



Content Validation of the D-Three Effect Inventory (DTEI): Examining the Experiences of Black Children in Early Childhood Education

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Research has demonstrated that Black students experience school environments in ways that are incongruent with that of their peers (Howard 2013, 2016; Wright and Ford 2016). Specifically, scholars have routinely demonstrated that Black students must navigate school environments rife with mistreatment and stereotypes (Harper and Wood 2015; Jenkins 2006; Noguera 2003). While the range of stereotypes experienced by these students is expansive, Wood (2019) contends that Black children are most likely to navigate three specific perceptions: distrust, disdain, and disregard. Distrust refers to perceptions of criminalization that assume that they are dangerous, deviant, or engage others with mal-intent. Disdain entails perceptions that assume that the students, their families, their communities, and cultural styles are lesser than that of other communities. Disregard refers to views that assume that Black learners are academically inferior in comparison to that of their peers. These perspectives are collectively referred to as the D-Three Effect, indicating the most common ways that Black students are viewed and engaged by educators (Wood et al. 2017).

These perceptions align with sub-types of racial microaggressions proffered by Sue et al. (2007) including assumptions of criminality, second-class citizenship, pathologizing culture, and ascriptions of intelligence, respectively. Racial microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (p. 271). The concept of microaggressions was coined in the 1970s by Chester Pierce who sought to convey the subtle ways that racism manifests and influences Black people (Pierce and Allen 1975). Racial

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microaggressions are so common, that they are often rendered to people of color without the perpetrator being consciously aware that they are doing so. According to Sue et al., assumptions of criminality refer to prevailing perceptions that people of color are naturally predisposed towards criminal behavior. Indeed, the scholarly literature is replete with discussions about the pervasive labeling of Black children, particularly Black boys, as by teachers and school leaders as “aggressive,” “troublemakers,” “too active,” “hyperactive,” and “dangerous” (Ford et al. 2000; Howard 2008; Wright and Counsell 2018; Wright and Ford 2016). Scholars have articulated a number of ways that the assumptions of criminality manifest in the schooling experiences of Black children, including being more closely monitored for infractions and wrongdoing (Wood 2019); being singled out for discipline even when other children engage in the same actions (Allen 2013; Marsh and Noguera 2018; McCadden 1998; being overly exposed to exclusionary discipline (e.g., restrictions of recess, suspensions, expulsions) (Howard 2016), being engaged more harshly by educators for perceived wrongdoing (Lewis et al. 2010; Sealey-Ruiz and Lewis 2013), having their movements (e.g., walking through the hallway, using the restroom) in school environments restricted (Ladson Billings 2011).

Sue et al. (2007) noted that second-class citizenship refers to people of color being treated as lesser in comparison to their White counterparts. Inversely, this can be viewed as White people being given preference and priority over people of color. Often, this mistreatment is attributed to negative perceptions of students, their families, and their communities as having values, cultures, and communication styles that are lowly. Sue et al. refers to this as pathologizing culture. Thus, the interplay between second-class citizenship and pathologizing culture is evident in the experiences of Black learners in education. The pervasive mistreatment of Black children has been identified as a recurrent pattern in the research on the Black school experience. For example, Wood (2019) articulates seven ways that Black Dignity is challenged by educators, including dismissing Black childrens’ passion for learning, perceiving them as being futureless (not having positive future outlook), being viewed as troubled, parental apathy, having parents who do not communicate professionally, and coming from communities that are downtrodden. Reinforcing the latter points, Wood (2019) stated that there are three key examples of second-class citizenship for Black students, including being treated as lesser than by educators because the child is assumed to emanate from a fatherless home, a home without discipline and structure, and/or a home that is lower income. Given these perceptions, Black children have experiences with educators where they are extended less care, “talked down” to, and given less attention than their peers (Lewis and Diamond 2015; Howard 2014; Lightfoot 2004; Author & Colleague 2016).

Ascriptions of intelligence were articulated by Sue et al. (2007) as another key microaggression facing people of color. This microaggression connotes that people of color are academically inferior in comparison to their White counterparts. Research on Black students in education, from preschool to doctoral education has shown that ascriptions of intelligence are endemic to educator’s perceptions of Black learners (Fries-Britt and Griffin 2007; Griffin and Allen 2006; Howard 2008; Nasir and Shah 2011; Noguera 2003). Howard (2014) noted that this perception results in educators exposing Black children to low-expectations, assuming that Black children have learning disabilities, and restricting opportunities for them to participate in more

advanced schoolwork. Moreover, researchers have routinely documented the underrepresentation of Black children in gifted education and their significant overrepresentation in special education (Ford 2012; Henfield 2013; Milner IV 2007; Whiting 2006; Wright and Ford 2016). Because Black children are assumed to be inferior, Reynolds (2010) has shown that demonstrations of their intelligence are reacted to with a sense of surprise.

Guided by the aforementioned, the purpose of this study was to examine the content validity of the D-Three Effect Inventory (DTEI), a needs assessment instrument designed to assess the extent that the parents of Black children perceive that they are perceived through these three common stereotypes. The instrument was specifically designed for use by parent educators, parent advocates, and school personnel that authentically seek to understand how Black children experience schooling environments, particularly in early childhood education (preschool through third grade). The instrument while informed by Wood (2019), D-Three Effect is based on extensive examples of racial slights and insults from extant literature that fall within the frameworks of distrust, disdain, and disregard. The next section will discuss the methods employed in this validation study.

Method

To assess the content validity of the DTEI, the authors presented subject matter experts (SMEs) with a 31-item inventory designed to assess three common types of microaggressions experienced by Black children in preK-3 education. These microaggressions included assumptions of criminality ($n = 11$), ascriptions of intelligence ($n = 9$), and second-class citizenship ($n = 11$). According to Wynd et al. (2003), content validity includes effects to determine whether an instrument “adequately samples the research domain of interest when attempting to measure phenomena (p. 509). Stated differently, it reflects the degree that an instrument measures the concepts that it is designed to measure (Davis 1992; Grant and Davis 1997; Waltz et al. 2005). The SME’s were identified for participation in the validation of the instrument based on their expertise as scholars and practitioners of the Black male experience in education. In particular, those who publish works on Black learners in the fields of early childhood education, gifted and talented education, special education, and the school-to-prison pipeline were prioritized. As with most content validation studies, SME’s were restricted to a smaller number of participants with high levels of expertise on the topic of focus. In all, 9 SME’s participated in this content validation, providing ratings and feedback to the authors on the DTEI. This was within the threshold for an acceptable number of SME’s for a content validation study (Lynn 1986).

The SME’s in this study were asked to rate each item on a four-point scale, indicating the degree that the statements were relevant to measuring the Black experience in education with respect to the constructs on assumptions of criminality, ascriptions of intelligence, and second-class citizenship. The scale rating included “not relevant,” “somewhat relevant,” “quite relevant,” and “highly relevant.” SME’s were also asked to indicate the level of clarity for each item, based on the degree to which the language used was clear and unambiguous. This approach was employed given that the target audience for the inventory is for a lay-audience, the parents of Black children.

The scale used for assessing the DTEI's clarity included "not clear," "somewhat clear," "quite clear," and "highly clear." In addition, for each construct, SME's were provided with a comment section that allowed for qualitative feedback on their reflections to the instrument.

As noted previously, this research study focused on the extent to which the items were relevant to the constructs and clear in articulation. Given this, this research employed the measurements to evaluate content validity. These measurements included the content validity index (CVI-*r*) and the scale-level index (S-CVI-*s*) to assess relevance as well as the CVI-*c* and the S-CVI-*c* to assess clarity. All four scales are types of measurement for content validity (see Rubio et al. 2003). The CVI scores (e.g., CVI-*r*, CVI-*c*) were used for each individual item within a construct to account to the degree that the total proportion of each indicator was rated as valid by the SME's. The scores were computed by dividing the total proportion of each items rating as valid. Operationally, this was the average of those marking "quite relevant" and "highly relevant" (coded 0) against those that marked "not relevant" or "somewhat relevant" (coded 1). The S-CVI score measures (e.g., S-CVI-*r*, S-CVI-*c*) the validity of the items within each construct (e.g., assumptions of criminality, ascriptions of intelligence, second-class citizenship) to the construct as a whole. This is assessed by using the average of the individual CVI-*r* and CVI-*s* scores for each construct area. A minimum threshold of .78 for CVI scores and .90 for S-CVIs scores are needed for the items and scales to be retained (Polit et al. 2007). The item retention strategy employed in this study required an item to meet the threshold for CVI-*r* and CVI-*c* in order to remain in the instrument.

Results

The first content area measured by the DTEI is assumptions of criminality. Of the 11 items within this construct, all but two were retained based on CVI scores that met or exceeded the predetermined threshold of .78. The CVI-*r* statement that was not retained was "treat my child with disrespect when they assume my child has made a mistake." This item did not meet the CVI threshold for relevance (CVI-*r* = .67, $M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.27$) or clarity (CVI-*c* = .63, $M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.25$). With respect to clarity, the item "treat my child like they are bad when they make minor mistakes" also had a CVI score below the threshold (CVI-*c* = .75, $M = 3.13$, $SD = .83$). While the CVI score for relevance met the threshold (CVI-*r* = .78, $M = 3.44$, $SD = .88$), the item was removed from both tables as the retention criteria was not satisfied.

Feedback on the relevance of item 1.2 indicated that the statement should be expanded to enhance its validity (see Table 1). Initially, the item read as "refer to my child as bad." The SME's indicated that many terms are used to criminalize Black children; these include being referred to as: "aggressive," "troublemakers," "too active," "hyperactive," "dangerous" (Ford et al. 2000; Howard 2008; Wright and Counsell 2018; Wright and Ford 2016). While the existing item met the threshold with a CVI of .89 ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .67$), the researchers concurred with the SME's. Thus, a revised item was added to the instrument stating "refer to my child with criminalized terms (e.g., bad, aggressive, hyper, physical, misbehaves, defiant)." Feedback on item 2.5 indicated that the phrase "give my child longer punishments" should be changed to "give my child harsher punishments" (see Table 2). The modification was made and appears in Tables 1 and 2. Given that the change is minor, the

existing CVI and descriptive scores for this item remain in the tables. The scale validity indexes for both relevance (S-CVI-*r* = .92) and clarity (S-CVI-*c* = .94) exceeded the minimum threshold. As a result, the initial DTEI scales for assumptions of criminality demonstrate initial content validity.

The second area of analysis focused on items that collectively sought to measure ascriptions of intelligence. Of the initial 9 items, two were identified for elimination for not meeting the threshold scores (see Tables 3 and 4, respectively). The first of these items was “publicly acknowledge that my child has a high academic ability.” This item had a noticeably low score for relevance (CVI-*r* = .56, *M* = 2.54, *SD* = 1.41), despite having an acceptable score for clarity (CVI-*c* = .88, *M* = 3.34, *SD* = 1.06). The second item that was removed from the subscale of ascriptions of intelligence was “assume that when my child succeeds in the classroom that this is not an accurate reflection of ability.” This item had a strong CVI score for relevance (CVI-*r* = 1.00, *M* = 3.25, *SD* = .53); however, the item did not meet the threshold for clarity (CVI-*c* = .75, *M* = 3.13, *SD* = 1.19). The feedback from the SME’s indicated a lack of certainty about whether the item was referring to an assumption that the child scored high on an assignment by accident or an assumption that the child cheated or cut corners on the assignment. In terms of the overall scales, the S-CVI-*r* score for the ascriptions of intelligence sub-inventory of the DTEI was .91. This met the threshold for an acceptable level of validity. The S-CVI-*c* score was .98; this far exceeded the acceptable threshold for content validity for clarity of the sub-inventory.

The third sub-inventory area of the initial DTEI included 11 items designed to assess second-class citizenship. All but one of these items were retained based on SME feedback. The item that was eliminated was “provide my child with less feedback on their work.” This item had a CVI-*r* score that fell below the acceptable threshold (CVI-*r* = .70, *M* = 2.82, *SD* = 1.05) (see Table 5). The score for clarity also did not meet the needed threshold (CVI-*c* = .75, *M* = 3.20, *SD* = .76) (see Table 6). In terms of

Table 1 CVI-*r* and S-CVI-*r* scores for assumptions of criminality (relevance)

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	CVI- <i>r</i>	S-CVI- <i>r</i>
1.1 Assume that my child is a troublemaker	3.89	.33	1.00	
1.2 Refer to my child with criminalized terms (e.g., bad, aggressive, hyper, misbehave, physical, defiant).	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1.3 Spend time watching my child for wrongdoing	3.78	.44	1.00	
1.4 Single my child out for punishment, even when they do the same thing as other children	3.89	.33	1.00	
1.5 Give my child harsher punishments (e.g., restrictions of recess, suspensions)	3.67	.71	.89	
1.6 Immediately discipline my child for perceived wrongdoing	3.67	.71	.89	
1.7 Assume that my child is the cause of a problem when they tell their teacher that other children have treated them poorly	3.56	1.01	.89	
1.8 Mistakenly identify my child as the one who did wrong when they did not	3.56	1.01	.89	
1.9 Assume that my child has a behavioral disorder	3.33	.86	.78	
				.92

Modified from “longer to harsher”

Table 2 CVI-*c* and S-CVI-*c* scores for assumptions of criminality (clarity)

Item	<i>M</i>	SD	CVI- <i>c</i>	S-CVI- <i>c</i>
2.1 Assume that my child is a troublemaker	4.00	0.00	1.00	
2.2 Refer to my child with criminalized terms (e.g., bad, aggressive, hyper, misbehave, defiant).	n/a	n/a	n/a	
2.3 Spend time watching my child for wrongdoing	3.88	.35	1.00	
2.4 Single my child out for punishment, even when they do the same thing as other children	3.50	.76	.88	
2.5 Give my child harsher punishments (e.g., restrictions of recess, suspensions)	3.75	.71	.88	
2.6 Immediately discipline my child for perceived wrongdoing	3.88	.35	1.00	
2.7 Assume that my child is the cause of a problem when they tell their teacher that other children have treated them poorly	3.63	.52	1.00	
2.8 Mistakenly identify my child as the one who did wrong when they did not	3.63	1.06	.88	
2.9 Assume that my child has a behavioral disorder	3.75	.71	.88	
				.94

Modified from “longer to harsher”

qualitative feedback, one SME recommended that the item “Treat my child as less important because they assume that they come from a fatherless home” be revised. Specifically, they offered that the question could focus on a sense of surprise about children coming from a two-parent home or having two parents who do not live in the same home. However, given that the item had a 1.00 CVI-*r* score and that the extant literature on Black children focuses on stereotypes of coming from fatherless homes specifically (see Coles et al. 2010; Wood 2019), this item was retained as originally presented. Of course, these stereotypes perpetuate despite the fact that Black fathers are far more involved than their counterparts in helping with homework, talking about the day with their children, taking them to events, playing with them, eating meals with them, and tending to their daily preparation (e.g., bathing, diapers, dressing) (Mosher

Table 3 CVI-*r* and S-CVI-*r* scores for ascriptions of intelligence (relevance)

Item	<i>M</i>	SD	CVI- <i>r</i>	S-CVI- <i>r</i>
3.1 Assume my child is unintelligent	3.27	.73	.89	
3.2 Praise other children for academic successes, even when my child performs at the same level or higher	3.53	.33	1.00	
3.3 Avoid rewarding (e.g., praise, awards) my child for academic successes	3.48	.35	1.00	
3.4 Put down my child in public when they provide a wrong answer	3.27	.73	.89	
3.5 Be surprised when my child succeeds academically	3.37	.71	.89	
3.6 Make my child prove their intelligence in the classroom	3.30	1.01	.89	
3.7 Assume that my child has a learning disability	3.03	1.30	.78	
				.91

Table 4 CVI-*c* and S-CVI-*c* scores for ascriptions of intelligence (clarity)

Item	<i>M</i>	SD	CVI- <i>c</i>	S-CVI- <i>c</i>
4.1 Assume my child is unintelligent	3.56	0.00	1.00	
4.2 Praise other children for academic successes, even when my child performs at the same level or higher	3.48	.35	1.00	
4.3 Avoid rewarding (e.g., praise, awards) my child for academic successes	3.50	0.00	1.00	
4.4 Put down my child in public when they provide a wrong answer	3.56	0.00	1.00	
4.5 Be surprised when my child succeeds academically	3.56	0.00	1.00	
4.6 Make my child prove their intelligence in the classroom	3.34	1.06	.88	
4.7 Assume that my child has a learning disability	3.48	.35	1.00	
				.98

2013). The S-CVI-*r* score exceeded the minimum threshold, at .96 as did the S-CVI-*c* score at .97. Given this, the scale with the remaining items was deemed to have acceptable content validity.

Implications

Results from the examination of the DTEI indicate that the instrument meets and exceeds acceptable thresholds for content validity. This is inclusive of content validity

Table 5 CVI-*r* and S-CVI-*r* scores for second-class citizenship (relevance)

Item	<i>M</i>	SD	CVI- <i>r</i>	S-CVI- <i>r</i>
5.1 Talk down to my child	3.52	.67	.90	
5.2 Restrict access to the bathroom for my child, when other children are permitted to use it	3.18	1.01	.90	
5.3 Treat my child as less important because they assume that they come from a fatherless home	3.55	0.00	1.00	
5.4 Assume that my child comes from a bad neighborhood	3.58	.33	1.00	
5.5 Assume that my child has parents (i.e., guardians, caretakers) who are less engaged	3.48	.33	1.00	
5.6 Assume that my child has parents that do not care about education	3.48	.33	1.00	
5.7 Assume that my child has an unstructured (e.g., unruly, undisciplined) home	3.48	.33	1.00	
5.8 Treat my child as lesser than because they assume that they come from a low-income home	3.58	.33	1.00	
5.9 Ignore my child in the classroom	3.28	1.13	.80	
5.10 Prioritize the learning of other children over my child's learning	3.58	.33	1.00	
				.96

Table 6 CVI-*c* and S-CVI-*c* scores for second-class citizenship (clarity)

<i>Item</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>CVI-c</i>	<i>S-CVI-c</i>
6.1 Talk down to my child	3.41	1.06	.89	
6.2 Restrict access to the bathroom for my child, when other children are permitted to use it	3.54	.35	1.00	
6.3 Treat my child as less important because they assume that they come from a fatherless home	3.37	.74	.89	
6.4 Assume that my child comes from a bad neighborhood	3.45	.46	1.00	
6.5 Assume that my child has parents (i.e., guardians, caretakers) who are less engaged	3.50	0.00	1.00	
6.6 Assume that my child has parents that do not care about education	3.38	3.78	1.00	
6.7 Assume that my child has an unstructured (e.g., unruly, undisciplined) home	3.56	0.00	1.00	
6.8 Treat my child as lesser than because they assume that they come from a low-income home	3.31	1.07	.89	
6.8 Ignore my child in the classroom	3.54	.35	1.00	
6.10 Prioritize the learning of other children over my child's learning	3.60	0.00	1.00	

.97

for the relevance and clarity of the programs items within the three constructs. There were several items that were removed across the constructs based on scores that did not meet the item-level CVI threshold. As noted previously, this instrument was intended to be completed by the parents of Black children to reflect their views of how their children are engaged by educators in early childhood education (preK through grade 3). Ideally, this instrument would be administered by parent educators and parent advocates that are seeking to understand how Black children are experiencing a schooling environment. Thus, the DTEI is offered as a needs assessment tool.

While this study examined the content validity of the DTEI from the perspectives of scholars that have a demonstrated track record in publishing scholarly works focused on Black who publish works on Black learners in the fields of early childhood education, gifted and talented education, special education, and the school-to-prison pipeline. An additional content validation study should be conducted with those engaged in parent advocacy and parent education to elicit their perspectives on the relevance and clarity of the DTEI. In particular, their perspectives on the clarity of the items for parents are particularly essential. Moreover, the instrument should be piloted with parents who have Black children in early learning to examine the psychometric properties of the instrument for construct validity.

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