

# Culture and Diversity

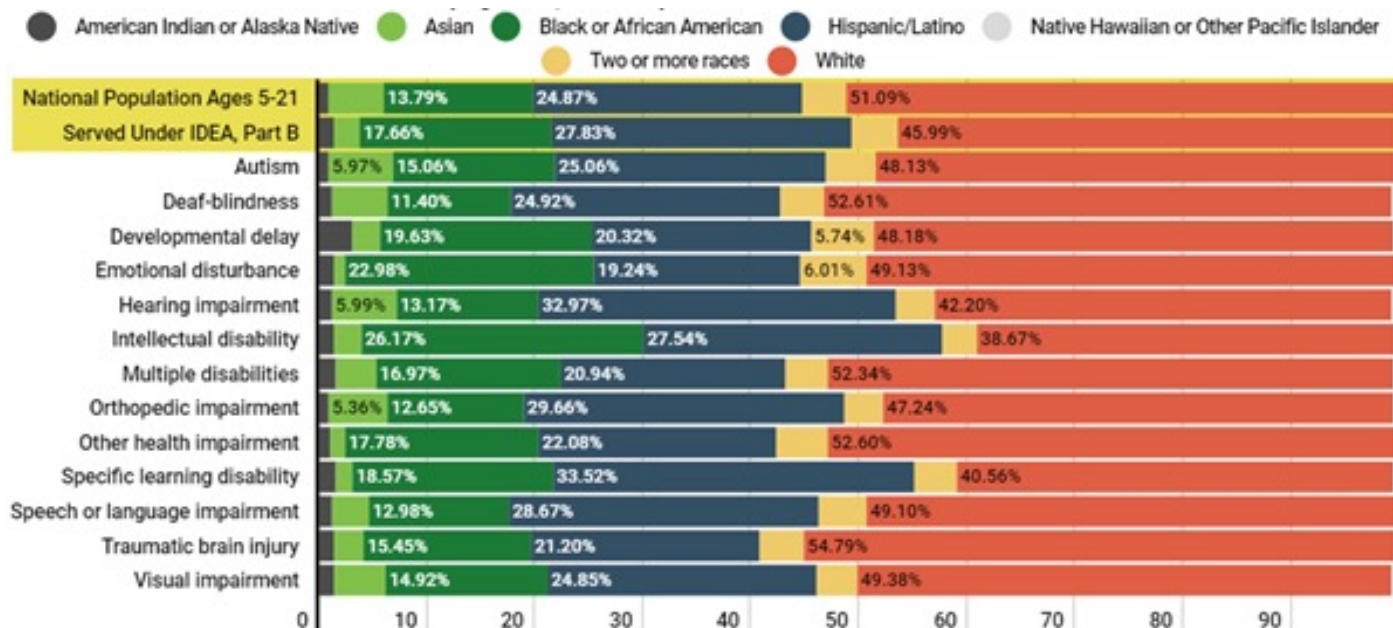
As MSLBD approaches its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, concerns regarding the issue of racial discrimination and bias have continued to be prominent and pose a serious problem for our society. Racial discrimination particularly regarding Black or African Americans has been an especially prominent issue recently due in part to the murder of George Floyd. In addition, over the past 40 years, a variety of other types of diversity (e.g. ethnicity, poverty, religion, gender and gender identity) have been recognized in our society.



Knowledgeable professionals are aware of the over representation of black or African American and Hispanic minorities among students identified having Serious Emotional Disturbance under IDEA. Autism has a racial/ethnic profile much more like the profile of the national population.

Children identified as having Emotional Disturbance have also historically been more likely to live in poverty, to live in urban environments, to become involved in the criminal justice system and to be male. At the same time, most

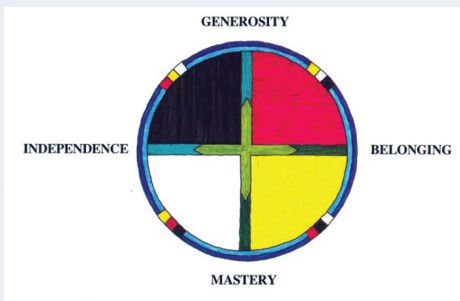
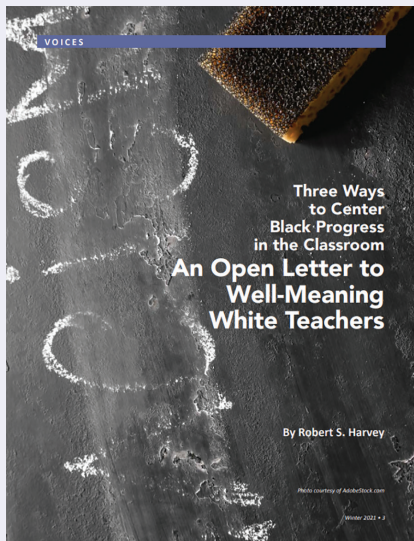
**Percentage of Students with Disabilities, Ages 5 (in kindergarten) through 21, by Race and Ethnicity and Disability Category: SY 2019–20. Data from U.S. Dept of Education for SY 2019-2020**



teachers (including special educators) are about 75% to 80% white and a large majority are female. Although the number of Black, Hispanic and Asian teachers may be incrementally increasing,

While our awareness and understanding of these complex issues has evolved and changed through time, they are prominent in professional discussions. That has been true for MSLBD as well. Through its history, the all-volunteer MSLBD Planning Committee has continuously had members join, and others depart. In this process, it has included members who were of African American, Native American, Asian American, and Hispanic origins though not proportional to the student population. Male and female membership on the Planning Committee has been much more balanced.

MSLBD has regularly included conference sessions on cultural issues, issues of racial and gender discrimination, minority over-identification, and bias as they relate to educating students with behavioral needs. In addition to sessions at all three types of MSLBD conferences, diversity topics have been addressed in magazine articles and JANUS Project interviews. In the early years of



MSLBD there were few presentations with diversity topics in the title. One notable exception was a session in 1983 which addressed “Ethical Issues in Identification of Minority Students” led by MSLBD Planning Committee member, Art Hoernicke and others.



However, in 1990 cultural issues were the theme for the entire Symposium conference.

“*Multicultural Issues in the Education of Students with Behavioral Disorders*” was the conference theme. A variety of keynote speakers addressed the interrelated concepts of culture and behavior disorders. A particular focus was on how various cultures understood or interpreted mental health issues such as “aggression” and “depression.” The goal was to help participants appreciate ways that people from various cultures understand those concepts and their implications for identification and treatment of children and youth in schools.



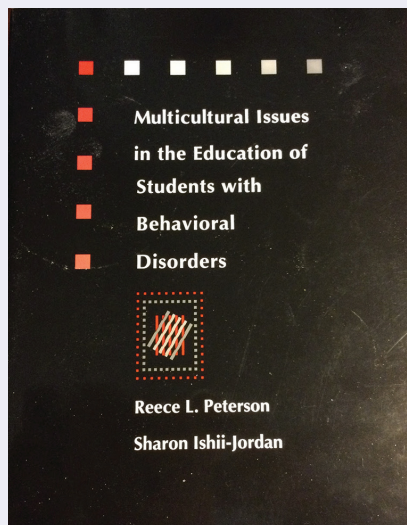
The keynote topics and speakers included “Culture and Substance Abuse” (Peter Leone and Kevin Allison), “The Circle of Courage” (Martin Brokenleg), “Culture and Aggression” (Robert Zabel and Mary Kay Zabel), “Culture and Juvenile Delinquency” (C. Michael Nelson and Cheryl Pearson), and “Depression in the Context of Culture and Community” (Steve Forness).



In addition, the 1990 Symposium's Oxford-style debaters argued for and against the following resolution: "Since special education for behaviorally disordered students cannot free itself from cultural biases, it should be aimed only at those students whose behaviors would be considered deviant by most, if not all, cultures." Debaters were Eun-ja Kim Park, Tom Reilly, Brenda Walker and Michael Pullis.



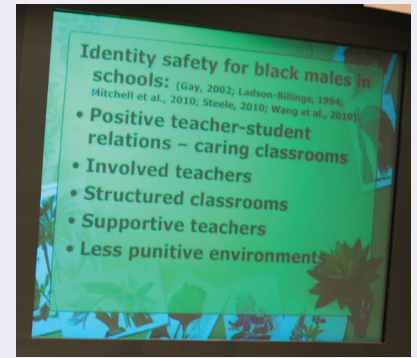
A few years later, MSLBD Planning Committee members Sharon Ishii-Jordan and Reece Peterson published an edited book that included papers drawn from those presentations as well as several additional papers that examined multicultural issues and behavior disorders from multiple, diverse perspectives. (Peterson, R. L. & Ishii-Jordan, S., 1994. *Multicultural issues in the education of students with behavioral disorders*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books 1994).



In 1995, John L. Johnson, a pioneer in our field, presented a session entitled "Meeting the Psychological Needs of African American Students in Programs for Students with E/BD". Examples of other titles of February Symposium presentations which have been presented subsequently include:



- "Psychosocial and cultural predictors of alcohol use among African-American and Caucasian adolescents" (1996; D. Irvin,).
- "Helping war traumatized children -Bosnia and Beyond (1997; M. Pullis)
- "Teaching in a multicultural school" (1997; N. Singh)
- "Teaching and reaching urban youth" (1998; B. Townsend)
- "Cultural-ethnic diversity: Implications for developing needs-based social skill curricula (1999; N. Meadows)
- "What is multicultural special education and how do we do it? (1990; L. Boman, et al.)
- "Effects of poverty on students with E/BD" (2001; D. Blesz et al.)
- "Success in spite of the odds" (Keynote 2002; R. Pierson)
- "Disproportionate representation in special education and disproportionate disciplinary experiences among culturally and linguistically diverse students" (2008: L. Bowman-Perrot & G. Cartridge)
- "Creating culturally responsive education" (2011; C. Kea)
- "Self-regulation strategies for secondary African America students with challenging behaviors (2017; M. Lusk)



- Adapting classroom based antecedent intervention for diverse students” (2018; K. Zimmerman, et.al.)
- “Forget reality TV -Reality Teaching is what’s up for culturally responsive behavior management. (2018; B. Townsend Walker).

Additionally, the MSLBD magazine, *ReThinking Behavior*, has had multiple articles related to diversity issues and perspectives.

MSLBD has recently initiated a “Diversity Committee” which is attending to the role of diversity topics in MSLBD activities. It may also propose new ways of addressing diversity or other initiatives addressing diversity issues. These issues will certainly continue to be reflected in the programs of future conferences and the other activities of MSBD.

This list does not include presentations from the “Leader’s” or “Autism” conferences which have also included multiple presentations on diversity topics. The 2022 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary conference will have additional presentations related to diversity topics.

