

**USE OF THE RORSCHACH AS A PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT TOOL  
WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS**

A Dissertation

by

ANDREA J. VELOX

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2004

Major Subject: School Psychology

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**ABSTRACT**

Use of the Rorschach as a Personality Assessment Tool

with African American Students. (May 2004)

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African American children comprise 16.5 percent of all public school enrollments, but account for 27 percent of all students in Seriously Emotionally Disturbed (SED) classes (U. S. Dept of Education, 2001; U. S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 1997). Being in such a position sets these children in the position of being assessed more often for placement and diagnostic purposes. Test instruments often use norms that either have not been standardized with African American children, or the cultural impact of African American socialization has not been validated with these children.

In this investigation, the Rorschach was administered to 40 African American students of low-and middle-socioeconomic status. Comparisons were made between the Rorschach's established norms for 9- and 11-year-olds and the study group of 40 African American male and female, 9- and 11-year-olds, to investigate any trends for the study group. In addition, the relative impact of acculturation on the Rorschach scores of this study's participants was examined.

Results revealed significant differences from the norm group on six of the 15 variables for the 11-year-olds in the study group, although not all significance was in the same direction, nor in the direction expected by the investigator. F+, and m were found in

higher amounts for the study sample; *CF*, *Pairs*, *Zf*, and *T* were all found in significantly lower amounts for the study group. Significance on six (*CF*, *Pairs*, *R-total*, *Zf*, *AG*, and *T*) of the Rorschach variables investigated was found for the 9-year-old study group. There was no significance found due to the impact of acculturation for the entire study group.

It may be that the 9-year-olds have a less sophisticated or negative “worldview” than their 11-year-old study group counterparts, or that when they are younger African American children perceive or process images more similar to their mainstream peers.

Implications for further research and practice were discussed.

*“We don’t see things as they are,*

*We see things as we are.”*

Anais Nin

This paper is dedicated to Keisha, Demoine, Patrick, Autumn, and Jamari for “waiting”.  
To my parents: Thank you for the inspiration, and to Lynn, Neicey and Kevin: Thanks for  
being there. All praises to God.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The use of psychological instruments for educational, intellectual, developmental, and emotional assessment is a fact of life for children in the United States. Traditionally, psychological tests have been used in many settings, from academic institutions, psychiatric hospitals, counseling centers, and private practice, to institutions for individuals with developmental disabilities (Groth-Marnat, 1997). Psychologists have accumulated a huge collection of tests, techniques, and procedures covering a broad range of human activity. This testing arsenal is used continuously in attempts to accurately assess the anxieties, fears, personality, moods, abilities, intelligence, values, potential, and other dimensions of men, women, boys, girls, students, workers, unemployed, the sick, well, and disabled; in other words, tests are used for all types of individuals, of diverse circumstances (Groth-Marnat, 1997).

Testing can be used to assess the accumulated knowledge of students, appraise the performance of teachers in their job of instructing students, evaluate various deficits or talents students may have, diagnose or identify students who have particular problems within the educational system, determine whether or not someone is “college material” by predicting academic achievement, or to assess some knowledge, particular skill, or facet of personality (Guthrie, 1998; Sattler, 1992).

Over the last few decades, standardized tests have been used extensively to define teaching goals and to assess student learning. Williams and Mitchell (1991) called

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This dissertation follows the format of *Psychological Assessment*

this phenomenon the “testing game” and implied that it is not only big business, but also addressed the issue that it can be an unfair gamble of a business, with some groups as predictable winners, and others as continuously spiraling downward losers. Banks and Banks (1997) agreed with this view arguing that these tests are frequently used as a tool for tracking students. Assessment for children often is sought because it is crucial to developing continuing programs for students; it is also practical for evaluating how much a student knows, and determining their talents and weaknesses. It is valuable for problem solving and decision-making, and is indispensable for clinical and psychoeducational assessment (Sattler, 1992; Groth-Marnat, 1997). The question of bias is often a critical element in the understanding of assessment, whether for personality, projective, educational, achievement, or intellectual evaluative purposes (Barnes, 1970; Chronbach, 1984; Kaplan, 1961; Lonner, 1985).

The assessment of personality, a major area of psychological testing, is concerned with the affective/emotional status of individuals. According to Anastasi (1998), the term “personality test” most often refers to measures of characteristics such as emotional states, interpersonal relations, motivations, interests, and attitudes. Historically, techniques of personality assessment began in the early 1900s with the use of Kraepelin’s free association tests (Bernal, 1991). Since then, the measurement of personality has involved the use of personality questionnaires (self-report inventory), performance or situational tests, and projective techniques (Anastasi, 1998). Children are often given personality tests as a component of a full scale psychological in order to add a clinical ‘richness’ to the assessment, particularly if there is a question of depression (Donahue &

Tuber, 1993; Rozensky et al., 1987), a borderline condition (Pfefferbaum et al., 1986), adjustment disorder (Tuber, 1983), or juvenile delinquent behavior (Frank, 1994a).

The first step in the process of evaluation, assessment, and placement of students with potential emotional disabilities, or other school problems, is usually referral for testing. The commonly used top ten tests in psychiatric hospitals, counseling centers, community mental health centers, and other agencies generally are the following: The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (WAIS-R: Wechsler, 1974), the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (Dahlstrom, 1972; MMPI: Hathaway & McKinley, 1940), the Visual Motor Gestalt Test (Berry & Buktenica, 1997), or Bender-Gestalt (Bender, 1938), the Rorschach (Exner, 1996; Rorschach, 1942), the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT: Murray & Bellak, 1973), the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised, (WISC-R: Wechsler, 1991), the Picture Peabody Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R: Dunn et al., 1981), the Rotter Incomplete Sentence Test (RISB: Rotter & Rafferty, 1950/1992, ), the House-Tree-Person Test (Buck, 1985; Goodenough, 1963), and the Draw-A-Person Test (Anastasi, 1998; Groth-Marnat, 1997; Lubin & Matarazzo, 1984).

There are two types of instruments used to make an evaluation or assessment of individuals. These are objective and subjective tests. Objective assessment methods such as the MMPI-2 (Hathaway & McKinley, 1940) typically are designed to rate individuals according to certain personality factors or criteria. These methods attempt to overcome the subjectivity of interviews by using pencil and paper, and measurable criteria. Most importantly, objective tests yield personality measures that help classify people and compare individuals to groups (Anastazi, 1998).

One type of subjective tests is identified as *projectives* such as the Rorschach, word association tests, and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). The basic assumption of these measures is that when the subject is presented with a number of ambiguous stimuli and is then invited to respond to such stimuli, the subject “projects” his own needs and these appear as responses to the ambiguous stimuli (Anastasi, 1998). Projection is based on Freud’s theory of projection (1938) wherein he proposed that there are parts of ourselves we can’t accept, thus, we “project” those thoughts and feelings onto other people and things.

One projective personality instrument used as a tool to understand a child’s inner process is the Rorschach Inkblot Test (Exner, 1974; Rorschach, 1921). The Rorschach test consists of ten inkblots that are presented one at a time to the individual. Examinees simply state what they see in each blot. As a personality/perceptual instrument, the Rorschach is often used when assessing school-aged children for diagnosis of emotional status (Sundberg, 1961; Worchel, 1997). Over the years, a variety of scoring and interpretation systems for the Rorschach have emerged. According to Exner (1974), his Rorschach scoring system is a technique used to garner how an individual sees the world. Inherent within such techniques is the assumption that given the ambiguous nature of the stimuli, latent conflicts and motives will be expressed (Rabin, 1981).

### **Assessment of the “Culturally Different”**

Research regarding cross cultural and ethnic group differences on personality tests is relatively limited, yet significant differences among ethnic groups have been documented on instruments such as the Rorschach (Jones, 1978; Kaplan, 1961; Krall et al., 1984), the Draw-A-Person (Koppitz & DeMoreau, 1968), the MMPI (Ball, 1960), and

the Millon (Moreland, 1996). Most research on the applicability of tests such as the Rorschach and MMPI for multicultural groups has relied on criterion-related validation using test profiles of European Americans and members of diverse groups drawn from the same broad population. Small mean differences in such studies were taken as evidence that differential interpretation, based on cultural subgroup membership, was not warranted (Banks & Banks, 1997; Guthrie, 1998; Suzuki, Meller, & Ponterotto, 1996). Lambert and Rowan (2003) questioned why African American children's differences in functioning were not seen as alternative competencies, which though adaptive for them might inhibit functioning in mainstream culture.

Although the use of several of these tests with diverse groups may be controversial (Frank, 1994a; Hale-Benson, 1982; Worchel, 1997), they have been used cross-culturally, without standardized modification. According to Anastasi (1998), personality projective techniques present a peculiar discrepancy between research and practice. When formally evaluated as psychometric instruments, many of the commonly used projective tests like the Rorschach were found technically lacking with people of color, but their clinical use continues (Frank, 1994b; Lubin & Mattarazzo, 1984; Sundberg, 1961).

Researchers, multicultural educators, and other scholars familiar with diverse cultural groups argue that assessment tools normed on the majority group population or developed within Eurocentric approaches cannot be applied blindly to people of different cultural subgroups (Frank, 1993a; Jones, 1978; Lonner, 1985; Russell, Fujino, Sue, Cheung, & Snowden, 1996; Williams & Mitchell, 1991). Anyone using tests with peoples of color needs to understand and appreciate the heterogeneity within the specific group.

In addition, the validity and reliability of a test used with individuals of different cultures who were not included in the standardization group are questionable. It is also important to recognize that diversity may exist between examiners and examinees even when the difference may not be readily apparent.

According to Padilla and Medina (1996), assessing children from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds can be exceptionally difficult, especially considering the pervasive problem of finding appropriate tools for use in education and psychology. Tests may be considered biased if they project only predominant values and attitudes that do not reflect the linguistic and cultural experiences of minority groups. Padilla and Medina estimated that because of the misunderstanding of varying cultural backgrounds, approximately 5 million students are inappropriately tested each year. These investigators also found that traditional tests and procedures affected the assessment, interpretation, or placement outcomes of lower social economic status (SES) individuals. The implication is that the performance of an individual coming from different cultural backgrounds, or lower social classes may be affected in ways not intended by the test authors or users. While normative test information is helpful and important, administrators need to know what the assessment tool actually measures when it is used with groups for whom it was not standardized.

DeVos and Boyer (1989) stated that of the many types of assessment instruments used cross-culturally, personality tests and projective techniques in particular, are controversial for use with non-mainstream populations. They further questioned why researchers using personality assessment tools with African American children did not take possible Afrocentric cultural impact into consideration, when the tests had

consistently negative results, as compared to mainstream children. There have been suggestions that modification, or adaptation due to cultural influences, might be warranted for the use of such tests with African Americans (Jones, 1978; Russell et al., 1996; Stoskopf, 1999).

Research investigating cross-cultural and ethnic group differences on projective tests is relatively scarce. However, significant differences in relation to acculturation, socialization, and the way different cultural subgroups process information cognitively and emotionally have been documented recently. Liem, Lim, and Liem (2000) examined the relation between acculturation and affect for Asian Americans. They found that more recently assimilated Asian Americans experienced the emotion of guilt and shame similar to other East Asians (other-focused), whereas highly acculturated Asian Americans whose families had been American citizens for generations, experienced these emotions in the more “ego-focused” way of European Americans. Investigating the effects of racial socialization on acculturative stress, Thompson, Anderson, and Bakeman (2000) found significant correlation between racial socialization and certain levels of acculturation.

Methodological weaknesses within such cross-cultural research have generally disregarded the effects of such moderator variables as educational level, SES, IQ, degree of acculturation/assimilation, and language style of the examinee. These factors have contributed to the inability of cross-cultural research to explain mean differences among ethnic groups. Thus, the question remains whether group differences are due to bias within the test and how it was constructed, or due to real differences in the personalities of the various ethnic groups.

### **Assessment of the African American Child**

Hale-Benson (1986) argued that most psychological tests have a strong middle class, White bias. For example, even a test such as the Picture Peabody Vocabulary Test (PPVT-R: Dunn et al., 1981), that appears to be simple and straightforward, has demonstrated potential difficulties (Altepeter & Handal, 1986). Instruments devised to measure or represent cultural or ethnic variation have been persistently controversial in the cross-cultural sphere. In agreement with Lonner (1985), there are still many unanswered questions that merit careful attention, to meet challenges of proper appraisal and assessment in cross-cultural or cross-ethnic situations.

Historically, African Americans have fared poorly under psychological scrutiny from mental health professionals. Behavior that some mental health professionals label “pathological,” others see as “survival skills” or resilience (Banks, 1995; Frank, 1994b; Krall et al., 1984; Obiakor, Algozine & Schwinn, 1995). The very survival skills often needed for continued strength and growth under sometimes severe discrimination, prejudice, and having to deal with an unequal “playing field” can cause African American children, particularly those of lower SES circumstances, to do and perceive things differently than their peers. It can also result in very real difficulties in dealing with the mainstream educational system in productive ways (Banks & Banks, 1997; Kunjufu, 1983).

Statistics concerning referral for psychological and educational/behavioral assessment reflects this phenomena for African American students. African American students are at greater risk for school failure and referral to special education/behavior disorder programs in public school than any other ethnic group in the United States

(Jones, 1993). The underachievement of African American children, particularly males, is well documented (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997; Kunjufu, 1983; Kurkendahl, 1992).

African American children comprise 16.5 percent of all public school enrollments, but account for 27 percent of all students in Seriously Emotionally Disturbed (SED) classes (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1995; National Mental Health Association, 1993).

According to Banks and Banks (1997), far too many African American children are exposed to a stifling bias that often destroys their interest in school. Cultural insensitivity, lowered expectations, harsh discipline, and systematic shunting to remedial and special education tracking programs seem to be the precursors of continued difficulties in school. Oakes (1990) reported that the tracking system perpetuates the inequities of race, gender, and SES in our society. Students placed in lower track classes tend not to move into higher tracks later; and suffer from decreased achievement (Oakes, 1990)

A 1990 study of more than 105,000 students in Maryland's Prince Georges County where African Americans made up about 65 percent of the enrollment, showed that African American male students performed comparably to boys and girls of all races on first and second grade standardized math and reading tests. However, by fourth grade these same boys experienced a sharp decline in their scores (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997).

A similar finding was reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (1994) where fourth grade reading scores for African American boys lagged behind those of all other groups at the same grade level.

According to Kunjufu (1983), African American males that have been academically keeping pace with peers from the start of their academic careers, suddenly drop behind all other racial groups at around the third grade, even if they were *ahead* academically. Kunjufu poses the theory that these children are impacted, more than are African American girls; by the bias of their teachers and significant others in the school system who no longer see them as little boys, but as potentially threatening Black males. The National Center for Education Statistics found that African American girls also declined in reading scores and achievement around the ages of 9-11, but the dip is not nearly as pronounced and is often recovered by the seventh to ninth grades.

Comer (1996) documented similar results in the Yale Child Studies, noting that these phenomena were particularly prominent with children from low-income families. As a result of the data from the Yale Child Studies Comer (1996) surmised that at about fourth grade there is a change in the school environment from encouraging social interaction to a condition of lecturing/listening only. This approach is especially tough on African American males because of teacher response to their relatively high energy levels or behavioral “verve”, a term coined by Boykin (1983). Boykin used this word to describe a dynamic that he believed was intrinsic to African American children, possibly making them difficult to assess using non-adapted norms and instruments of assessment. Comer (1996) theorized that this “discouragement” toward African American students was compounded many times by teachers, who either did not understand or value African American culture.

School cultural expectations require conformity, passivity, teacher-focused activities, and individualized non-interactive student participation. The ideal student

looks only at the teacher, answers questions, and performs the required tasks; this is very unlike the orally expressive, kinesthetically and group oriented African American child who, some researchers believe, leads teachers to view African American student behavior as an indication of less potential and lower academic ability (Stoskopf, 1999; Williams & Mitchell, 1991). Therein begins the African American trek toward over representation in special education (Banks & Banks, 1997).

Since African American students are referred more often for psychological assessment, and when they *are* referred, it is for more severe incidents with far reaching educational implications, it seems imperative that tests used to measure or assess their personalities be able to accurately reflect their true persona and character. Lewis-Fernandez and Kleinsman (1994) suggested that North American professional constructs of personality and psychopathology are culture bound, selectively reflecting the experiences of the White, male, Anglo-Germanic, protestant, and mainly of middle-class cultural orientation. According to Lewis-Fernandez and Kleinsman, American professional diagnostic criteria routinely ignore the fundamental influence of social context and cultural norms on human behavior. Nyasani (1997) and Lassiter (1999) agreed that American psychology does not seriously take cross-cultural diversity into consideration in regard to somatic and psychological symptoms. These authors proposed a transcultural theory of behavior assessment in which behaviors are interpreted for specific contexts that vary, change, and exert different effects so that one can make culturally informed clinical formulations (Lassiter, 1999; Lewis-Fernandez & Kleinsman, 1994). This approach leads to multiple versions of self and personality, since these attributes are more plural and fluid than generally described, and are largely dependent on

cultural environment. Lewis-Fernandez and Kleinsman stated that this kind of personality assessment would be less likely to explain, for example, the adaptational strategies of impoverished inner-city minority youth to dangerous predatory environments as antisocial personality disorder, a condition that has evolved out of a different ethnic and historical context. Examiners who keep this in mind may be better informed when seeking to diagnose an individual who does not fit the “norm.”

### **Acculturation**

An additional component of the complex phenomena that may contribute to the challenge of assessing African American students is level of acculturation (Jones, 1991; Obiakor et. al., 1995; Ogbu, 1978). Acculturation has been described as the psychosocial adaptation of the ‘newcomer’ involving a fundamental change that includes relearning the meaning of symbols, readjusting to a new system of values, and relinquishing some old customs, beliefs, and behaviors (Burnam, Hough, Telles, Karno, & Escobar, 1987).

In relation to African Americans, acculturation comprises the ways in which Africans adapted to and accommodated mainstream societal values and demands (Gay, 1995). According to work done by Bernal (1991), Landrine and Klonoff (1994) and others, acculturation, although not as all-encompassing a term as SES, is an important related component that socially affects African American’s assimilation process. Ogbu (1978) asserted that minority status imputes a different level of assimilation starting at birth. Harwood (1994) suggested that ones’ level of acculturation is not an objective fact, but a constantly changing set of emotional issues. This implies that the experience of emotion is significantly invested with cultural meaning.

Psychological studies have shown that highly traditional people of color differ significantly from Whites on a variety of scales and behaviors while highly acculturated people of color typically do not (Barnes, 1971). Instead, highly acculturated groups tend to perform like Whites on tests, in part because cognitive styles that characterize them are largely those of the dominant society's culture. Most instruments purporting to measure acculturation show that investigators relied on items tapping values, beliefs, behavioral preferences, and cultural self-identification to determine the extent or trajectory of acculturation. Landrine and Klonoff (1996) state that, on any psychological test or behavior, highly acculturated people of color will not differ significantly from Whites, whereas very traditional individuals *will*. More highly educated people of color tend to behave more like the mainstream culture, whereas those who are traditional are immersed more deeply in the social customs of their original heritage (Bergen, 1990; Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; Ogbu, 1978).

The potential impact of using current test instruments for the assessment of African American students may be crucial to the issue of testing bias. Personality tests are often used in extensive psychological evaluation for students being considered for movement into alternative school programs, in forensic testing for students in the juvenile detention system, and for students seeing therapists in clinical practices (Jones, 1978; Lonner, 1985; Meyer, 1999). In Houston, TX for instance, D. Quintana, (personal communication, 1998) reported that the Rorschach is used routinely as one of a battery of instruments to assess emotional pathology and psychological distress for youth referred to the Harris County Detention Center/ Mental Health Mental Retardation Association triage team (Quintana, 1998).

## **The Rorschach**

The Rorschach is a perceptual personality assessment instrument that has been established and used in the evaluation of serious emotional disturbance for over 78 years (Guthrie, 1998; Irving, 1997; Weiner, 1997). Personality tests, such as the Rorschach and others, frequently have been used cross-culturally, with varying degrees of success. Psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach developed the Rorschach test (1921/1942). Rorschach was the first to apply inkblots to the diagnostic investigation of the personality as a whole (Anastasi, 1998). As a personality/perceptual instrument, the Rorschach is often used when assessing school-aged children for diagnosis of emotional status (Sundberg, 1961; Worchel, 1997).

Personality is the process an individual uses to organize his or her experiences in terms of a changing world of physical and social realities such that the reality fills his own needs and values. Personality assessment procedures have evolved over decades but were formally developed and became popular in the 1920's (Rabin, 1981). Frank (1939) coined the term "projective technique" (as cited in Francis-Williams, 1968) to describe a certain type of task designed as an appraisal of personality. These techniques had been in use for many years, and strongly reflected influences of Freud's psychoanalytic approach to an understanding of personality. Frank (1939) introduced the term projective and described it as method of studying the personality involving confrontation with the subject in a situation whereby the subject emotionally responds according to what the situation means to him. Using this concept to define it, the images of the Rorschach essentially can be said to evoke expressions of an individual's private world and personality process.

Since, as stated earlier, the Rorschach is one of the 10 most often used test instruments employed by test administrators (Ames et al.; Anastazi, 1998; Groth-Marnat, 1997; Lubin et al., 1984), it would be useful to describe its administration process. The Rorschach test consists of ten inkblots that are presented one at a time to the individual. Examinees simply state what they see in each blot. Over the years, a variety of scoring and interpretation systems for the Rorschach has emerged. The Exner Comprehensive System (Exner, 1995) has been the most extensively researched and used interpretation techniques of all the Rorschach interpretation systems (Levitt, 1972; Meyer, 1999; Wood, Nezworski & Stejskal, 1996). Using the Exner System, the examiner considers the content of the response, the part of the inkblot that was used, and the determinants (e.g. color, shape, and texture) that led to the response. Responses are assumed to measure ways in which individuals normally react in problem solving situations.

An individual's perception of 'forms' seen within the ink splotches rest entirely within his/her own experiences and the ability to project or express them to the investigator. Using ambiguous data to spur individual imagination did not start with Rorschach; according to Anastasi, before Rorschach, there had been word association formats, and other tests with formless blotches thought to prompt, or draw out, a person's imagination, creativity, or personality style (Anastasi, 1995). Rorschach (1974) focused on the determinants of a subject's inkblot responses and their relationship to personality, research with inkblots had mainly involved imagination and associational content. The Rorschach became the major research and clinical assessment instrument of influence in the projective personality technique movement. Anastasi (1995) reported that projective tests reached their peak in 1955, after which they began to marked decline. Their

popularity has remained fairly constant since then. The underlying assumption of projective techniques is that when individuals respond to ambiguous stimuli, unique personality characteristics are exposed. Both the Rorschach and the Thematic Test (TAT: Morgan & Murray, 1931) were based on this theoretical framework concerned with drives, instincts, and needs (Rabin, 1981; Geiser et al., 1999).

The use of projective methods for the study of personality was first used in clinical work with abnormal adults. Since then, work with children has flourished (Francis-Williams, 1968). The present number and variety of projective personality techniques is vast, but all have ambiguous stimulus material in common. Just as with adults, children must draw a response from inner resources to organize the stimulus material.

Some sources have placed personality tests, projective techniques in particular, under scrutiny for being used in cultural or ethnic settings for which they were not originally intended. The Rorschach has also suffered attacks from critics concerning the lack of adequate norms, and susceptibility to situational influences both of which may involve aspects of cultural diversity. When the Rorschach was first presented, in the 1950s, many researchers churned out hundreds of dissertations that unexpectedly revealed its tendency to overpathologize in even mainstream populations (Wood et al., 2003). More recently, Lilienfeld et al. (2000) described the Rorschach as a test 30 years past its prime in that its status remains highly controversial and concludes that there is no empirical support for the validity of the test. Wood (2003) declared that the validity of the Exner Comprehensive System has been overstated, and even though he found Exner's

efforts to systematize the Rorschach laudable; he claimed that the Comprehensive System had not yet met professional standards.

Greenfield (1997) maintained that cross-cultural misdiagnosis and erroneous assessment often occurs when evaluators from a dominant cultural group test participants from a less powerful group using instruments that originated in the dominant culture. He argued that these measures are sometimes not as theoretically applicable to the behaviors, emotions, and attitudes of people of color. Seen as an even more problematic issue by some is the inappropriateness of assessing people of color with personality tests that use projective techniques, the majority of which have been standardized on European American middle class norm groups (Banks, 1997; Frank, 1994; Krall et al., 1984; Obiakor, Algozzine, & Schwenn, 1995).

### **Significance of the Study**

Controversy has played a significant role in the use of instruments such as the Rorschach and other projective personality instruments. There has been debate involving reliability, validity, statistical prediction, and more recently, appropriateness with diverse groups, multicultural, and cross-cultural research (Jones, 1978; Kaplan, 1961; Russell et al., 1996). Other controversy focuses on the origin and development of behavior. The current perspective is that social and cultural situations are the predominant influences on behavior (Boykin, 1986; Guthrie, 1998; Jones, 1991). This perspective requires that the examiner consider the subject's cultural background, abilities, experiences, socialization, SES, and attitudes toward the testing situation.

In this regard, Sue (1991) stated that using projective/personality tests indiscriminately, without considering socialization and cultural influences, may be

misleading and, therefore, destructive. For example, there has been some evidence that certain diverse groups show more personal expressiveness (Boykin, 1979). Consistent with this theme, some studies indicate a tendency for personality tests to “over-pathologize” members of ethnic groups such as African Americans and Mexicans, when the tests were normed on the “mainstream” (Banks, 1995; Jones, E., 1978; Jones, J., 1991; Lewis-Fernandez & Kleinman, 1994). Other personality instruments such as the Draw-A-Person (Koppitz, 1968), and The Thematic Apperception Test has been reported to show significant differences reported for various cultural subgroups (Bailey and Green, 1977).

The Rorschach is interpreted using various systems (such as Exner, 2001, 1974; Exner & Weiner, 1995; Exner & Weiner, 1996a, 1996b) with the underlying presumption that responses are representative of behavior and coping styles. Past inquiries have indicated that African American children produce more color, shading, *M* (human movement), and large detail responses; fewer responses overall, poorer form accuracy, more aggressive content, and a smaller number of “whole “ orientations on their Rorschach protocol (Crain & Smoke, 1981; Frank, 1993a, 1994a; Williams et al., 1968). In addition, Frank (1993b) reported that in several research inquiries comparing African American students with European American students, African Americans gave fewer Responses I, fewer shading (YF, FY, Y), fewer form dominated (F) responses; had higher percentage of color dominated form (CF) greater than form dominated color responses (FC); fewer human movement (M) and inanimate object movement (m); and made less use of space.

C prime (C') believed to be indicative of repression and showing emotional constraint (Exner, 2000; Niolin, 2002), was reported by Frank (1993b) to occur in greater numbers in African American children's Rorschach responses (Frank, 1994b). Noting that African Americans also have fewer R responses than the norm sample, Frank (1996) suggested that African American children may be less self-disclosing, particularly with unfamiliar examiners from a different culture.

If African American children have more "Verve," as posed by Boykin (1983, 1985), movement, a high degree of emotional expressiveness, and a propensity for high stimulation should be evident in African American children. This might influence their perception of Rorschach images so that certain variables are elevated or different relative to the normative sample. Focusing on content variables may present differences for African Americans of both traditional and assimilated groups. According to several studies (Costa and McCrae, 1992; Krall et al., 1983; Moon and Cundick, 1983; Niolin, 2002), this area has shown deviations from the norm for non-mainstream individuals. MOR, a category associated with depression, bodily concerns, is negatively related to self-esteem, and may be a particular indicator of traditional Afrocentrism. These less assimilated persons may have a higher frequency of MOR items because of superstitious rules and increased spiritual beliefs.

Research that focuses on the personality assessment characteristics of African American children needs to be grounded in a thorough understanding of the characteristics of African American children. The limited numbers of studies undertaken in this area tend to compare African Americans to Whites. It is important to explore the

effect of aspects of the African American experience and culture on the development of the personality of African Americans.

### **Statement of the Problem**

More information is needed to assess the way acculturation impacts upon the African American child's personality as revealed by verbal responses to the Rorschach Inkblot Test. This investigation considered variables of the Rorschach (Exner) scoring system corresponding to the preceding components as discussed. The specific Rorschach determinants used as independent variables are: C (pure color response), FC (color response dominated by form), CF (color-form response), C' (pure achromatic color response), DV (deviant verbalizations), DR (deviant/peculiar response-or rambling), F+ (superior form quality), M (human movement), m (inanimate movement), R-total (total answers given), Pairs (2 identical objects), D (large detail), W (whole responses), *Zf* (frequency of z scores), and the T (Texture response). In addition, content theme verbalizations that include MOR (frequency of morbid content in verbal responses), and Ag (aggression reported in content) might be higher in the sample group. This study used the Rorschach as a personality assessment tool for the purpose of identifying patterns of responses that may be typical of African American children, 9 and 11 years of age. According to child development theory, children develop cognitively in various stages. Piaget (1972) described two stages of intellectual development in children that would be cognitively appropriate for understanding the Rorschach. For ages 7-11, the period is that of concrete operations; for 11-15 years the period is that of formal operations. In the concrete operations stage (or latency stage as Erikson, 1996 would call it), children have evidence for organized, logical thought, and they are capable of concrete problem solving

(Piaget 1997; Elkind, 1979). Their thinking becomes less egocentric than earlier years; they generally are unable to handle abstract reasoning, but are beginning to understand socialization values (Eccles, 2000; Erikson, 1994). Piagets' formal operational stage (or the early adolescent stage according to Erikson) is described as the years between 11-15 when children are beginning to think in the abstract. For example, they can reason, "what would happen if snow were black," and can formulate to understand mathematical problems. At this stage, the child has internalized the socialization dynamics of their culture (Eccles, 2000; Vygotsky, 1980); the child is beginning to transition from morality learned as a child to develop adult ethics. Since the Rorschach does demand some abstract reasoning ability it was thought by this examiner that it would be interesting to assess differences between children at these two different stages of cognitive ability, particularly since they are also developing different social and cultural understandings.

There may be significant difference between this group and current interpretive norms, using the predominantly used Exner (1995) scoring system. Since African Americans are different from one another, they may differ on the extent to which they have adapted features of the majority "white" culture. Thus, there may be a relationship between level of acculturation and certain variables from Rorschach profiles obtained by African American 9 and 11-year-old students.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

- a) Are there differences between the Rorschach performance of African American Students ages 9 and 11, and the established norms currently used in the Exner Comprehensive System (Exner, 1996)?

- b) Is there a correlation between parents' scores on the African American Acculturation Scale (AAAS: Landrine & Klonoff, 1996), and their children's performance on 19 different Rorschach sub-scales: *C, CF, FC, C', D, DV, DR, F+, M, m, Pairs (2), R, S, T, W, Sum Y, Zf, Ag* and MOR?

### **Assumptions / Limitations of the Study**

It was assumed for this study that the sample selected adequately represented the population of African American 9 to 11 year old children in the geographical area they were drawn from.

A central limitation of this study is the use of a large proportion of the participants from two after school program organizations that primarily are attended by the children of poor unemployed or working class single parents in a small urban area without a great deal of diversity or economic opportunities for minority populations.

### **Definition of Terms**

There are several terms I will use throughout this paper that may have ambiguous or more than one meaning, to clarify the use of terms for this study the following definitions are provided.

#### Acculturation

The extent to which ethnic-cultural minorities participate in the cultural traditions, values, beliefs, and practices of their own culture versus those of the dominant society. According to Landrine and Klonoff (1996) acculturation can be thought of as a continuum from the traditional to acculturated.

### African American

A Black American of African descent or ancestry; pertaining to African heritage. “African American” and “Black” are currently used interchangeably. Either is used by personal choice, although there seems to be an age group choice, with younger people choosing African American more often (Banks & Banks, 1997). The term African American is used throughout this paper, except in the case of reporting information from other research, whereupon the ethnic term for African American as used by that particular researcher is used.

### Afrocentric

African centered: primarily an orientation on how one views data, involving location, place, and beliefs; putting African people in the middle of their own historical context as active human agents (Asante, 1994). Asante suggests three fundamental Afrocentric themes: human relations, relationship to the supernatural, and self-acknowledgement.

### Assimilation

Cultural assimilation is used in the literature as synonymous with the “melting pot” concept of aspirations expected of immigrants. Students may experience cultural conflict and discontinuities resulting from the cultural differences between their school and community environments (Ogbu, 1978).

### Socialization

Socialization is the process by which parents prepare their children to function as competent adults in society. For African Americans, the task of child rearing is unique because Black children must be socialized to be competent in two worlds: the

mainstream, majority society and the Black community (Hale-Benson, 1986). According to Thomas (2002), the socialization process includes both implicit and explicit messages given to children on how to be African American.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Assessment of Personality for African Americans

Any school child referred for assessment at school or clinic would likely be tested using several types of instruments. However, there continues to be controversy on the appropriate use of tests for cognitive, personality, and intellectual assessment of African American children without specific African American norms (Guthrie, 1998). Generally, projective stimuli have been created for a White middle class population, but were applied not only to that group, but to different ethnic groups and lower classes as well (Guthrie, 1998; Rorschach, 1942). Guthrie, in "Even the Rat Was White," reported that whenever personality tests are given they have frequently stereotyped people of color, as a group. In fact, Guthrie cited that test data as early as 1934 indicated that controversy began to plague the area of personality assessment in reference to various ethnic groups.

Says Guthrie (1998):

... there was some question of its (Rorschach) validity for individuals who had been systematically excluded from equal participation in the majority culture; nevertheless, most psychologists viewed the test as a promising instrument because of its relative independence of language and other culturally restricted content. In reality...far from being 'culturally free,' for the Freudian-based philosophical underpinnings were biased, and the psychologists who administered and interpreted the test were not culturally free (p. 71).

The well-documented problem of behavioral difficulties of African American children (Banks, 1995; Cross, 1991; Fremon and Hamilton, 1997; Stoskopf, 1999; Fremon and Hamilton, 1997; Williams Mitchell, 1991) may necessitate use of personality

tests such as the Rorschach, Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), and other standardized IQ tests for purposes of comprehensive assessment (Maheady, Algozzine, & Ysseldyke, 1985; Watkins et al., 1995). Nationally, African American children are nearly two to three times more likely to be identified as emotionally disturbed or mentally retarded than White students (Orfield & Losen, 2003). In 1993, the U.S. Department of Education reported that after grade 3, African American male learners are labeled and placed in SED, Behaviorally Disordered, or other resource programs in numbers disproportionate to their percentage of the US population. This statistic is right in line with Kunjufu's research (1983), which reports that African American males drop back from academic competition with their peers after the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, mainly due to racism and disillusionment. African American children also are referred outside the school system to the mental health system because of problems in school (Anastasi, 1998; Groth-Marnat, 1997). In community settings, a test such as the Rorschach is even more likely to be used as an assessment indicator of pathology for diagnostic, intervention, or placement/hospitalization purposes.

DeVos and Boyer (1989) stated that of the many types of assessment instruments used cross-culturally, personality tests and projective techniques in particular, were the most controversial for use with non-mainstream populations. They questioned whether personality assessment tools accurately or fairly evaluated African American children, taking into consideration possible cultural impact. It has been suggested that modification or adaptation due to cultural influences might be warranted for the use of such tests with African Americans (Costa and McCrae, 1992; Niolin, 2002; Williams & Mitchell, 1991).

Research investigating cross-cultural and ethnic group differences on projective tests is relatively scarce. However, significant differences in relation to acculturation, socialization, and the way different cultural subgroups process cognitively and emotionally, have been documented. For example, Liem, et al. (2000) examined the relation between acculturation and affect for Asian Americans. They found that more recently assimilated Asian Americans experienced the emotion of guilt and shame similar to other East Asians (*other-focused*), whereas highly acculturated Asian Americans whose families had been American citizens for generations, experienced these emotions in the more (*ego or self-focused*) way of European Americans.

Implicit messages for socialization of children may include appropriate values, beliefs, behaviors, and direct coping mechanisms for fighting the effects of racism. Thomas (2002) used the term “racial socialization” (p.1) to describe how certain implied values, beliefs, or messages a child receives might be related to the acculturation of the family and racial identity of the caregivers. Investigating the effects of “racial socialization” on acculturative stress, Thompson, Anderson, and Bakeman (2000) found correlation between racial socialization and various levels of acculturation. Thompson et al. interviewed African American students and gave them a self-report to assess cultural values important to them, perceived level of mental stability, and confidence in their environment. Study results indicated that the students’ psychological well-being was a direct reflection of acculturative stress levels and the individual’s inherent coping mechanisms.

There have been some significant differences reported for various cultural subgroups on the Rorschach and other personality instruments such as The Holtzman

Inkblot Test (Holtzman, Diaz-Guerro, & Swartz, 1975); Draw-A-Person (Koppitz & DeMoreau, 1968); and the Thematic Apperception Test (Murray & Bellak, 1973). Using the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) to explore Black/White personality differences related to the “deficiency hypothesis” (Jones, 1978, page 244), gave the personality inventory to 226 students matched for SES. According to Jones, the young African American subjects emerged from this investigation as “more assertive, poised, tough-minded, power-oriented, and skeptical” (page 244) than their White counterparts. African Americans also tended not to be easily hurt or readily ‘put down’, were traditionally religious, and had a significantly greater proclivity to self-criticism and feelings of guilt. Based on the interpretations the students received from their performance on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), Jones (1978) surmised that the group of young African Americans could be diagnosed as “estranged...alienated, ...mistrusting”. However, with more in-depth interview and evaluation, Jones found that the students were not alienated from society at all, but psychologically speaking, very much in the mainstream. Jones (1978) noted that even when familial SES and years of education were equivalent for Blacks and Whites, important racial differences remained (that were not necessarily pathological). Thus, he argued for the construction of new norms for Blacks on personality tests, in order to account for significant differences in specific personality characteristics.

Jones (1991), and Guthrie (1998), reported that traditional social science consistently interprets any Black-White differences as evidence of Black inferiority or deficiency, particularly in relation to standardized personality inventories and IQ tests. Banks and Banks (1997) suggested that much of the explanation for such differences

primarily results from the impact of cultural differences on values, perceptions, and expectations. Research by Choca and associates (1990) continued this debate over the adequacy or “culture fairness” of psychological instruments in evaluating members of people of color. Testing Black and White male psychiatric patients using the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI: Millon, 1992) Choca et al. (1990) discovered that the groups were significantly different on nine of the 20 scales (Histrionic, Narcissistic, Antisocial, Parphrena, Hypomania, Dysthymis, Alcohol Abuse, Drug Abuse, and Psychotic Delusion). With the exception of the Dysthymic scale, all of the differences were in the direction of Blacks obtaining a higher score than Whites (significantly more problems than expected by chance). The differences found at the scale level could indicate that the norms offered in the MCMI test manual (Millon, 1984), did not adequately reflect racial differences in the population at large. Choca and colleagues further discussed the possibility of race/socioeconomic status being confounded. If that were true, they proposed that such personality tests constituted a different measure for the group under consideration.

In the *Politics of Personality: Being Black in America* (1991), Jones discussed the “Black personality.” Jones, adopting Gordon Allport’s (1937) working definition of personality, summarized personality as “creative adjustments to environmental circumstances and as such is a mode of survival” (p. 311). Jones explored the question of why psychology has not had more empirical interests in the dynamic of Black personality and psychic strength. In the face of the hostilities of racism and discrimination, Jones observed that there were a limited number of African American personality studies. He

also observed that studies relating to personality assessment of African American children were even more meager.

### **Use of the Rorschach with African American Students**

The Rorschach is the second most frequently researched personality assessment instrument in the United States (Weiner, 1997). Weiner described the Rorschach as a “multifaceted method of generating structural, thematic, and behavioral data” (page 7).

Like other personality tests, the Rorschach includes scores and indices that are presumed to measure aspects of personality functioning and indicate information about pathology and personality dynamics. Weiner (1997) and Exner (2001) demonstrated that the personality states best measured by the Rorschach are generally elevated levels of subjectively felt distress, combining elements of anxiety and depression.

As stated previously, the Exner Comprehensive System is the most popular comprehensive system for use with the Rorschach (Exner, 1974; Exner, 2001; Exner & Weiner, 1982; Finch & Belted, 1994). The original purpose of Exner’s Comprehensive System was to provide the Rorschach, community that had been fragmented by various scoring systems, with a common methodology, language, and literature. Administration involves showing subjects ten inkblots, with the question of “What might this be?” The individual’s responses are coded using the system and the codes are ultimately converted into scores using frequency data. Using any of the scoring systems, including Exner, allows for a number of possible scores per response. Using Exner’s system, scores are then divided into the following major categories: location, determinants (e.g., color, shading, movement), organization of the response, frequency of the response by the normative group, content and special scores, (e.g., unusual, illogical, aggressive content

of responses). Finally, scores are transformed into frequency counts, ratios, percentages, and constellations. Weiner (1986) reported inter-rater reliabilities of 0.85 or more for all scoring codes when trained examiners were used. Test retest reliability is fairly good for adults, with all but two of 19 variables showing correlations of 0.75 or higher with a retest period of three years. For children, test-retest reliabilities are lower than for adults, with the best reliability for children ages 9 years old and above.

Validity studies on child samples using the Comprehensive System are not extensive. One of the main reasons for this is the nature of the characteristic differences between children and adult Rorschach protocols. Depending on where they are in their developmental process, children of the same age, environments, and circumstances can have vastly different responses patterns, without significance (Exner & Weiner, 1995; Francis-William, 1968), therefore Rorschach studies on child populations have been relatively few and far between. For example, Ames et al. (1974) presented a list of popular forms (*P*) given by young children from the Gesell Normative Study; Gesell warned that the children used were above average in intelligence and social class, thus results could not be generalized. In addition, as Exner (2001, 1988, 1974) repeatedly pointed out, there is not *a* Rorschach; but at least five different ones created around the five major systems. Thus, findings of validity studies performed on one system could not necessarily generalize to any of the other systems; there has been wide variation in training required for scorers; many studies have been characterized by inadequate controls for age, sex, race, and SES (Exner, 2001).

Very general approaches have given rise to number specific scorings and interpretations, each with various degrees of validation. Many early studies are difficult

to evaluate because of varying scoring systems, and for every study supporting an interpretive hypothesis, there has been another refuting the same hypothesis (Groth-Marnat, 1997; Lilienfeld, Wood, & Garb, 2000; Meyer, 1999; Miller & Hughes, 1995; Presley et al., 2002). Groth-Marnat (1997) noted that establishing validity of the Rorschach, as a whole, has been further complicated by the many scoring categories and quantitative formulas, each having varying levels validity. In addition, some interpretations have greater validity than others, even within a specific category. After proposing criteria for assessing the clinical utility of the Rorschach, Hunsley and Bailey (1999) went as far as to conclude that there is no scientific basis for justifying the use of the Rorschach at all.

#### Validity and Reliability

Exner (1986) has pointed out that there is not one Rorschach but at least five because of the five major systems for interpretation. Reliability and validity studies performed on one system could not be generalized to another. Despite these difficulties, estimates of reliability can be obtained by referring to meta-analytic reviews by Parker, Hansen, and Hunsley (1988). Parker et al. analyzed 39 papers using 530 different statistical procedures. Parker and colleagues concluded that, overall, the Rorschach can be expected to have reliabilities in the low to middle 0.80s. While developing the Exner Comprehensive System, Exner (1993), gave particular attention to interscorer reliability. No scoring category was included unless it achieved a minimum 0.85 level among different scorers. Test-retest reliabilities were more variable. Retesting of 25 variables over a one-year interval for a nonpatient group produced reliabilities ranging from 0.26 to 0.91. Retesting for children did not come close to the same degree of stability as for

adults, although Exner reported this was to be expected, given that children undergo considerable developmental changes (Exner & Weiner, 1995). Short-term retesting over 7-day and 3-week intervals for 9-year-olds indicated an acceptable level of stability with levels for 25 variables ranging from 0.70 to 0.90.

The primary focus of early validity studies for the Rorschach was to differentiate empirically among different populations, based on: a) past observations of a particular group's responses to the Rorschach, b) the development of norms based on these observations, and c) comparisons of an individual's Rorschach responses with these norms. For example, depressed individuals tend to have very few human movement responses (Exner & Weiner, 1995; Miller & Hughes, 1995). General approaches have resulted in a large number of specific scorings and interpretations, all of which have had various degrees of validation.

According to Groth-Marnat (1997), establishing validity of the Rorschach has been complicated by the many scoring categories and quantitative formulas, each of which has varying levels of validity. Some interpretations have greater validity than others, even within a specific category. However, the general consensus among several meta-analytic reviews was that, when rigorous, high-quality studies were analyzed, validity ranged from 0.40 to 0.50 (Atkinson, 1986; Parker et al., 1988; Weiner, 1997), making the Rorschach, overall, achieve reliability and validity levels comparable to the MMPI and MMPI-2 (Meyer, 1996a; Meyer, 1999; Stricker & Gold, 1999)

The development of Exner's Comprehensive System was largely motivated by the deficiencies (and strengths) inherent in each of the earlier systems. Recently, as a result of there being a greater proportion of studies that have used the Exner Comprehensive

System some researchers have been less critical of Rorschach validity (Groth-Marnat, 1997; Meyer, 1996b). However, external validity has continued to cause critical review of the Rorschach (Groth-Marnat, 1997). Groth-Marnat (1997) noted that the main focus of Rorschach validity studies has been directed toward determining its ability to discriminate among different types of populations; less success has been achieved in making accurate predictions for areas such as response to therapy, academic achievement, or spontaneous improvement in a clinical condition. Under ideal conditions, a test such as the Rorschach should not only infer characteristics regarding the ways in which individuals organize their perceptions, but also should convert these inferences into understanding types of relevant behavior.

Multicultural theorists reported that many measures used to assess students of color did not capture the relevant facets of behavior or functioning among children of different cultural groups (Lambert & Rowan, 2003; Haynes et al., 1999). Lambert and Rowan (2003) stated that measurement developers often included representative samples of individuals from diverse background; however, they concluded that the representation was usually insufficient to explore how these measures functioned within these different populations.

### Normative Data

The Rorschach normative data present two challenges for usefulness. The first is the size of samples at each age is modest. Only three age groups (9,11, 16) include more than 130 subjects and two age groups (5, 6) include less than 100 subjects. Exner, Thomas, and Mason (1985) also added that the stratification process has potentially created a great deal of heterogeneity in the data for each group.

Secondly, it has also been noted that all subjects were volunteers, with parental agreement; in many instances, the actual number of volunteers with parental agreement was considerably less than the actual number of potential subjects available in a school or group. This was especially a problem in recruiting children from urban communities. Exner and Weiner (1995) concurred that generally fewer than 20% of the children in a class volunteered for the study, and that percentage was considerably reduced by the failure of many in obtaining parental consent. Therefore, Exner and Weiner (1995) regarded the data as representing children who, for some reason were interested in taking the test, and whose parents supported this. Therefore, this may have left out parents who might be “suspicious” of testing situations (such as urban parents of color), or children not particularly interested assessment, possibly skewing the data in some way. Exner and Weiner (1995) stated that the normative data generated from the protocols of 1580 children between the ages of 5-16 was stratified for geographic distribution and partially stratified for socioeconomic level.

As for reported cross-cultural utility of the norms, Exner and Weiner (1995) stated that in general, “most results are inconsequential” (p. 48). Males and females do not differ for any location or determinant scoring, except that females in age groups 12, 13, and 14 gave significantly more *Y* (*Y* is used for responses based on the light-dark features or *shading* features of the blot), responses than males for the same ages. Exner and Weiner (1995) indicated a higher *Y* is indicative of “hopelessness.” Differences were more marked when SES was considered. For ages 5 to 11, the combined group of middle-lower and lowest lower SES gave significantly fewer *M* responses (*M* is used for human movement responses) than children of other SES groups regardless of race, sex, or

geography. A lower level of human movement might be indicative of depression per Exner (2001), Weiner (1997), and Frank (1993a). Inexplicably there were a few geographic differences, for example, southwestern and western children 10 to 14 gave more color answers (C, CF, and FC combined), than children of the same ages from other areas of the country. In relation to differences in quantity of responses, Exner and Weiner (1995) suggested that while the test process is consistent for perceptual-cognitive operations represented in the structural data, it might also be markedly influenced by cultural factors. Despite that conclusion Exner & Weiner (1995) thought establishing normative data for specific cultures, country, or language would be “unrealistic” (p. 50).

According to Groth-Marnat (1997), combining the results from a number of studies, the general consensus among well-designed meta-analytic reviews was that concurrent validity for the Rorschach ranged from 0.40 to 0.50. This is nearing validity of the Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children- 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (WISC-III; Wechsler, 1991), that has concurrent validity for Full Scale IQ scores ranging from 0.65-0.96 with a median range of 0.83 (Wechsler, 1991). It is also generally comparable to the concurrent validity reported in the technical manual (1997) for the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (WAIS-III; Wechsler, 1997)), that was stated to range from 0.60-0.77.

Exner and Weiner (1995) reported another major factor that might serve to lower validity to be the meaning associated with response productivity. Response productivity was found to be closely tied to age, intellectual level, verbal aptitude, and amount of education (Exner & Weiner, 1995; Frank, 1994). Norms have been provided for different ages, but the other three factors (IQ, verbal abilities, and education) can potentially confound the meanings associated with response productivity.

Rorschach “scores” are really codes that signify the presence of certain characteristics within the response (Exner, 1988; Weiner, 1997). Constellations are of particular importance because they combine scores into meaningful patterns. Current constellations provide screening information about schizophrenia, depression, suicide potential, and interpersonal coping among other manifestations (Exner, 2001). Scores are combined to form seven variable clusters based on the frequency counts, ratios, percentages, and special indications. These variable clusters involve personality components or functions such as affective features, capacity for emotional control and stress tolerance, ideation, information processing, interpersonal and self-perceptions, and situationally related stress. In the usual application of the Rorschach, the most significant emphasis is placed on the final “global” description of the individual, in which the clinician integrates the results from different parts of the protocol and takes into account the interrelations of different scores and reference points.

In the Exner Comprehensive System, the Rorschach is considered primarily a cognitive perceptual task; responses are believed to measure the way in which individuals normally react to problem solving situations. Interpretation of the Rorschach using the Exner Comprehensive System yields a constellation of elements that forms the structural aspect of the system. Using Exner’s system, certain elevated or deficient Determinant or Content variables occurring in an individual’s Rorschach response set are presumed to reflect characteristic personality traits, especially those signifying pathological aberrations (Exner, 2001).

Diagnostic interpretation of the Rorschach is based on normative data originally derived in large part from adult ‘mainstream’ groups. More recently, the normative data

have been updated to include some children of color (Anastasi, 1998; Groth-Marnat, 1997; Sattler, 1992). The Exner System presents normative data based on 700 nonpatient adults, and 1390 nonpatient children with separate norms by age, from 5-16 years, as well as groups of adults with psychiatric problems, adult inpatients with schizophrenia, adults with depression, and other adult groups. The Exner System normative data included statistics for 33 different structural variables. Particular profiles can be used to screen for various psychological disorders such as suicide potential or “ego-strength”: *determinants* can be used to represent a particular way in which an individual perceives stimuli, reflecting some aspect of cognitive processing.

### **Rorschach for African American Students with Emotional Issues**

Historically, it was assumed that responses to instruments like the Rorschach had the same meaning irrespective of the subject’s ethnic cultural background, but by 1960 several psychologists expressed concern that personality assessment devices developed in a Eurocentric culture might not perform well with members of minority groups. Moreland (1966) speculated that personality instruments developed in a Eurocentric culture might be a prescription for discrimination when used with minority group members. As recently as 1999, Wood and Lilienfeld asserted that Blacks, Hispanics, *and* Native Americans “score differently on important Rorschach variables for both the Comprehensive System and other approaches” (p. 342).

Bernal and Cash (1994) concurred, reporting that educators, health care professionals and even students in psychology doctoral programs have very little mandated training in multicultural issues. To compound the possibility of misleading results, children are notorious for their resistance to psychological testing. Consequently,

developmentally brief protocols are to be expected and this also might result in misinterpretations (Exner, 1988).

Krall et al. (1984), noting the differences they found for African American Inner City children, attributed the significant findings to these children's perception of the environment as very different than that of the larger culture. Based on Rorschach norms, the African American children were found to have fewer responses, greater large detail (*D*), lower form accuracy levels (*F*+%) and percentage of whole card detail (*W*); fewer color responses (*C*, *CF*, *FC*), and few or no shading responses (*Y*, *YF*, *FY*). Krall and his associates concluded that normative data should be established for children of various ethnic groups regarding form accuracy, color responses, use of shading, and percentage of whole responses.

Frank (1993a), investigating principally with the Rorschach, indicated that there might be a higher percentage of extraneous verbalizations in the Content of Rorschach responses given by African American children. Frank (1993a) suggested that the Content of African American children may be more likely to be interpreted as pathological, due to the oral tradition and expressionistic language style or speech patterns of many African American children that may be different from the speech patterns of middle class European American children. In that same 1993 study, Frank also reported finding that lower *R* is reflective of inhibition for self-disclosure. This suggests that familiarity with the race of an examiner might alleviate undue inhibition in a same-race subject. In one of the few studies investigating Rorschach *content*, DeVos (1961) found that the most meaningful differences between African American and White children was that African American children had a higher degree of affect-laden content. DeVos' theorized that

because of a more emotionally expressive oral style African American children tended to demonstrate a pattern of giving more information on specific determinants of the traditionally scored Rorschach.

Frank (1994) completed several studies exploring the Rorschach and special groups (children of low socioeconomic status, with depression, with hyperactivity, and with aggressive tendencies) using diverse groups of children (mainly Mexican or African American). Although Frank (1994) concluded that there is no scientific reason for discussing and researching the issue of race in relation to the interpretation of Rorschach responses or personality/psychological functioning, he advocated that “*influences*” on individuals such as SES, geographic environment, educational levels, and living conditions could be meaningful. The process of socialization incorporates the *influences* of environment, educational levels and living conditions through the impact of values, beliefs, behaviors and coping mechanisms, thus, there should be consideration of that effect on culture and acculturation.

Using the Exner Comprehensive System, Rozensky, Tovian, and Stiles (1987) investigated the relationship between students assigned to either a learned helplessness or non-learned helplessness condition and Rorschach responses. Results suggested that students in the “learned helpless condition” experienced a more painful affective state and tended to withdraw from their environment more than those in the non-learned helplessness condition. The researchers concluded that people briefly exposed to unsolvable problems might have a reactive type depression. Rozensky et al. (1987) suggested that prolonged exposure to a learned helpless condition; such as that of inner

city children in poor environments, tended to produce depressive responses on the Rorschach.

A certain percentage of *F* (form) responses are unusual in mainstream US, but this variable, interpreted in relation to an individual's capacity for order, may be particular to "mainstream" personality types in the US. In non-US society, high *F* may not reflect neurotic conservatives (Henry & Rotter, 1956). According to Henry and Rotter, it might reflect creativity, a high level of adaptive ability, or the percentage of *F* significant to identify a capacity for order might be different from that of mainstream individual's in the US. Frank (1993) questioned the association of the "dark, gloomy" achromatic colors (*C*) in Rorschach responses as a determinant only reflecting depression; choosing black as a color might not always represent evil, sadness, and negativity. Krall et al. (1984) compared Rorschach norms with protocols of African American inner city children, ages 3 to 12 years. Using Exner's system, Krall and colleagues found many Rorschach variables significantly different for African American children as compared to mainstream European American children. These included a lower accuracy level for *F+* percentages, a lower percentage of (*W*)hole responses, fewer color and shading responses (*C*, *FC*, *CF*, *Y*, *FY*, *YF*), and higher large detail responses (*D%*). In conclusion, Krall et al., (1984) asserted that it might be necessary to consider African American children's perceptions in view of their own ethnic experiences, rather than that "of the larger white culture" (page 157), when interpreting the responses African American children. Additionally, Krall and colleagues suggested the use of form accuracy tables to be compiled exclusively for various ethnic group comparisons.

In another interesting study, Frank (1994a) identified Rorschach responses that reflected disordered thinking by counting the percentage of *confabulations* and *contaminations*. It was revealed that the pathological nature of the diagnosis mainly depended on the subjective assessment of the protocol by the clinician. In other words scoring was influenced by the clinician's tolerance for deviant thinking. Frank (1994b) concluded that it is essential for psychologists to continue to summarize the response styles of African Americans to a variety of psychological tests, and reconsider or investigate inter-rater reliability for tolerant clinicians and culturally conservative ones. This could be especially important since Whites test the majority of African Americans.

Using the Exner System, certain elevations or deficiencies in *Determinant* or *Content* variables are interpreted to represent characteristic personality traits, especially pathological aberrations. These relatively inflexible modes of perception are established in the norms with respect to use of form, color, shading, use of space, location, and complexity of responses given in the protocol. Kaplan (1961) found meaningful between-group differences in the use of affect-laden content. Significant differences between African Americans, Whites, and Hispanics were found in the use of white space in Rorschach responses (symbolizing hostility according to the Exner system), content indicating anxiety, body preoccupations (symbolic of dependency needs using the Exner system for interpretation), and positive content (as defined by the Exner System).

The tactile or texture (*T*) score is a Rorschach determinant that has been noted as being extremely important in terms of pathology. This determinant is believed to correspond to how a person "needs" relationships with other people and navigates social situations (Exner, & Weiner, 1996b; Krall, 1994). In Rorschach, coding *T* is reflective of

the human need for nurturance and social closeness, loneliness, and need for others.

Using Exner's normative data, the only completely "normal" pattern is to have one *T* response. No *T* response is interpreted as a prediction that an individual has not received needed nurturance and has abandoned the natural need for this experience, i.e.

commensurate with Erikson's (1994) theory of need fulfillment. An occurrence of more than one *T* response is interpreted as representing a "needy" individual. *T*s of more than one normally occur in protocols of individuals who have likely spent the first two years of their lives in a healthy adult-child relationship followed by some break in the pattern, or trauma, thereby leaving the individual in a stage of primitive unmet dependency needs. Two particular determinants that may enhance or modify *T* are COP (positive cooperation responses, reflecting the presence of healthy social relationships), and Pair responses (any time two humans or animals are doing something together, be it positive or negative).

Ethnic differences have been reported between particular groups and the norming samples on variables such as Vista (*V*). Cross-cultural studies have suggested that for certain minority groups when *F* is elevated it may not reflect pathology, but rather concern with control and order, at an appropriate level. Shade (1992) suggested that African Americans have a unique cognitive style that is more spontaneous in general than their mainstream White counterparts. Cognitive style refers to a pattern of strategies. This pattern includes the examination of preferences in conceptual differentiation as well as interpersonal interaction. Shade (1986) found highly significant between group differences for White and African American children on the Embedded Figures Test (Benton & Spreen, 1969). African American students tended to be more spontaneous,

flexible, and open-minded. Wober (1977) hypothesized that studies of cognitive style were actually studies of the differences in visual information processing.

Discussing Movement (*M*) responses of all kinds, Weiner (1997) commented that all *M* responses are based on the individuals' dreams, fantasies and creativity. There may be more movement noted in profiles of African American children if "behavioral verve", a term coined by Banks (1995) to denote the preference of many African American children for high levels of intense stimulation and movement (Bernal, 1991; Frank, 1993; Krall et al., 1984), is exemplified in their responses. Inanimate movement (*m*), on the other hand, is indicative of uncertainty, depression, and anxiety (Weiner, 1997).

Weiner (1995) considered pure color I as egocentric, impulsive, or indicating poor ego control. Considering the dynamic of African American children and verve (Banks, 1997; Boykin, 1985); however, a higher presence of color variable responses (*C*, *CF*, *FC*) may simply be related to their cultural socialization. Frank (1993b) explored the rates of *C*, and *C'* that been defined metaphorically as kin to a psychological biting of the tongue (Exner, 2001), in the Rorschach profiles of inner city African American students and found them to be significantly higher. Frank (1994) reasoned that the impact of stress in the lives of these children affected their Rorschach profiles with more presentation of depression thus, higher *C* and *C'*.

Another pertinent question concerning African American students is whether the patterns of their learning and narrative styles might impact their Rorschach responses. Bennett (1990) suggested that learning style, or the consistent patterns of behavior and performance by which an individual approaches educational experiences, perceives and interacts with the environment, is influenced by culture and socialization. Several

investigators (Burnett, Burlew, & Hudson, 1997; McCabe & Peterson, 1991) reasoned that cognitive style and processing is influenced by cultural socialization. According to G. Webb-Johnson, (personal communication, March 12, 1996), Afrocentric socialization, is the basis for the interpersonal emphasis oral style of African Americans. Webb-Johnson, has done extensive research in the area of multicultural education dynamics.

If the Rorschach is a measure of perception, then clinicians may need to revise their perceptions in view of ethnic preferences when interpreting Rorschach protocols from diverse cultures. Based on results, indications, and suggestions from previous literature differences may be found for African American children as compared to the normative data of the Rorschach. The level of acculturation may affect the extent to which differences are seen if previous research between “mainstream” assimilated African Americans and “unacculturated” more traditionally Afrocentric groups holds true. Given that African American children are socialized differently according to many researchers, it is important to examine in these differences in depth. This study will focus on emotional and content-related dynamics of the Rorschach such as those indicated by Frank (1994), Miller and Hughes (1995), and Christian and Barbarin (2001) that indicate differences in the emotional content for African American children.

### **Implications of Acculturation on Performance on the Rorschach**

African Americans are in every sense a bicultural people. Shared experience of capture, the Middle Passage, and bondage as human chattel added to fostering feelings of kinship, common destiny, and camaraderie among the diversified lot of Africans brought to the New World (Feelings & Henrik, 1995; Salzman, Smith, & West 1996). These cultural commonalities allowed the Africans to draw upon them in developing survival

strategies for coping with their circumstances. They set aside tribal differences and cooperated in creating new customs, traditions, and values that reflected the newly mixed racial/cultural people they became. The new creation made them neither fully African nor fully American, but a combination of both. African Americans are commonly described as a people with dual identity and double consciousness, ones who meshed two, sometimes more (Native American, French, West Indian, etc.), sets of values, customs, and traditions together to create another distinctive system (Kunjufu, 1983; Ogbu, 1978).

Africans did not assimilate into the mainstream social structure to the same extent, as did Hispanics or European Americans. According to Ogbu (1978) and Shade (1986), African Americans represent a distinctive style of aesthetics, oral speech patterns, spirituality, behavioral 'verve', and group solidarity, going from the more traditional, African American-oriented to the totally assimilated. There have been various attempts to measure acculturation levels of various groups including African Americans, Mexican American, Southeast Asians, and Japanese Americans and Vietnamese Americans.

The African American Acculturation Scale is a 74-item scale, which has shown good initial construct and concurrent validity (AAAS: Landrine & Klonoff, 1994). The scale is comprised of eight theorized dimensions of African American culture. These dimensions are reflected in the various subscales: 1) traditional African American religious beliefs and practices, 2) traditional African American family structure and practices, 3) traditional African American socialization, 4) preparation and consumption of traditional foods, 5) preference for African American things, 6) interracial attitudes, 7) superstitions, and 8) traditional African American health beliefs and practices. These

subscales have been shown have high internal consistency, and the full scale has high split-half reliability.

### Concurrent Validity

Theoretically, members of any ethnic group living in an ethnic-minority enclave are likely to be the more traditional members of their culture, if only because they are constantly exposed to it. In contrast, those living in predominately European American or integrated neighborhoods are likely to be more acculturated (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996). Based on this theory, Landrine and Klonoff obtained preliminary evidence to show that African Americans living in African enclaves scored higher on the AAAS than those living elsewhere as evidence of concurrent validity. They used multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to assess the extent to which these two groups differed on the eight subscales. The MANOVA was significant,  $p = .01$  and follow-up one-way ANOVAs were also conducted. The results indicated that African Americans who live in African American enclaves scored significantly higher than those living elsewhere on the four subscales of Family, Preferences, Foods, and Attitudes. Differences on the remaining four subscales, although not statistically significant, were all in the predicted direction. Finally, a t-test to assess the extent to which the African American enclave residents differed from other-residence subjects on the Total AAAS scale was computed, with the prediction that the former would score higher than the latter. The difference in their scores was significant [ $t(1,49) = -3.10, p < .003$ ].

Although the AAAS is a relatively new instrument, it has been used effectively in several acculturation-related studies. Manley et al. (1998) used the AAAS to study the effect of African American Acculturation on neuropsychological test performance in

normal and positive HIV individuals. Results indicated that the AAAS summary scores of African Americans differed significantly from the non-Hispanic White counterparts. The study indicated that among neurologically normal African Americans acculturation level accounted for ethnic group differences on several WAIS-III (Wechsler, 1997) subtests, including the Block Design and Figure Learning performances. The authors discussed whether these “nonverbal measures tapped culturality based approaches to problem solving, or differences in speed and accuracy” (Manley et al., 1998; p. 299).

The AAAS was used in the Transition and Health Urbanization of South Africans (THUSA) project in 1994 to determine whether there were relations between cultural factors, such as degree of acculturation, and degree of psychological well-being (Choabie, 2001). The scale was adapted for the South Africans, and results suggested that a more traditionally African orientation on the Acculturation Scale was associated with a more individualistic cultural perspective. South African men scored significantly higher than South African women on the *Preference for Things African* dimension of the AAAS; South African women scored significantly higher than did South African men on the *Traditional Socialization* dimension of the AAAS scale. South Africans with more traditional preferences were shown to have a higher incidence of illness and symptomatology (less psychological well-being) on a general health questionnaire given to the entire group. Thus, it seems the AAAS could be a useful instrument in assessing how psychological well-being is related to acculturation.

### **Summary**

There is a widely acknowledged controversy over the use of personality measures (particularly projective instruments), in general, and particular controversy over their use

with ethnic populations. There is a dearth of investigation related to African American children, although these children are more likely to have to be assessed with these instruments during their school years because of academic or emotional school concerns. It seems apparent that African American children may have different cultural and socialization values that may impact the way they view things, express their experiences, and verbalize. These differences may have some influence on the results they obtain on personality tests, particularly one such as the Rorschach where the individuals' inner world and personal experiences is what is being primarily tapped. If these differences are enough to affect the results of African American children's responses, then those differences should be kept in mind when gathering information and considering the interpretation of this type of assessment tool.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHOD**

As described in Chapters I and II, the purpose of this study was to first, examine a possible relationship between parent level of acculturation, as measured by the African American Acculturation Scale, and performance on selected Rorschach scores from their child's Rorschach profile. The second goal was to determine if there were significant differences between the norm sample scores for the Comprehensive system and African American student's scores on selected variables chosen from the Rorschach scores. This chapter describes a review of the methodology employed in this study. A description of the participants, instrumentation, research design, procedure, and analyses are included. Results will be provided in Chapter IV and discussed in Chapter V.

#### **Participants**

The forty participants in this study were African American boys and girls, ages 9 and 11 years old who volunteered for the study by answering an advertised bulletin describing the study. These children lived in College Station, TX and the surrounding area. Volunteers were solicited by an advertisement of the study placed in bulletins at a local youth center. The first 40 volunteers for whom parental permissions were received were included. The parent completed a short demographic survey asking them about marital and employment status, race identification, and education completed. All student participants self-identified as African American; however, four were also either multi/bi-racial [African-African American, (n=2); Mexican-African American, (n=1); and White-African American, (n=1)]. Participant demographic information is provided in Table 1.

Parents were requested to complete the African American Acculturation Scale (AAAS). At least one parent for each child participant completed the Landrine and Klonoff (1994), African American Acculturation Scale (AAAS). Parents completed the AAAS questionnaire either at the centers or in their own homes, sending the survey in with their child later.

The specific ages of 9 and 11 years were chosen as appropriate for the study in order to try and get children in different developmental stages. Nine-year-olds are cognitively at an earlier developmental stage and thinking is more “concrete” (Elkind, 1979). By the age of 11 and upward children are able to understand and think more in the abstract. The two age levels were also considered because much research has indicated that African American students tended to start having trouble academically between grades 3 and 4 (Kunjufu, 2002; Fremon & Hamilton, 1997; Banks and Banks, 1997; Comer, 1996; Jones, 1991) thus this age range was relevant. Additionally, the investigator was interested in whether any significant differences found would be maintained even as children became developmentally more mature and more socialized. Based on the characteristics of the community centers (specifically from the after school programs offered by both for the nearby communities); it can be assumed that these children were mainly from the lower-middle lower SES group.

Table 1  
*Demographics of Study Participants*

Demographic Variables	<i>n</i>
<b>Family Makeup</b>	
Two-Parent Family	15
Single Father	6
Single Mother	19
<b>Parent Education Level</b>	
Did not complete H.S./No GED	8
High School diploma/GED	12
College: 2 years or less	10
College degree	6
Advanced degree	4
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	23
Male	17
<b>Ethnic Origin</b>	
African American	36
Bi-racial African/African American	2
Bi-racial Caucasian/African American	1
<b>Grade Level</b>	
3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	19
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	21
<b>Age</b>	
9	19
11	21

### **Procedure**

Prior to data collection, the Institutional Review Board of Texas A&M University, as well as the parent/member Board of the Lincoln Center in College Station, TX approved the study. Parental consent (Appendix B), and child assent (Appendix C) forms were required for students to participate in the study. Parents completed a short demographic survey that included educational background information and their child's name, age, and grade (Appendix A).

After receiving parental permission, children were administered the Rorschach test. The principal investigator administered the test and scored all responses for all the participants. As a check on the consistency of scoring, 10% (4) protocols were chosen randomly for score interpretation by two other female graduate students; (1 African American and 1 Hispanic), trained in using the Exner Comprehensive System. Each of the other raters was given two protocols at random to score and these scores were then compared to the same protocol scores given by the primary investigator. There was 80% level of agreement among scorers on the variables chosen for the study. Any language interpretation or other scoring discrepancy was resolved by consensus before interpretation of that particular protocol.

All participants were tested individually in a large empty classroom at one of the two community centers used to draw volunteer participant population. Parents completed the AAAS questionnaires either at the centers or in their own homes, sending survey in with their child later. The AAAS was given to the parent (s) of the student participant for completion.

### **Debriefing**

All participants were formally debriefed after completion of protocol scoring. During this debriefing any significant pathological interpretations or “at risk” indicators noted on the Rorschach protocol would have been described, explained to parents, and the child referred for further screening, if needed. In fact, there were only two protocols that had any significant indication of emotional distress and those were mild indications; these protocols were discussed with the appropriate parents.

### **Instruments**

#### *African American Acculturation Scale (AAAS: Landrine & Klonoff, 1994)*

This study employed the African American Assimilation Scale (AAAS) as the method of assessing degree of acculturation to U. S. mainstream culture. The AAAS is a relatively new instrument, but it has been used effectively in several acculturation-related studies (Choabie, 1994; Manley et al., 1998; Wissing and Vorster, 2000) The eight dimensions measured on the AAAS are Traditional African American Family Structure and Practices; preferences for things African American; Preparation and Consumption of Traditional Foods; Interracial Attitudes/Cultural Mistrust; Traditional African American Health Beliefs and Practices; Superstitions; and Traditional African American Childhood Socialization. The AAAS was constructed to assess a diversity of aspects of African American culture.

There are 74 questions divided into 8 areas of interest/values. The eight subscores are added to total one Global Score ranging from 74 to 518. The range of scores is interpreted as a continuous variable. The items for each of the eight subscales were constructed so that high scores indicate a traditional, cultural orientation (immersed in own culture) and low scores a more acculturated orientation (not immersed in African American culture).

According to Landrine and Klonoff (1994) multivariate analyses suggested that the AAAS has good internal consistency (0.73-0.90), and split-half reliability ( $r = 0.93$ ). This suggests that the items in the AAAS as a whole measure acculturation in a highly consistent and reliable manner. Internal consistency and split-half reliability was assessed for this sample. All but one of the eight subscales for our sample was highly reliable, with alphas ranging from 0.56 to 0.96. Reliability coefficients for the scales with this particular sample are presented in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Reliability Coefficients of AAAS*  
 AAAS Dimension

AAAS Dimension	Reliability Coefficient	
	9-yr-olds	11-yr-olds
Traditional Family Structures/Practices	0.93	0.84
Preference for Things African	0.89	0.91
Traditional Foods	0.93	0.92
Interracial Attitudes/Cultural Mistrust	0.96	0.85
Health Beliefs and Practices	0.92	0.56
Religious Beliefs and Practices	0.92	0.94
Childhood Traditions	0.90	0.91
Superstitions	0.81	0.86

According to Thompson (1998), testing instruments such as the AAAS do not have a separate reliability. Thompson pointed out that the intra-reliability of every instrument has to be reassessed with each study sample in which it is used. For this reason, a Cronbach Alpha was used to check the reliability of the AAAS with the current group of study participants; the significantly positive reliability coefficient was  $r=0.97$  (See Table 2).

### The Rorschach

The Rorschach test consists of ten inkblots that are presented one at a time to the individual. Examinees simply state what they see in each blot. Over the years, a variety of scoring and interpretation systems for the Rorschach have emerged. The Exner Comprehensive System (Exner, 1974) has been the most extensively researched and used interpretation techniques of all the Rorschach interpretation systems (Levitt, 1980; Meyer, 1999; Wood & Nezworski, 1996). Using the Rorschach Workbook for the Comprehensive System (Exner, 2001) the examiner considers the content of the response, the part of the inkblot that was used, and the determinants (e.g. color, shape, and texture) that led to the response.

For this particular study the Rorschach Workbook for the Comprehensive System, IV Edition (Exner, 1995) was used to code the students Rorschach responses. These codes were entered into the Structural Summary from which the specific variables to be investigated were retrieved. The individual's responses were coded using the Rorschach Comprehensive System to convert the scores using frequency data. Using any of the scoring systems, there are a number of possible scores per response; a minimum of 17

responses is needed to consider the test to be of “sufficient length to be to be interpretively valid” (Exner, 2001, p. 7).

In Exner’s system, scores are divided into major categories of location, determinants (e.g., color, shading, movement), organization of the response, frequency of the response by the normative group, content, and special scores (e.g., unusual or aggressive content). Scores are then transformed into frequency counts, ratios, percentages, and constellations. Weiner (1986) reported inter-rater reliabilities of 0.85 or more for all scoring codes when trained examiners were used. Discussing validity of the Comprehensive System regarding children and adolescents, Exner and Weiner (1982) reported that retest correlations are not as consistent for children as for adults. Retest correlations for the different variables range from 0.35 to 0.77.

For this study 19 different Rorschach sub-scales: C, CF, FC, C’, D, DV, DR, F+, M, m, Pairs (2), R, S, T, W, Sum Y, Zf; Ag and MOR were originally chosen as independent variables. However, the DV, DR, S, and Sum Y variables had to be discarded before analysis because Exner (1995) warned that these variables could prove to be “unreliable and/or misleading” (p.188) in statistical analyses. The remaining 15 variables were chosen because of the emotional dynamic reported for their interpretation using the Exner Comprehensive System. Of these remaining variables the T variable had to be analyzed separately from the other 14 because it was binomial in the present study and was therefore omitted from the t test analyses. These specific variables were also chosen based on their interpretations as well as differences found in the literature for minorities, related to cultural or socialization influence. A few basic Rorschach variable interpretation discussed by Exner and Weiner (1996b, 1995) are summarized in Table 3:

Table 3  
*Personality Characteristics Represented by Rorschach Variables*

Characteristics	Related Determinant(s)
Preferred coping style when confronted with stress	<i>D</i>
Likelihood that preferred coping style will work	<i>m, C, T</i>
Maturity and complexity of psychological operations	<i>M, W, C, FC</i>
Objectivity-emotional functioning dimension	<i>m, D</i>
Extent and quality of self-focus	<i>R, (2)</i>
Efficiency used in organizing the environmental stimuli	<i>D, M, m</i>
Expression of affection and emotional ability	<i>FC, CF, C, C'</i>
Social need for interpersonal / interest in people	<i>T, (2)</i>
Z frequency: organizational activity	<i>Zf</i>
Reality contact / ego strength / intellectual control	<i>F+</i>
Associated with negativism / oppositional or stubbornness	<i>S</i>
Deviant responses / having strange, peculiar or distorted meaning	<i>DV, DR</i>
Aggressive tendencies / hostility or fear of aggression	<i>Ag</i>
Morbid content: relates to bodily concerns, depression	<i>MOR</i>

A high frequency of color (*C*, *CF*, *FC*, or *C'*), in any blending, indicates less control of emotions, affect, and degree of impulse control (Aronow and Reznikoff, 1983; Exner, 2001). Aronow and Koppel (1997), and Aronow and Reznikoff (1983) cited a significant difference in the use of color (*C*, *CF*, *FC*, or *C'*), and shading use for African American children. Ames et al. (1974) found that *W*%, related to intellectual capacity, increased with decreasing socioeconomic status. *R* was found to be smaller among children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Ames et al., 1974). The number of Rorschach responses *I* was also considered as an independent variable for this study to control for the possibility that a higher number of color, shading or other determinants was not due simply to a significantly higher number of total responses for the sample population.

According to Exner (2001) the presence or absence of *T* (presence or absence of texture in response), indicates level of “neediness” (in the case of more than 1 occurrence in entire protocol), social interdependence (in the case of only one *T* variable occurring in the protocol), or lack of social adaptivity and possible antisocial characteristic if no *T* at all is found in the entire protocol (Francis –Williams, 1968; Levitt, 1980). Different trends for texture have been noted for differing ethnic groups (De Vos Borders & Borders, 1978; Meyer, 2002; Sangro, 1997). For example, African American inner city children have been reported to higher *T* response due to the effects of learned helplessness (Rozenky et al., 1974). African American children have also been reported to have lower *W*, *M*, *m*, and *F+* responses (Frank, 1993; Krall et al., 1984).

### Morbid Content (MOR) and Aggression (Ag)

Two additional content determinants were included as independent variables because the literature indicated that children of color presented on various personality tests, as more hostile (related to aggression) or more likely to have deviant verbalizations and unusual ideas of reality (Constantino et al., 1995; DeVos & Borders, 1989; Ridington-Fox & Chickadee, 1999). Exner (1993) reported that a high frequency of MOR responses is indicative of a pessimistic world view or viewing oneself as damaged.

### **Data Analysis**

The study used a group comparison (exploratory descriptive) design with one comparison group compared to existing normative data. In addition, a correlational design that examined the association among levels of acculturation and resulting scores on the specific variables of the Rorschach was completed. Each variable had two age levels (9 and 11). Additionally, the degree to which the student's parent educational level was associated with the criterion variables was considered. Separate tests were run to answer each of the research questions. Specifically, a two-sample t-test for the difference between independent means was used to compare the sample population's Rorschach variables with Exner's norms. *Pearson Correlations* were calculated to determine the presence of any association between level of assimilation and the fifteen independent variables from the Rorschach by the two age groups. Thompson (1996) recommended that effect size information be included for empirical studies when there is statistical significance. Thus, the results for this data will also include effect size results. Lastly, since there was numerous t tests completed a Bonferroni which controls for the Type 1 error rate was also applied to the data.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Analysis of Research Question 1

The first question was to determine if 9- or 11-year-old, male and female, African American children scored differently on the Rorschach than same age male and female children based on the established norms currently used in the Exner Comprehensive system (1995) for interpretation of the Rorschach. The Rorschach variables of interest were 15 of the determinants chosen for this study: *C*, *CF*, *FC*, *C'*, *D*, *F+*, *M*, *m*, *Pairs*, *R*, *T*, *Zf*, *W*, *Ag* and *MOR*. Data analysis was completed for 14 variables excluding *T*. The *T* variable was binomial in the present study and was therefore omitted from the t test analyses. Although binomial variables are permissible for analysis of this sort, their low variation leads to attenuation of the results.

To answer the first question, the data were analyzed to obtain two sample t tests for independent means comparing the sample population with the Exner norms for each of the 14 variables of interest for the two different age levels (9 or 11 years). The 9 year-old age sample contained 19 children, the 11 year-old sample contained 21 children. Tables 4 and 5 will present detailed analyses of the results of these comparisons.

For the 11 year-old study sample, significant differences from the Exner norms were found on five t-tests (excluding *T* –Texture, which was analyzed separately): *CF*, *F+*, *m*, *Pairs*, and *Zf*. Though there were statistically significant differences, they were not all in the same direction. For the 9-year-old sample, significant differences were also found on five of the 14 t-tests tests (excluding *T* –Texture, which was analyzed

separately): *CF*, Pairs, R-total, *Zf*, and AG. All statistically significant differences were in the same direction (the response scores for the variables were less than the norm sample). However, the two samples did not have statistical significance on all the same tests. The two age groups performed in the same direction on two subscales: *CF*, and Pairs. There was no statistical significance for 11-year-olds on *FC*, *C'*, R-total, AG, and MOR. There was no statistical significance on the following t tests for 9 year olds: *C*, *FC*, *C'*, *D*, *F+*, *M*, *m*, *W*, and MOR.

Cohen's *d* (1998) was used for an estimate of effect size for the association between test scores and group membership, for descriptive purposes as a corrective procedure. There was a large (robust) effect size for all of the Rorschach variables for the 11-year-old sample, except three (*C*, MOR and AG), which all had a medium effect size. The 9-year-old sample population was somewhat different in that there was a robust effect size for: *CF*, Pairs, R-total, AG, and *Zf*; a medium effect size for three variables *C'*, R-total, and *D*; and all other effect size of Rorschach variables for 9-year-olds were less than Cohen's definition of a small effect size.

Table 4  
*T Test Comparisons of Study Sample to Norming Sample, Age 11*

Subscale	Study Sample		Norming Sample		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD			
C	0.67	0.86	0.28	0.27	.17	NS	0.45
CF	1.14	1.49	3.43	1.13	-6.54	<.001	-1.94
FC	1.95	1.98	2.93	0.95	-2.18	NS	-0.87
Sum C Prime	1.81	1.80	1.06	0.71	1.88	NS	0.81
D	8.14	4.14	10.01	1.31	-2.05	NS	1.51
F+	1.24	1.61	0.21	0.38	2.94	<.003	1.51
M	2.81	2.46	4.12	1.67	-2.48	NS	0.73
m	2.33	2.16	1.00	0.89	2.77	<.005	-1.18
Pairs	5.90	3.09	9.90	1.08	-5.88	<.001	-2.44
R Total	20.33	1.65	20.53	2.46	-0.49	NS	-0.73
W	11.19	3.17	9.61	0.95	2.26	NS	1.09
Zf	10.57	3.26	13.70	1.22	-4.35	<.001	-1.91
AG	1.05	1.24	1.42	0.57	-1.42	NS	-0.54
MOR	1.10	1.24	0.72	0.57	1.46	NS	0.58

*Note.* Study sample: n=21; norming sample : n=135.

Positive values indicate that the study sample obtained higher scores; negative values indicate that the norming sample obtained higher scores.

*Note.* C=pure color; CF=Color/form; FC=Form/color; Sum C Prime=C'/achromatic color; D=large detail; F+=ego strength; M=human movement; m=inanimate movement; Pairs=sets of 2; R Total=total # answers; W=whole detail; Zf=organizational quality; AG=Aggression; MOR=Morbidity  
 Bonferroni for *p* at .0036

Table 5  
*T Test Comparisons of Study Sample to Norming Sample, Age 9*

Subscale	Study Sample		Norming Sample		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD			
C	0.95	1.27	0.43	0.48	0.58	NS	0.25
CF	1.05	1.22	2.79	0.78	-6.21	<.001	-2.07
FC	1.58	1.02	1.89	0.86	-1.29	NS	-0.35
Sum C Prime	1.68	2.11	1.16	0.79	1.08	NS	0.50
D	9.16	4.03	9.00	1.28	0.17	NS	-0.46
F+	1.24	1.61	0.26	0.31	0.37	NS	1.58
M	2.16	3.02	3.12	1.85	-1.35	NS	-0.16
m	1.47	2.04	0.67	0.58	1.67	NS	1.81
Pairs	4.58	3.06	8.97	1.69	-4.26	<.001	-2.31
R Total	18.53	1.50	21.29	2.43	-6.90	<.001	-0.68
W	9.32	3.43	10.33	1.57	-1.26	NS	0.47
Zf	8.63	2.92	11.16	1.54	-3.67	<.001	-0.32
AG	0.42	0.84	1.37	0.78	-4.75	<.001	-1.20
MOR	0.68	1.00	0.87	0.64	0.82	NS	-0.27

*Note.* Positive values indicate that the study sample obtained higher scores; negative values indicate that the norming sample obtained higher scores.

*Note.* C=pure color; CF=Color/form; FC=Form/color; Sum C Prime=C'/achromatic color; D=large detail; F+=ego strength; M=human movement; m=inanimate movement; Pairs=sets of 2; R Total=total # answers; W=whole detail; Zf=organizational quality; AG=Aggression; MOR=Morbidity

Study sample n= 19; norming sample n= 140

Bonferroni for *p* at .0036

Independent T-tests for the difference between means were employed to compare data with the Rorschach norming sample, using Exner's scoring system. Fourteen separate t-tests were utilized for each age group of the population sample (9 and 11 year olds). Due to the large number of comparisons (14), which increases the possibility of significance occurring due to chance, a Bonferroni was applied to the data. The new Alpha level was .0036. Using the new level, the 11-year-old sample no longer showed statistical significance on the *D*, *M*, or *W* variables. The 9-year-old sample variables remained the same.

### **T-Test Results for Each Rorschach Variable**

#### *C – Pure Color Determinant*

There was no significant difference between African American children's number of *C* (pure Color) responses and the norm reference samples for either 11-year-olds: ( $t = .17$ ,  $df = 154$ ,  $d = .45$ ), or 9-year-olds ( $t = .58$ ,  $df = 157$ ,  $d = -2.07$ ).

#### *CF – Color Form Determinant*

There was a statistically significant difference between African American children's number of *CF* (Color Form) responses and the norm reference samples for both 11-year-olds: ( $t = -6.54$ ,  $df = 154$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = -1.94$ ), and 9 year-olds, ( $t = -6.21$ ,  $df = 154$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = -2.07$ ). That is to say that both 11-year-olds and 9-year-olds generated fewer responses that combined color and form, but were predominated by color, as compared to the normative sample.

*FC – Form Color Determinant*

There was no statistically significant difference between African American children's number of *FC* (Form Color) responses and the norm reference samples for either the 11-year-olds or 9-year-olds

*C' – C Prime-achromatic Color Determinant.*

There was no statistically significant difference between African American children's number of *C'* (Achromatic Color) responses and the norm reference samples for 11 or 9-year-olds.

*D – Large Detail Determinant*

There was no statistically significant difference between African American children's number of *D* (large Detail) responses, and the norm reference samples for 11-year olds or 9-year-olds.

*F+ – Ego-strength Variable*

There was a statistically significant difference between African American children's *F+* score and the norm reference samples for 11-year-olds: ( $t=2.94$ ,  $df=154$ ,  $p<.003$ ,  $d= 1.51$ ), but not for 9-year-olds. That is to say that 11-year-olds generated a higher number of responses that indicated good form quality, as compared to the normative sample.

*M – Human Movement Determinant*

There was no statistically significant difference between African American children's *M* score and the norm reference samples for 11-year-olds or 9-year-olds.

### M – Inanimate Movement Determinant

There was a statistically significant difference between African American children's *m* score and the norm reference samples for the 11-year olds: ( $t = 2.77$ ,  $df = 154$ ,  $p < .005$ ,  $d = -1.18$ ), but not for 9-year-olds. That is to say that 11-year-olds generated more responses that included inanimate objects, as compared to the normative sample.

### Pairs – (2)

There was a statistically significant difference between African American children's Pairs response score and the norm reference samples for both 11-year olds: ( $t = -5.88$ ,  $df = 154$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = -2.44$ ) and 9-year-olds ( $t = -4.26$ ,  $df = 157$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = -2.31$ ). That is to say that both 11-year-olds and 9-year-olds generated fewer responses that included pairs of objects/forms seen, as compared to the normative sample.

### R – Total Responses

There was a statistically significant difference between African American children's number of *Total Responses* and the norm reference samples for 9-year-olds: ( $t[1, 20] = -5.81$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = -.73$ ), but not for 11-year-olds. That is to say that 9-year-olds generated a fewer number of total responses in their Rorschach protocol, as compared to the normative sample. This particular variable is especially important for interpreting the differences for 9-year-olds, because fewer responses in general could have influenced the frequency of the other scores. For example, having fewer *CF* may not be as meaningful for 9-year-olds as the fewer *CF* for the older sample group, because the 9-year-olds already have *fewer* total responses anyway.

### W – Whole Detail Response

There was no statistically significant difference between African American children's *W* score and the norm reference samples for 11-year-olds or 9-year-olds.

### Zf – Organizational Quality Variable

There was a statistically significant difference between African American children's *Zf* score and the norm reference samples for both 11-year-olds ( $t [1, 20] = -4.39, p < .001, d = -1.91$ ) and 9-year-olds: ( $t [1, 18] = -3.76, p < .001, d = -.32$ ). That is to say that both 11-year-olds and 9-year-olds generated fewer responses that indicated a high level of cognitive energy being put into perceptual organization, as compared to the normative sample.

### Ag – Aggression Content

There was a statistically significant difference between African American children's Aggression score and the norm reference samples 9-year-olds: ( $t [1, 18] = -4.94, p < .001, d = -1.20$ ), but not for 11-year-olds. That is to say that 9-year-olds generated fewer responses that included aggressive content, as compared to the normative sample.

### MOR – Morbid Content

There was a no statistically significant difference between African American children's number of MOR (morbid) responses and the norm reference samples for 9- or 11-year-olds.

### T – Texture Response Results

The *T* or (texture or touch) Rorschach subscale was analyzed separately for 11 and 9 year olds due to the categorical nature of the data and to there being only one answer considered appropriate according to the Exner System. The research question

stated that there would be a difference between the number of texture responses produced on the Rorschach protocols of the study sample population and those of the norming population. Exner (1986) suggested that it is optimal for protocols to have one *T*. The results of the current analysis found that *T* was significant for the 11-year-olds:  $t = -2.21$ ,  $p < .05$ , and for the 9-year-olds:  $t = -3.14$ ,  $p < .001$ .

### **Analysis of Research Question 2**

A *Pearson Correlation* analysis was used to determine if there was an association between parent's level of acculturation as measured by the African American Acculturation Scale (AAAS) scores, and their child's performance on all 15 specified Rorschach subscales: *C*, *CF*, *FC*, *C'*, *D*, *F+*, *M*, *m*, Pairs (2), *R*, *Zf*, *T*, *W*, *Ag* and *MOR* (Table 6). The next section will present detailed analyses of the results of this comparison.

Table 6  
*Correlations between Parent AAAS Total Score and Rorschach Variables (n=40)*

Subscale	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
C	0.03	0.83
FC	0.10	0.51
CF	-0.24	0.12
Sum C Prime	-0.29	0.06
D	-0.11	0.47
F+	-0.11	0.49
M	0.04	0.78
m	0.02	0.87
Pairs	-0.08	0.61
R-total	0.06	0.67
W	0.19	0.22
Zf	0.14	0.36
AG	0.09	0.57
MOR	-0.12	0.42

*Note.* C=pure color; FC=Form/color; CF=Color/form; Sum C Prime=C'/achromatic color; D=large detail; F+=ego strength; M=human movement; m=inanimate movement; Pairs=sets of 2; R Total=total # answers; W=whole detail; ZF=organizational quality; AG=Aggression; MOR=Morbidity

In examining the association between a child's performance on the 15 subscales of the Rorschach and their parent's level of acculturation as measured their AAAS score, A *Pearson Correlation* was calculated to determine the extent to which assimilation was associated with the specified Exner System subscales. Using a two-tailed t-test for comparing between-group differences, there was no statistically significant relationship found between parental level of assimilation and any of the 15 Rorschach variables. One coefficient was approximately equal to a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988). The correlation for *C'* was  $r = -0.29$ , indicating that Afrocentrism in parents was negatively associated with repression of emotion in children. Another coefficient was about midway between a small and a medium effect size. The correlation for *CF* was  $r = -0.24$ , indicating that Afrocentrism in parents was negatively associated with emotional liability or high affect in their children. The remaining coefficients were small. A reliability analysis for the AAAS used with this study sample was completed, yielding a high inter reliability of  $r = 0.96$ . There was no  $r$  completed for the *T* variable for the reason stated previously.

The effect size for the study sample correlated with the parents AAAS scores was completed also. It was possible that age or sex could act as a confounding variable, making it partially or wholly responsible for the results. There was a small effect size for the acculturation between parents total acculturation score and children's developmental age and a medium one for sex. Nevertheless, the results were statistically non-significant for age and sex (See table 7).

Table 7  
*Correlations between AAAS Total and Child Age (n=40)*

	Sex	Age	Total AAAS
Sex		$r = 0.11$	$r = 0.27$
		$P < 0.50$	$p < 0.09$
Age			$r = -0.09$
			$P < 0.59$

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION**

African American children may perform differently on assessment instruments such as the Rorschach, requiring norms based on an African American population. Adding the cultural variable may cause challenges for appraisal but perhaps this issue should be addressed more often to properly appraise a differently socialized group. Strengths of the African American community reflect African culture, a history of enslavement, actively struggling for civil rights, and a different social reality from the mainstream. The Rorschach is just one assessment instrument that might need further study on how African American students perform on it, or if there are differences impacted by culture. This chapter contains a summary of the research, a discussion of the findings of this study, and recommendations for clinical assessment and future research.

#### **Summary**

The present study was designed to determine if there were differences between the Rorschach performance of African American Students ages 9 and 11, on 15 separate Rorschach variables, and the established norms currently used in the Exner Comprehensive System. In addition, a determination of whether parents' acculturation level (as determined by AAAS score), was related to the child's response to the specified Rorschach variables.

The study sample consisted of 40 male and female, African American children, aged 9 and 11 years old. The students were volunteers from two different after school community center programs in the Black community of Bryan/College Station. Each

student participant was administered the Rorschach after their parent completed a short demographic survey and the AAAS scale. The primary variables were the 15 specified Rorschach subscales specified *C*, *CF*, *FC*, *C'*, *D*, *F+*, *M*, *m*, Pairs (2), *R*, *T*, *W*, *Zf*, *Ag* and *MOR*, and the parent AAAS Total Score.

The research questions investigated in this study focused on two questions: (1) Will African American students aged 9 and 11 score differently, on the Rorschach than the established population norms currently used in the Exner Comprehensive System (1995); and (2) is there any relationship between acculturation and level of assimilation (as measured by Total AAAS scores), and responses to the 15 specified Rorschach variables?

Question 1 was examined using an independent *t*-tests between means of the study samples and the norm sample for the specified Rorschach subscales. The findings obtained indicated that there were the following statistically significant differences between the two groups for the sample population.

### **11-Year-Old Subject Sample Summary**

Starting with the 11 year old students, six variables from the 15 (including the *T* or texture subscale) examined in this study were found to be statistically significant. These were *CF*, *F+*, *m*, Pairs, *Zf*; and *T*, which all had effect sizes ranging from large to exceeding a large effect size of  $d = -2.44$  for the Pairs subscale. Effect size is an estimate of the size or association between test scores and group membership (Cohen, 1988).

The 11-year-olds generated a greater number of *m* and *F+* responses. According to the Exner Comprehensive System (1974), the *m* or inanimate movement response is a

characteristic related to coping responsiveness according to the Exner System. Higher frequency of *m* responses is generally associated with unpleasant feelings indicative of repressed conflicts and tension (Aronow & Reznikoff, 1983). Exner (1993) identified *m* as characterizing a lack of control and helplessness.

The children in this sample appear to be less emotionally labile than the norm group, both the 9- and 11-year-olds had statistical significance on the CF or color dominated form variable. This would indicate that the sample group tended to modulate or control their affect or expression of their feelings. Loosely interpreting the results then, the study sample children would appear to show less overt emotion (being emotionally restrained or conservative), be more anxious and repressed (likely due to holding in feelings), and appear to be less sociable or in need of social contact than the normed Rorschach sample.

The 11 year olds in the study sample have significantly fewer total responses on the other Exner variables: Pairs, *Zf*, and *T*. The lower Pairs response score for the 11 year olds was unexpected; it had been predicted that African American children would likely have *more* pair responses due to high level of social interrelation in the Afrocentric community (Anderson & Webb-Johnson, 2002; Boykin, 1985; Jones, 1991). Pair (2) responses signify interactions with, and views of people, and yields information about relationships (Exner, 2001, 1995; Seitz, 2001). Also, according to Exner (1994, 2001), the number of pair responses represents an indication of social interest in other people, and the extent and quality of self-focus.

*Zf* indicates the ability to meaningfully organize dissimilar features of the blot suggesting sensitivity to perceiving meaningful relationships (Gerstle et al., 1988). The

study sample had significantly lower  $Zf$ . The  $T$  variable, or lack of one thereof, is another oft discussed Rorschach response.  $T$  is the Rorschach determinant that characterizes the individual's social need, in particular the need for tactile experience, according to Exner (2001), Exner and Weiner (1996b), and Rorschach (1942). The presence of at least one  $T$  is considered essential or "normal" in all protocols, more the one is "needy," and the lack of one at all has been the subject of controversy on whether such a  $T$ -less person is automatically a psycho/ sociopath. The study population had a significantly lower number of  $T$  responses in their protocols.

### **9-Year-Old Subject Sample Summary**

For the 9-year-old students, there was also statistical significance on six (including  $T$ ) of the Rorschach variables, although not the exact same ones as the older sample:  $CF$ , Pairs, R-total,  $Zf$ , Ag, and  $T$ . All statistically significant variables for the 9-year-olds were less than the normed group. Effect sizes for these variables ranged from a small effect size for one of  $d = -.32$  to exceeding a large effect size of  $d = -2.31$  for Pairs.

Both groups differed from the norm on  $CF$ , and Pairs, this might be interpreted to indicate that this group had similar ways of expressing themselves emotionally and verbally; which brings to mind the verve that Boykins (1983) discussed as being characteristic of African American children. The results could suggest that the 9-year-olds have a less "negativistic" view of the world, the relative ability to cope with their feelings somewhat better, and ability to use defenses as resources for not being overwhelmed by feelings and emotions.

The only problem with the previous interpretation for 9-year-olds is that the difference noted for the 9-year-olds may not be as meaningful because fewer responses,

in general, could have impacted the frequency of the other scores. For example, having fewer *CF* may not be as meaningful for 9-year-olds as the fewer *CF* for the older sample group, because the 9-year-olds already have *fewer* total responses anyway.

Fewer Response totals I than the norm group is consistent with the research of some investigators for African American children (Frank, 1993a; Meyer, 1996b, 2002). In fact low *R* has been found to be generally characteristic of the Rorschach protocol of various ethnic groups in this country (Frank, 1992), however, this particular outcome had not been predicted for the study sample. As stated earlier, the tendency for “verve” had been expected to affect the response verbosity of study sample children. A previous study by Frank (1992) indicated fewer response totals could be related to defensiveness; in particular, Frank suggested African American children might be less likely to self-disclose in an assessment context.

In summary, although the 11 and 9-year-old study sample had some similarities in their response to the 15 variables, the more meaningful results might be exclusively those of the 11-year-old group, although lower responses (as that of the younger group) has been previously reported for African American. An alternative explanation could be that the younger group might have fewer verbal responses to images such as those of the Rorschach. Rorschach response differences observed between the two age levels of the study sample may most accurately distinguish developmental characteristics.

Both student sample age groups had significantly lower *T* response (which indicates painful affective experience or infantile needs); and of which having a count of one is supposedly a critical characteristic of social normalcy (Beck et al., 1961; Exner, 1974; Exner & Weiner, 1982, 1995).

### **Acculturation Correlation**

The proposed correlation between the acculturation score of the parents and their children's Rorschach response pattern did not occur. However, there may be several reasons why the acculturation was not related to Rorschach scores. It is possible that the AAAS was either not effective as an instrument for assessing acculturation, which would allow a problematic interpretation that there is no relation between "acculturation" and Rorschach scores; or this particular test could be unable to measure this specific population adequately. The AAAS may be an instrument that does not effectively measure the socialization aspect of African American children in relation to their culture. Culture may not exist along the continuum used in the AAAS as related to a child's processing in response to variables such as the ones chosen from Rorschach for this study. There may or may not be other tools currently available that could pick up this difference better than the one used for this study.

The AAAS has been used to good effect for picking up differences in culture for adults. Manley et al. (1998) found that the AAAS was able to pick up cultural differences within ethnic groups related neuropsychological test performance. Manley and his associates found that the accounting for acculturation in African Americans with HIV (as compared to Whites with the syndrome) improved the diagnostic accuracy on certain neuropsychological tests needed to assess the mental status of patients in an HIV treatment program.

Boykin's (1985) theory of patterns of difference in oral tradition in African American children suggest that there are culture related differences between African American children and the mainstream in relation to oral custom. According to Boykin

and others in Multicultural theory, African American children are socialized to express feelings with more verve and emotional creativity, although this study was not able to ascertain that correlation.

### **Observations of Sample Group**

There were several content items, though not formally analyzed, that were of special interest to the investigator of this study due to the possibility there might be a cultural emphasis. Two possibilities relating to content were whether there would be more numerous references to certain categories for the study group, and were there specific content themes characteristic of this group. For example in this group of 40 children 25 of the 40 children had numerous references to clothing (cg) in their profile; 17 of the 40 had at least one and often several references to household (Hh) items; and 10 or a quarter of the children verbalized significant religious references (usually about Christ). In addition, skin color was content material for six of the children in the study group.

Since clothing (cg) and household (Hh) content references are included as part of the HVI (hypervigilance) constellation index in the Exner Comprehensive System, having a more than a certain number could direct an assessor to consider whether or not such a individual might be hypervigilant or somewhat paranoid. However, considering the emphasis on clothing in African American fashion this would not be unusual for a child to see. Most of these children wore designer name shoes and clothing even if their families were not affluent, and even if they weren't wearing the name brands they all knew who the most expensive designers were, what their logo was and thus, several

children mentioned Tommy Hilfiger jeans/shirts/logo, Manolo sandals, FUBU, ECKO jersey, etc. in their Rorschach profiles.

Specific content from children who used religion in their responses included “It’s a Black angel from hell. I can tell she’s evil.” *Q* “No there’s a part in her hair, so that means its straight and she must be a White angel even though the color of her skin is Black.” Other religious content: “That’s Jesus on a cross with his arms sticking up”; “That’s the cross that Jesus died on. Here he is in the middle”; “Those are angels standing beside God”; “That’s a demon that’s high in rank because he’s big... looks like he could be bossy, and he’s Black” Also, there were three references to Black African heads and masks.

Results of the present investigation point clearly to the conclusion that many types of response, which are considered pathological or at least suggestive of disturbance in the standardized norms, occur quite commonly within the study population. The implication of any given determinant is of course not reversed or invalidated simply because it occurs in a majority of subjects at given age or of any ethnic composition. However, both the clinical implications of such responses and the implications with regard to individuality may well be considered to vary with the extent to which such signs are found to occur in a presumably normal population. Thus, the characteristic patterns for the sample group are of interest when cultural influence or the impact of African American socialization is considered.

### **Discussion**

The focus of this study was not mainly to compare how the sample group responded to the Rorschach in comparison to the norm group; but also to investigate

possible trends in characteristic responses for the sample group. While there were many differences between groups in amount and emphasis of the 15 specified variables, there was also difference between the two ages for the study group, and interesting content characteristics within the group. The sample children appeared to be less emotional, have a higher level of anxiety about everyday life, and be repressed in expressing feelings, and less sociable or in need of social contact than the normed Rorschach sample. In addition, results for the 11-year-old sample indicated that this group might view themselves as “damaged”; have a negativistic view of the world; or perhaps, they have incorporated the negative view of themselves they see in images, print and other media on a daily basis. In addition, some of these differences, which might be considered deficiencies if viewed without cultural sensitivity or consideration, might actually be considered strengths or adaptive in the African American community.

Other explanations for the significant differences between this group of African American children and the Rorschach norm sample may be that the differences were enhanced because of the small homogeneous sample, which all knew one another and predominately lived in the same general area. These children may have parents with similar values and ways of raising and socializing them. The families tended to be Southern, low income, single parent households, be high school educated, live near one another, have parents that were actually related to or all went to school with one another, and the children knew or played together on a consistent basis. Over half of the sample group attended the same two after-school centers; thus this may have been a more similar group than initially suspected because of the small, close-knit African American community.

The study sample also could have been somewhat constricted in the testing situation due to having some trepidation with authority figures (to the study investigator and other test administrators). The children may have been giving more reserved answers, leaving some of their ideas and thoughts undisclosed.

Racial Socialization as defined by Greene (1990) is what African American parents communicate to their children about what it is to be African American and what they can expect from others. It informs them “what they may expect from African American and White individuals, how to cope with it, and whether disparaging messages are true” (p 209). Many African American parents feel as if they have the dual role of teaching their children how to cope in a hostile environment, while at the same time trying to instill a positive Black identity (Thompson et al., 2000). This tendency to socialize their children in a similar fashion might be expected among parents who live near or are related to one another, and possibly have similar experiences. This might account for the similar responses to certain stimuli posed by the Rorschach for the sample group.

Labeling is a problem associated with misdiagnosis. Saying a child has a mental illness or behavioral disorder can cause parents and teachers to start treating the child differently and that can lead to serious social issues. Likewise, failure to diagnose a “real” disorder is perhaps especially dangerous. Thus, many Black researchers, teachers, and educators have issues with the Rorschach’s usage as an accurate tool for African American children (Lilienfeld, Wood, & Garb, 2000; Manly et al., 1998; 2000; Smith et al., 2002). In this study, acculturation, defined as the level at which an individual participates in the values, language, and practices of his or her own ethnic community

*versus* those of the dominant culture, was suggested as possibly having an impact on the Rorschach responses of African American children. If they were markedly different from the norm, this might indicate a need to have the Rorschach and other projective psychological measures properly validated on minorities specifically for their use. What we mean by acculturation may not affect what these children are impacted by or what their living circumstances are.

Recent articles by Lilienfeld et al. (2000), and Wood and Lilienfeld (1999) indicated that using the Exner Comprehensive System (1993) very likely over-pathologizes minority individuals. Lilienfeld et al. (2000) asserted that Blacks and other minorities scored differently on important Rorschach variables. Wood and Lilienfeld (1999) concluded that because of cross-cultural differences, appropriate norms should be developed to evaluate American minority groups. According to Lilienfeld and Wood (1999), clinical interpretations of projective tests probably say more about the interpreter than about the psychological motivations and personality structure of the individual being assessed. It appears that current clinical interpretations of projective tests may not give us a particularly valid or reliable account of the psychological makeup of the individual, child or adult.

In a recent article Wood et al., (2003) reported that a large majority of the citations Exner has used to validate various analysis of the Comprehensive System were from unpublished Rorschach Workshops, which questions conflict of interest. In Wood et al. (2003) listed a dissertation by Gregory Meyer, which stated that many of the protocols used for Exner's norms have been scored incorrectly for Form quality since the 80s and

lists several other System scores: *F+*, *T*, *MOR*, and *C* that probably overpathologize due to inaccurate norms. Could this effect be compounded with use on diverse groups?

In his research, Frank (1993a) proposed that African Americans tended to be less self-disclosing in an assessment context, due to their significantly lower *R* compared to European Americans, on the Rorschach. Klopfer & Davidson, (1962) indicated that *R* total was correlated with intellect. Frank opposed this and other theories similar to it. He hypothesized that lower *R* might be prevalent with African Americans because they had learned to limit self-disclosure to strangers “particularly White strangers” (Frank, 1992, p. 321). In addition to limited self-disclosure, Frank also considered that the lower *R* response of African Americans could be a function of depression, or lack of education due to lower socio-economic status. The present study, however, used an African American to administer the instruments and there were still fewer total *R* for both the 11 and 9-year old sample groups. This suggests that regardless of these outcomes, self-disclosure does not appear to be related to intellect, and the current African American subjects continued to exhibit lower *R* (limited self disclosure according to Frank), even though the investigator was also African American.

Pressley et al. (2002) matched a group of 44 African American and White Americans for age, sex, education, and socioeconomic status, and discovered that African Americans showed statistically less cooperative movement. This was interpreted to suggest that there was a shared feeling among African Americans that most members of society would be less sensitive to their needs relative to the needs of others. Gardner (1983) persuasively argues for eight major intelligences through which individuals engage the social and physical world (i.e., linguistic, logical-mathematical, social,

emotional, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, and naturalist intelligence). From that standpoint, the statistically significant differences of the sample group to the majority of the specified Rorschach variables may point out the different linguistic, social, and emotional style of the study sample group.

There was a great deal of religiosity in the sample responses. Possible reasons for this increase might be due to the fact that this study sample had a high level of involvement in the church and spirituality that involved “falling out in the spirit,” speaking in tongues, and being “covered by the blood of Jesus.” This resulted in many references to seeing blood on Jesus on the cross and so on in the Rorschach response to many of the colored blots, that in turn increased answers that were scored for deviant or unusual Content.

### **Conclusions**

In this study, the AAAS was either not effective as an instrument for assessing acculturation, which would allow a problematic interpretation that there is no relation between “acculturation” and Rorschach scores; or the sample population used was so analogous as to make this task unable to be assessed using the current instrument.

The study sample age levels were remarkably alike in their differences from the Rorschach norms. There were surprising results related to the how developmental differences in played out in the samples Rorschach response. The difference was both significantly different from the norm group and each other, even though it was expected that all the children would be different from the norm group. For years those in Education and Psychology have tended to view children of color from the “deficit hypothesis”, claiming that differences seen in the ways African American think, perceive, relate,

respond to stimuli are caused by individual and cultural deficiencies. Another way to look at this would be that these deficits are just differences. The profusion of religious content for this African American sample might also have implications for future Rorschach or other personality assessment tool studies with African American children.

### **Recommendations**

#### *For Theory*

Due to the sparseness of the research and theoretical literature on African American children, there is a need for research to address specific issues for this community so that they are understood better in relation to cultural and socialization influences, and how culture might impact personality. Topics of concern, such as what do African American parents teach their children about expectations from mainstream culture and how this might influence coping strategies are extremely limited in current literature.

Researchers often compare African American children's behavior and functioning to that of White children, often using psychosocial models that cast African American children's difference as deficiency. Deficit models ignore the emotional and behavioral strengths of African American children, and also ignore how social/cultural factors might impact their performance, particularly in the educational system.

#### *For Practice*

Practitioners using the Rorschach on African American students in school need to be cognizant of the differences in how African American children perceive and process incoming stimuli such as the Rorschach. Being unaware of the possible differences in perception could lead to children being misdiagnosed or inappropriately labeled. Saying a

child has a mental illness or behavioral disorder can cause parents and teachers to start treating the child differently, and that can lead to serious repercussions. Likewise, failure to diagnose a “real” disorder is equally dangerous. Thus, many Black researchers, teachers, and educators have issues with the Rorschach’s usage as an accurate tool for African American children (Manly et al., 1998; Lilienfeld, Wood, & Garb, 2000). In this study, acculturation, defined as the level at which an individual participates in the values, language, and practices of his or her own ethnic community *versus* those of the dominant culture, was suggested as possibly having an impact on the Rorschach responses of African American children. If they were markedly different from the norm, this might indicate a need to have the Rorschach and other projective psychological measures properly validated on minorities specifically for their use. What we mean by acculturation may not affect what these children are impacted by or what their living circumstances are.

An article by Lilienfeld et al. (2000), and Wood and Lilienfeld (1999) indicated that using the Exner Comprehensive System (1993) very likely over-pathologizes individuals. Wood and Lilienfeld (1999) reported that Blacks and other minorities scored differently on important Rorschach variables. Lilienfeld and Wood (1999) concluded that because of cross-cultural differences, appropriate norms should be developed to evaluate American minority groups. In his research, Frank (1992), proposed that African Americans tended to be less self-disclosing in an assessment context, due to their significantly lower *R* compared to European Americans, on the Rorschach. Pressley et al. (2001) matched a group of 44 African American and White Americans for age, sex, education, and socioeconomic status, and discovered that African Americans showed

statistically less cooperative movement. This was interpreted to suggest that there was a shared feeling among African Americans that most members of society would be less sensitive to their needs relative to the needs of others.

*For Research*

The focus of this study was not how the individual study participants responded to the Rorschach instrument in comparison to the norm group, but how the group differences compared to the standardized norms. While there were many differences between groups in amount and emphasis of the different variables this rather “normal” group of children still had many similarities; the point is to be sure that investigators, Psychologists and others working with diverse populations are ethnically sensitive to the possible different cultural perceptions. Future research might focus on whether Afrocentric thinking is different in relation to perceiving images and verbalizing them; whether socialization is related to developmental differences, and how this could aid teachers with appropriate expectations of how African American children might respond on tests such as the Rorschach. This might aid in lowering misdiagnosis based on norms that don’t “fit.” Another focal point for future investigation might be to look at the context of how African American children are raised. Would African American children educated in Afrocentric system-based schools have any differences in how they respond to the Rorschach from children schooled in the typical United States Eurocentric school system?

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this study may have been that only 40 subjects were included. The number of subjects that could be tested was time limited due to the study being conducted late in the school year, after which the children would be unavailable. Thus, the first 40 volunteers for whom parental permission was received were included for the study. Another limitation of this study is that these were Southern, rural children from two after school programs (Lincoln Community Center and Terrell after school program), in the small African American population; this may have contributed to the homogeneity of this study sample. Perhaps a wider age range needs to be tested due to possible developmental differences. A sample of urban African American students with high Afrocentric values might also generate different or interesting results.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY FORM**

Parent Questionnaire

Student Code # \_\_\_\_\_

Please put a ✓ beside the correct answer

Gender:        M\_\_\_            F\_\_\_

Marital Status (check all that apply):

M\_\_\_    Single Mother\_\_\_    Single Father\_\_\_    Div\_\_\_    Widowed\_\_\_

Living w/sig. other\_\_\_

Employment Status:

Working Full Time\_\_\_    Working PT\_\_\_    Unemployed\_\_\_    Student\_\_\_

Years of Education:

Less than 12<sup>th</sup> grade\_\_\_    Completed High School/GED\_\_\_

Some College\_\_\_    4 years College\_\_\_    More than 4 years of College\_\_\_

Race:

African American\_\_\_    White\_\_\_    Asian American\_\_\_    Native Amer. \_\_\_

Mexican American/Latino\_\_\_    Biracial (Please Specify)\_\_\_\_\_

Your Child's Race:

African American\_\_\_    White\_\_\_    Asian American\_\_\_    Native Amer. \_\_\_

Mexican American/Latino\_\_\_    Biracial (Please Specify)\_\_\_\_\_

Child's Age:            9\_\_\_    11\_\_\_

Child's Grade:        3<sup>rd</sup>\_\_\_    4<sup>th</sup>\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### PARENT'S INFORMED CONSENT

My child and I have been selected to participate in a research study of 40 elementary students' responses to the Rorschach (10 inkblot patterns will be shown and the question "What does this look like?" asked). There is no personal benefit from this study, however it is hoped to give further information on how Rorschach results can be more useful for African American children. The Program Director at Lincoln Center has agreed to be a place for the Rorschach pictures to be shown, but it is not a mandatory part of coming to the center. My child and I may choose to participate or not on a purely voluntary basis.

My child's responses will take approximately 35-55 minutes. There is also a short group of questions about my family "style" that I may answer in less than 15 minutes. My child's answers will be audiotaped for scoring purposes (unless I'd rather not have responses taped), and then erased at the end of the study. Both of our responses and any other information will be numbered instead of linked with our names so that we have privacy, and everything will be kept strictly confidential.

I understand that my child has the right to stop giving responses at any time, for any reason if he or she wishes. I understand that my child's name will not be identified or used, and only group results will be reported. There are little or no risks associated with my child's participation in this research study. My child will be asked to keep his or her answers private and not to discuss them with anyone else.

"This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through Dr. Richard E. Miller, IRB Coordinator, Office of Vice President for Research and Associate Provost for Graduate Studies at (409) 845-1811."

My child will receive a small reward just for returning the consent form, regardless of whether I give my consent or not for her/him to take part in this study. There will also be a lottery at the end of the study in which my child can win a pair of roller blades, or one of two department store gift certificates for \$30.00, as part of having participated in it. If I wish for my child to participate I will return my signed consent form by my child to the staff office at the Lincoln Recreation Center. If I have any other questions or concerns about this study I may call or contact Andrea Velox or her supervisor at: Texas A&M University, Harrington Bldg. Room 366, College Station, TX 77844; (409) 823-2274 or (409) 845-8363(TAMU).

I have read and understood the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I have been given a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 First (PRINT)                      Last Name (Child)                      Parent/Guardian Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Researcher's Signature

Place a ✓ in the appropriate box for consent of your child's participation:  YES  NO                      Ph#:

## APPENDIX C

### CHILD'S INFORMED ASSENT

I have been asked to participate in a research study with 39 other children. There is no personal benefit for me in this study but it may help people understand African American children's answers on the Rorschach. The Rorschach is a set of 10 patterns that I will look at, and then tell the examiner what it looks like to me. The Program Director at Lincoln Center has agreed to be a place for the Rorschach pictures to be shown, but I don't have to be part of the study if I don't want to.

My responses will take approximately 35-55 minutes, and my answers will be audiotaped for scoring purposes (unless I'd rather not have them recorded). At the end of the study my responses will be erased. To make sure I have privacy all information I give will be numbered instead of linked with my name.

I understand that I have the right to stop giving responses at any time, for any reason during the test. I understand that my name will not be identified or used. There are little or no risks associated with my participation in this research study. I have been asked to keep my answers private and not to discuss them with anyone else.

"This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through Dr. Richard E. Miller, IRB Coordinator, Office of Vice President for Research and Associate Provost for Graduate Studies at (409) 845-1811."

I understand that I will receive a small reward just for returning the assent form, regardless of whether my parent has agreed for me to take part in this study. There will also be a lottery at the end of the study in which I can win a pair of roller blades, or one of two department store gift certificates for \$30.00, as part of having participated. I will return my signed assent form, and give it to my parent(s) to sign if I am interested in being in this research study.

If I have any other questions or concerns about this study I may call or contact Andrea Velox or her supervisor at: Texas A&M University, Harrington Bldg. Room 366, College Station, TX 77844; (409) 823-2274 or (409) 845-8363(TAMU).

I have read and understood the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I have been given a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 First (PRINT)      Last Name (Child)      Parent/Guardian Signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Researcher's Signature

Place a ✓ in the appropriate box for consent of your child's participation:  YES  NO      Ph#:

## VITA

### ANDREA J. VELOX, B.S., M.A.

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### EDUCATION

Doctoral Candidate – School Psychology, Texas A & M – May 2004  
 MA – Psychology – College of William and Mary – 1978  
 BA – Psychology and Social Work – Central State University – 1973

### INTERNSHIP/TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Psychologist Intern – Lincoln Public Schools/UNL Consortium, Lincoln, Nebraska
- Instructor – INST 322: Social Foundations in a Multicultural Society – Texas A&M, College Station, Texas – 1996-1998

### RECENT PUBLICATIONS

#### Juried Publications

- Velox, A. J. (1996). Multiculturalism-antiracism: Can schools be multiethnic with harmony? (Review of the *Ethnic Crucible: Harmony and Hostility in Multi-Ethnic Schools*). *Contemporary Psychology: A Journal of Reviews*, 41. APA July, No.7, 723-724.
- Webb-Johnson, G.; Artiles, A. J.; Trent, S. C.; Jackson, C., & Velox, A. J. The status of research on multicultural education and special education *Remedial and Special Education*, 19, No. 1, January/February, 1998, 7-15.

#### Research

- Andrews, J., Velox, A. J. (1978). Thesis: *Stress reactions by black females while viewing conflict and no-conflict videotapes of a black male or female*. Williamsburg, VA: College of William and Mary.

### HONORS AND AWARDS

- Champernowne Trust Scholarship for Annual Jung Summer Course (awarded)– London, England – 1999
  - Minority Student Achievement Fellowship – Texas A&M – 1995-1998
  - Washington State University Summer Teaching Fellowship – summer 1997
- Velox, Andrea, (2000) Awarded grant for project: “Sticks and Stones Can Hurt, and So Can Words,” by Lincoln Public Schools Foundation. Project completed 5/29/00.