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# Exploring School Counselors' Preparation to Address Disproportionality of African American Students in Special Education

E Mackenzie Shell

While school counselors work with students in special education, little research describes their work with African American students in or at risk of special education or the phenomenon of disproportionality of African American students in special education. This phenomenological study explored the experiences and perceptions of eight high school counselors working with African American students in special education, and their perception of disproportionality among this identified population. Three themes were identified: (a) Dis-Regard, (b) separate worlds and (c) professional knowledge. Intentional strategies to introduce counselors to the concept of disproportionality and its antecedents may mitigate processes that potentially lead to overrepresentation of African Americans in special education.

*Keywords:* school counselors, disproportionality, overrepresentation, special education, counselor education

Researchers, policy makers, and educators have documented and contended with a nearly intractable issue of disproportionality of minority students in special education categories for nearly five decades (Sullivan & Proctor, 2016). The persistence of disproportionality in special education has led some scholars to conclude that schools have used special education as a tool of exclusion from general education for students from marginalized racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Ferri & Connor, 2014; Orfield & Frankenburg, 2014; Sullivan & Proctor, 2016). The intersections of race, social class, ethnicity, and disability within the public schools often further disadvantages African American students (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013; Artiles et al., 2010; Ferri & Connor, 2014; Kramarczuk Voulgarides, Fergus, & Thorius, 2017).

Major facets of the discrepant educational outcomes for African American youth are the overrepresentation in special education services and in exclusionary school discipline which often serves as a precursor to subsequent diagnoses of learning disabilities (Bal, Sullivan, & Harper, 2014; Shifrer, Muller,

& Callahan, 2010). African Americans receive office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions at disproportionately high rates compared to their White counterparts (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2017). African American students have an increased risk of identification and referral for special education services, especially in three high incidence categories that depend upon professional judgment for diagnosis: specific learning disabilities (SLD or LD), intellectual disabilities (ID)/cognitive impairment (CI), and emotional behavioral disorders (EBD) (Klingner et al., 2005; Kramarczuk Voulgarides et al., 2017).

When justified, special education interventions and services provide helpful academic and social supports for struggling students (Ford, 2012). However, placement and identification in special education often carries deleterious effects for African American students, such as less rigorous curricula, more restrictive educational settings, lower graduation rates, higher suspension/expulsion rates, lower college-going and completion rates, and higher rates of under- and unemployment (Artiles et al., 2010;

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*E. Mackenzie Shell, Clark Atlanta University. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to E. Mackenzie Shell, [eshell@cau.edu](mailto:eshell@cau.edu).*

Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, Moore-Thomas, 2012; Raines, Dever, Kamphaus, & Roach, 2012; Waitoller, Artiles, & Cheney, 2010). Compounded with those potentially adverse effects of identification for placement into special education is the potential for misdiagnosis. Researchers have suggested that some students have received inaccurate diagnoses for both special education services and placement (Sullivan & Proctor, 2016). Unjustified identification for and placement in special education services further marginalizes and disadvantages students (Ford, 2012). Furthermore, the disproportionate identification and placement in special education services reproduces historical inequities in public education (Reid & Knight, 2006, Shifrer et al., 2010).

In a position statement, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2016) made suggestions for specific roles and responsibilities of school counselors when working with students with disabilities. Those roles and responsibilities range from direct counseling services to advocacy and collaboration for students with disabilities (ASCA, 2016). Students with learning challenges, especially African American students, often require the benefits of school counselor advocacy to prevent erroneous special education placement, identification, or disproportionality in special education (Moore, Henfield, & Owens, 2008).

### **Disproportionality as Educational Inequity**

Disproportionality occurs, generally, when the proportion of African American students in a learning disability or special education category is larger than their proportion in the total school population or their proportions in the overall population (Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009), or refers to differences in educational outcomes by race (Sullivan & Proctor, 2016). Disproportionality also occurs when African Americans are underrepresented in other educational categories, such as gifted, when compared to the group's overall proportion within a school or community (Kramarczuk Voulgarides et al., 2017). Disproportionate representation in special education for African American students has complex roots that defy simplistic explanations.

Researchers have categorized the explanations for disproportionality in special education into two camps: outcome-based and process-oriented (Sullivan & Thorius, 2010). Outcome-based explanations include factors such as socioeconomic status, different cultural norms among teachers and students, and family education levels. Referral and classification systems, educators' biases, and environmental factors form part of the process-oriented explanation for disproportionality in special education (Kramarczuk Voulgarides et al., 2017; Moore, Henfield, & Owens, 2008; Skiba et al., 2008). Regardless of the explanations used, counselors should pay attention to disproportionality because the phenomenon represents the repercussions of the intermingling of "inequitable access, participation, and outcomes experienced by students with memberships in multiple marginalized groups" (Sullivan & Thorius, 2010, p. 99).

### **School Counselors' Roles**

School counselors possess a rare skill set and training to implement comprehensive programs that attempt to address the academic, career, and socio-emotional development needs of all students (Gardner & Mayes, 2013; Martin, 2002). In addition, ASCA's (2012) National Model and the Education Trust's (1997) Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) gave school counselors a mandate to commit to a social justice orientation (Clark & Breman, 2009; Mitcham, Portman, & Dean, 2009). The social justice orientation represents a commitment to advocacy, counseling, collaboration, consultation, and data-driven decision-making to address the needs of all students (Gardner & Mayes, 2013). Hines et al. (2017) noted that school counselors with a social justice orientation "focus on historically underserved and marginalized groups" (p. 9). The professional mandates paired with counselors' distinct positions within school settings offer a compelling rationale for counselors to use their influence, training, and skills to benefit African American students with disabilities.

School counselors adopt various roles within the special education referral and identification processes. Those roles require competent counselors who have the requisite knowledge base to work with

both referral/identification processes and students with disabilities (McKenna, 2013; Milsom & Akos, 2003; Moore et al.; 2008). For over 40 years, researchers have contended that school counselors lack adequate preparation to provide appropriate services to students with disabilities or in special education (Milsom, 2002; Milsom & Akos, 2003; Studer & Quigney, 2005; Romano et al., 2009). In a study of CACREP-accredited counseling programs, Feather and Carlson (2019) reported that approximately 50% of counselor educators surveyed suspected that their programs offered ineffective or moderately effective preparation to address the needs of children with disabilities. Furthermore, nearly 51% of the counselor educators believed that their programs spent too little time on disability-related practices and policies, and 35% believed counselors-in-training were not adequately prepared to work with individuals with disabilities (Feather & Carlson, 2019). Barrow and Mamlin (2016) noted the lack of training and competency to create and facilitate programming to address the needs of students with special needs leads school counselors to delegate “special education questions or concerns to special education case managers” (p. 4). School counselors choosing to collaborate with special educators seems a promising practice; however, an overreliance on special educators could lead to Dis-Regard.

### **Defining Dis-Regard**

The concept of “Dis-Regard” refers to ignoring or not seeing differences based on physical or learning abilities (Singer, 2015). Generally, Dis-Regard is the idea that the way to treat all students equally is to put on blinders to differences based on disabilities (Smith, Geroski, & Tyler, 2014). Dis-Regard involves counselors avoiding disabilities despite disability status’ continued salience in society, in general, and in education, specifically. The danger of Dis-Regard is that it upholds oppressive structures within schools because counselors have not explicitly or intentionally addressed issues around disability within their comprehensive school counseling programs or other interventions. An ideology of Dis-Regard leads to a type of ableism because ideology of this type reifies power structures that discriminate

and exclude people with disabilities from equitable opportunities (Storey, 2007).

Counselor education programs play key roles in preparing future school counselors to effectively work with and advocate for students with learning/behavior difficulties and learning disabilities. Few researchers, however, have used phenomenology to examine school counselors’ beliefs about working with students with disabilities. School counselors’ interactions and practices with students in special education warrant further study because of the growth in this student population, legal and professional mandates, and enduring inequities faced by African American students in special education. The broad research question that guided this study was: How do high school counselors describe their experiences with African American students with disabilities or learning challenges?

### **Method**

The researcher used a phenomenological, social constructivist framework to elicit and describe the experiences and perceptions of high school counselors working with students with disabilities. Phenomenological studies solicit participants’ experiences with, perceptions of, and thoughts about a phenomenon with goals of identifying commonalities and capturing the essence of the experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Social constructivism provided a structure for researcher interpretation of participants’ meanings about this phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher focused on high school counselors because high school counselors have shown the lowest amount of certainty in their work with students with disabilities (Janson, Guillot Miller, & Rainey, 2007).

### **Procedure**

The present study garnered in-depth data using a two-interview phenomenological research design. Disproportionality and school counseling research provided the foundation for the semi-structured, open-ended questions. The researcher conducted two rounds of semi-structured interviews with the eight participants, with member checks between interviews, totaling 16 interviews. The nature of the

interviews allowed participants to conceive and frame their perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes in their own words (Hays & Singh, 2012). Each interview lasted approximately 45-50 minutes and took place in person. The first interview began with a prompt: “Try to remember the last time you were involved in the special education process for an African American student. Tell me anything you can about the experience.” The interview protocol consisted of 10 questions that included, “What incidents connected with the special education experience stand out to you?”; “How did the special education experience for African American students affect you?”; and “How did your training impact your experience of special education with African American students?” (See Appendix A for first semi-structured interview questions.)

After the first interviews were transcribed and coded, the second interviews began. During this interview participants received follow-up questions concerning any additional information about their experiences they wanted to include. Additionally, the researcher presented four vignettes that described four fictitious ninth grade students to assess participants’ thoughts about academic placement and counseling interventions. The researcher used the data gathered from the vignettes for a separate study examining school counselors’ responses to scenarios provided within the vignettes.

## Research Team

The researcher is a major instrument of data collection in phenomenological research designs (Hays & Singh, 2012). This research process began by bracketing—examining the philosophical assumptions and lived experiences of the researcher (author) as a method to explore how experiences may have impacted research questions, research design, and analysis of data (Morrow, 2005). In addition to bracketing the researcher’s experiences, the researcher assembled a team to ensure that the researcher’s beliefs and experiences as a counselor educator and school counselor did not impact the study adversely. The research team consisted of four members with experience conducting phenomenological research. Each team member earned a doctoral degree in counselor education from a CACREP-accredited program. The members worked as high school

counselors (including the researcher), a college career services professional, and a college disability services professional. The research team bracketed and shared their assumptions with the entire team before analyzing data to reduce bias that may have influenced the team’s analysis of the data (Hays & Singh, 2012).

## Participants and Sampling

Purposeful criterion sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012) was used to recruit high school counselors who had experience working with students in special education within a school. A recruitment flyer detailing the research study was posted on school counselor-related social media platforms. The study also was publicized through a state school counseling association website and emails (Hays & Singh, 2012). Twelve participants initially began the study, but four did not complete the second interviews. Eight school counselors (four female, four male) who worked at high schools within or adjacent to a Southeastern Metropolitan Area volunteered to participate in this study. The ages of the participants ranged from 30 to 60 years and the years of experience as school counselors ranged from 7 to 14 years. The participants self-identified as African American ( $n = 4$ ) and White ( $n = 4$ ). The participants worked in rural districts ( $n = 2$ ), urban school districts ( $n = 4$ ), and suburban school districts ( $n = 2$ ).

## Data Analysis

The author conducted and audio recorded each interview and transcribed verbatim each recording into a text format. The research team then analyzed data in four stages: (1) horizontalization, or the process of each member identifying nonoverlapping statements from the transcripts to give value to each statement (Hays & Singh, 2012), (2) the members identified and indexed emergent themes and sub-themes from the individual interview data (Hays & Singh, 2012), and then coded the interviews separately, (3) the team conferenced to discuss the codes and cultivated consensus to resolve differences, and (4) the team then grouped those codes into broader categories, or themes. After identifying six initial themes, the team met to try to capture the essence of

the phenomena via the textural and structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). The textural description provided *the what* and the structural description underlined *the how* participants experienced their work with African American students in special education (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). After completing the descriptions, the team settled on three themes and one subtheme.

### Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, an important factor in qualitative research, refers to validity, credibility, or rigor in qualitative research (Morrow, 2005; Singh & Hayes, 2012). To strengthen this study, the researcher incorporated trustworthiness into each step of the process with bracketing, member checking, triangulation with school district data, extended engagement, lengthy or ‘thick’ descriptions, research team debriefing, and researcher reflexivity. The processes of the research team provided additional external checks and balances for the data analysis, especially reviews of the transcripts, reflexive journals, and consensus building, or intercoder agreement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checking allowed participants to review and ensure their experiences were accurately portrayed and described (Hays & Singh, 2012). Additionally, each participant received a copy of their interview transcript, and the themes identified by the authors for member checking. (Hays & Singh, 2012).

### Findings

The research team identified three themes from its analysis of the experiences and beliefs of school counselors about their roles with African American students at risk of special education referrals or identified for special education and counseling services provided to those students: Dis-Regard, separate worlds, and professional knowledge. These themes all reflected school counselors’ perceptions of their work with African American students with disabilities and the phenomenon of disproportionality. The themes reflected the participants’ responses to the interview questions and, where applicable, are illustrated by quotes from the school counselors

themselves. To protect participant anonymity, direct quotes are presented using pseudonyms.

### Dis-Regard

Respondents noted that in their efforts to work equitably with students with special needs meant that students in special education received the same information and services that all students received. Paul emphasized that “services are services” and that all students received equal access to services or received services based on their presenting issues. Katy suggested that her counseling department offered the “same services to everyone.” Pam actively engaged in supporting students by making sure that they received the same types of information and services as all students as well. She offered students in special education the same services.

*The same as others, nothing different, you know, the same kind of services. They come in when they need help. We call them, you know, during classes—the same thing and talk about what their future is going to be.*

Similarly, Judy worked to make sure that students in special education received “the same as everybody else, whether it’s college prep or career prep, or anything...” Jon showed how not working with African American students in special education could impact how counselors view their roles with those students.

*I think that special education does a great job for the kids. I don’t know if there’s a lot we can do with them...with that particular population.*

### Separate Worlds

Although ASCA (2016) encourages school counselors to work with students with disabilities, the school counselors who participated in this study often found that their roles were constrained. The second theme describes the challenges of having two school professional positions tasked with services for African American students in special education. This shared responsibility for student success proved to be a challenge for participants in this study. When asked about his roles with African American students who receive special education services, Chris noted that:

*We have case managers, which are the special education teachers, and they have roughly five or six students on each of their caseloads. The case managers actually recommend the level of courses, if it's an inclusion course or more self-contained pullout. So, they make the recommendation and then we (school counselors) implement.*

Judy noted that she could not fix scheduling errors for students with disabilities. If she had a problem, she would “go to the special ed[ucation] director and let her fix that.” Wanda described the separation of duties in similar terms. “We just do the regular education schedules. So, it’s like we’re in separate worlds in a way.” The division of duties between counselors and the special education department left Kevin with the thought that counselors were only used for “scheduling as opposed to intervention” or that the students on his caseload who had IEPs belong to “the special ed[ucation] department instead of thinking that they [the students] are still on my caseload too.”

Participants described their perceived and assigned roles/duties with students with learning disabilities and the division of roles/duties within their particular schools. One division that became apparent is that school counselors work with African American students in special education, but often the primary advisement source for those students are their special education advisors. Judy stated that “they usually have a special ed[ucation] person there for their advisement group.” The last challenge driving separate worlds was time constraints school counselors faced. Wanda noted the challenges faced by school counselors when working with the students—the lack of time to do everything. Because of the time constraints, the division of duties ensured that students in special education received services. She suggested that: “The students meet with their special education case manager during advisement (period) every day. So that’s kind of like their main advocate and resource.” The time constraints, counseling caseloads, and school functions shaped the school counselors’ work experiences and their perceived training needs with African American students in special education.

### **Professional Knowledge**

All of the study participants expressed dissatisfaction with their training and preparation to work with African American students with learning difficulties or learning disabilities. In his comments about education and training, Paul summed up the way that most of the school counselors in this study learned strategies for students who receive special education services. Paul stated, “You have to really learn that on the job.” Paul stressed that learning on the job can present both benefits and challenges for learning best practices.

The counselors had prior experiences in different jobs with students with learning disabilities; experiences that helped them to gain skills that transferred well to their school counseling practices. Judy discussed how her background in college disability services provided preparation for working with students in special education. She noted that she “learned more from working in the higher education disability field” than she learned in her special education course. A couple of respondents ( $n = 2$ ) had worked in community agencies before becoming school counselors. These experiences helped them to understand the language used to describe diagnoses for students with learning disabilities. Jon noted that his clinical background allowed him “to work with psychological evaluations and diagnosing” and those skills proved transferable to the public school setting while Katy suggested that her background helped her to “understand the challenges that students with learning disabilities face.”

Several of the respondents ( $n = 3$ ) had worked as teachers prior to assuming roles as school counselors. Pam explained that her teaching background gave her some insight into the needs of students with learning disabilities. For Chris and Kevin, their teaching experiences helped them to understand the terminology associated with students who receive special education services and gave them ideas, from a teaching perspective, about strategies to help the students find success in high school.

**Training needs.** All of the participants unanimously recognized a need for more education or training to guide professional school counselors’ work with African American students with learning difficulties or who receive special education services. All of the participants’ graduate programs included at least one course focused on special education or multicultural counseling, but all believed that

supplemental professional development or training would help. The suggested supplemental training could take the form of “more coursework”, “more participation with the referral process and the special education departments at their respective schools”, or “interventions training” that addressed behavior or pedagogy issues specifically for African American students with disabilities or learning challenges.

## Discussion

In this study, participants highlighted how Dis-Regard, separate worlds, and professional knowledge framed their counseling experiences with African American students with learning difficulties or disabilities. The school counselors in this study noted that providing services for all students is their goal, but they faced challenges providing services to students in special education. Part of the challenge involved the tensions between the roles of school counselors and special educators. The participants provided several reasons for their limited contact with students who receive special education services, including time constraints, duties assigned by their administrators, and their caseload sizes. Prior research has shown that counselors often have limited time to work with students in special education because of duties assigned by their administrators or their large caseloads (Vega, Moore, & Miranda, 2015). Barrow and Mamlin (2016) noted that school counselors often rely on special educators to work with students with disabilities.

One of the core functions for school counselors involves teaming and collaboration to assist students in historically underserved populations, such as special education (Hines et al., 2017; Mitcham, Portman, & Dean, 2009; Romano, Paradise, & Green, 2009). For students with the potential for referrals to special education or for those already identified for services, school counselor collaboration with other stakeholders may prevent inappropriate referrals, promote proper placement after the referral process, or improve school outcomes (Martin, 2002; Janson, Miller, & Rainey, 2007; Romano et al., 2009). Conversely, an overreliance on the collaboration with special educators reinforces Dis-Regard and limits counselors' advocacy efforts with disproportionality. Dis-Regard prevented participants from creating

interventions specifically targeting students with disabilities and impacted their beliefs about training necessary to target interventions for students.

To intercede on behalf of students at-risk for referrals or previously identified for special education services, these school counselors required more education and training. The data that emerged regarding the preparation to work with students with learning difficulties or in special education included feelings of inadequate preparation and a paucity of continuing education opportunities. These themes are consistent with prior research that indicated that school counselors feel inadequately prepared to work with students with disabilities (Hall, 2015; Milsom & Akos, 2003), school counselors do not receive enough training to work with students with disabilities (Milsom & Akos, 2003; Romano et al., 2009; Studer & Quigney, 2005) and school counselors often have little focus on African American students with disabilities (Moore et al., 2008). The findings from this study suggest that training fails to address advocacy strategies for African American students that may limit the factors that contribute to disproportionality. None of the participants suggested training needs that would prepare them to work systemically to limit referrals for special education which would help to mitigate the forces that lead to disproportionality.

## Implications

The disproportionality of African American students in special education in high schools reflects the influences of racism, classism, and ableism on educational practices (Ferri & Connor, 2014). School counselors, as participants in this society and its educational systems, are not immune to the influences of those often intertwined oppressions. The influences impact the ways in which school counselors view, challenge, or perpetuate systems that adversely impact students. Counselor educators should intentionally interweave the concepts of intersectionality and Disability Studies within counseling coursework to help counselors-in-training examine “how multiple social constructions of different dimensions of cultural identity shape individuals' social locations and lived experiences” (Sullivan & Thorius, 2010, p. 103). Intentional exposure to Disability Studies and intersectionality gives school counselors tools to

address their biases, educate other stakeholders about the range of difference within the human condition, and recognize that differences do not always indicate an abnormality that requires a label (Ammanna, Connor, & Ferri, 2013; Sullivan & Thorius, 2010).

The results from this study provide insight into possible approaches to integrate an intersectional multicultural approach. First, courses addressing multiculturalism and disabilities might incorporate both Disabilities Studies and an ecological framework to shift the deficit discourse often associated with academic failures to a sociocultural discourse that contextualizes problematic behaviors and academic difficulties with a holistic view (Hart, Cramer, Harry, Klingner, & Sturges, 2010; McMahan, Mason, Daluga-Guenther, & Ruiz, 2014). The shifting discourse allows counselor educators to teach about disproportionality as a phenomenon with sociohistorical roots of discrimination and exclusion within school systems (Ammanna, Connor, & Ferri, 2013; Sullivan & Artiles, 2011). School counselors who do not see the racialization of ability or the disabling of race may not address issues students face. Second, coursework addressing disabilities should focus on what school counselors can contribute to the reduction of inequities from a school counseling perspective: data collection, team membership, systemic interventions, advocacy, and collaboration (Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, & Moore-Thomas, 2012; Clark & Breman, 2009). Further, this addition to coursework lays the groundwork for future collaborations with school counselors and other stakeholders within the identification and referral processes for students with learning difficulties. The course format will further emphasize the importance of including students with learning difficulties and disabilities within comprehensive counseling programs, a concern voiced by study participants.

Finally, counselors should receive adequate training to use school data to address systemic processes that contribute to the phenomenon of disproportionality. Because of the access to school-wide data, school counselors have a special duty to collect this data and review referral and placement patterns to lessen inequitable treatment. More importantly, school counselors have the task of challenging referral and placement practices by reviewing the impact on different student groups, especially African American students. Further training in social justice

and advocacy can help school counselors move from a focus on individuals to a focus on systemic change. Social justice training requires that school counselors look at the larger forces (including systemic and political forces) that conspire to increase referral and identification for special education services for African American students rather than locating the issues within the students themselves (Kohli, Pizarro, & Nevarez, 2017; Reid & Knight, 2006).

### Limitations and Future Research

The design of this study included several efforts to establish credibility and transferability. However, the design of the study also provided limitations, including a narrow sample of high school counselors without a mix of elementary or middle school counselors for additional perspectives. Additionally, all of the participants worked within a Southeastern state which potentially limits these findings to the institutional cultures, processes, and policies within that state. The sensitive nature of this topic could have limited the participants' willingness to honestly express their beliefs. Furthermore, the semi-structured nature of the two-interview process may have limited the responses and contexts of the participants.

School counselors in this study agreed that more training would help them. A larger scale study to evaluate current levels of disability focus in counseling programs and to determine training and intervention needs for school counselors' work with students with learning difficulties/disabilities is needed. Future research could illuminate the exact training and interventions that school counselors want and need to enhance their knowledge base and efficacy. While no panacea to the challenges faced by African American students referred and identified for special education services exists, counselor educators can promote more equitable educational outcomes for students and their families by increasing student counselors' knowledge about themselves, the intersectional nature of disproportionality, Disability Studies, and advocacy.

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### **Appendix A**

#### **Initial Interview Questions**

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1. Guiding Question: How do school counselors describe their experiences with African American students in special education?
  2. Opening: Try to remember the last time you were involved in the special education process for an African American student. Tell me anything you can about the experience.
  3. What incidents connected with the special education experience stand out for you?
  4. What people connected with the special education experience stand out for you?
  5. What aspects of the special education experience stand out for you?
  6. How did the special education experience for African American students affect you?
  7. What feelings were generated by the experience?
  8. What thoughts stood out for you during the experience?
  9. How did the special education experience affect the African American students involved?
  10. How did the special education experience affect the stakeholders involved (guardians/ educators)?
  11. How did your training impact your experience of special education with African American students?
  12. Have you shared all that is significant regarding your experience of African American students and special education?
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Note: Research questions constructed based on the literature and phenomenological research tradition

### **Appendix B**

#### **Follow Up Interview Questions**

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1. Before moving forward, is there anything you would like to add to what you shared during the first interview?
  2. Since our first interview, have you had any additional experiences with African American students in special education that you would like to share?
  3. Suppose you were in charge, and could bring about one change to the special education experience for African American students, what would you do?
  4. Vignette Questions. What are your first impressions of the student in the vignette?
  5. Given your current knowledge of this student, what do you think is the most appropriate educational setting?
  6. How would you summarize the criteria used to arrive at the appropriate educational setting?
  7. What interventions would you implement, if any, to help the student?
    - a. On what criteria would you base your interventions?
    - b. What would be your next steps if the interventions did not work?
  8. What additional information and/or training would have been helpful to determine interventions for this student?
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Note: Research questions constructed based on the literature and phenomenological research tradition