

School Psychology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:  
Objective measurement; subjective decision-making

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264 students referred to building intervention teams were followed to assess the degree of minority representation in Special Education at four decision points. Disproportionality was not found during the referral or testing phases but minority students were referred significantly more for formal assessment and exited significantly less compared to White students. When presented with identical data (with only ethnicity being manipulated), for their opinions on whether: a) the scenario data for a student justified formal referral to assessment and b) the data justified a decision to exit student from program, school district staff and then 125 Washington School Psychologists, in a replication study, referred Latino students significantly more than other ethnicities, while more reluctant to exit both Black and Latino students. Background data appeared to be most relevant when Latino and Black students were being evaluated, while intervention progress was most attended to with White and Asian populations. Special Educators appear to enter the decision-making process with pre-conceived stereotypes or biases that overrule objective data. Despite good intentions (trying to help specific populations), we perpetuate disproportionality through our subjective decision-making based on objective data.