The Misrepresentation of Students of Color (SoC) in Special Education
Rachael Tyrrel, Learning and Design M.Ed. Student

**RESEARCH QUESTION**
- How can we support educators, especially general education teachers, to limit the over referral of students of color for special education?

**PROBLEM OF PRACTICE**
- African Americans may be overrepresented in special education, but these students are also significantly overrepresented in the category of emotional disturbance (ED) (Wiley, Brigham, Kauffman & Bogan, 2013).
- SoC may actually be underrepresented in special education (Arnold & Lassmann, 2003; Morgan, Farkas, Cook, Strassfeld, Hillemeier, Pun & Schussler, 2017).
- There is misrepresentation of SoC in special education.
- One potential factor leading to misrepresentation is educator bias (Wiley et al., 2013; Matias, 2013; Hosp & Reschly, 2004; Kincaid, Kincaid, & Sullivan, 2017; Echevarria, Powers & Elliott, 2004).

**OBSERVATIONS FROM CONTEXT**
- School partnership site has 500 students, 47% of which are White, 44% are Black, 4.8% Hispanic, 3.6% Asian and 0.2% Native American; however, 12/13 students on a special education teacher’s caseload are Black (about 92% of students receiving special education services).

**RESEARCH THAT HAS INFORMED DESIGN**
- “I can re-watch certain sections [if] I need more understanding.”
- 77.8% of survey respondents wanted a list of future resources and 88.9% highlighted the importance of learning new information.
- 8/9 survey respondents could stay focused on an online professional development module for at least 30 minutes.
- Five respondents said they could stay focused for an hour or more, especially if the information was chunked.

**DESIGN**
Online professional development learning module for educators (administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals) to interrogate their own biases.

- Why are students of color (SoC) not accurately represented in special education?
  - Implicit bias on behalf of teachers
  - General education classroom teachers refer SoC to special education.
  - SoC

**LITERATURE**
- Deficit vs. asset-based approach to education
- Equity and social justice
- Culturally responsive pedagogy

**SELF-REFLECTION**
- Privilege Walk Simulation
- Wheel of Privilege
- Dr. Milner and colleagues’ (2018) self-reflection questions

**RESOURCES**
- Books
- Instagram accounts
- Movies
- Podcasts
- Websites