Addressing Disproportionality: An Educator's Guide to Privilege, Race, and Micro-Aggressions

Ambra L. Green, Ph.D.

Moises Aguayo, M. Ed.

University of Missouri

Disproportionality

THE PROBLEM

The Problem #1

- Overrepresentation in Special Education Categories

  - Categories which have more room for teacher judgment (ID, LD, and EBD) and less clinical identification

- Referring a student for evaluation or intervention has been cited as one of the most important predictors of future special education eligibility since most students referred are eventually placed in special education programs where they typically remain for the remainder of their schooling (Harry & Klingner, 2014; Hosp & Reschly, 2003).
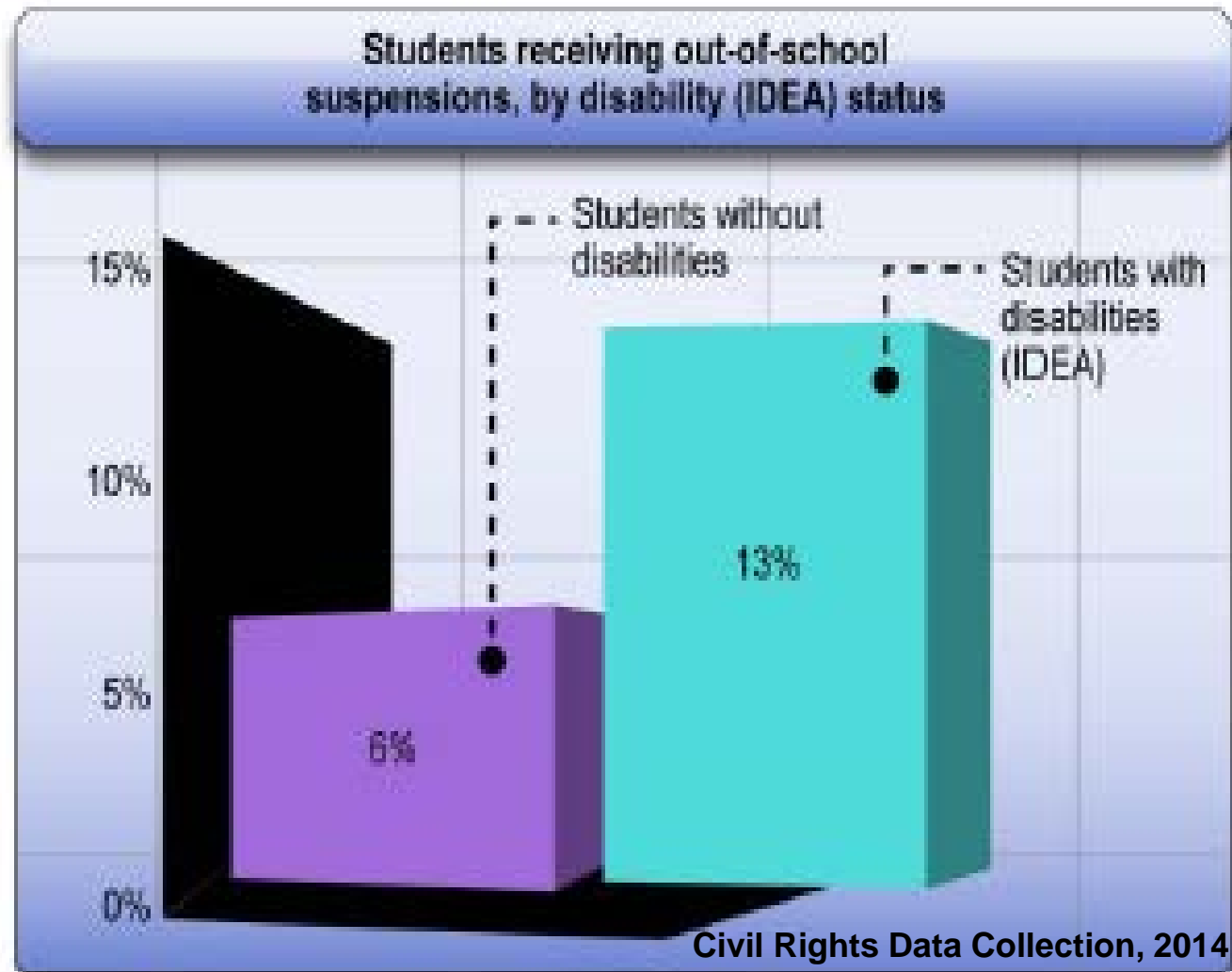
The Problem #2

- Overrepresentation of minority students with disabilities receiving exclusionary discipline practices

    – Minority students are more likely to be referred to the office by teachers for infractions that are subjective (i.e. disrespect and excessive noise), whereas their Caucasian classmates were sent to the office for more serious offenses such as smoking, truancy, or vandalism (Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, & Moore-Thomas, 2012; Skiba et al., 2002; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008).

    – Monitored by IDEA

        - In school suspension (ISS)

        - Out of school suspension (OSS)

        - Expulsion

Overrepresentation in Sped Categories
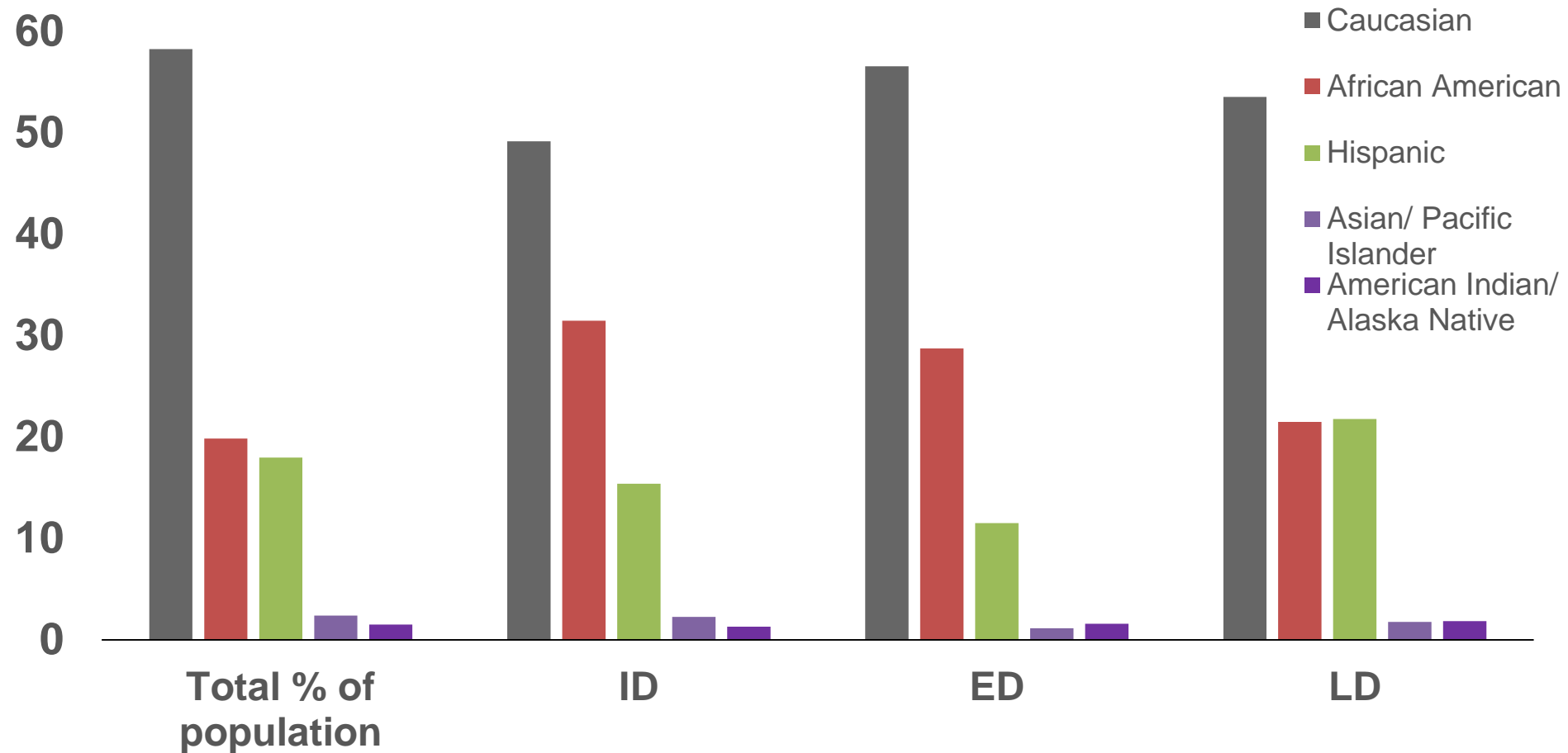
- **Students with disabilities represent 12% of the overall student population.**

- **88% of students do not have an IEP.**

Students receiving out-of-school suspensions, by disability (IDEA) status

- - - Students without disabilities

- - - Students with disabilities (IDEA)

15%

10%

13%

5%

6%

0%

Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014

Students with disabilities (IDEA) receiving out-of-school suspensions, by race/ethnicity and gender

Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014

OSS: Gender, Race, Disability-Missouri

(Male)	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian/ Pac. Isl.	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ Latino	Two or More races	White
United States	13%	3%	7%	20%	9%	11%	6%
Missouri	13%	5%	7%	27%	10%	14%	7%

(Female)	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian/ Pac. Isl.	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ Latino	Two or More races	White
United States	7%	1%	3%	12%	4%	5%	2%
Missouri	7%	2%	4%	16%	4%	6%	2%

Contributing Factors

There is not one single cause of disproportionality. Multiple factors contribute to the overrepresentation of racial/ ethnic groups in SpEd and exclusionary discipline practices.

o Homogenous approaches in the American education system

o Ineffective special education referrals processes

o Use of incorrect or inappropriate interventions/ preventions

o Poor classroom management

o Lack of awareness of culturally normed behaviors

o Teacher and administrator bias

(Ford, 2012; Skiba et al., 2013)

A Discussion on Privilege and Microaggressions

Overview

- Guidelines for discussion

- Levels of oppression

- Unpacking white privilege

- Invisible knapsack

- Microaggressions

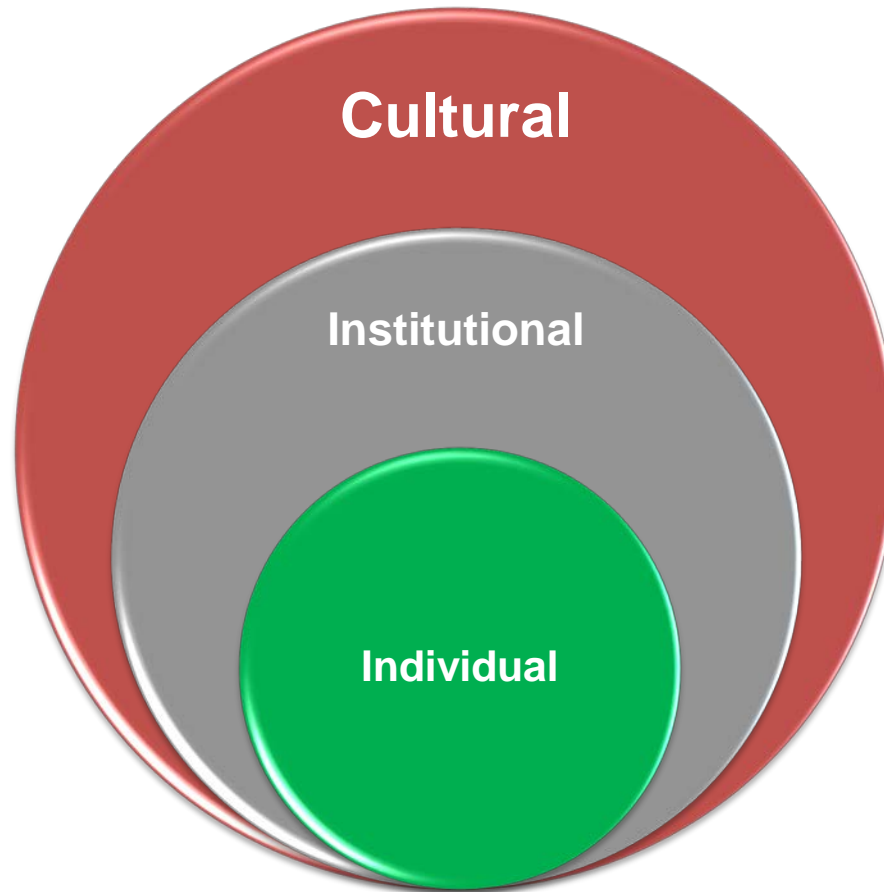- Culturally Responsible education

Expectations

1. We agree that we respect each other as collaborators and as people. We agree to show that respect in word and action.

2. We agree that our intention is to help each other and support each other's learning.

3. We agree to have discussions respectfully and challenge statements by asking questions whenever possible, rather than attacking people, making conclusions, or delivering orders.

4. We agree to discuss our differences with each other in private.

5. We agree to consider anything for five minutes.

6. We agree that we cannot do it alone. We agree that we need each other.

Levels of Oppression

Cultural

Institutional

Individual

Adapted from: Adams, M., Bell, L. A., & Griffin, P. (Eds.) Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice 2nd Edition

Individual Oppression: Personal attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that maintain and perpetuate oppression.
- Examples: believing people with mental disabilities are not capable of working, telling homophobic jokes, throwing a sexist theme party, etc.

Institutional Oppression: Social institutions like media, education, health services, and government that maintain and perpetuate oppression through laws, practices, policies, and norms.
- Examples: marriage being legal only for heterosexual couples, public schools more racially segregated than in 1950s, etc.

Cultural Oppression: Values, norms, societal expectations, ways of thinking and ways of knowing that form institutions and individual patterns of oppression.
- Examples: standards of beauty that are unrealistic for women, narrow definitions of gender expression, etc.

Invisible knapsack

- 1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.

- 2. I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me.

- 4. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
  5. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.

- 6. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.

- 7. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.

- 18. I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty or the illiteracy of my race.

- 19. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.

- 20. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.

- 21. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.

- 13. Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.

- 8. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.

- 12. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.

- 15. I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.

- 16. I can be pretty sure that my children's teachers and employers will tolerate them if they fit school and workplace norms; my chief worries about them do not concern others' attitudes toward their race.

Discussion

- What statement stood out to you the most?

Discussion

- How do do you define privilege?

What is a Microaggression?

Microaggression: Subtle, verbal and nonverbal slights, insults, indignities, and denigrating messages directed toward an individual due to their group identity, often automatically and unconsciously. Usually committed by well-intentioned folks who are unaware of the hidden messages being communicated.

Microaggressions are similar to carbon monoxide - *"invisible, but potentially lethal"* - continuous exposure to these type of interactions *"can be a sort of death by a thousand cuts to the victim"*

Sue, (2010) Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation.

Types of Microaggressions

- **Microinsult:** Often unconscious verbal, nonverbal, and environmental communications that subtly convey rudeness and insensitivity that demean a person's heritage or identity

  – Examples: asking a student of color which scholarship they received for admittance to college, joking that you cannot give female office worker constructive feedback or she'll cry, "helping" a wheelchair user without asking if they need assistance

- **Microassault:** Conscious and intentional discriminatory actions on one's identity

  – Examples: flying a confederate flag, denying child from dating someone of the same sex, UA student whistling at female professor in Centennial class

- **Microinvalidation:** Communications that subtly exclude negate or nullify the thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of a person's identity

  – Examples: color blindness, pictures that represent organization are homogenous, denial of individual homophobic experience

Taken from: Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal & Equilin, 2007

Real Life Microaggressions

- Teacher asking a student wearing a hijab to explain to the class about arranged marriages, because "where she's from they must do a lot of that"

- Students, faculty, or staff dismissing questions by refugee students by responding "I don't understand you?" or ignoring what was said (Kim & Kim, p. 175, 2010)

- Commenting that "mixed race people are so beautiful/handsome/exotic" (Johnston & Nadal, p. 131, 2010)

- "Don't you worry your pretty little head" said to female students (Steinem, 2008)

- "On any given day someone will race across the parking lot, and I wont be looking for help. I am putting my wheelchair in my car, and I hear 'can I help you? can I help you?'" (Keller & Galgay, p. 253, 2010)

Microaggressions on a systemic level

- Case of Columbia Public School Districts

  – High number of White and Asian students in AP classes

  – Low number of Hispanics & African-American students

  – AP students recommended by teachers & counselors

- Teachers and counselors recommended less students of color

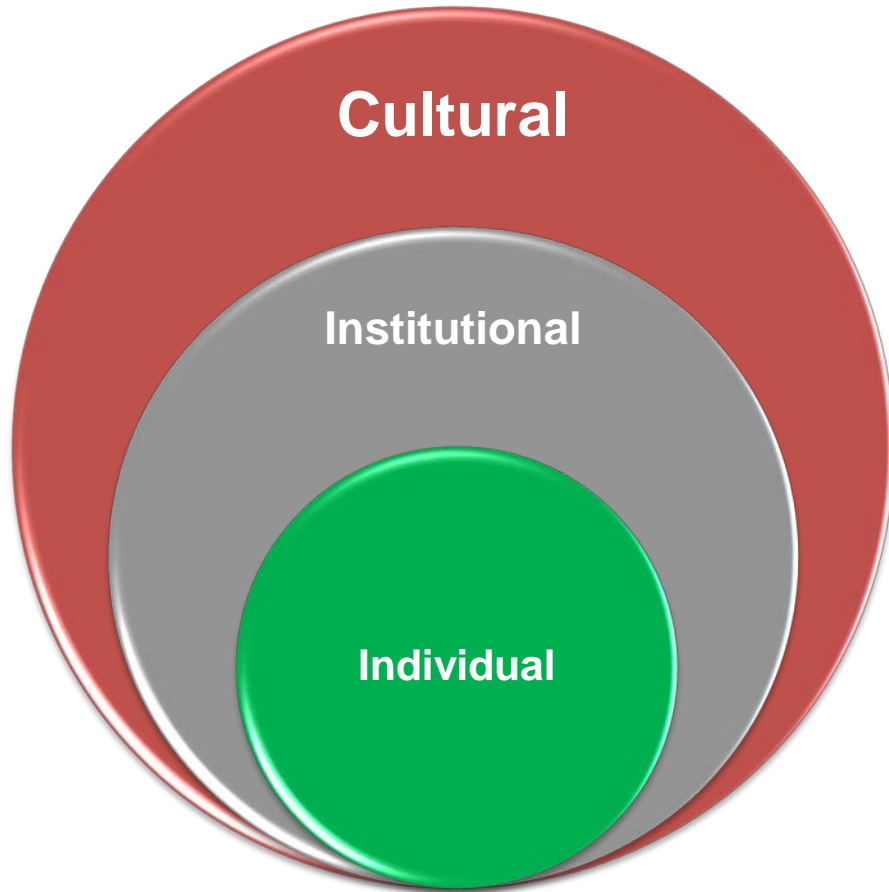- Same goes for Honors & College Credit courses

Microaggressions & Impact on Students

Sue, (2010) Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

» Anxiety

» Paranoia

» Depression

» Sleep Difficulties

» Lack of Confidence

» Worthlessness

» Intrusive Cognitions

» Helplessness

» Loss of Drive

» False Positives

Levels of Oppression

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<u>**Cultural Oppression:**</u> **Values, norms, societal expectations, ways of thinking and ways of knowing that form institutions and individual patterns of oppression.**

- **Examples: standards of beauty that are unrealistic for women, narrow definitions of gender expression, etc.**

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<u>Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice 2nd Edition</u>

Culturally Responsible Education

- *Deficit thinking*

  - **Points to deficit cultures and behaviors to explain achievement gaps**

    - *Ronald doesn't have what it takes to graduate high school because he wasn't raised with the value of hard work and determination.*

  - **Draws on stereotypes, which have been socially established**

    - *I'm not surprised Jean acts out for attention. Isn't that what they all do?*

  - **In turn, we address the problems students face by fixing them instead of the conditions that affect them.**

    - *Vince may have a lot of responsibilities at home, but this is school. He needs to leave those issues where they came from.*

- **When we believe some of our students are inherently lacking what is needed for success, we empower ourselves while disempowering them**

Additive Thinking

- A system of belief that suggests ALL students are capable of learning, each just brings a different and very unique set of strengths and challenges with them

    - **"All parents care about their child's education, but some parents do not have the resources and social capital to assist their student in the schools. I as teacher have a responsibility to provide that support for each child."**

Cultural Responsible Education includes:

1. Acknowledging own power and privilege
2. Focusing on building trusting, collaborative relationships among teachers, families, and community members
3. Recognizing, respecting, and addressing families' strengths and needs, as well as class and cultural differences
4. Embracing a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared

Questions or comments?

Contact Information

- Ambra Green, Ph.D. e-mail: GreenAmb@missouri.edu

- Moises Aguayo, M. Ed e-mail: AguayoMoi@missouri.edu