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Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Behavior Problems Among a Sample of African American, Hispanic, and Non-Hispanic White Students[1]

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A multiracial/multiethnic sample of middle school adolescents and their teachers was used to assess whether teacher ratings of student behavior problems varied according to teacher–student racial/ethnic differences and students' perception of teachers' attitudes toward them. No significant mean score differences were found for Hispanic or non-Hispanic white students according to the race/ethnicity of the teachers doing the ratings. However, African American students rated by Hispanic and non-Hispanic white teachers

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had significantly higher mean total behavior problem scores than African American students rated by African American teachers. Teacher ratings were also compared to those made by parents. The percentage of students rated as cases by teachers but not by parents differed significantly by race/ethnicity of student. Other findings indicated highly significant relationships between student-perceived teacher disparagement and the assignment of high behavior problem scores to students by teachers.

KEY WORDS: behavior problems; racial/ethnic differences; teacher ratings; teacher attitudes; parent ratings.

Behavioral problems in school during childhood and early adolescence can be predictive of academic failure, school dropout (Barrington & Hendriks, 1989; Goodlad, 1984; Hawkins, Doueck, & Lishner, 1988), and delinquency (Bachman, O'Malley, & Johnson, 1978; Hirschi, 1969; Loeber & Dishion, 1983). The accuracy of teachers' assessments of student behavior disorders is of special concern because teachers have a primary role in identifying and referring students to special education programs and psychological services (Bennett, Gottesman, Rock, & Cerullo, 1993; Hudley, 1993; Ysseldyke et al., 1993).

Assessments of students by teachers may be influenced by cultural differences between teacher and student (Sugai & Maheady, 1988). Statewide data from the Florida Department of Education have suggested that behavioral differences related to culture and social class may contribute to disparities between teachers' and students' expectations of appropriate classroom behavior (Mailander, Rubin, & Doig, 1993). In addition, racial/ethnic differences between teachers and students may account, in part, for divergent behavioral assessments of minority and nonminority students (Eaves, 1975; Hawkins, Von Cleve, & Catalano, 1991; Lethermon, Williamson, Moody, & Wozniak, 1986).

A number of studies have found that teacher perceptions of a students' conformity to classroom behavioral norms can lead to lowered teacher expectations of student academic skills and result in differential treatment of students (Bennett et al., 1993; Brophy & Good, 1974; Jussim, 1989, 1991; Williams, 1976). Edmonds (1986), in a study comparing the effectiveness of schools in fostering student academic achievement, found evidence suggesting that some teachers systematically varied their behaviors according to student characteristics for example, race, socioeconomic status (SES), and academic performance.

Students have been shown to be keenly aware when differential treatment by teachers occurs in their classrooms (Babad, Bernieri, & Rosenthal, 1991; Brophy, 1983, Coleman, Jussim, & Isaac, 1991; Marcus,

Gross, & Seefeldt, 1991; Marshall & Weinstein, 1984). In addition, such treatment, when present, may indirectly inform students about expected behavior and thereby affect student self-image and motivation (Brattesani, Weinstein, & Marshall, 1984). A study of early adolescent students (Goodenow, 1993) found that a factor tapping students' perception of the support, interest, and respect they received from their teacher was the most influential single component of academic motivation, effort, and achievement. The dynamics of these interaction patterns are important to understand in light of research indicating that student-perceived teacher disinterest and unfairness of discipline may be related to feelings of alienation, lack of commitment to school, and high dropout rates among low SES and minority students (Calabrese & Poe, 1990; Kagan, 1990; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986).

The present study extends previous research on the nature of the teacher–student interaction by utilizing a large multiracial/multiethnic sample of both teachers and students. Such data are important to examine given reports that a disproportionate number of minority students are referred for psychological services or special education programs compared to their majority peers (Brosnan, 1983; Tomlinson, Acker, Conter, & Lindborg, 1977; Tucker, 1980). Data are presented both from the point of view of the teacher and of the student to illuminate the interactive nature of the teacher–student relationship. The behavior problem rating of students by their parents is included to provide an additional perspective on student behavior.

Specifically, this paper addresses the following questions: (a) Do teacher-rated behavior problem scores of students vary significantly according to the race/ethnicity and SES student? (b) Does the concordance between parent-rated caseness and teacher-rated caseness differ according to the race/ethnicity of both teachers and students? (c) What are the relationships between teacher-rated behavior problem scores of students and student-perceived teacher disinterest or disparagement?

METHODS

Description of Sample and Procedures

The data presented were obtained as part of a longitudinal study of the differential patterns of adolescent developments among a multiracial/multiethnic sample of young adolescent boys (N = 6,760) residing in Dade County, Florida. The county, which includes Miami as its principal city, is one of the most ethnically diverse in the United States. Its large

Hispanic population includes approximately 1.1 million persons about one half of whom are of Cuban heritage. The remaining Hispanic groups are from a variety of Caribbean, Central, and South American countries. In 1990, the county's population also included 398,933 (20%) non-Hispanic blacks and approximately 586,000 (30%) non-Hispanic whites.

Data collection took place in each of the 48 middle schools in the county in the Fall of 1990. Active consent procedures, involving the securing of parental or guardian signatures, were utilized and only those students returning affirmative responses were included in the study. Informed assent was also secured from the students. In addition to the data collected from the students, a questionnaire was administered via telephone to a randomly selected subsample of 2,992 parents with children in the study. The high parent response rate (83%) reflected both the interest of the parents and the vigorous efforts of the research group.

Teacher ratings were provided by a multiracial/multiethnic group of teachers who rated the same student subsample as the one on whom parent data were obtained. The teachers' response rate was high (95%). Only ratings completed by 236 Hispanic, African American, and non-Hispanic white teachers were included in this analysis. Other racial/ethnic groups of teachers were not included due to their small numbers in the study. Most teachers rated between one and six students, but some teachers rated larger numbers of students.

To address the concern that teachers who rated large numbers of students may have influenced the results more than teachers who rated fewer students, analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to explore the relationships between the number of students rated and the outcomes of those ratings. ANOVAs were conducted separately for two groups: (a) teachers who rated 20 or more students (teachers, $n = 41$; students, $n = 993$), and (b) teachers who rated fewer students (teachers, $n = 195$; students, $n = 1{,}255$). Each ANOVA examined the effect of student race/ethnicity and teacher race/ethnicity on students' total behavior problem score. While student race/ethnicity was a significant main effect in both analyses, teacher race/ethnicity was not significant in the analysis of teachers who rated large numbers of students. These results indicate that the impact of teacher race/ethnicity on total behavior problem score was not in fact due to the ratings of a small number of teachers who rated larger numbers of students.

The final student subsample on whom both teacher and parent ratings were secured included 1,639 Hispanics, 324 African Americans, and 426 non-Hispanic whites. Black students from the Caribbean Islands and students of other racial backgrounds were excluded from the analyses due to their small numbers in the sample.

Instruments

The ratings provided by parents and teachers were obtained with complementary instruments developed for use with general population samples of children and adolescents. The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), designed to be completed by parents, consists of 118 items known to be associated with mental health and social-behavioral problems (Achenbach, 1991; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983). The CBCL has been tested for reliability and validity by Achenbach and Edelbrock (1983) and has been used extensively in a variety of social and cultural settings (Bird, Gould, Rubio-Stipec, Staghezza, & Canno, 1991; Costello & Janiszewski, 1990; Verhulst & Koot, 1991).

The Teacher Report Form (TRF) was developed as a complement to the CBCL in order to obtain collateral information on the behavioral competencies and problems of children and adolescents in classroom settings (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1986). The TRF includes 93 of the 118 items found in the CBCL; 25 items have been replaced with questions more applicable to behavior in school environments. The CBCL and the TRF are highly comparable, despite reports that the correlations of scales using different types of informants tend to be modest (McConaughy, Stanger, & Achenbach, 1992). In fact, due to the situational specificity of some childhood behaviors, use of these two instruments in combination has been found to enhance screening sensitivity and increase the specificity of case definition (Bird et al., 1991; Brandenburg, Friedman, & Silver, 1990).

The TRF is designed to obtain, in a standardized format, a description of a student's behavior as seen by a teacher who has observed the student in a classroom setting for at least several months. Teachers are instructed to base their ratings on behavior that has occurred within the previous 2 months only. In completing the TRF, teachers are requested to circle 0 if an item is not true of the student (as far as the teacher knows); 1 if the item is somewhat or sometimes true; and 2 if the item is very or often true. As with the CBCL, the test–retest reliability of the TRF has been amply demonstrated, as has its validity in discriminating between clinically impaired and nonimpaired children (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1986; Achenbach et al., 1990).

Measures

The primary dependent variable utilized in the analyses is the total behavior problem score as determined by the TRF (Achenbach & Edel-

brock, 1986).[3] It is the sum of the 1s and 2s circled by the teacher on all the problem items. The total behavior problem score is a broad index of the degree to which a child differs from a normative sample of age-mates in terms of problems identified by their teachers. The criteria developed by Achenbach and Edelbrock (1986) place those in the upper 11% of the scores as being in the clinical caseness range. They indicate that students whose TRF total behavior problem scores are above this level may be in need of referral for professional help with emotional/social or behavioral problems (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1986).

The independent variables used in the analysis include the race/ethnicity of the teachers, the race/ethnicity of the students, and a scale measuring student-perceived teacher derogation or disparagement. The four-item teacher derogation scale was derived from the work of Kaplan, Johnson, and Bailey (1986) who developed it for use in studies dealing with the relationships between self-rejection/derogation and deviant behavior. Questions included (a) Some of my teachers are usually not interested in what I say or do. (b) My teachers feel that I am a failure. (c) My teachers do not like me very much. (d) My teachers usually put me down. For each item, respondents were offered the following response choices: not true at all, not very true, pretty true, or very true. Resulting scores ranged from 4 to 16 with higher scores indicative of higher perceived levels of teacher derogation. The scale was tested for internal consistency with this sample using the procedures developed by Cronbach (1951), yielding an alpha coefficient of .80.

Three parent-reported variables are used primarily as controls in these analyses. They include parent-reported educational level and household income level to gauge the SES of the student. The parent-reported CBCL total behavior problem score is included to provide an additional perspective on student behavior.

RESULTS

The findings on the mean raw TRF total behavior problem scores for students in the three racial/ethnic groups by race/ethnicity of the teach-

[3]As suggested by Achenbach and Edelbrock (1986), raw scores rather than normalized *T* scores should be used for research purposes. Thus, we have used raw scores throughout the article. As described by those authors (pp. 24-25 and Appendix A), normalized *T* scores are based directly on the percentiles of the distribution of total scores obtained by their normative samples, up to the 98th percentile (*T* score = 70). A *T* score of 89 was then assigned to the highest raw score in their referred sample for each sex/age group. The raw scores from the 98th percentile to the highest raw score were then assigned *T* scores in equal intervals from 71 to 89. The raw scores above the highest actually found in their referred sample were assigned *T* scores in equal intervals from 90 through 100.

ers doing the ratings are presented in Table I. African American students with Hispanic teachers had the highest mean total problem score, 48.5; African American students with non-Hispanic white teachers had the next highest mean score, 35.0; and non-Hispanic white students with Hispanic teachers had the lowest mean total problem score, 15.3.

One-way ANOVA utilizing the Scheffé multiple comparison procedure indicated that the mean TRF total problem scores for African American students varied significantly by the racial/ethnic group of the teacher doing the ratings, $F(2, 280) = 15.22, p < .001$. The mean scores of African American students rated by Hispanic and non-Hispanic white teachers were significantly higher than those rated by African American teachers. No significant mean score differences were found for either Hispanic or non-Hispanic white students according to the race-ethnicity of the teachers doing the ratings.

Additional analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between the SES of students and teacher ratings. Two separate one-way ANOVAs examined (a) the mean TRF behavior problem scores of students with three levels of annual family income ($20,000 or less, between $20,000 and $50,000, and more than $50,000); and (b) three levels of parent education (less than 12 years, 12 years, and more than 12 years). Significant group differences were found for income level with TRF scores decreasing as level of annual family income increased, $F(2, 2255) = 22.59, p < .0001$. TRF scores also decreased significantly as level of parent education increased, $F(2, 2356) = 21.76, p < .0001$.

To ascertain whether the observations of student behaviors made by teachers were comparable to those made by parents, a ratio measure of mean TRF scores to mean CBCL scores was computed using the normalized T scores assigned to the raw scores for each test (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983, 1986). Ratios greater than 1.00 indicated that teachers noted more student problems than parents. An examination of confidence intervals (using the single sample T test) for each ratio measure was used to determine if it was significantly different from 1.00.

The findings revealed that the ratios of mean TRF score to mean CBCL score for Hispanic students were similar for all racial/ethnic groups of teachers. Their average ratio of 0.98 signifies a high degree of comparability between the scores assigned by teachers and parents. The TRF/CBCL ratios for African American students were significantly ($p < .05$) greater than 1.00 for those with non-Hispanic white (1.05) and Hispanic teachers (1.11). However, they were lower than 1.00 for African American students with African American teachers (0.96). The lowest TRF/CBCL ratios were found for non-Hispanic white students; they aver-

Table I. Mean TRF Total Behavior Problem Scores According to Race/Ethnicity of Teacher and Student Race/Ethnicity

	Hispanic		African American		Non-Hispanic white		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F* ratio
Hispanic	22.4	22.7	19.4	23.0	21.2	22.9	1.70
	(T = 53, S = 377)		(T = 54, S = 423)		(T = 105, S = 755)		
African American	48.5	33.0	21.7	23.9	35.0	28.2	15.22[b]
	(T = 9, S = 30)		(T = 35, S = 127)		(T = 51, S = 126)		
Non-Hispanic white	15.3	20.0	16.4	24.6	17.1	21.8	0.13
	(T = 18, S = 42)		(T = 22, S = 108)		(T = 59, S = 260)		

[a]Numbers in parentheses: T = no. of teachers; S = no. of students.
[b]$p \leq .0001$.

aged 0.88 (significantly less than 1.00) and were similar for all three racial/ethnic groups of teachers.

To further investigate the discrepancies between teacher and parent ratings, cross-tabulation procedures were utilized to examine the percentage of students whose total problem scores fell within the clinical caseness range on the teacher-rated TRF but not on the parent-rated CBCL. These data are presented in Table II. Analyses were conducted by the race/ethnicity of both the students and teachers doing the ratings.

The largest percentage of students rated in the caseness ranges by their teachers but not by their parents was found among African American students with Hispanic teachers (13.3%). This was followed closely by African American students with non-Hispanic white teachers (11.9%). The smallest percentage of nonconcordant ratings was found among non-Hispanic white students with African American teachers (1.8%). These results for difference in caseness ratings between parents and teachers are consistent with results for the ratio analyses presented earlier.

To examine the statistical significance of these differences in percentages of students rated as cases by their teachers but not by their parents,

Table II. Percentage of Students Rated as Cases by Teachers But Not Parents, by Race/Ethnicity of Teacher and Student

	Teacher race/ethnicity			
Student race/ethnicity[a]	Hispanic	African American	Non-Hispanic white	All teachers
Hispanic				
%	4.5	4.5	4.8	4.6
T	53	54	105	212
S	377	423	755	1555
African American				
%	13.3	7.0	11.9	9.9
T	9	35	51	95
S	30	127	126	283
Non-Hispanic white				
%	2.4	1.8	3.5	2.9
T	18	22	59	99
S	42	108	260	410
All students				
%	4.9	4.6	5.3	5.0
T	80	111	215	406[b]
S	449	658	1141	2248

[a] *T* = no. of teachers, *S* = no. of students.

[b] Due to the fact that some teachers rated more than one student, the total number of teachers in this table exceeds the actual number of participating teachers.

one-sample mean Z tests for differences in proportions were conducted for every two-proportion combination in Table II (Bohrnstedt & Knoke, 1982, p. 177). Significant differences ($p < .005$ to adjust for multiple comparisons) in proportions of students rated as cases only by their teachers were found among the three racial/ethnic groups of students with non-Hispanic white teachers. There were no significant differences in proportions of nonconcordance for students with African American teachers. The lack of statistical significance of differences in proportions among Hispanic students may have resulted from the small numbers of students in two of the groups. There were no significant differences in the proportions of nonconcordance between parent and teacher caseness ratings when all three racial/ethnic groups of students were combined. However, when all teachers were combined, the three racial/ethnic groups of students were rated as significantly different; African American students were more than twice as likely as the other groups to have received nonconcordant ratings.

To determine teacher ratings within the context of students' perception of negative teacher attitudes, TRF total behavior problem scores and

Table III. TRF Total Behavior Problem Scores and Caseness, by Students' Racial/Ethnic Group and Perception of Teacher Derogation

	Levels of perceived teacher derogation			
Student race/ethnic group	Low (1)	Moderate (2)	High (3)	Significant group differences[a]
Hispanic				
n	771	451	261	
M TRF score	15.9	22.0	31.4	a[d], b[d], c[d]
% in caseness range	4.3	6.2	13.4	b[d], c[d]
African American				
n	153	76	57	
M TRF score	24.3	30.4	42.3	b[d], c[b]
% in caseness range	9.8	18.4	26.3	b[b]
Non-Hispanic white				
n	236	123	53	
M TRF score	12.5	20.7	27.1	a[c], b[d]
% in caseness range	2.5	8.9	7.5	a[b]
All students				
n	1160	650	371	
M TRF score	16.3	22.7	32.5	a[d], b[d], c[d]
% in caseness range	4.7	8.2	14.6	a[b], b[d], c[d]

[a] a: 2 > 1, b: 3 > 1, c: 3 > 2.
[b] $p \leq .05$.
[c] $p \leq .01$.
[d] $p \leq .001$.

percentages of students with scores in the caseness range were examined according to low, moderate, and high levels of student-perceived teacher derogation (Table III). A low level of perceived derogation was at or below the mean for the total group; a moderate level was between the mean and 1 standard deviation above the mean; and a high level was more than 1 standard deviation above the mean.

Significant differences in the mean TRF total problem scores and percentage of scores in the caseness ranges were found for the three levels of student-perceived teacher derogation. As perceived teacher derogation increased, so did the mean behavior problem scores and percentages in the caseness ranges. This was found for the total sample and for students in each of the racial/ethnic subgroups. Overall, students with high perceived teacher derogation had mean TRF scores that were twice as high as those with low perceived derogation, 32.5 contrasted to 16.3. And, among all students, the percentage of TRF scores in the caseness range more than tripled in the interval between low and high levels of perceived teacher derogation, 4.7% compared to 14.6%. For both Hispanic and African American students, the largest increases in mean TRF scores occurred between moderate and high levels of perceived teacher derogation. For non-Hispanic white students, the largest increase in mean TRF scores was between low and moderate levels of perceived teacher derogation.

Table IV. ANOVA Summary Table of Main Effects and Interaction Effects on Teacher Report Form Total Problem Scores

	df	M^2	*F*
Main effects (independent variables)			
Student race/ethnicity	2	2614.53	28.42[a]
Teacher race/ethnicity	2	1077.98	11.72[a]
Student-perceived teacher derogation	1	6902.46	75.04[a]
Main effects (covariates)			
Annual family income of student	1	2601.50	28.29[a]
Parent educational level	1	2990.96	32.52[a]
Parent-completed CBCL score	1	5775.97	62.80[a]
Two-way interactions			
Student race & teacher race	4	568.08	6.18[a]
Student race & perceived teacher derogation	2	24.47	0.27
Teacher race & perceived teacher derogation	2	206.09	2.24
Three-way interactions			
Student race, Teacher race, Teacher derogation	8	91.29	0.99
Error (within cells term)	1961	91.98	

[a] $p \leq .001$.

To investigate the possibility of interaction effects of student race/ethnicity, teacher race/ethnicity, and level of student-perceived teacher derogation on TRF total problem scores, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) among groups was conducted (Table IV). To control for possible SES effects, students' family income and parent education were partialled out as covariates. Parent-rated CBCL score was also added as a covariate to control for parent reports of behavior problems.

Significant main effects ($p < .001$) were found for all three independent variables: student race/ethnicity, teacher race/ethnicity, and student-perceived level of teacher derogation. Significant covariate effects were also found for the two SES measures and for the parent-rated CBCL total problem score. In addition, a significant two-way interaction was found between student race/ethnicity and teacher race/ethnicity.

Post-hoc analyses were conducted to determine the source of this interaction between student race/ethnicity and teacher race/ethnicity. Separate ANOVAs were conducted for each of the three racial-ethnic groups of students. Teacher race/ethnicity and student-perceived level of teacher derogation were the independent variables in the equation. The annual family income of students, parent education level, and parent-rated CBCL score were partialled out as covariates. For both Hispanic and non-Hispanic white students, significant main effects ($p < .001$) on TRF total problem score ratings were found for student-perceived level of teacher derogation but not for teacher race/ethnicity. Among African American students, however, teacher race/ethnicity had a significant main effect ($p < .001$) as did student-perceived teacher derogation ($p < .001$) on TRF total problem score ratings. Thus, while student-perceived teacher derogation affected TRF behavior problem scores for all three racial/ethnic groups of students, teacher race/ethnicity affected TRF scores only for African American students.

DISCUSSION

One of the primary purposes of this paper was to determine whether teacher ratings of behavior problems among students varied according to teacher–student racial/ethnic differences. The results indicate that African American students received the highest mean total behavior problem scores, and were more likely to be rated as "cases" on the total behavior problem measure than Hispanic or non-Hispanic white students. This difference was due primarily to the finding that Hispanic and non-Hispanic white teachers (but not African American teachers) gave much higher problem scores to African American students than to Hispanic or non-Hispanic

white students. However, these differences did not merely reflect incongruity between the race/ethnicity of teacher and student. African American students were rated as having the highest problem scores by all three racial/ethnic groups of teachers (i.e., including African American teachers); similarly, non-Hispanic white students were rated as having fewest problems not only by the non-Hispanic white teachers but also by Hispanic and African American teachers.

There are several possible explanations for these findings. One interpretation is that the African American students in this study may actually have engaged in more problematic behaviors in school settings than the Hispanic and non-Hispanic white students and that these behaviors were observed by their teachers. An alternative explanation involves cultural differences between teachers and students in what is considered acceptable behavior in the classroom. This could account for the finding that African American teachers gave African American students a more moderate mean TRF total problem score than did Hispanic or non-Hispanic White teachers.

To explore there issues further, additional analyses attempted to determine the level of congruence between the judgments of parents and teachers. One of the underlying assumptions of the analyses was that parents' judgments of their children (i.e., having the same racial/ethnic heritage) would be less influenced by cultural misunderstanding than the judgments by teachers of students with dissimilar backgrounds. In these analyses, racial/ethnic combinations of teachers and students were compared on both the ratio of teacher-defined (TRF) to parent-defined (CBCL) behavior problem scores, and on the proportion of students classified as cases by their teachers but not by their parents. The results indicate that African American students received higher behavior problem scores from their teachers than from their parents, and were more likely than the Hispanic and non-Hispanic white students to be classified as cases by their teachers than by their parents. This finding held for all three racial/ethnic groups of teachers, suggesting that for those African American students with high behavior problem scores, the types of problems noted by their teachers may be situationally specific to the school environment (i.e., perhaps not seen at home).

Another important finding produced by this research was a positive relationship between perceived student-perceived teacher derogation and the assignment of high behavior problem scores by teachers. One possible explanation is that a self-fulfilling prophecy on the part of students may be operating, which leads to troublesome classroom behaviors. That is, it is possible that students who perceive that their teachers possess negative attitudes toward them feel rejected and this perception, in turn, fosters un-

desirable classroom behaviors. This explanation is in keeping with the general theoretical position of Kaplan and his colleagues who have posited that the rejection perceived by adolescents often leads to a variety of behavior problems (Kaplan & Fukurai, 1992; Kaplan et al., 1986). Another possible explanation is that students, regardless of race or ethnicity, who act out in the classroom are likely to be evaluated negatively by their teachers and that evaluation is effectively communicated to the students.

To pursue and to expand the exploration of the findings reported above, a series of summary analyses indicated that the strongest overall effects were student-perceived teacher derogation and the parent-completed CBCL score. This suggests that much of the variation in teacher reports of student behavior could be explained by parents' reports of their children's behavior (cross-situational behavior problems) and the teachers' responses to those behaviors. The effects due to race/ethnicity, interactions between teacher and student race/ethnicity, and the socioeconomic status variables were much smaller, indicating that the effects of "group differences" were less than the effects of individual behaviors.

Post-hoc analyses of the interaction between student and teacher race/ethnicity found that teacher race/ethnicity affected total problem scores only for African American students. Student-perceived teacher derogation did not vary by racial/ethnic group of student or teacher. It was however, significantly related to TRF scores among all groups of students for all groups of teachers. This suggests that the impact of teacher derogation occurs at the individual rather than the group level. Thus, while behavior problems on the part of African American students are perceived as more frequent by teachers (especially those who are not African American), African American students do no perceive themselves to be put down by their teachers any more than do students of other racial/ethnic groups.

The findings reported in this paper suggest that some interventions may be needed to increase the mutual understanding of culturally based expectations on the part of teachers and their students. Also implied, is the notion that differential treatment of students by their teachers might need to be addressed. However, the authors emphasize that the findings presented here are cross-sectional and descriptive in nature and, as such, they are not definitive enough to justify their use in the making of school policy decisions. Because each student was rated by only one teacher, it was impossible to discern whether a student's behavior would have been treated differently by a second or third teacher. The use of multiple ratings from teachers with different racial/ethnic backgrounds would assist researchers in interpreting the findings produced by future research. In addition, the data were collected from teachers and students at only one point in time. Longitudinal research, assessing students' behavior problems and

teacher/student interactions over time, is required to better understand the dynamics of this process, the chronological ordering of events, and the impact of the process on the learning outcomes of students.

In summary, additional research is needed before we understand how the social, cultural, and racial/ethnic differences between teachers, parents, and students influence the perception, prevalence, and perpetuation of and responses to behavior problems in classroom environments. This research would be especially useful in school environments where there are marked differences in the race and cultural backgrounds of the students and teachers.

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