memos provide some explanation to what the sample of practicing school psychologists have experienced when assessing CLD students, systemic issues that impact the way they assess CLD students, and how they ensure that a child's linguistic, racial, and ethnic background are accounted for during assessments and change the way they approach their assessment.

Additionally, throughout the data, there is evidence across both the open-response questionnaire and interviews, that the participating school psychologists do not take a color-evasive approach; race and disability are not ignored. Table 5 demonstrates the most frequent codes that represent the most identified ideas from all 10 participants, across the open-response questionnaire, and individual interview.

Table 5 Frequency Table for Codes and Findings

Salient Findings	Codes and Participants	Total Times Mentioned
Equitable Assessments use Multiple Tools and Methods	Standardized tests are the norm (A): Participants 1-11	18
	Qualitative measures are just as important (A): Participants 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, and 11.	32
	Family inclusion (V): Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 11	39
	Student inclusion (V): Participants 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11	17

Equitable Assessments are Dynamic	Respecting the child's background (V): Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.	53
	Assessments highlight individuality (A): Participants 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 11.	7
	Assessment selection changes based on student skills/needs (B): Participants 1-11	
		53
Systemic Issues	More training is key (A): Participants 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11.	11
	Appropriate interventions are lacking (B): Participants 1, 5, 7, 10, and 11.	18
	District procedures impact assessment (B): Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7,10, and 11.	31

The participants do not take a "color-evasive" approach when assessing CLD students for special education. There is regard to how the student's background is discussed at various points throughout the psycho-educational assessment process, especially as they relate to the injustices students of color have been negatively impacted by special education. The overarching finding,

"Equitable Assessments Utilize Multiple Tools/Methods", describes that the participants believed that a wide range of testing procedures that uncover academic, social/emotional, behavioral., and cognitive strengths and weaknesses are necessary. The second finding, "Assessments are Dynamic," references that a student's racial, ethnic, and linguistic background mold the assessment tools and methods that are used in order to provide a sound psycho-educational assessment. Additionally, school psychologists understand their own biases may impact the assessment process but engage in various activities to ensure those biases do not influence the perceptions they hold about CLD students. My third finding, "Procedures and Laws Implicate Assessment" references legal, procedural, and historical aspects that influence the decisions they make surrounding assessment procedures. Each major finding is used as an overarching heading, where the subfindings are used as subheadings to help fortify the findings.

Equitable Assessments Utilize Multiple Tools/Methods

The participating school psychologists discussed using multiple approaches to assess CLD students for special education. Mainly, there were three common approaches that they used within the psycho-educational assessment process: standardized tests, qualitative measures, and student/family involvement. Some participants even defined an equitable psycho-educational evaluation as an evaluation that is comprehensive, that includes standardized measures, details about the student beyond testing scores, and other relevant data, like the student's medical history.

Standardized Tests

Standardized tests refers to tests that adhere to a standard set of procedures, like IQ tests (AERA, APA, and NCME, 2014). The school psychologists reported using multiple standardized

assessments including IQ testing, psychological processing assessments (e.g., auditory processing, phonological processing), social/emotional rating scales, and other rating scales that assess for disabilities associated with Autism, Emotional Disturbances (ED), or Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). All participants listed various commercialized IQ assessments like the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, 5th Edition (WISC-V), Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children, 2nd Edition (KABC-2), Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities (WJ-Cognitive), Cognitive Assessment System, 2nd Edition (CAS-2), as some of the assessments that are typically used for their assessment practices. For example, participant 5 reported:

> So, for the [Behavior Assessment System for Children] BASC, I mean, that's something I always use. That's something that I was trained in at my program that I have to have a broad social emotional and behavior rating scale. So, I give that out regardless, if, especially if there's a social emotional behavioral need that I need to look at.

Like Participant 5, all the participants discussed using standardized tests as a necessary component of the psycho-educational assessment process. The participants, as noted in the open-response questionnaire, use standardized tests that assess not only IQ or cognitive abilities, but also assess social/emotional functioning, as a way to fully understand the child they are assessing. To them, using standardized tests within the psycho-educational assessment process is traditional, where the scores they obtain provide an overview of the students' strengths, weaknesses, and other areas of need. Overall, there is a significant reliance on standardized tests to ensure that the entire assessment is valid. Similarly, participant 3 reported using cognitive measures as a standard part of the assessment process "regardless of what suspected area of disability I'm looking for.". The use of standardized measures is a routine, expected part of the psycho-educational assessment

process. Participant 2 reported that the assessments that are used in the district of employment are pre-selected for the school psychologists; Participant 2's district only allows certain assessments to be used within the psycho-educational assessment process. There is a focus on ensuring that standardized tests continue to be part of the psycho-educational assessment process, which in this case is unkept by the district, which is echoed by the litany of previous research (e.g., Benson et al., 2019 Kennedy et al., 1994; Klassen et al., 2005; Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014; Stinnett et al., 1994; Wilson & Reschly, 1996; Vega et al., 2016).

Use of Qualitative Measures

While the participants discussed using standardized measures that capture IQ, psychological processing abilities, social/emotional development, and behavioral issues, the participating school psychologists reported integrating qualitative approaches in their psycho-educational assessments. Qualitative methods can include methods like interviews, observations, and review of records. The qualitative methods employed by the participants include student observations in various settings (classroom, unstructured settings), interviews with relevant stakeholders (teachers, parents, the student), and a review of available records (reviewing the cumulative file, for example).

Observations. Observations, reported 11 times by the participants, were reported as a qualitative method embedded in the psycho-educational assessment process. The participants considered observations as a necessary component within the evaluation process, as observations can reveal information that is not covered through traditional, standardized tests.

Participant 1   I observe the students in the after-school program.

Participant 2   …the observations are also very important. You know if they're having

conversations in English or in Spanish mostly with their peers and you know

the difference between those conversations versus the classroom

conversations.

Participant 3   So I always do observations. I see how they are interacting in the

classroom.

Observations across multiple settings provide the school psychologists with a better understanding of how the students function in school. Observations provide key information to school psychologists to help facilitate their understanding of strengths, weaknesses, and areas of needs that would not be able to be completely identified through the administration of standardized tests.

Interviews. Besides observing students across multiple settings, the use of interviews was discussed as another key assessment tool during the psycho-educational assessment process. Interviews with parents, students, and teachers were referenced 13 times across participants. The participants reported using interviews to understand the student's feelings about themselves through strength-based interviews and interviewing parents/guardians about their perspectives regarding their child's educational issues, what is important to understand about their child, and how they believe school personnel can better support their child. Participant 7 reported that it is imperative to employ a strength-based interview with students and parents. Participant 7 discussed:

I just learned about, when working with students that are ethnic or racial minorities, is

using strength-based interviews for the student and the parent. So really not just trying to

get a positive focus on the student, but trying to understand, you know, what they care

about, what in their education matters.

Participant 8 reported having collaboration with parents through an interview to obtain an understanding about different factors like language history. Similarly, participant 11 reported that, "The interviews are really important, like getting as much information as I can out of the stakeholders that support the student and as well as the student themselves". Interviews, like observations, are a necessary component of the psycho-educational assessment process. As noted by the aforementioned participants, collaborating with stakeholders also provides necessary information about the student that is not easily uncovered through standardized testing. Again, the participating school psychologists want to achieve a well-rounded assessment that does not solely rely on one test or method.

Record Reviews

Another qualitative method that the participating school psychologists mentioned, mentioned 12 times, was reviewing the student's records, including reviewing the cumulative file, reviewing state testing scores, student study team notes, reviewing work samples, report cards, and anything else available to them was reported as another key feature of a comprehensive psycho-educational evaluation. The records presented to them help gauge the way they may approach how they will assess the student. Participants 2, 8, and 11 reported that reviewing records like intervention data and how that ties into the educational concern(s) is important to consider and to understand factors that may be impeding the student like trauma history, medical history, or other important details, like foster care history, respectively. Additionally, state testing scores were also described as part of the records that are reviewed for psycho-educational assessments. Participant

3 reported that looking into other available pieces of information provides insight into the student's academic functioning and how they may approach their assessment of the student.

> I look at their English language proficiency in terms of their [English Language Proficiency Assessments for California] ELPAC assessment and that gives me a good understanding of, usually it gives me a good understanding, because that is given mostly individualized.

Like observations and interviews, reviewing the student records could provide more details about the student's school functioning. It is necessary to consider the student records, as a student's history also informs how students function in the school environment, but also provides school psychologists with further understanding of how the people around these students, like teachers, may perceive the student.

The use of qualitative measures is a large part of the assessment measures used by the participating school psychologists. The participating school psychologists use the various qualitative measures as an added layer of detail to help paint not only the issues the child is experiencing, but to highlight the various academic or social strengths. Yet, there is an understanding that standardized testing may not always capture the nuances of the child's life, like their trauma history. Therefore, qualitative measures are an advantageous tool to uncover more details that may not always be addressed through standardized measures. As cited by Merrell et al (2012, p. 185-186), qualitative measures like observations and interviews clarify the child that is not always captured with one assessment technique (Shapiro & Heck, 2004). Interviews are helpful in the inclusion of the family as experts within the psycho-educational assessment process, which was another vital aspect of the assessment process, per the participants.

Student and Family Involvement

Across the participants, families and students were noted as key contributors to the psycho-educational assessment process. As noted previously, parents and students were mostly involved in the interview process, but participants highlighted the importance of their roles in the assessment process. Participant 11 reported that there is emphasis on familial involvement with psycho-educational assessment, which could include the involvement of biological parents, foster parents, or legal guardians. Participant 11 reported:

> And then also like, like, being okay that like there are multiple, maybe multiple family members that are involved in the assessment process because a lot of our students come from like very close-knit families or like intergenerational like families so like being mindful, especially with my language with assessments, like to not just assume it's parent. Because there's like foster parent, guard-like grandmother, mom, dad, sister, as the main guardian for students.

Additionally, parents are also included in the completion of social/emotional/behavior rating scales. Participants 5 and 7 shared that a routine practice during the psycho-educational assessment process is to provide a rating scale to the parent's which could drive if there is a need to assess more in a certain area. Participant 5 further described:

> I always give it to parent and teacher, and then from there that kind of guides my next step of a narrow band rating scale that I have to give out so it can be the Connors, which really looks at ADHD or, the [Autism Spectrum Rating Scales] ASRS.

Parent involvement, per the participants, seems to be paramount in the psycho-educational evaluation process. Participant 8 highlighted the role of the parents by reporting that "parents are very accommodating and willing to bring in the students for assessment". It is evident that the

participating school psychologists value familial involvement as one of the many hallmarks of a sound, equitable psycho-educational assessment process.

Additionally, along with the family as key informants, the participants view the student being assessed as another major player or expert within the psycho-educational assessment process. Student involvement during the psycho-educational assessment process is tantamount, even when, per Participant 1, "student engagement levels and motivations" may be variable. Nevertheless, per the participants, the student is interviewed as one way to obtain more data and understanding of what the student believes about themself. Participant 6 reported using an informal questionnaire to help gauge the student's feeling about themselves to further cement the referral concern for assessment. Participant 7 reported providing the student with a standardized self-report questionnaire to identify any social/emotional concerns that might explain the basis for the referral for assessment. Participant 11 reported having conversations with students about why they are being assessed. Participant 11 reported:

> And also, like having a chance to speak with the student to explain why this process is happening...So like having, like, you are not dumb like this is not why we are doing this process like my job is to advocate for you. So, I want you to, all I want is for you to try your best.

Additionally, Participant 11 discussed the importance of the student having a role in the psycho-educational assessment process as a way to create buy-in into the process and ensure that they are willing to participate in the assessments, via the open-response questionnaire.

Student and family involvement in the psycho-educational process stresses the importance of creating a connection between the school and the family. Additionally, the participants that

stressed the importance of family/student/school connection put the family and the student as key experts within this process. As special education has tainted CLD students and their families' relationship with the school, it is worthy to note that cultivating a role where the family is central is important. As highlighted by Irvine (2012) students and families of color historically have grown fearful of special education and in turn, have been disappointed with the mistreatment they have endured. Thus, it is important to highlight that the participating school psychologists engaged in manners that ensured that the family had meaningful participation in the process. The experiences and viewpoints shared by the student and families ensure equity during the assessment process, which is stressed by Tharinger et al (2019), Gentry (2017), and Holman et al (2019) where it is crucial for school psychologists to ensure that the family is educated about the process, the tests used, and the purpose of special education. Additionally, the authors also stressed the importance of keeping that connection with the families past the assessment process.

While it is evident that student and family involvement are paramount in cementing an equitable and comprehensive psycho-educational assessment, the responses from some of the participants could be interpreted as performative. For example, some of the participants reported providing a behavioral rating scale to the parent to be completed. Yet, there was no evidence that the participant had a conversation with the family members or student on what the rating scale assesses and why it is necessary for special education/disability identification. Yes, the family has a role as an informant, but it was not clear how the participants engaged with the family to ensure they understood the rationale for completing the rating scale. In the end, their involvement could be meaningless, which defeats the purpose of including the family as the experts in their child's life.

Equitable Assessments are Dynamic.

Overall, participants reported that the assessment methods, including standardized and non-standardized measures, are chosen in line with the student's background, which includes their linguistic, racial, and ethnic background. The participating school psychologists describe that they are cognizant about CLD students' background, which informs what tests they select, what language they assess in, and what other measures they need to ensure that the child's background is considered during assessment selection (e.g., use of a bilingual assessor/school psychologist).

Individualized Assessment Batteries

Some participants reported selecting assessments that represent the child, instead of having a standard assessment battery for all students. Participant 6 indicated that "I make sure that I choose assessments that represent the student accurately…their social economic status, their language, all of the different things that go into their identity". Participant 8 reported using Cognitive Academic Level Proficiency (CALP), which is proficiency in academic language used in classroom settings (Anonymous, 2019), assessments to help determine which language standardized assessments, like IQ tests, should be administered in. Depending on the child's CALP level, per participant 8, then a tool in the child's dominant language would be selected and administered per participant.

Access to a variety of assessments was not reality for at least one participant. Participant 2 reported that the district they work for assigns a standardized battery that includes only one option for cognitive tests, one option for academic tests, and one to two options for psychological processing tests. Because of the limited availability of tests in their district,

participant 2 acknowledged that results are not always accurate for the CLD students that are being assessed. Participant 2 discussed:

> The student is really having difficulties in this area, you know, maybe this is a better assessment or, in some cases for preschool assessments, they only, my district only has one, like, assessment, which is like the, Mullens, so which is quite outdated. I feel like there's just so many more assessments out there that could be helpful for a lot of the students.

Participant 2 further cemented the preceding sentiment in the open-response questionnaire, which Participant 2 indicated that:

> I can sometimes find myself thinking of other tools that would give me beneficial information but I have no access to.

There is consideration that the standardized assessment tools are not always appropriate, especially when assessing CLD students. Participant 2 is yearning to have access to tools that may better capture academic and social/emotional strengths and weaknesses for CLD students. The participating school psychologists acknowledged that the assessment tools that are in use are not always constructed or standardized with CLD students in mind, which could skew evaluation results. There is evidence, based on the interview transcripts and open responses, that the participating school psychologists are conscious of the many adverse factors of standardized testing, thus it is important to consider other evaluation tools and methods to ensure a student's background is reflected within the evaluation process.

Acclimation to US/Western Culture

The student's background, especially when the student might be new to the US, is a key feature that shifts the way the school psychologists approach psycho-educational assessment. Consideration of the child's background and acclimation status changes the way they approach assessment. Participant 1 discussed the importance of considering how cultural differences might lead the child to misinterpret the test items. Participant 1 reported:

> When I choose if the student is let's say, newly incoming immigrant, with little bit, um, um English background. I might use KABC [Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children], the mental processing index, because that gives you some idea with less demands of the language and background.

There is consideration about what tests or specific subtests may not fully capture the skills of the children that are being assessed. The specific test noted by Participant 1, the KABC, contains less verbal knowledge or skills needed to answer questions. So, Participant 1 melds the selection of assessment tools to the student's background. Participant 6 provided an anecdote about a student from a Spanish-speaking country, who newly immigrated to the states with a former diagnosis of Autism. Participant 6 described an issue with a standardized academic test, where the answers to the questions are fixed:

> I had to give an example when it came to like, the math questions in his country. They don't use decimals. They use commas when it comes to money. Would that test accurately represent what he's familiar with or would you still mark it wrong even if you knew that he was right? So different things like that. Considerations of the whole child. The whole child's experience and not just stopping short to think what's going to check a box.

Consideration of the child's background was discussed by all the participants. Specifically, participants considered and reflected about how Whiteness, English-speaking, Western standards are typically the marker of intelligence of typicality. The participating school psychologists shared that it is responsible to take the time to review pertinent information that may affect how they interpret assessment data, choose their selection tool, and provide sound, just recommendations for the child.

Use of Alternative Measures and Methods. Consideration of the child's background may also lead to the use of alternative measures and methods that still assess cognitive, social/emotional, and behavioral needs. Specifically, participants discussed being mindful about the specific backgrounds of CLD students they assess for special education, which informs the alternate measures they may use during assessment. Participants reported securing bilingual school psychologists to conduct assessments in a language they may be unfamiliar with, using nonverbal measures, or using other alternative measures to assess academic achievement, for example. Alternative measures include tools that do not rely on standardized, psychometric measures to understand student functioning. There was also some discussion on using other ways to complete psycho-educational assessment, especially when assessing CLD students, which included the use of play-based assessment, the Southern California Ordinal Scales of Development (SCOSD), and nonverbal intelligence tests.

Participant 1 highlighted the utility of using nonverbal intelligence tests. Participant 1 reported that, "Sometimes I even used the nonverbal index. And I think it is more, more approachable, less boring and especially for younger children." Per Participant 1, it is imperative to remain flexible during the assessment process, as the student's racial, ethnic, and linguistic background may compromise their performance on a typical standardized test, since IQ tests are

mainly constructed around White notions of typicality and intelligence (Murdoch, 2006).

. Additionally, there is awareness that the typical standard test is not feasible for all students, so

it is necessary to shift gears and adapt to the student's background. Participant 3 also discussed

the shift in using alternative methods for testing, especially when assessing ELL students.

Participant 3 reported that even the typical assessments that are routinely used may need extra

consideration when assessing CLD students. Participant 3 reported:

> So for instance, if I have an English language learner, which most of my, I would say, oh
>
> my gosh, I didn't I don't even know how accurate this would be but I would say maybe 50
>
> to 60% of my population in my school district is an English Language Learner, I wouldn't
>
> use the WISC because the WISC is very verbally loaded. Even though it has the
>
> nonverbal index portion I feel like that if I use the KABC, the mental processing index,
>
> that would give me a better understanding it would give me, you know, 4 domains to look
>
> at and to compare and I just wouldn't have that knowledge index piece.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Review of the Current Literature, the court case *Larry P vs.*

Riles (1979), ruled that IQ testing is not permissible for the purposes of assessing Black students

for special education. Participants discussed the court case ruling's impact on selecting tools for

Black students. However, it is important to note that participants did not speak about assessment

issues related to Asian, Hispanic, or other diverse student populations. Participants 1 and 5

highlighted knowing about the Matrix, which is a tool that helps understand a child's functioning

across academic, processing, and social/emotional skills (Riverside, n.d.). The Matrix tool was

developed specifically for school psychologists to have a guide on informal tasks, curriculum-

based measures, and work samples, that can help point out strengths and weaknesses across

psychological and academic skills (Riverside, n.d.). The Matrix tool is used as an assessment

procedure that would not rely on the use of IQ or psychological processing tests. Participant 5

reported knowing about the Matrix to assess those skills but had not used it. Participant 1

reported more on how the Matrix is used for psycho-educational assessment:

> I really like the matrix, approach from the NAFTA, California Diagnostic Center. This is
>
> not only for, for African American students, it's also displayed for, all the students. It's
>
> more like observations, curriculum based. Using some other ways, your observation, you
>
> may manipulate the observations like you can ask them to try this, try that, but it's not a
>
> standardized approach.

> However, Participant 5 discussed that although the court case ruling limits what

assessments can be used for special education identification, there is room to be resourceful

when assessing. Participant 5 reported that "I have to, like, look for the specific assessments that

we can use and give more processing tests, than the average student". There is consideration for

case laws as they apply to the improper use of assessment for CLD students.

> Participants 1 and 5 were not the only participants that discussed how the *Larry P vs.*

Riles (1979) case impacts how they assess Black students for special education. Participants 4

and 11 reported getting creative with the assessments and strategies that are available to them, in

light of the aforementioned court ruling. For instance, participant 4 reported that using portions

of standardized assessments, without reporting or calculating the overall IQ scores:

> Participant 4   I will use the NEPSY because it will give me the information that I'm
>
> looking for without reporting an IQ score.

Participant 11 I know at this time there is currently an addendum on the Larry P law, so there are changes now, but personally I wasn't a fan of how to get around the Larry P. law this district in particular was like "let's only use the CAS to assess cognitive but also because we're not providing the FSIQ".

Both participants explained how they fulfill the expectations of using standardized assessments for the purposes of special education identification, but with consideration for the historically improper use of standardized assessments on Black students. It is important to note that the participants are cognizant of how they should meld their practices to adhere to legal reasons.

A vital perspective that arose in discussing the use of alternative assessment measures, is that practicing school psychologists' assessment skills beyond the typical administration of standardized tests, may be limited. While some of the participating school psychologists explained that they have used alternative assessment methods like the CLIM, the MATRIX, etc., it was evident that in total, their knowledge and practice with alternative methods is meager. Instead, there seems to be an overreliance on a narrow approach to assessing students for special education, which aligns with Klassen et al.'s (2005) implication where an overreliance on archaic, "traditional" practices may further harm students than help them by falsely identifying students with disabilities. Participants were fully aware that the assessment battery that is mandated by districts is not always appropriate for use with CLD students but the school psychologists feel they have no other choice but to stick with standardized tests.

Procedures and Laws Implicate Assessment

The last identified theme connects to the systemic issues, within districts and within the special education system, that school psychologists have experienced and identified that

complicate how they assess CLD students for special education. Some of the issues that were identified include lack of resources and interventions prior to a referral for assessment, district policies and procedures, lack of continuing education related to CLD assessment, and vague laws related to special education.

Lack of Resources and Interventions

A common issue that surfaced amongst the participants was the lack of structured interventions, or even an intervention process. Because of a lack of interventions or support for CLD students, special education may seem like the only way to help CLD students. In turn, that leaves the participating school psychologists with the only one option: to assess CLD students for special education. Participant 1 and 10 discussed this issue and shared that there are so few interventions at their disposal that could be implemented without the need for a special education referral:

> Participant 1   We do not have enough interventions. Therefore, we are, we because we, we -We're running out of all those interventions. The next part will be special education.

> Participant 10   I think that if they [CLD students] had received linguistically appropriate interventions, [they] probably wouldn't need special education support…there aren't appropriate interventions that are implemented. And I feel that we are very quick to move into assessment.

Participant 11 also touched on more about the lack of a tiered systems approach of interventions. Specifically, Participant 11 discussed how there does not seem to be an arsenal of "Tier 2" approaches, like a check-in/check-out system, to provide additional support for students

who require them. "Tier 2" references a tier within the Response to Intervention (RTI; Barret et al., 2015; Batsche et al., 2005) in which individualized, structured interventions are provided to students who require behavioral or academic support. In summation, there are some issues with the way their respective districts employ interventions. Additionally, all three participants reported that the assessment process is usually the next step to provide extra support when interventions are meager, and there are no laws in place to support more interventions. In turn, they are stuck with an unfounded referral for special education, in which they must comply and have the student assessed for special education.

Lack of resources for students and their parents is another issue that leaves school psychologists little choice in assessing CLD students for special education. At times, participants reported receiving undue pressure from teachers, parents, and administrators to assess and subsequently qualify a student for special education. Participant 2 reported receiving pressure from parents to qualify their child for special education "to get extra income to support their family". Special education assessment and a potential qualification may be one-way parents could receive monetary support for their families. Participant 11 also expressed that a lack of resources available for students is meager, so assessing CLD students then potentially qualifying them for special education may provide them a gateway to obtain community/social supports, like social welfare programs. Participant 11 shared an anecdote in which a student was identified with an intellectual disability, but Participant 11 attempted to change the eligibility classification to SLD, as this is what was apparent. However, pressure from colleagues led Participant 11 to keep the previous disability label, for fear that the student's community support would cease. Participant 5 also described that administrators and parents have pressured assessment because supplying academic or behavioral interventions to students prior to a referral for special

education was not "feasible" for the teacher to carry out, thus a psycho-educational assessment was warranted. Participant 7 also reported that parents, who participated in a district focus group, reported that "they felt like their kid was getting help in middle school by being put in special ed, but they also felt like they should have been provided help without having to be put in special ed in the first place". A lack of resources and support for the students left them no choice but to accept placement in special education.

A lack of resources for the school psychologists themselves could pose a large systemic issue for them. As noted in the preceding section, Participant 2 mentioned that at their district, they do not have a large library of assessments to choose from. Instead, they are relegated to a preselected set of tests; there is not much variability or flexibility to adapt to the child and select fair assessments. As echoed by some of the participants, namely Participant 1, it is necessary to remain flexible when it comes to selecting assessments, especially when assessing CLD students. However, when districts do not provide adequate tools to equitably assess CLD students, school psychologists are left with no choice but to hold onto unethical, faulty assessment practices. As noted by Klassen et al (2005), school psychologists, when not given the proper resources and support to assess students ethically and adequately, they may hold onto faulty practices, which in turn is something that is held onto Participant 2.

Vague Special Education Laws

As discussed in the preceding subsection, the participants pointed to the court case, *Larry P. v. Rile*s (1979), as further support when selecting assessment tools for Black students. While some of the participants reported adjusting the assessment measures and methods considering the historic court decision, there is some confusion about what appropriate, specific

measures they can use to assess Black students. As mentioned by Participant 11, a previous district they worked at used parts of an IQ test but did not report the full-scale IQ score. In turn, Participant 11 reported feeling that that approach used by the previous district was not something they approved of, which could be an ethical concern.

In terms of the protection of CLD students, participant responses varied. Some participants reported that special education has clear laws that would not allow CLD students to be wrongfully identified in special education. Participant 4 reported that:

> Just because they're [students] CLD doesn't mean that they qualify for special education. So again, when we're assessing for special education in order for that child to receive special education services, they must have an actual deficit.

Similarly, participant 5 reported that CLD students who are in special education are afforded "protection" and in turn, special education can provide CLD students with the services to help them "acclimate" to school and provide them "academic support" that they would not be able to receive outside of special education. Across both participants, they believe that special education law affords CLD students with an added layer of protection.

Conversely, other participants reported that the "intention" of special education, in relation to the protection of CLD students, is noticeable, but there is no follow-through at the district level to protect CLD students. The participants acknowledged that at the district and state level, there are protections for unfair assessment referrals for CLD students, but the procedures that are in place do not allow for such protection. For example, Participant 11 expanded on how Black students are overrepresented in special education, especially under the category of Emotional Disturbance (ED), despite the rulings from *Larry P vs. Riles* (1979). Participant 6

echoed the same sentiment where students "do not have a legitimate and true disability but somehow still end up in special education more often than not, it's because of their cultural or linguistic differences". Plus, as mentioned by participant 6, the definition of a 'disability' is something that needs to be corrected at a "systems" level. Participant 7 described that when the student is demonstrating a "true disability", if the evaluation results point to a disability that resembles the criteria set forth by IDEA (2004), then special education is needed. From the lack of protection, per Participant 7, students are assessed at older ages and have led to placement in restrictive environments.

Even though special education law can be difficult to navigate due to vague federal laws and eligibility criteria, participants reported believing that their district policies and procedures should support CLD students. Participants 1, 11, 5, and 6 reported that their districts have specific ordinances, initiatives, or committees to discuss and implement solutions related to CLD students in special education. Some of these measures implemented to help monitor these issues included having transparency with students and their families, holding meetings to review the amount of CLD students represented in a specific disability category, and identifying the major issues that impact CLD students in special education. The aforementioned are not necessarily solutions implemented but were ways to create monitoring systems for their respective districts. Participant 5 shared that their district employs a procedure where the evaluation report and the results are reviewed prior to the meeting to consider if the evaluation was done equitably, as well as to ask the following questions: "Why do you select that one [assessment tool]? Why do, why'd you come up with that analysis?'. There is a shared responsibility between the district and the assessing school psychologist in relation to ensuring that an equitable assessment was completed.

In terms of district responsibility, Participant 10 reported that districts should take extra steps to enact and review their policies surrounding referral of CLD students to special education. Participant 10 reported that districts should ask questions like "is there really an over representation? How many English language learners do we have in special education? And why is that? Do we need to look at the school psychologist and the tools that they're using?". Participant 7 also discussed that due to the issue with overrepresentation in special education, the district is "making changes to our assessment process because of it and instituting new policies". Additionally, Participant 7 reported that the district's responsibility to ensure fair assessments was shared with parents via a focus group to gauge their understanding and concerns about their children in special education.

Training for Practicing School Psychologists. Participants stressed the importance of receiving continuing education related to the assessment of CLD students. Participants acknowledged that research in assessment is changing. Participants 3, 8, and 10 reported that training is needed to understand the "theory" behind the tests that are administered. Participants 3 and 10 also reported that continuing education is needed to understand the changes in assessment and to feel that they have the most up-to-date training on proper psycho-educational assessment practices:

> Participant 3 I think that it's crazy that a school psychologist probably needs CEUs [Continuing Education Units] to get like NCSP [Nationally Certified School Psychologist] or to be an LEP [Licensed Educational Psychologist]. It blows my mind that school psychologists in general just have to pay something every 5 years to renew their credential. They don't have to provide evidence of CEUs.

Participant 10 I think for me to feel more supported. I just, again, it just goes back to maybe more training or professional development. Keeping us up to date with new research.

Participant 3 references that practicing school psychologists in CA must renew their PPS credential every 5 years. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) does not require continuing school psychologists to show proof of CEUs; there is only a monetary fee for renewal. This differs from licensing for an LEP or NCSP, where there is a requirement to engage in professional development related to topics like social justice, law and ethics, and cultural diversity for renewing the license (California, 2014; *NCSP Renewal*, n.d.). Not every practicing school psychologist holds the LEP or NCSP, so it is not guaranteed that all practicing school psychologists are receiving updated training on issues related to CLD students and psycho-educational assessments, which likely impedes appropriate, ethical assessment administration.

Participant 10 acknowledged the ever-changing field of assessment and expressed that they may need support in the interpretation of assessment, such as using the data/results from testing to inform meaningful interventions, accommodations, and modifications for the CLD students they assess. Specifically, there needs to be further support in making sense of their assessment data, understanding if the child demonstrates a disability, and in providing sound, equitable recommendations to support the student in school.

The participants reported that having the opportunities to have access to other colleagues for the purposes of assessing CLD students, and assessment in general, is needed to feel more confident or skilled when testing. Participants reported districts should invest in opportunities and time for case reviews, where psychologists could engage with their colleagues for

consultation on issues that they face during an assessment. The preceding subsection highlighted the thoughts of school psychologists about the laws and procedures that make the psycho-educational assessment process difficult to navigate, especially when assessing CLD Students. The participating school psychologists shared that some facets of special education law are vague, like the court-ruling from *Larry P. vs. Riles* (1979), which leaves them with confusion on how to assess Black students for special education. Additionally, a lack of clear laws related to CEUs and intervention implementation leave them stuck when trying to provide an equitable psycho-educational assessment. Participants call for mandatory CEUs, clearer directions on when to provide interventions, and clear guidance on how to evaluate CLD students, namely Black students, for special education.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the results and findings from the open-response questionnaires and individual interviews. To answer the overarching research question, the participating school psychologists revealed using multiple assessment measures including standardized measures, qualitative measures, which includes the student and families as contributors within the psycho-educational assessment process. School psychologists acknowledged that CLD students' background must be considered when selecting the assessment tools and making changes to their typical assessment batteries. School psychologists also acknowledge that the consideration of a CLD student's background is vital, especially since standardized batteries may not account for variances in linguistic, racial, or ethnic backgrounds. The consideration of the child's background, per the participants, leads them to use alternative assessment measures and methods. Finally, to answer the sub research question that asks why systemic issues impede their psycho-educational assessment practices, the participants acknowledged that special education

laws are vague and do not provide much guidance on how to assess CLD students, there are minimal protections for CLD students, but ultimately, school district officials have a mandate to support CLD students. In terms of school resources, the participating school psychologists acknowledged that their districts have limited resources to support families, which in turn marks special education as the only way to receive support for CLD students. Additionally, the participants acknowledged that further training is needed to help support their assessment skills when assessing CLD students for special education.

The following chapter discusses the findings and how they relate to the most salient tenets of DisCrit. Additionally, I discuss how the three major findings relate to the current literature surrounding psycho-educational assessment of CLD students and the systemic issues that may arise during the assessment process.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to identify how practicing school psychologists define equitable psycho-educational assessments, how CLD students' background impacts their assessment process, and what systemic issues impede the psycho-educational assessment process. Using phenomenological research principles and DisCrit, I explored what equitable assessment means to school psychologists as they work with CLD students, what systemic issues impact their assessment practices, and how racial, ethnic, and linguistic factors influence their perceptions of CLD students they assess. The three key findings for the study as described in the previous chapter include:

1. School psychologists believe that equitable psycho-educational assessments utilize multiple tools and strategies

2. School psychologists believe that equitable assessments are dynamic

3. Procedures and laws implicate assessment

Using DisCrit in my analysis, I considered how race and disability interplay during the psycho-educational assessment process and how each construct implicates, influences, and guides each participating school psychologists' assessment practices with CLD students. These considerations helped me identify each of the three findings aforementioned above, which align with facets of the framework. The findings reveal that school psychologists are not ignoring CLD students' racial background and are cognizant about how racial differences influence the way they approach their assessment practices and techniques. Additionally, school psychologists identified how case laws, current special education law, and historical foundations, also impact their assessment practices. I frame this discussion chapter with the following subheadings:

- Race/Disability Consciousness

- Student Identity(ies) During Assessment Procedures

- Social Construction of Race and Disability

- Legal/Historical Considerations

- Unexpected Findings

- Conclusion

Race/Disability Consciousness

As noted in Chapter 2, Review of the Literature, historical underpinnings and the controversial birth of the IQ test reveals the White-centered, Eurocentric characteristics that are used to qualify what is acceptable or not. Participants in the study acknowledged the problematic use of IQ tests and other standardized tests, and other systemic issues that confound the way they assess CLD students for special education. They acknowledged that through their own assessment practices, they find it necessary to highlight the student's academic strengths and weaknesses, yet still account for the cultural, linguistic, racial, and ethnic factors that make the student unique, but not disabled. Additionally, the participants discussed the need to shift their assessment practices from the traditional measures to alternative or culturally-sensitive approaches when working with CLD students, and ensure that they engage with students and families to better understand their backgrounds when selecting assessment tools. It was evident that the participants in this study do not take a "color evasive" approach and acknowledged that CLD students have unique challenges (e.g., acclimation to the US) that may compromise their success or progress in school but does not mean that the child is disabled.

To answer the overarching research question, "What does equitable assessment mean to school psychologists as they work with CLD students?", the participating school psychologists

explicitly reference the student's racial, ethnic, and linguistic background to not only inform the assessments and assessment methods they choose but also as key features about how they conceptualize the special education eligibility criteria as it relates to CLD students. The participating school psychologists are cognizant that they must be culturally sensitive when assessing CLD students. They understand that traditional assessment methods could inaccurately depict a CLD student with a disability.

Ableism and Racism

Ableism and racism are individual constructs that uphold characteristics of race and disability but work in tandem to demonstrate that people of color have innate physical, intellectual, and mental capabilities (Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Tenet 1 of DisCrit addresses this idea, as race and disability status implicate the way others marginalize and categorize people of color who are also disabled (Annamma, Connor, & Feri; 2013; Proctor & Rivera, 2022) The participants revealed issues arise during psycho-educational assessment, especially when a CLD student is suspected of having a disability, that point to difference in race, ethnicity, and cultural background. The participants revealed that they are met with unfounded referrals for assessment for issues related to English acquisition, differences in acculturation, or differences in a student's personal history (trauma history, medical history, familial history). Yet, referring CLD students for assessment, and in turn completing an assessment for the purposes of special education identification have become a normal function of schools.

The participating school psychologists understand this normal function, but reported to be actively engaged in various practices to ensure that they provide sound, fair, and equitable psycho-educational assessment practices. Hence, they engage in extra activities to ensure they put aside biases, such as being mindful of standardized testing tools they select, conducting a

thorough review of the child's background, and engaging in their own work to ensure they are aware of their own biases especially during the assessment process. While it is commendable that the participating school psychologists are active in making the assessment process more just, they still succumb to the gaps within special education and within the general aspects of the public school system. As noted by Filter & Ebson (2013) and Newman et al (2018), service delivery for school psychologists, including psycho-educational assessments, can be implicated by a plethora of factors, like unclear guidance from district policies, high testing caseload, and a lack of support from administrators. However, despite the extra efforts they implement to create a more equitable psycho-educational assessment, the continuing mandatory assessment process continues to uphold the broken system that is special education.

While the extra effort is apart from the traditional assessment methods that were once criticized by case laws (*Diana v. State Board or Education*, 1970; *Larry P v. Riles*, 1979), the participating school psychologists are part of the broken system, even with evidence that demonstrates their understanding of the negative aspects of special education. While it is understandable that IDEA (2004) is a federally mandated set of laws and policies for special education that school psychologists must follow, including adaptations to assessment, especially standardized testing, is not fully equitable (Garcia, 2015, as cited in Proctor & Rivera, 2022 p. 130). The typical assessment process and standardized tests do not consider or address the innate cultural differences of CLD students, which could lead to a misidentification for special education.

Whiteness in Special Education

Per participants, CLD students assessed were sometimes referred due to preconceptions about the child's abilities, due to their cultural background. It could be deduced that as

Whiteness and Eurocentricity have become deemed as the marker of normalcy, CLD students and their cultural, linguistic, racial, and/or ethnic differences paint them as students with disabilities (Anama et al., 2013, 2018; Proctor & Rivera, 2022, p. 38). Per Annamma et al (2013), there is a sense of normativity that establishes how people understand what it means to be disabled within Western culture/ideals. For this reason, Black, American Indian, and Latino students continue to be identified as needing special education (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2021, as cited in Proctor & Rivera, p. 149).

It has long been recognized that IQ tests and other standardized tests are biased against CLD students, especially Black students; yet, the IQ test still is a common tool used, per the participating school psychologists. Although they supplement standardized tests with qualitative measures and by extending the family as an expert in the process, IQ tests continue to be a major reason why CLD students continue to be disproportionately placed in special education. Yes, special education could afford students with a disability a gateway for more support; but CLD students placed in special education are at higher risk for adverse life situations, like dropping out of school (Irvine, 2012; Murdoch, 2009; Skiba et al., 2002, 2006; Woodson & Harris, 2018). I appreciate the efforts that the participating school psychologists are making to make their practices equitable, but the inherent prejudice in IQ testing appears to supersede the other adaptations made to the assessment process, which in turns continues to allow for CLD students to be placed in special education, even if they do not have an actual disability.

The sixth tenet of DisCrit is, "DisCrit recognizes Whiteness and ability as property and that gains for people labeled with dis/abilities have largely been made as the result of White, middle-class citizens" (Annamma et al., 2013, 2018; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). The sixth tenet explains that Whiteness and ability have innate benefits for those who fit into those categories.

Traditional psycho-educational assessment procedures further perpetuate Eurocentric ideals about CLD students, which could further implicate their supposed disability status. The participants discussed Whiteness as a harmful ideal, especially when assessing CLD students for special education. Participant 6 understood that students with cultural differences, even White students, who are labeled with a disability and then placed in special education do not always benefit from such restrictions. Participant 6 further explained that other means of intervention or support could be beneficial, without special education. Across the participants, they echoed what Participant 6 mentioned, as they are aware that CLD students they assess may not always reap the benefits of the assessment process and subsequent placement in special education. Additionally, the participants understand that support for CLD students could be provided regardless of special education status. These thoughts bring up the question, why are school districts not providing resources? This may be a complicated topic that delves into issues related to funding for general education interventions or a lack of intervention/resources guidelines for districts (Filter & Ebson, 2013). But Vega et al (2016) raised a point that some of the school psychologists in their study found it easier to qualify students for special education, if that meant that interventions, support, and resources would be implemented.

The onus has gone onto special education, which was founded on ableist and racist ideals about intelligence and typicality (Fagan & Wise, 1994; Murdoch, 2009). As mentioned by Filter and Ebson (2013), a lack of general education guidelines may contribute to the continued need to assess students for special education to receive resources and support. Within the California Education Code, there is not a mandate to provide interventions or a definition on what is considered an intervention. IDEA (2004) on the other hand ensures that whatever is placed on a student's IEP must be adhered to, including interventions and services. If services are not

provided, parents have the right to seek legal counsel, a due process hearing, and compensatory services (IDEA, 2004). Hence, the IEP provides a system of checks and balances that is made into law, which makes special education a sound option, in theory, for students who need extra support.

Like mentioned by Au (2013), White students who may be identified with a disability and placed in special education may be afforded special accommodations that enhance their chances of success in schools; the same cannot always be said for CLD students. Per Sullivan et al (2019), as cited by Proctor and Rivera (2022), White students and their families have a different experience than CLD students and their families in special education. White students and their families more often receive the services needed to improve their academic progress, whereas CLD students and their families may not be given the same privileges (Sullivan et al., 2019 in Proctor & Rivera, 2022). The outcomes for White students in special education are typically more favorable than CLD students, but they too are not free from the issues that comprise special education (Sullivan et al., 2017, in Proctor & Rivera, 2022).

Special education at its core is a problematic system. The participants described how they believe that if a structured intervention system were to be implemented in their districts, the CLD students they assess may not need special education. Instead, the participants are in a bind, where the lack of intervention/resource guidelines leads CLD students to be referred to them. Interventions, as described by Participant 5, are labeled as not feasible. Although RTI, as noted in Chapter 2, is a proactive approach (Barret et al., 2015; Batsche et al., 2005), the interventions along with data collection can be time-intensive, whereas the completion of a psycho-educational assessment has a finite timeline, 15 days to provide an assessment plan then 60 days to complete (IDEA, 2004). The special education system ensures that the assessment is done in a timely

manner, which again makes the option sound like an appropriate one. However, school psychologists are left with no other choice but to assess. Participants revealed how they tackle disagreement between district personnel, and families at times, due to an unwarranted psycho-educational evaluation. Yet, they are stuck with the system that emphasizes the need to identify children they suspect have a disability within a firm timeline (IDEA, 2004). As noted by Participant 1, they have been pressured to qualify students as a means to provide an intervention (e.g., academic support), but not as a forever solution. The added pressure is likely due to the lack of sound resources that a school can offer to all students (Irvine, 2012).

Participant 6 shared an anecdote about a newly immigrated student with a diagnosis of Autism, who was identified with special education support from their previous country. Colleagues had preconceived ideas of how the child would function in the schools and what supports the child would need and the school psychologist stepped in to reject those ideas and used the opportunity to educate their colleagues on the cultural differences. Instead of treating the case as a typical special education evaluation, Participant 6 did not allow prejudices or biases about the child's academic functioning to lead them to using standardized tests that do not represent the child's background. Preconceived notions about race and ability-levels, where Eurcoentric ideals signal intelligence is what ignited the IQ testing movement, where it was justified to use IQ tests on non-White people, to ensure that Whiteness is the marker of intelligence and to sustain the ideal that non-White people are intellectually inferior to White people (Galton & Galton, 1998; Hally, 2015; Kaufman, 2000; Murdoch, 2009; Richardson, 2002; Terman, 1916; Warne, 2018). As evidenced by the experiences of the participating school psychologists, some of these notions are still upheld in the 21st century.

Often, during the assessment process, assessors receive undue pressure from various stakeholders to assess CLD students for special education. Participants revealed that they receive pressure to qualify students for special education from administrators, teachers, and even families. School psychologists are sometimes left with no other choice but to complete psycho-educational assessments, as special education is painted as the only way to provide support for CLD students. As mentioned by the participants, their districts/schools do not have a menu of culturally sensitive interventions to support CLD students, which leads to excessive referrals for special education, which again upholds the conception that CLD students hold deficits since they do not meet the expectations of White norms. Participants reported being cognizant of this issue, which begs the need for structured interventions to account for CLD students' background, without using Whiteness as an indicator for what is deemed typical in schools. As noted by Nathanson and Rispoli (2022), the qualifying criteria set forth by IDEA (2004) for Autism is based on how Autism manifests in White students. The disability eligibility criteria does not consider cultural variance with how disabilities should manifest, which leads to misidentification of CLD students in special education (Nathanson & Rispoli, 2022).

Again, disability categories within special education are based on notions of Whiteness, which is imperative to understand how Whiteness is seen as property and gains (Annamma et al., 2013, 2018). This is one example that shows that IDEA (2004) and state special education laws have yet to rehaul special education criteria to fully account for racial, ethnic, and linguistic differences. Under the 13 disability eligibility categories, Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is the only disability category where linguistic and cultural differences are exclusionary factors and would not make a child eligible for special education; students whose academic difficulty is primarily the cause from lack of English acquisition or who has not had much time attending

school within the US could not be eligible for special education (IDEA, 2004). These exclusionary factors do not extend to the remaining 12 categories. Therefore, if the school psychologist is receiving undue pressure to qualify a CLD student by school personnel or families for the sake of receiving support, then they may feel pressured to consider other eligibility for special education that do not factor in cultural or linguistic factors. In turn, school psychologists are left with an ethical dilemma, where they may engage in unethical assessment practices to qualify students for special education in order to give them access to support (Algozzine, Christenson, & Ysseldyke, 1982; Macmillan, Gresham, & Bocian, 1998; Shepard & Smith, 1983; Sullivan et al., 2019).

Student Identity(ies) During Assessment Procedures

Tenet 2 of DisCrit describes how "DisCrit values multidimensional identities and troubles singular notions of identity such as race, dis/ability or class or gender or sexuality, and so on (Annamma et al., 2013, 2018); one person is situated in multiple identities, not just one (Proctor & Rivera, 2022). The participants showed concern for students' multiple identities, as their assessments take multiple sources of data to form the eligibility recommendation. As their assessments are comprehensive, using multiple methods, they demonstrate how one score was not indicative of the deficits that were suspected, but how taking a holistic approach to understanding the student and their academic challenges was necessary. The participants reported considering medical history, trauma history, language acquisition history, acculturation, as important pieces of data. Considerations are essential to understanding the student's identity. They reported ensuring that they considered all relevant factors about the child, including the many markers of their identity.

Conceptualizing Identities during Assessment

The participants also reported being mindful of all the child's identities throughout the various steps in the psycho-educational process. Situating school psychologists' assessment practices within the multiple identities of the students they assess is an important finding drawn from the present study, where the school psychologists discussed being mindful not only about the student's racial, ethnic, and linguistic background, but considered other factors like their situation with homelessness, foster care status, etc. The school psychologists did not focus on only one aspect of the child's identity. The participants stressed the importance of basing their eligibility recommendations not solely on standardized test scores, and instead including facets of the child's development, medical history, family history, amongst other key characteristics.

Participant 4 was clear on how a CLD student is not automatically qualified for special education, just for being CLD. The fact that the student is CLD, does not make them disabled. There are other factors at play that may implicate or negatively impact their educational experiences, like socioeconomic status (SES). Au (2013) discusses that while it is imperative to consider SES as part of a child's identity, class inequities are seldom considered as markers of students referred for special education.

Participant 2 said the student's SES must be considered, especially in selecting what assessment to administer and what supports are needed. Consideration on how various aspects of a child's identity intersect with each other is necessary to not only understand their skills, deficits, and potential disability status, but to consider how those identities land them in the psycho-educational assessment process. Again, even though the participating school psychologists discussed considering all the identities of CLD students they assess and take extra measures to ensure cultural sensitivity, CLD students continue to comprise a large portion of the special education population in the US. Special education is seen as one of the only sound ways

to receive support from schools. Yet, special education identification also relies on categorizing someone with a disability. Disabilities can carry a large stigma for some people, so it begs the question why do we need to label someone with a disability to give them help? Again, schools are relying on a disability classification to not only provide but justify providing support and interventions. Labeling someone with a learning or intellectual disability, for example, may open the doors for academic interventions, but now the student themselves is at risk for diminished self-esteem, lack of teacher connection, etc. (Sullivan et al., 2019). Supporting all students, regardless of disability status, should be a priority for all facets of public education, not just within special education.

Social Construction of Race and Disability

Race and ability are man-made social constructs with legitimate ramifications for the individuals that are impacted by preconceived notions of race and ability (Annamma et al., 2012, 2018; Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Students who are assessed for special education and subsequently identified and placed in special education are given a disability label, per IDEA (2004), based on all assessment information. On the surface, the provision of special education supports and services seems positive; but labeling and placement in special education often impacts the student negatively. The participants were cognizant about their role during psycho-educational assessment and discussed ways they ensure they use fair or equitable assessment practices, especially when assessing CLD students for special education.

Stereotypes and Preconceived Ideas

However, as school psychologists, they are not free from using faulty stereotypes to guide their evaluation. Across all participants, they are aware of their weaknesses or lack of knowledge when assessing students from different cultural backgrounds. They do not ignore

these differences, but instead seek out resources or colleagues that may be better informed on language and cultural practices. Yet, at times, it is evident that their own preconceived notions about race and culture impedes the way they can navigate their assessment procedures. Participant 5 reported that it is difficult for them to work with Latino families, as she finds them to lie or exaggerate their concerns surrounding the child. However, Participant 5 seeks out support from a bilingual school psychologist to help facilitate communication with the family.

A child who is raced and potentially disabled is often looked at as a difficult child who cannot learn the traditional way (Sullivan et al., 2019). At times, small deviances from the norm, like irregular attendance or behavioral concerns, signal to schools that they must assess these students for special education. Again, special education is then seen as the "intervention"; special education is the only means to support the student. Irvine (2012) claims that Black families are hesitant to have their children assessed for special education, due to stereotypical ideas about their child that may (e.g., a child demonstrating hyperactive behaviors being construed as unteachable) (Irvine, 2012). The same sentiment was expressed by some of the participants. Participant 7 reported that students that have been assessed, without a prior suspicion or evidence of a disability, were referred for assessment due to attendance or behavior issues. In turn, if the child qualified, a restrictive, "special day class" setting was recommended.

On the surface, there is support that is justified, but placement in special education may add to the breadth of issues of disproportionate numbers of CLD students in special education (Irvine, 2012). Additionally, the provision of special education services may be seen as a punishment, even during the administration of assessments. For example, Participant 11 reported having a conversation with the child to ensure them that they are not "dumb." That sentiment expressed by that student in the anecdote is another form of ramification, as even the mere

completion of a standardized test could lead to feelings of inadequacy and compromise the student's own self-worth.

Legal/Historical Considerations

Tenet 5 of DisCrit discusses that "DisCrit considers legal and historical aspects of dis/ability and race and how both have been used separately and together to deny the rights of some citizens" (Annamma et a., 2013, 2018); DisCrit emphasizes the need to uncover the historical underpinning of how race and disability have transformed into their modern iterations (Proctor & Rivera, 2022). This tenet includes how legislation and the sociopolitical sphere of race and ability have impacted the current issues that plague CLD students with disabilities. The participants were mindful in considering how special education law, case law, and other historical issues have been used to further disenfranchise marginalized people. Additionally, the systemic issues revealed by the participating school psychologists relate back to the lack of clarity in state and federal special education laws.

Consideration of Historical Case Laws

The landmark court case of *Larry P. vs. Riles* (1979), that made it illegal to use IQ tests on Black students, was discussed as one main consideration to the participants' practice when assessing Black students. The landmark court case ruled that IQ tests were culturally irrelevant to Black students, evidenced by many Black boys being placed in special education, due to low IQ scores (*Larry P vs. Riles*, 1979). Participants in the study cited difficulty providing sound assessments due to the limitations established by the court case. They described how the case provided new guidelines for what standardized measures they can use. The participants reported using subtests from various measures to provide a comprehensive evaluation, relying on alternate assessment approaches, and relying on qualitative assessment methods (observations, interviews,

review of records). However, there is no correct, standard way to approach the case law to ensure that a sound, equitable psycho-educational assessment is conducted. Lawyers and legal experts take on case laws with different lenses; they interpret the outcomes of the case law differently, and then provide recommendations to special education personnel based on their interpretations. In turn, blanket recommendations are not easily found. Even among the participants, their viewpoints on testing for special education vary.

Additionally, the case law does not address other racial and ethnic subgroups who may have been ultimately harmed by IQ testing. IQ testing and other forms of standardized testing not only harm CLD students, but they can harm all students regardless of racial, ethnic, and linguistic background. As discussed by Au (2013), standardized testing enables a meritocratic society and educational system. Worth is bestowed upon those who are deemed highly intelligent, where those who are considered subaverage to the norm are boxed into categories that deem them as worthless (Au, 2013; Irvine, 2012). Experts in psychometrics, school psychology, and special education law should consider why so much emphasis is placed on the routine use of the IQ test and why there is so much emphasis on completing an IQ test and what other methods can be used with not just Black or CLD students, but with all students. Even though IQ tests have shown to be harmful and are based on prejudiced ideals, some of the participants see the IQ test and other standardized tests as a necessary component of the psycho-educational assessment process.

The standardized tests they use in their practice provide them with a better understanding of the child's strengths, weaknesses, and needs to support their education. As mentioned by Klassen et al (2005), although IQ tests are understood to be problematic, there is not enough training sometimes on other measures, so school psychologists may hold fast onto archaic, faulty

measures, like IQ tests. When looking at IDEA's (2004) eligibility criteria, mainly for SLD, Intellectual Disability (ID), and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), the criteria denote a way to identify impairments in cognition (ID and TBI) and a total intelligence score (SLD). With that in mind, federal law allows for the continued use of the IQ test. Along with the IQ test and standardized measures being a common tool, per the participants, vague special education laws add to the continued use of IQ tests. The participants expressed frustration with how vague special education law is and how the vagueness does not provide clear guidance on how to navigate psycho-educational assessment. It can be deduced that the unclear guidelines set forth by IDEA (2004) complicates their practice and leaves them with little room to explore other avenues during assessment.

Unclear Special Education Laws

Within the SLD eligibility criteria, there are exclusionary factors that would not allow a student to be eligible for special education. Per IDEA (2004), if a student's learning is impacted by a lack of English proficiency, visual impairment, hearing impairments, motor impairment, cultural factors, an emotional disturbance, economic disadvantage, or an intellectual disability. While these exclusionary factors are meant to help understand that learning difficulties are common with the aforementioned factors, they are not necessarily SLD (Kavale, Spaulding & Beam, 2009). In trying to operationally define SLD, the SLD criteria is left up to interpretation (Kavale et al., 2009). There is an unclear consensus of what SLD is, so school psychologists are left with a difficult task: understanding what an SLD is not (Kavale et al., 2009). Additionally, IDEA (2004) provides three ways to identify SLD: discrepancy model (which relies on IQ tests and standardized academic achievement tests), patterns of strengths and weaknesses, or RTI (no use of IQ Testing). However, IDEA (2004) and California Education Code allow for these 3

measures, but not one is compulsory. Therefore, school psychologists may feel comfortable

sticking with IQ tests, like mentioned by Klassen et al (2005) versus using a proactive approach,

like RTI, depending on their level of training. In turn, SLD in particular, despite the

exclusionary factors, provides another layer of difficulty for the school psychologist, and in turn

may further dampen the way they approach psycho-educational assessments with CLD students.

IQ Testing Misuse: CLD Students. Additionally, some of the participants referenced

the historical misuse of IQ testing. As described by Miguel and Valencia (1998) and Blanton

(2000), IQ tests were used to justify two things: students of color (Black and Mexican students)

were inferior in intellect to White people and that they belonged in separate, restrictive settings.

Some of the participants described that they are aware of the misuse of IQ tests, which

historically has aided in the disproportionate numbers of students of color, mainly Black

students, in special education (NCES, 2019). What is important about the participant's awareness

of historical issues with IQ tests and their misuse is that the participants are not only cognizant

about what happened, but are attempting to be proactive in creating equitable assessment

practices.

As noted in Chapter 4, their awareness of historical misuse of IQ tests and

misidentification of Black students and English Language Learners leads them to take more time

to identify assessments that are culturally sensitive, include families to gauge their expertise, and

are supplementing their assessments with qualitative and alternative measures. However, CLD

students are still being put through the psycho-educational assessment process; the amount of

CLD students in special education has not reduced. IQ testing is still allowed for other racial and

ethnic subgroups in California and the ban on IQ testing for Black students is not extended to

other states (*Larry P v. Riles*, 1979; Womack et al., 2022, as cited in Proctor & Rivera, 2022). If historical and legal matters are being considered as per Tenet 5 of DisCrit (Annamma et al., 2013; 2018), it would behoove school psychologists to analyze the systems that have continued to allow the use of standardized tests despite the controversy.

Historically, students of color who were assessed and then placed in special education have been left with challenging lives. Some of these students have not been able to graduate high school, have been in jail, have been involved in delinquent behavior, among experiencing other negative outcomes (Irvine, 2012). Therefore, special education has been used to punish differences in language, behavior, and learning, instead of building up those skills for further educational success and advancement (Connor & Ferri, 2005). Again, experts in special education, school psychology, and policymakers need to fully analyze current laws in place that are meant to protect CLD students from unfair referrals for psycho-educational testing and create and enact amendments to the current breadth of special education law to ensure that CLD students are fully protected.

Unexpected Findings

While some of the current study's findings mirrored previous research, there are three unexpected findings that arose, relating to special education as the only resource, family and student as the expert, and ethical assessment procedures. The unexpected findings provide not only a better understanding of issues that the participating school psychologists interact with routinely, but also provide a better understanding of how the participants adhere to ethics to attempt a sound, culturally sensitive psycho-educational assessment.

Special Education as the Only Resource

While I expected that some of the participating school psychologists would share how a lack of resources may impact their assessment process, I envisioned that the resources that their schools needed would be appropriate curriculum-based measures, interventions for academic or social/emotional growth, or personnel who can provide extra support like school counselors and school social workers. While some of these resources were discussed as a need, I was surprised that some of the participants shared that for some families, having a child in special education is helpful in securing social benefits and services. Therefore, the participants feel pressure to not only assess the student, but they feel stuck in how they should address if the child does not qualify for special education. I was prepared for the participants to discuss the shortcomings of the school system, but I was not prepared to hear and understand how society is filled with shortcomings.

As a White Latino man from a middle-class family, I do not always see the roadblocks CLD families face to ensure their children have a successful education. However, as a practicing school psychologist, now, where I routinely interact and collaborate with CLD students, I have gained new awareness about the shortcomings of the American school system, namely the special education system, and how they leave families with no resources, but special education. Additionally, I am left to question, what social support is available? What is the procedure to receive such support? How do people, especially those not working within education, engage with people with disabilities? Families may be hesitant to accept help from schools, but sometimes they feel desperate and feel they must succumb to school procedures, like assessment for special education (Irvine, 2012).

Family and Student as the Experts

Another unexpected finding, albeit a positive one, was the value the participants placed on including the students and their families within the psycho-educational assessment process. Traditional psycho-educational assessment practices continue to imbalance the power between families and school personnel. Even though the participants mainly stick to traditional assessment methods, it was impressive to see how they include families during the entire assessment process. While the participants were not overt with this sentiment, it was noticeable and commendable that they attempted to disrupt the archaic version of psycho-educational assessments. They are honest with the students and families about the process, acknowledging that the assessment process may be daunting, but they are attempting to make the process more palatable to endure. Additionally, the participants do not want to highlight the weaknesses, as was the original intent of earlier iterations of diagnosis and identifying students with disabilities. They want to celebrate the students' differences and strengths. The compassion they showed in humanizing the families and students is an act of resistance made to support the students and their families.

Ethical Psycho-Educational Assessment Practices. As noted by the litany of research regarding ethical psycho-educational assessment practices (e.g., Algozzine & Ysseldyke, 1981; Golson et al, 2022; Huebner, 1990; O'Reilly et al., 1989; Singer et al., 1989; Sullivan et al., 2019), school psychologists may engage in unethical assessment practices, like manipulating test data, to justify a student's placement in special education. These unethical practices may lead to mistrust between families and the school system, as noted by Irvine (2012). It is important that school psychology as a discipline was born through stereotypes about Whiteness and intelligence. However, the participating school psychologists are aware how special education may be weaponized against CLD students, such as a placement in restricted classroom settings or

a loss of opportunities to engage with general education peers. In turn, they do not want to fall victim to unethical assessment practices as noted by previous researchers (e.g., manipulating assessment data to support special education eligibility; Algozzine & Ysseldyke, 1981; O'Reilly et al., 1989; Singer et al., 1989). As noted by the participants, they want to ensure that they do not engage in faulty, archaic practices, but it is evident that the educational systems complicate their practices. NASP (2019) acknowledges that the certain laws and regulations further harm CLD students, but NASP provides resources and recommendations for practitioners to dismantle oppressive practices. While NASP and the practicing school psychologists are cognizant about the pitfalls of special education, they notice the need to be culturally sensitive with the families they serve.

Conclusion

The discussion chapter provides explanations on how the data gathered from the open-response survey, the individual interviews, and the themes connect to the theoretical framework, DisCrit, and the identified literature, and why it matters. The study as a whole and the data collected highlighted how race and ability are interdependent with each other, how school psychologists are considerate of CLD students' multiple identities during the assessment process, and how legal and historical aspects of the marginalization of disabled people have impacted their practices with CLD students. The following chapter will discuss recommendations for practicing school psychologists as they continue to work with CLD students, district administrators, school psychology trainees, and policymakers. Additionally, recommendations for future school psychology or special education researchers are discussed so that they can ensure that the voices of marginalized people are centered in future studies, as well as other recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the study is to understand how California school psychologists define equity in the psycho-educational assessment process, what system issues impact their assessment practices, and how they adjust their assessment practices as they work with CLD students. The purpose of the study was to not only answer the research questions, but to provide further understanding about how the participating school psychologists attempt to support CLD students, despite the issues they identified. In Chapter 6, I provide an overview/summary of the participants, methodology, findings, and how the findings relate to the most salient pieces of literature that influenced my study. Unexpected findings, implications of this study, limitations, and recommendations for policymakers, school district administrators, practicing school psychologists, school psychology trainers, and future researchers, are discussed.

Overview of the Problem

Standardized IQ testing has become a mainstay in the field of psychology. IQ testing helped quantify intelligence, but also provided a "scientific" manner to uphold faulty notions of intelligence, that has been especially harmful to people of color (Au, 2014; Kaufman, 2000; Fagan & Wise, 1994; Holman et al., 2021; Merrell et al, 2012; Murdoch, 2009). The IQ test historically was used to separate students of color, like Black and Mexican students, from their White counterparts, which further promoted the false idea that White students are intellectually superior (Miguel & Valencia, 1988). IQ testing became a routine part of the psycho-educational assessment process as compulsory schooling became a legal component of the US public education system. Today, IQ testing is still used for the purposes of special education eligibility, which further oppresses marginalized communities, like CLD students. CLD students' performance on routine IQ tests may impact how teachers perceive them, perpetuate flawed

Eurocentric ideals about intelligence, and leave CLD students to continually experience prejudice and mistreatment from school staff (Irvine, 2012; Link & Ratledge, 1979).

Study Participants, Methodology, and Findings

In this study, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1.) What does equitable assessment mean to school psychologists as they work with CLD students?

a.) What systemic issues impact their assessment practices with CLD students?

b.) How do school psychologists adjust their assessment practices with CLD students?

As IQ testing continues to be a controversial topic in special education and school psychology, school psychologists' perspectives related to equity in psycho-educational assessment provide rich insight into how they define equity and offer a clearer understanding of the various factors that impact their assessment process, through their perspectives, as well as when completing psycho-educational assessments. Although previous studies have examined school psychologists' assessment practices using quantitative or mixed-methods, I chose to use phenomenological lens and a qualitative methodology, to deepen knowledge about various factors that impede the assessment process, alternative assessment methods, and about how school psychologists define equity in psycho-educational assessments. The phenomenon of assessing CLD students for special education has been previously researched, but the perspectives from practicing school psychologists regarding the specifics of how students' CLD status impacts their assessment process is not heavily researched.

Ten practicing California school psychologists participated in this study, where they completed an open-response questionnaire and participated in an individual interview. The participating school psychologists had varying years of experience working in public and charter schools in California. Responses, along with analytic memos, were analyzed through Values coding, where 30 codes were identified. Additionally, hierarchical coding helped organize the codes, where the three main codes are: (1) Fair Assessment Practices, (2) Downsides of Assessment, (3) Systemic Issues.

The participating school psychologists identified that equitable psycho-educational evaluations are comprehensive, include the use of qualitative measures, and involve both the student and the family in the assessment process. The participating school psychologists consider that equitable assessments are dynamic, and they must consider the student's acclimation to the US and consider the use of alternative methods and measures, especially when CLD students are assessed. They also identified some of the systemic issues that impede the assessment process for CLD students, including vague special education laws, lack of resources and interventions, and a lack of continued training for practicing school psychologists. Some of the unexpected findings relate to special education as the only resource, how the family and student are used as experts in the assessment process, and how ethical assessment practices are paramount during assessment.

Findings Related to the Literature

The responses from the participants echoed what the salient empirical studies, books, and articles discussed surrounding assessment practices and systemic issues, related to the assessment of CLD students for special education. First, participants do not take a color-evasive approach to their assessment practices. They do not utilize the same battery of assessment and methods for all students they assess for special education. The participants revealed being

cognizant of the child's ethnic, linguistic, and racial background, which impacts the ways they approach their assessments. This sentiment echoes tenets of DisCrit and from Proctor & Rivera (2021), where the concept of race, although socially constructed, has become a normalized facet of society. The participants recognized that cultural and racial differences may lead students to be referred for assessment, but recognized that it is their duty to responsibly, ethically, and equitably assess CLD students, which includes considering a child's racial background in selecting assessment tools and methods.

Participants defined an equitable psycho-educational assessment as one that is comprehensive, entails the use of qualitative measures, and includes both the student and the family. Participants were aware that using standardized tests, like IQ tests, should not be the sole indicator of qualifying CLD students for special education (Sotelo-Dynega & Dixon, 2014; Vega et al., 2019). Participants understand that the family and the student should have a major role throughout various phases of the psycho-educational assessment process (Holman et al., 2019; Tharinger et al., 2019). There needs to be trust and rapport built throughout the assessment process, which some of the participants reported being a hallmark of an equitable psycho-educational assessment. Student and family involvement looks like a complete explanation of the assessment process, the purpose of each administered test or rating scale, and providing opportunities for families to provide feedback during the assessment process (Gentry, 2017; Holman et al., 2019).

Per the participants, systemic issues are some of the roadblocks that complicate the psycho-educational assessment process. Some of the issues that the participants mentioned include the lack of administration support they receive to enhance their assessment practices. Some of the participants reported that they believe that the issues that they experience with

psycho-educational assessment practices with CLD students could be addressed through administrators allowing opportunities for further training or having opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues for feedback on CLD assessment practices (Filter & Ebson, 2013; Gonzalez, 2019; Newman et al., 2018; Shernoff et al., 2017). Additionally, some of the participants stressed the importance of mandatory continuing education/training for practicing school psychologists as a need, which is a recommendation from Gonzalez et al (2019) and Ding et al (2019). Research on assessment practices is ever changing, so it is imperative that practicing school psychologists receive updated training on this topic (Ding et al, 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2019). Lastly, the participants shared a wide range of systemic issues like a lack of resources, lack of culturally-sound assessment batteries, and a lack of district policies and practices to help mainstream CLD-appropriate assessment practices. These obstacles, because of systemic issues, are noted by Vega et al (2016), where similar issues related to CLD psycho-educational assessment practices were identified.

Implications

In discussing some of the pitfalls or issues the participating school psychologists have experienced, they mentioned that undue pressure from various people impacts their assessment practices with CLD students. Yet, they also demonstrated a grasp on the varied multicultural issues that CLD students experience.

Undue Pressure

A major implication from this study is that school psychologists deal with tremendous pressure during the psycho-educational assessment process. The participating school psychologist referenced undue pressure impacting their assessment practices 11 times throughout the study. As a school psychologist, you are meant to be the gatekeeper of who is or is not

eligible for special education (NASP, 2021). Hence, the participants reported that they receive pressure from various individuals, like parents or administrators, to qualify students for special education. It is implied, through the responses of the participating school psychologists, that they are left with little room or choice to not go forward with assessing CLD students, even if the assessment could lead to further marginalization of the student. Therefore, it is imperative that school districts create a breadth of support, resources, and interventions for students and families so that assessing CLD students for special education is not the sole option. School psychologists are skilled in other areas besides assessment. Instead, with support from their school district officials, practicing school psychologists can use skills like counseling, consultation, and home-school collaboration to support CLD students (e.g., providing prevention/intervention services, *Who Are School Psychologists*, 2014).

School Psychologists and Multicultural Awareness

Another implication is the participating school psychologists' knowledge and training on being culturally aware or sensitive when assessing CLD students for special education. The participating school psychologists, referenced 5 times throughout the study, demonstrated the pitfalls of the traditional psycho-educational assessment process with CLD students. The school psychologists conveyed that they are cognizant that CLD students in special education are often at the brunt of mistreatment by school staff, which is noted by Sullivan et al (2019) and Irvine (2012). They are aware that special education as a system and its set of laws were not created to protect the well-being of all students who are put through the psycho-educational assessment process. The school psychologists adhere to the many NASP position papers, where NASP advocates for school psychologists to engage in self and systems-analysis to consider the outcomes and treatment of CLD students within the public school system.

This is an important implication, as it can be argued that the creation of school psychology as a subfield in psychology is based on racist and ableist ideals (Proctor & Rivera, 2022). However, it was noted by the participating school psychologists that they reject racist and ableist ideals when testing CLD students for special education. Although Ding et al (2019) discussed that school psychology training programs are not uniformed in how they teach diversity as it applies to school psychological services, it is implied that the programs they obtained their training from are providing an arsenal of tools, strategies, and methods to leave school psychologists ready to tackle cases where they work with CLD students. While some of the participants may not have much experience with using alternative measures to assess CLD students for special education, they understand being culturally sensitive. It is imperative that school psychologists acknowledge the diversity within the student populations they serve and consider ways that the public school system should be structured so that diversity is seen as a normal part of student populations, and not as a sign of deviance or a disruption to notions of typicality, intelligence, and academic achievement.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are related to the study's methodology, the small sample size, the geographic location of the sample, and my own identity as a school psychologist that impacted the study. First, the study methodology, although it produced rich results, is far from being generalizable. My study population was composed of practicing school psychologists in California, so their responses, experiences, values, and beliefs cannot be generalized to all practicing school psychologists in the US, or even to the rest of the practicing school psychologists in California. However, the intention of this study was not to utilize the data to generalize them to the school psychologist's population. Rather, my intention with using

phenomenology was to identify the specific beliefs, attitudes, values, and experiences of this subset of the population. Additionally, aspects of the methodology, specifically the interaction between myself and the participants, may have impeded the data. As recommended by the IRB, I instructed the participants to turn off their cameras and change their names to pseudonyms. While these measures protected the identity of the participant, this practice did not allow me to pick up the nuances in their body language or facial expressions, especially when trying to make sense of their words. Another limitation through the methodology was the use of a structured interview. While I did ask some follow-up questions for the purposes of clarifying the participants' words, a semi-structured or unstructured interview could be paramount in finding out more about the experiences of practicing school psychologists as they assess CLD students for special education.

Second, the number of school psychologists that participated in my study was small. Initially, I hoped to have 16-20 practicing school psychologists participate in all phases of the study but was only able to recruit 10. While the data collected is rich with findings, it would have been more impactful to see a larger sample population for the study to fortify the commonalities that were established by the 10 participants, or if their testimonies would provide a contrasting experience to what was shared by the participants. Future studies should recruit a larger sample of participants and should consider expanding this study to include practicing school psychologists from across the US, not just California.

Lastly, my role as a researcher and a practicing school psychologist is another limitation to this study. Although I engaged in bracketing, which is purposefully keeping my own biases and prejudices at bay, through the analytic memoing process, it is not likely that all my preconceived biases were not impacting the analysis of the data. Additionally, the participants

may have felt that they needed to impress me, as my role as a PhD candidate and practicing school psychologist may have influenced their interactions with me during the process.

Recommendations

Based on the collected data, subsequent findings, limitations, and implications, I offer some recommendations that policymakers, administrators, practicing school psychologists, and school psychology trainers can consider especially when dealing with psycho-educational assessment practices with CLD students. Recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Policymakers

Clarify Existing Laws

Federal and state laws surrounding psycho-educational assessments are vague and provide little guidance when assessing CLD students for special education. Policymakers at both the state and federal levels need to carefully review the current laws and regulations, IDEA, set forth by the federal government and California Education Code, and identify if the current laws in place are protecting CLD students from wrongful referrals for evaluation. Additionally, policymakers should consider extending the exclusionary factors that are under the category of Specific Learning Disability (SLD) to be applied to the remaining 12 categories under IDEA (2004). Specifically, students, per IDEA (2004), should not be made eligible for special education under the category of SLD if their educational performance is impacted by a visual, hearing or motor disability, intellectual disability, emotional disability, cultural factors, environmental/economic factors, limited English proficiency, and loss of instructional time. These exclusionary factors are not applied to the remaining 12 categories, therefore, policymakers can consider extending these exclusionary factors to the remaining categories, as

some CLD students who are assessed for special education may be recommended for eligibility under other categories.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the new iteration of SLD per IDEA (2004) was meant to differentiate between what SLD is and what SLD is not, hence the exclusionary factors were included in the SLD criteria (Kavale et al., 2009). Additionally, the IDEA (2004) new iteration was to account for the overidentification of students with SLD (Kavale & Flanagan, 2007). However, Black, American Indian, and Latino students continue to be over-represented among special education students, compared to White students.

Mandate Continuing Education

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), the governing body that regulates teaching credentials and PPS credentials in school psychological services, could mandate continuing education for practicing school psychologists. Currently, school psychologists who carry the NCSP or LEP licensure are expected to engage and show proof of continuing education every five years. California's PPS credential in school psychology only requires a fee payment every 5 years to renew the credential. Therefore, to ensure that practicing school psychologists are receiving up-to date training on a wide range of topics, especially topics related to CLD students and psycho-educational assessments, mandating continuing education when renewing the PPS credentials could ensure that practicing school psychologists receive the most up-to-date information on assessment practices with CLD students.

School District Administrators

Administrator Support for School Psychologists

The participating school psychologists urged for more support from their administrators for issues with psycho-educational assessment with CLD students. The participants referenced

needing more administrative support 9 times throughout the study. Therefore, school districts can prioritize creating initiatives and resources to help families so that families do not feel that special education is the only gateway to receiving help and support. School District Administrators such as special education directors, principals, and student services directors, can better their practices related to the protection of CLD students and their referral for psycho-educational assessment. School district administrators can engage in continuing education, where they too can have updated information and understanding of CLD assessment practices. Administrators can provide their school psychologists and related special education personnel with opportunities to participate in continuing education or to have time set aside to collaborate with their colleagues on cases they need support in. Administrators can also devise district policies that include promoting response to intervention practices, routine of curriculum-based measures, etc., prior to referring students for special education. In turn, administrators can collaborate with special education providers and school psychologists and the needs of their districts to better support their student population.

Responsive Interventions and Resources

To help mitigate the lack of resources for families, school district administrators can implement a responsive, active approach to provide support for families and their children, especially with CLD families. One way to support CLD families is to implement programs through the community school model. The community school model is an evidence-based, community-driven system that seeks to support the whole child and families (California Department of Education, 2022; Min et al., 2017; Oakes et al., 2017). The community school model offers a hub of support services, paired with community agencies, that can include educational, behavioral, health, and mental health supports and services. With a system in place

to better support families, especially vulnerable populations like CLD families, families may not only have a better rapport with school personnel but may lessen the need to request special education services for support. The community school model offers a collaborative approach between school personnel, community partnerships, and families. This model could be advantageous in offering a streamlined approach to disrupt the power imbalances between families and school personnel, as CLD families have a long history of mistrust with the school (Irvine, 2012). Therefore, it would behoove administrators to include such a model in those schools, as it is their duty to ensure the well-being of all their students.

Another framework that could increase the provision of support to students and their families is the SWIFT Schools framework. SWIFT stands for Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation, in which academic and behavioral supports are provided to all students, including students with various disabilities (McCart, Sailor, Bezdek & Satter, 2014, as cited in Gross et al., 2018). The SWIFT framework includes utilizing evidence-based practices to engage the school and their families, which can aid in family engagement and participation. Use of the SWIFT framework has shown to increase family participation in their child's education, but also has shown positive parent perceptions about the school (Gross et al., 2018). The SWIFT framework has also shown to increase the use of inclusive practices in schools, like increasing special education students involvement in the general education setting (Kurth et al., 2018). Frameworks like SWIFT and movements like the Community Schools movement can help create inclusivity, but also value the family as equal agents in their children's education and would negate the need from school psychologists and families to identify their children with a disability.

Practicing School Psychologists

Professional Development

Practicing school psychologists can engage in professional development that relates to assessment practices with CLD students. School psychologists could seek out professional development from NASP, American Psychological Association (APA), American Educational Research Association (AERA), or from other major organizations for support in this area. Practicing school psychologists can also seek training within the area of alternative assessment practices that do not use standardized testing. While the participating school psychologists shared some knowledge on alternative assessment practices, some participants had a meager understanding of what alternative assessment practices can look like. Therefore, training in this area is needed.

Increase Family Engagement

Study results highlight the importance of including the student and family during the assessment process. While there were some discussions on how the student and family is involved in the completion of interviews, rating scales, etc., there was not much conversation about how school psychologists keep in contact with the families they work with. Practicing school psychologists can consider how the school system, historically, fostered distrust in families (Irvine, 2012), and seek ways to follow-up with families so that trust and rapport is created and maintained. In turn, school psychologists can integrate culturally sensitive approaches by using facets of a therapeutic assessment.

A Therapeutic Assessment (TA) could be applied to a school-based/psycho-educational assessment, as therapeutic assessment provides assessors with a sound approach to being mindful or racial, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic factors (Hamilton et al., 2009; Holman et al., 2022; Tharinger et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2010. School psychologists can remain mindful about the

differences CLD students present, but school psychologists can establish assessment procedures that ensure that they foster a connection with the families they work with, since family/student connection was a hallmark piece of a comprehensive, equitable psycho-educational assessment. Additionally, practicing school psychologists can further embed qualitative measure through TA, through the use interviews, observations, and family involvement can further enhance the connections they have with the families they serve, but also ensure that cultural differences are addressed, but not the sole reason to qualify a student for special education (Gentry, 2017; Holman et al., 2019).

School psychologists can continue to foster relationships with families to ensure that families and students remain involved in their child's educational journey. Some ways to foster school-family relationships could include establishing parent engagement through screening and assessment procedures, serving as liaisons between communication between the home and school, and providing parent workshops on the importance of family engagement throughout their child's schooling (NASP, 2019). Using facets of TA is another way to ensure that families and students are included in the assessment process. School psychologist practitioners must allow the student to give feedback during assessment, provide opportunities for families to ask questions, and lastly create opportunities to ensure that families understand completely the purpose of all assessment procedures, both standardized and alternative methods, seek to uncover (Gentry, 2017).

School Psychologists as Change-Agents. As recommended by NASP's position papers (2012, 2019, 2021), it is imperative that practicing school psychologists engage in acts of resistance to seek to change inequalities in the systems that impede the learning of CLD students. School psychologists should engage in self-reflection/analysis to understand how the social

constructs of race and ability have impacted the way CLD students have been treated in schools (Merrel et al., 2012; NASP, 2012). School psychologists should also advocate for systems change in their respective districts/educational entities. They can advocate for the use of RTI as a proactive approach to supporting CLD students, advocate for changes in psycho-educational assessment (e.g., embedding facets of TA in their own practices), and advocate for culturally responsive policies and practices at their schools (NASP, 2012).

<div style="text-align:center">**School Psychology Trainers**</div>

Multicultural Assessment Training

School psychology trainers at the masters, specialist, and doctoral level must unify to ensure that all school psychologists they train have a sound arsenal of tools to support psycho-educational assessment with CLD students. To ensure this, school psychology trainers across the US must have a unified approach and curriculum on how school psychologists should assess CLD students for special education. As noted by Gonzalez et al (2019) and Ding et al (2019), school psychology curriculum, especially curriculum surrounding CLD assessment practices are varied. School psychology trainers need to follow and adhere to NASP's Ethical Principles as a basis for training. Then, trainers should come together to devise and implement a curriculum that universally teaches future school psychologist ethical assessment practices with CLD students.

Additionally, school psychology trainers should also create courses, or embed them into their current catalog, on alternative assessment practices. Equitable assessment methods can and should be taught in school psychology training programs at all levels (masters, specialist, doctoral). Proctor and Rivera (2022, p. 43) encourage that training programs embed tenets of DisCrit in the selection and reading of materials. Graduate training programs must be clear in teaching trainees the history of IQ tests and how aspects of White supremacy and Eurocentricity

are culprits in its rocky history. In relation to discussing White ideologies, graduate training programs should be purposeful in conversing about these ideologies and how they impact service delivery, procedures, policies, and practices in schools.

Ding et al (2019) and Newell et al (2018) found that school psychology training programs are not uniformed in how multicultural issues are taught. To close this gap, school psychology training programs can offer training opportunities for professors/trainers so that they can gauge a better understanding of current multicultural issues, not just in assessment (Garcia-Joslin et al., 2016; Rogers, 2006). When students take multicultural courses from experienced professors, they feel better prepared to tackle multicultural issues in practices Keim et al (2001). Rogers (2006), as cited by Newell et al (2018), encouraged programs to seek opportunities for their students with many diverse populations, not just one type. This can be completed through diverse practicum and internship experiences (Ding et al., 2019; Lopez & Bursztyn, 2013; Newell et al; 2018). Plus, graduate training programs should stress mastery in multicultural issues, such as having their students demonstrate mastery in an assessment for a CLD student.

School psychologists and school psychology professors need to focus on culturally sensitive assessment practices that should be implemented to ensure a well-rounded comprehensive psycho-educational evaluation (Ding et al., 2019). In summation, school psychology training programs, and even school districts, must invest the time to provide further training, whether embedded in school psychology training programs, or as part of professional development to enhance school psychologists' assessment practices and enhance their confidence in not always adhering to traditional assessment methods.

Future Research

Tenet 4 of DisCrit describes that the perspectives, experiences, and beliefs of disabled people should be highlighted in research (Proctor & Rivera, 2022). Proctor and Rivera (2022) also indicate that nondisabled researchers should allow disabled people to lead such research; "giving voice" within the works of nondisabled researchers is not enough. There needs to be room for disabled people to provide counternarratives to what is believed to be normal about being a person of color with a disability (Proctor & Rivera, 2022).

I am not a researcher with a disability, nor did I specifically include people with disabilities; the people who participated in the study, practicing school psychologists, were not necessarily people with disabilities. One participant reported being neurodivergent, and explained how their identity impacts their practice as a school psychologist. Although school psychologists' perspectives regarding assessment with CLD students with a phenomenological lens is not routinely completed, school psychologists are not considered a group of marginalized people (Goforth et al., 2021). Per a membership survey conducted for NASP by Goforth et al (2021), in a sample of practicing school psychologists, 5.6% of respondents revealed having a disability; 93.1% reported not having a disability. For the current study, practicing school psychologists were asked to participate, but there were no criteria that included having a disability. Although participants reported working intently with the students and families during the psycho-educational assessment process to give families a voice and hear their perspectives about their children's academic challenges, people with disabilities, their voices and their experiences of being disabled in the US were not centered. Therefore, future researchers must seek out people who actively identify themselves as people with disabilities and have them share their experiences, values, and beliefs related to psycho-educational assessment.

Future studies should also look to involve school psychologists with disabilities to share what it is like to work with disabled populations while being disabled themselves. Or a disabled school psychologist should embark on a research study that involves autoethnography, to highlight their experiences working within the American educational system, that is a byproduct of racist and ableist ideals. Involving people with disabilities is needed to fully adhere to DisCrit and to ensure that the voices of disabled people are elevated in spaces that are not usually constructed for people with disabilities.

Concluding Remarks

Through this study, I aimed to uncover how the participating school psychologists define an equitable psycho-educational assessment, how students' racial, linguistic, and ethnic background impact their assessment, and what systemic issues they notice impede their assessment process. Through their responses via the open-response questionnaire and the individual interview, along with my analytic memos, the participating school psychologists define that an equitable psycho-educational assessment is comprehensive, uses qualitative measures, and includes family and students. They are cognizant about CLD students' background and use their background to form the assessments they give. Yet, they are aware of the various systemic issues, like faulty district practices or vague special education laws. The participating school psychologists demonstrated that they are aware of the many issues surrounding psycho-educational assessment with CLD students and are attempting to create equitable, culturally sensitive assessment practices to ensure that they paint an accurate picture of the students they assess.

The participating school psychologists reported that it is vital that they include various measures during the process, as it is not ethical to rely on one standardized test to support special

educational eligibility. They stressed the importance of including the family and the student throughout the assessment process, which is helpful in creating trust and rapport with the families that they work with. However, the participating school psychologists are trying to navigate their practices within their schools where there are unclear procedures, vague policies/laws, and a lack of interventions and resources. The participating school psychologists demonstrated an equity-mindset when assessing CLD students for special education. However, school districts, policymakers, and school psychology training programs need to better understand the harm that CLD students have endured and continue to endure, because of some of the faults found within the psycho-educational assessment process.

The responses from the participating school psychologists demonstrated that the current population of school psychologist practitioners are attempting to create equity in a system that has not been equitable to CLD students and other historically marginalized populations. The participants are screaming for change within special education, so that CLD students are better protected by the American school system that has failed CLD and disabled students historically. The American school system, especially the special education system, has grown a lot form its infancy, but all educators, students, families, and those with a legitimate interest in the betterment of the school system must band together to create schools where CLD students are not oppressed for their differences that need correction, but instead a school system where student differences are celebrated.

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APPENDIX A

Open-Ended Response Questionnaire

Open-Ended Response Questionnaire

Thank you for your time and consideration in taking part in this dissertation research study. Prior to the interview, please complete the following open responses. You can be as brief or as

detailed as you would like. If you have any questions or need clarification with the following questions, please contact Hector M. Teran Jr. at hteran@sandiego.edu.

As detailed in the consent form you received prior to beginning your participation, you may ask

to cease participation at any time. Please contact Hector M. Teran Jr., if you no longer wish to

participate in this study.

As a participant, your name, the district you work for, or any other identifying information will be protected. Your name will not be used in the dissemination of the information provided. Your

name will be coded with a title (Participant 1, for example).

The questionnaire will provide insight into the assessment process through your eyes.

Please complete all questions and click "Submit". Google Forms will notify me when you have

completed the questionnaire.

* Indicates required question

1. Email *

_____

2. 1.) What standardized assessment tools do you use in your practice (e.g., WISC-V, *
    WJ-IV, etc.)? Please include cognitive measures, academic achievement
    measures, processing measures, and rating scales you use or have used in your
    practice. Then, briefly describe why you find these tools useful.

3. 2.) What barriers have you experienced when assessing students? *

4. 3.) If you use any strategies, activities, and/or methods to reduce bias while *
    selecting assessment tools and methods for special education assessments, what
    are they?

Thank you for your time in completing the open responses. Mr. Teran Jr. will contact you
to schedule the interview.

APPENDIX B

Structured Interview Protocol

Interviewee Number/Code	
Interviewer	H. Teran Jr.
Date of Interview	
Time	
Duration of Interview in Minutes	
Location	Zoom/Virtual

Script:

I am Hector M. Teran Jr., PhD Candidate at the University of San Diego. I am also a practicing school psychologist here in California. It is a pleasure to meet you. Thank you for your time in participating in the research study. I also want to thank you for taking the time completing the initial open response portion for this study.

Today we will spend approximately 60-90 minutes together. The purpose of this study is to understand your perspectives, beliefs, and attitudes about your assessment practices, specifically when assessing children from racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Before we begin, we will review the Informed Consent form you signed prior to participating in the study. *Form reviewed with the participant*

With your consent, I am recording these responses via the Zoom recording feature. Prior to beginning the recording, you will be asked to turn off your camera and change your display name before recording begins. To change your display name, click on the three dots next to your name, click on rename. You will change your name to Participant # 5. Please know that your name, the district you work for, or any other identifying information will not be made public. Your name will also not be used in the dissemination of the research. You have been assigned a participant number in lieu of your real name. As detailed in the consent form you received prior to beginning your participation, you may ask to cease participation at any time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Go ahead and turn off your camera and change your display name. Once you are finished, I will begin recording.

Introduction to the Interview:
Through this interview, I hope to have a better understanding of your assessment process, how other factors influence the assessments you choose, and what you believe is important to uncover during your assessment process. While you have already answered some questions regarding your assessment practices and ways you try to limit bias, I would like to use your responses to find out more about them.

Question 1: Can you briefly tell me about your experience as a school psychologist?

Question 2: In the questionnaire you submitted, you identified _____ as an assessment you use. Can you tell me about when and why you use it? And if you have found any challenges with it?

Question 3: How would a child's racial, ethnic, and linguistic background influence your assessment process?

Question 4: Aside from using standardized tests, do you know or use other ways to assess CLD students for special education? If so, what could that look like?

Question 5: In my experience, many outside factors influence the assessment process, like pressure to qualify from administrators? Can you identify any factors that may impact the assessment process? If so, what are they? How do those factors impact your process?

Question 6: In the questionnaire you submitted, you mentioned _____ as a way to reduce bias. Can you explain how that works for you? Is this a useful tool during assessment?

Question 7: What does it mean to provide an equitable psycho-educational assessment? What are its characteristics?

Question 8: One might assume that by assessing students and placing them into disability categories, school psychologists aim to support students. In your opinion, does special education help CLD students with their success in school? Why or why not?

Question 9: What, if anything, about the special education system would you like to change to better support CLD students?

Question 10: In your opinion, does special education law protect CLD students from unfair placement in special education? Why or why not?

Question 11: Can a district's policies protect CLD students from overrepresentation in SPED? Tell me why you think this?

Question 12: What do you think school psychologists need to feel more confident or skilled when testing?

Thank you for spending some time with me. Is there anything else you'd like to share about the assessment process?

Responses provided after the interview:

I will review the responses you provided to me, as well as the notes I took today. I want to thank you again for your time and for your participation. You are encouraged to communicate with me if you have any questions regarding today's interview. Once again, thank you for your time. Please contact me if you have any questions.

APPENDIX C

Provisional Codes

Code	Type of Code (Value, Attitude, Belief)
Need more training in the area of CLD assessment	Belief
Ensure that students can achieve more in school	Belief
Important to choose assessments that represent the child	Value
Personal responsibility to provide a sound recommendation	Value
Respecting the child's background in selecting measures/assessment tools	Value
It is a norm to use standardized measures	Belief
Assessments provide insight on struggles or strengths	Belief

APPENDIX D

Analytic Memo Template

Date of Memo	
Reason for Memo	

New Codes

APPENDIX E

Codebook with Definitions

Code	Code Definition
Accessibility and understanding are key (A)	Participants revealed that they have a personal responsibility to ensure that the process is clearly detailed with parents and students, that they explain what tests look for, understand the drawbacks of assessment, or that the way the information is disseminated is clearly explained.
Appropriate Interventions are Lacking (B)	Participants revealed that their districts either do not have interventions available to support CLD students prior to a SPED referral or that the lack of interventions leaves schools with no choice but to refer, test, and place students in special education,
Assessments highlight individuality (A)	Participants revealed that assessments should demonstrate each student's strengths, weaknesses, and specific support they may need.
Assessment Selection Changes Based on Student Skills/Needs (B)	Participants discussed that when finding out more information about a student's background, which includes family history, medical history, language dominance, issues with acculturation, etc., that their assessment battery changes to ensure that appropriate assessments are selected and administered. Additionally, this code signifies that assessment selection may change within the process; there is no set battery that should be administered. Assessment selections are not static.
Assessments should be multifaceted (A)	Participants shared that assessments for the purposes of special education identification should include multiple sources of information which could include qualitative measures, standardized tests, observations, interviews, review of records, and use of work samples.
Assessments should be reconsidered when dealing with bias (B)	Participants revealed that they are aware of bias in standardized testing and may opt for alternative ways to assess CLD students.

Assessor/Psychologist Responsibility (V)	Participants shared that they have a personal responsibility to choose assessments that would best represent the child.
District Procedures Impact Assessment (B)	Participants revealed that district procedures may have a negative impact on the way they tackle assessment. These issues included a lack of a formal referral process, lack of knowledge on special education assessment, lack of policies to support CLD students, or lack of appropriate assessments at their disposal.
Diverse students are not always accurately identified (B)	Participants understand that due to the nature of CLD students' background, assessments may misidentify them with a disability.
Diverse students may need alternative assessments (B)	Participants believe that CLD students may require a different manner to assess, which may or may not include typical standardized tests.
Family Inclusion (V)	Participants reported that family members (including but not limited to parents, grandparents, foster parents, grandparents, etc.) have a large role during the assessment process. Family inclusion includes completing rating scales, participating in interviews, and advocating for the family to be involved in the assessment process.
Introspection is key (V)	Participants believe that they must consider their own biases when assessing CLD students.
It is challenging to navigate SPED law (B)	Participants revealed that although there are certain case laws that provide a guide when assessing CLD students, the procedures can be vague and do not provide a solid approach to assessment.
More support for continuing school psychologists (B)	Participants believed that continuing school psychologists should receive more support with CLD assessment from colleagues, district personnel, or with more resources.
More training is key (A)	Participants revealed that ongoing training within the realm of assessment is needed. Additionally, some participants shared that more training in graduate school is needed, such as more support during internship and practicum experiences.
Organization Accountability (V)	Participants revealed that their districts/organizations have a responsibility to

	support CLD students to protect them from unfair referrals for assessment and have a responsibility to consider other factors that impact assessment procedures especially when testing CLD students.
Qualitative Measures are just as Important (B)	Participants shared that although they use various standardized tests that measure cognitive, academic, and social/emotional functioning, they ensure to include measures like observations, record reviews, interviews, etc.
One source of data cannot explain the child (A)	Participants believed that assessments should not only use one score or determinant to qualify a CLD child for special education.
Personal Responsibility (V)	Participants revealed that they should hold themselves accountable for accessibility during testing procedures, when disseminating the information, and to figure out how to best support CLD students when assessing for special education.
Self-awareness (V)	Participants understand that they need to be self-aware about how they approach assessing CLD students.
SPED Law does NOT protect CLD students (B)	Some participants believed that SPED law does not fully protect students from unfair placement in special education.
SPED law protects CLD Students (B)	Some participants believed that SPED law has the intention to protect CLD students.
Standardized Tests are the Norm (B)	Participants revealed that it is expected for them to use standardized measures when assessing CLD students for special education.
Standardized Tests are Problematic (B)	Participants revealed that the language, expectations, or cultural issues with standardized tests implicate assessments.
Undue Pressure Impacts Assessment (A)	Participants revealed that outside pressures from administrators, parents, and teachers can skew their decisions to qualify CLD students for special education.
Tests Do Not Account for Cultural Diversity (B)	Participants that due to the cultural loading of certain standardized tests, the way skills and functioning depicted through these scores are not always accurate for CLD Students.
Student Inclusion (V)	Participants discussed including the student in the assessment process in ways that include interviewing the student, explaining the purpose of an evaluation, or receiving

	feedback from the student regarding the evaluation.
Respecting the child's background (V)	Participants revealed that it is important that the child's ethnic, linguistic, and racial background be heavily considered when working with the student through assessment. This also includes being cognizant of the child's trauma history, familial background, and educational history.
Whiteness as a marker is harmful (A)	Standardized tests tend to be Eurocentric, using Whiteness as a marker of intelligence, which can be harmful when assessing CLD students.

APPENDIX F

Hierarchical Codes

Fair Assessment Practices
- Accessibility and understanding are key.
- Assessment selection changes based on skills/needs.
- Assessment tools should be changed when dealing with bias.
- Assessments highlight individuality.
- Assessments should be multifaceted
- Assessor/psych responsibility
- Non standardized measures are just as important
- One source of data cannot explain the child
- One source of data is not a sufficient assessment
- Qualitative measures are just as important
- Personal responsibility
- Respecting the child's background
- Self-awareness
- Student inclusion
- Family inclusion

Downsides of Assessment
- Diverse students are not always accurately identified
- Diverse students may need alternate assessments
- Standardized tests are the norm
- Standard scores are not the full picture
- Standardized tests can be problematic
- Undue pressure can impact assessment

Systemic Issues
- Appropriate Interventions are lacking
- District procedures impact assessment
- More training is key
- More support for continuing psychologists
- Organization accountability
- SPED Law does not protect CLD students
- It is challenging to navigate SPED law
- Test do not account for cultural diversity
- Whiteness as a marker is harmful

APPENDIX G

Informed Consent

University of San Diego
Institutional Review Board

Research Participant Adult Consent Form

For the research study entitled:

School Psychologists' Assessment Practices with CLD Students: A Phenomenological Study

I. Purpose of the research study

Hector M. Teran Jr. is a student in the PhD in Education for Social Justice program at the University of San Diego. You are invited to participate in a research study he is conducting. The purpose of this research study is: to obtain a deeper understanding of school psychologists' assessment practices when assessing diverse students, the ways they limit bias in their practice, and what barriers exist in assessment practices.

II. What you will be asked to do

If you decide to be in this study, you will be asked to:

    1.)   Complete a three-question open response questionnaire (completed virtually).

    2.)   Participate in one 60-90 minute virtual individual interview via Zoom.

You will be audio recorded during this interview.

Your participation in this study will take a total of up to 2 hours.

III. Foreseeable risks or discomforts

a) Sometimes when people are asked to think about their feelings, they feel sad or anxious. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings at any time, you can call toll-free, 24 hours a day:

The National Mental Health Hotline

If you need to connect with a mental health specialist, call 1-866-903-3787

IV. Benefits

While there may be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the indirect benefit of participating will be knowing that you helped researchers better understand

practicing school psychologists' perspectives and potentially contributed to improvements in assessment practices.

V. Confidentiality

Any information provided and/or identifying records will remain confidential and kept in a locked file and/or password-protected computer file in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years. All data collected from you will be coded with a number or pseudonym (fake name). Your real name will not be used. The results of this research project may be made public and information quoted in professional journals and meetings, but information from this study will only be reported as a group, and not individually. Additionally, you will only be audio recorded. You will be asked to turn off your Zoom camera and change your display name prior to the recording of the virtual interview.

The information or materials you provide will be cleansed of all identifiers (like your name) and other identifying information will not be used in future research.

VI. Compensation

You will receive no compensation for your participation in the study.

VII. Voluntary Nature of this Research

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You do not have to do this, and you can refuse to answer any question or quit at any time. Deciding not to participate or not answering any of the questions will have no effect on any benefits you're entitled to, like your health care, or your employment or grades. <u>You can withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.</u>

VIII. Contact Information

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact either:

1) Hector M. Teran Jr; <u>USD Email:</u>hteran@sandiego.edu

2) Dr. Suzanne Stolz; <u>USD Email:</u> sstolz@sandiego.edu

I have read and understand this form, and consent to the research it describes to me. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Name of Participant (Printed)

_____

Signature of Investigator

_____

APPENDIX H

Interest in Participating Form

Interest in Participating

Hector M. Teran Jr, M.S., NCSP, is a doctoral candidate at the University of San Diego who is completing his dissertation, as part of the requirements to complete the PhD in Education for Social Justice.

Mr. Teran Jr. is a practicing school psychologist in California who obtained his master's in counseling, Option in School Psychology at California State University, Los Angeles, along with PPS Credentials in School Psychology and Child Welfare and Attendance. He is also a Nationally Certified School Psychologist.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of the dissertation study is to obtain a deeper understanding of school psychologists' assessment practices when assessing diverse students, the ways they limit bias in their practice, and what barriers exist in assessment practices.

Nature of the Study:

The study will consist of an open response questionnaire (completed virtually), and one 60-90 minute interview (virtual), held via Zoom. In total, you will participate for up to 2 hours across the open response questionnaire and the individual interview. Additionally, you will only be audio recorded. You will be asked to turn off your Zoom camera and change your display name prior to the recording of the virtual interview

Who Can Participate:

Practicing school psychologists in California are invited to participate. Specific criteria for participation include:

- Practicing school psychologists in CA

- One year minimum working in public, private, or charter schools in CA

- Hold a valid PPS credential in School Psychology
- Job duties that include direct psycho-educational assessments for special education identification.

If you are interested in participating, please complete the questions below:

1. Email *

2. 1.) Do you work as a school psychologist in CA? (Please write "yes" or "no")

_____

3. 2.) What is your name? (First and Last)

_____

4. 3.) What type of school do you work at? (Public, Private, or Charter)

_____

5. 4.) Do you hold a valid PPS credential in school psychology? (Please write "yes" or "no").

_____

6. 5.) Do you complete psycho-educational assessments for special education identification?

_____

7. 6.) Please provide the best way to contact you:

   a. Phone: _____
   b. Email: _____

APPENDIX I

Email Template to School Psychology Training Programs' Alumni Listservs

Title of Study	School Psychologists' Assessment Practices with CLD Students: A Phenomenological Study
University Affiliation	University of San Diego
Program	PhD in Education for Social Justice
PhD Candidate Name and Information	Hector M. Teran Jr., M.S., NCSP hteran@sandiego.edu
Dissertation Chair and Information	Suzanne Stolz, EdD Dissertation Chair sstolz@sandiego.edu 619-260-2707

Dear (name of faculty/program advisor),

I am Hector M. Teran Jr, M.S, NCSP, a doctoral candidate at the University of San Diego. I am completing my dissertation, as part of the requirements to complete the PhD in Education for Social Justice.

I am a practicing school psychologist in California who obtained his Masters in Counseling, Option in School Psychology at California State University, Los Angeles, along with PPS

Credentials in School Psychology and Child Welfare and Attendance. I am also a Nationally Certified School Psychologist.

I am currently seeking practicing California school psychologists who would be willing to participate in the dissertation study. The purpose of the dissertation study is to obtain a deeper understanding of school psychologists' assessment practices when assessing diverse students, the ways they limit bias in their practice, and what barriers exist in assessment practices.

Nature of the Study:

The study will consist of an open response questionnaire (completed virtually), and one 60-90 minute interview (virtual), held via Zoom. In total, potential participants will participate for up to two hours across the open response questionnaire and the individual interview. Additionally, participants will only be audio recorded. They will be asked to turn off their Zoom camera and change their display name prior to the recording of the virtual interview.

 Who Can Participate:

Practicing school psychologists in California are invited to participate. Specific criteria for participation include:

·   Practicing school psychologists in CA

·   One year minimum working in public, private, or charter schools in CA

·   Hold a valid PPS credential in School Psychology

·   Job duties that include direct psycho-educational assessments for special education identification.

Therefore, I ask that you forward the attached PDF indicating the purpose of the study to your alumni listservs, to help me recruit potential participants. I extend my gratitude in advance for your time.

Please contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Suzanne Stolz, or myself if you have any questions or need any clarification.

Thank you,

Hector M. Teran Jr.

PhD Candidate

hteran@sandiego.edu

Suzanne Stolz, EdD

Dissertation Chair

sstolz@sandiego.edu

619-260-2707

APPENDIX J

Message to Special Interest Social Media Groups

Title of Study	School Psychologists' Assessment Practices with CLD Students: A Phenomenological Study
University Affiliation	University of San Diego
Program	PhD in Education for Social Justice
PhD Candidate Name and Information	Hector M. Teran Jr., M.S., NCSP hteran@sandiego.edu
Dissertation Chair and Information	Suzanne Stolz, EdD Dissertation Chair sstolz@sandiego.edu 619-260-2707

To Whom It May Concern:

Hector M. Teran Jr, M.S, NCSP, is a doctoral candidate at the University of San Diego who is completing his dissertation, as part of the requirements to complete the PhD in Education for Social Justice.

Mr. Teran Jr. is a practicing school psychologist in California who obtained his Masters in Counseling, Option in School Psychology at California State University, Los Angeles, along with PPS Credentials in School Psychology and Child Welfare and Attendance. He is also a Nationally Certified School Psychologist.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of the dissertation study is to obtain a deeper understanding of school psychologists' assessment practices when assessing diverse students, the ways they limit bias in their practice, and what barriers exist in assessment practices.

Nature of the Study:

The study will consist of an open response questionnaire (completed virtually), and one 60-90 minute interview (virtual), held via Zoom. In total, you will participate for up to two hours across the open response questionnaire and the individual interview. Additionally, participants will only be audio recorded. Participants will be asked to turn off their Zoom camera and change their display name prior to the recording of the virtual interview

Who Can Participate:

Practicing school psychologists in California are invited to participate. Specific criteria for participation include:

·   Practicing school psychologists in CA

·   One year minimum working in public, private, or charter schools in CA

·   Hold a valid PPS credential in School Psychology

·   Job duties that include direct psycho-educational assessments for special education identification.

If you fulfill all criteria and are interested in participating in this study, please follow this link to show interest:

Please contact Mr. Teran Jr. if you have any questions or need any clarification.

Thank you,

Hector M. Teran Jr.

PhD Candidate

hteran@sandiego.edu

Suzanne Stolz, EdD

Dissertation Chair

sstolz@sandiego.edu

619-260-2707

IRB CLEARANCE DOCUMENT

Date: 1-24-2024

IRB #: IRB-2023-431
Title: School Psychologists' Assessment Practices with CLD Students: A Phenomenological Study
Creation Date: 5-22-2023
End Date:
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Hector Teran
Review Board: USD IRB
Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Review Type	Decision
Initial	Expedited	Approved
Modification	Expedited	Approved
Modification	Expedited	Approved
Renewal	Expedited	Approved

Key Study Contacts

Member	Role	Contact
Hector Teran	Principal Investigator	███████████
Suzanne Stolz	Primary Contact	███████████