

TEACHERS' AND ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNDER-
REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN GIFTED
AND TALENTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

by

Roy D. Sermons

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2016

TEACHERS' AND ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNDER-
REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN GIFTED
AND TALENTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

By Roy D. Sermons

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2016

APPROVED BY:

Tamika Hibbert, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Amy T. McLemore, Ed.D., Committee Member

Dennis L. Humphrey, Ed.D., Committee Member

Scott Watson, Ph.D., Associate Dean, Advanced Programs

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological case study is to explore the reasons for specific perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of gifted African American male students in educational programs for the gifted and talented. Perceptions about gifted African American male students are generally defined as the views, thoughts, and patterns of educators pertaining to the characteristics of gifted students, recommendations for admission into gifted and talented education programs, and social and psychological factors that impede the enrollment of urban African American males into such programs. The phenomenological case examines social, cultural, and psychological factors through a series of interviews, participant observations, and physical artifacts as a system of data collection. The major theories guiding this study are: Piaget's learning theory of "constructivism" (1936), which supports this mode of research by allowing the researcher to examine and understand the reasons for specific perceptions about the underrepresentation of gifted male African American students. Bandura's theory on self-efficacy (1986) also guided the study by encouraging the examination of social and psychological factors. Lastly, Critical Race Theory (CRT) allowed the researcher to decipher meanings tied to race, social implications, or cultural experiences of people of color (Parker, 2004). The data were coded and analyzed for themes and patterns, while triangulation of data, coding, and member checking were utilized for accuracy.

Keywords: gifted education, administrator perceptions, underrepresentation, gifted pedagogy

Dedication/Acknowledgments

First, I give honor to God who is the head of my life and the guide on my journey. This manuscript is dedicated to those family members, friends, and colleagues who have supported and encouraged me throughout this journey. To my dissertation committee, your help and wealth of knowledge have been invaluable during this process. Charles and Nick, you are two of the dearest people in my life, and I could not have done this without your love, support, and encouragement. To my editing team of Craig Thompson and Rosemary Coffey, words cannot express how grateful I am to you for all your suggestions. To my parents, I thank you for being God-fearing and praying people. Your prayers and dedication have truly been an asset during this journey. I thank you and love you all dearly.

This work is also in memory of Helen Mudurra Hezekiah (1909-1997), to whom I made a promise that I would pursue and obtain this degree: I do this in remembrance of you.

Table of Contents

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	3
Dedication/Acknowledgments.....	4
List of Tables	9
List of Abbreviations	10
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	11
Overview.....	11
Background.....	12
Situation to Self.....	17
Problem Statement.....	19
Purpose Statement.....	20
Significance of the Study.....	20
Research Questions.....	21
Research Plan.....	24
Limitations and Delimitations.....	25
Definitions.....	26
Summary.....	27
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	28
Overview.....	28
Theoretical Framework.....	29
Related Literature.....	33
The Nation's Perspective	35

Power in the Perceptions.....	39
Reasons for the Perceptions.....	40
The Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act	50
Gifted Funding.....	51
The Teacher Perspective	57
Teacher Morale	60
Perceptions of Minority Gifted Students	68
Achievement	70
Social, Psychological, and Cultural Factors	72
Underrepresentation/Referrals	83
The Fruit of Misguided Perceptions	85
What Is Necessary.....	89
Summary.....	92
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS.....	94
Overview.....	94
Design	94
Research Questions.....	97
Setting	98
Participants	98
Procedures.....	99
The Researcher's Role.....	100
Data Collection	101
Data Analysis	105

Trustworthiness	107
Ethical Considerations	109
Summary	110
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	111
Overview	111
Participants	111
Results	116
Statements of Significance	119
Summary	139
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	140
Overview	140
Summary of Findings	143
Discussion	146
Implications	153
Limitations	156
Recommendations for Future Research	158
Summary	159
REFERENCES	161
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A: Interview Questions	187
APPENDIX B: Checklist of Topics for Administrator Interviews	189
APPENDIX C: Protocol Form	190
APPENDIX D: Table of Descriptive Notes and Dialogue Reconstruction	191

APPENDIX E: Adult Consent Form	192
APPENDIX F: Participation Invitation Letter/Email	194
APPENDIX G: Survey Questions	195
APPENDIX H: Permission from Atlanta Public Schools (APS).....	198
APPENDIX I: Liberty University IRB Approval.....	199

List of Tables

	Page
Table 1: FTE Weights and Earnings	54
Table 2: Differing Social Experiences of White and African American Millennials.....	81
Table 3: Participant Information.....	112
Table 4: Frequency of Codes Leading to Development of Themes	120

List of Abbreviations

Full-Time Equivalent	FTE
Gifted and Talented Education	GATE
National Association of Gifted Children	nagc
National Center for Education Statistics	NCES
National Institute for Urban School Improvement	NIUSI
Office for Civil Rights Data Collection	ocrdata
Office of Civil Rights Data Collection Data Base	CRDC
Qualitative Data Analysis	QDA

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The underrepresentation of African American male students in gifted and talented education programs in urban areas is well documented through a series of studies (Shujaa, 1996; Ford & Moore, 2013; Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2004). This phenomenological case study is built around the concept of uncovering the reasons why there is an underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented programs within urban school districts. Through the exploration of perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators, a unique understanding can be developed about gifted African American male students and their role in gifted and talented education programs. This information is useful to those who serve gifted and talented students in urban areas, either as an educator or an administrator, to ensure that there is a sense of equity in services provided through these types of programs. A series of research questions guided the study throughout, namely: What are the perceptions by urban educators and administrators of male African American students in gifted and talented programs?; In what ways do the perceptions by urban educators and administrators of male African American students impact how these students are referred to gifted and talented programs?; How are the perceptions by educators and administrators about male African American students reflected in their enrollment in the gifted and talented programs in an urban public school system in Georgia?; To what extent does professional development in gifted pedagogy impact the perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs?; and, finally, To what extent does personal experience – i.e., social, cultural, and ethical factors – impact perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs? All these questions seek to determine the role played by these perceptions and how

they impact the enrollment of African American males in gifted and talented programs within an urban public school system.

Background

The idea of gifted education is not new. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, a significant number of studies in the area of gifted and talented education in public school systems have produced a body of research prompting advancements in education and psychology, while bringing empirical and scientific credibility to the field of gifted education (Marland, 1972). According to Marland (1972), empirical studies conducted in the 1920s and '30s tended to evolve from research on mental issues or abnormal children, and from the realization that graded schools could not adequately meet the needs of all students (p. 87). Several pioneers, such as Lewis Terman (1947) and Leta Stetter Hollingworth (1926), helped to define what “gifted” was and looked like, in terms of the characteristics of those identified as qualified for gifted education; they also conducted some of the first widely published research studies on gifted children (Marland, 1972). Even a scholar as prominent as Plato advocated allowing students who demonstrated academic prowess to learn in a formalized and specialized educational setting in the leading content areas of the era, such as metaphysics, philosophy, the sciences, and military leadership.

During the 20th century there were milestones in gifted education going back to when the first private schools intended solely for gifted students were developed in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1901, and in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1902 (Piirto, 1999). The concept of gifted and talented education continued to spread, and by the 1920s nearly two-thirds of all major U.S. cities had some type of educational programming for gifted and talented students

(Colangelo & Davis, 1997; Davis & Rimm, 1989 p. 60). As gifted education progressed, methods for defining exactly who was *gifted* and who was not began to evolve.

Based on a series of tests by French researchers Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon, research advanced in the field of psychological testing. Although Binet and Simon developed the Binet-Simon Scale in 1905, they revised the concept in 1908 and again in 1911 (Habib, Truslow, Harmon, & Karellas, n.d.; nage.org, n.d.). The research was intended to identify children of lower levels of intelligence so that they could be separated from children who apparently functioned normally. Such identification would allow these unique children to be placed in special classrooms. The research facilitated capturing intelligence in a single numerical outcome (Habib et al., n.d.; nage.org, n.d.). In 1908, as a result of his studies with Binet in France, Henry Goddard brought the test to the United States for translation into English and subsequent dissemination to psychologists and educators (Habib et al., n.d.; nage.org, n.d.). It was not until 1916 that Terman, considered to be the father of the gifted education movement, published the Stanford-Binet IQ test that forever altered the American education system and intelligence testing. The pros and cons of psychological testing as it relates to gifted African American students require additional research, but the foundation for the design of gifted education in urban areas was developed as a result of research in psychological testing.

Gifted education in urban areas takes on a different look and feel as compared to more rural or suburban areas. Early research in gifted education was conducted mostly in urban areas such as New York City and Cleveland, Ohio (Hollingworth, 1926; Barbe, 1953). Differences in student achievement by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES) became especially pronounced and pervasive in urban school districts in the United States. Nearly 65 percent of poor minority students in this country attend school districts that are underfunded and struggling

to survive (VanTassel-Baska, 2010, p. 19). Thus students identified as gifted in these districts are particularly at risk, because they are often overlooked and underserved by teachers tasked with remedying the students' perceived academic deficits (Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2004).

More than fifty years ago, Gold (1965) suggested that more than 60% of urban districts were ethnically diverse, meaning that programs for the gifted in urban areas were required to serve students coming from both distressed conditions and varied ethnic backgrounds (p. 445). In confirmation of that observation, urban education in general has often been faced with poverty as a major obstacle, given that large cities have higher percentages of students coming from backgrounds of poverty, crime, and economic despair (VanTassel-Baska, 2010, p. 19).

The concept of *Excellence Gaps* is based on recent research suggesting that education systems have yet to address gaps between groups of students achieving at advanced levels (nagc.org, n.d.). Although excellence gaps have been noted in every state on national assessments of reading and math, the importance of these findings for the nation has received little attention (nagc.org, n.d.). Some of the major causes for the persistence of excellence gaps are: (1) Schools serving predominantly disadvantaged, lower-income, minority communities are under-resourced; (2) Attitudes in regard to the potential for high achievement are biased; (3) Poverty has pervasive effects; (4) The training for educators who teach underperforming subgroups of students is inadequate; and (5) Parental advocacy for access to gifted and advanced education services is minimal (nagc.org, n.d.).

Recent studies show the importance of strategic interventions to ensure that all populations of urban gifted students are supported and nurtured (Ford, 1996). Swanson (2006) also upholds the notion that poorer communities need additional support, especially to ensure that cultural, social, and intellectual opportunities are provided to their students, in particular

African American males (p. 24). Educators sometimes overlook the fact that African American students have a rich heritage; throughout history, members of that ethnic group have been prominent contributors to society through inventions, political careers, medical feats, and scientific research (Harding, 1993; Smith 1994; Franklin & Moss, 2000). This history is in stark contrast to what recent studies and statistics indicate about African American males (Watts, 2003). Past research has examined racial discrepancies in terms of grading trends, rates of graduation, dropout rates, participation in extracurricular programs, and identification for special and gifted education programs (Shade, 1978; Allen & Boykin, 1992; Daniels, 2002; Gay, 2002; Mickelson, 2003; Sankofa, Hurley, Allen, & Boykin, 2005). Therefore, the focus of this study was to highlight the issue of the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs in urban areas, by examining the impact of the perceptions by teachers and administrators who serve students in a particular urban school district. Studies conducted by Ford (1992) and Grantham (1997, 2004) support the proposition that such agents as race, society, and culture influence perceptions of African American students. Yet these studies, although thorough, do not offer adequate solutions to the issue of the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented programs (Ford, Moore, & Milner, 2005).

“Understanding and Reversing Underachievement, Low Achievement, and Achievement Gaps Among High-Ability African American Males in Urban School Contexts” – one of the most prominent bodies of related research – suggests that there are both external and internal factors that contribute to the underachievement of African American males (Ford & Moore, 2013). These same factors contribute to the biased perceptions of gifted male African American students by teachers, administrators, education systems, and society in general. Ford and Moore

(2013) pinpointed three major external categories: social, cultural/familial, and school. The internal factors that should be considered for further research include personality, motivation, self-perception, and others. These internal factors are found at the personal or individual level (Ford & Moore, 2013).

Additional research reveals a similar discussion of *out-of-school* factors and *in-school* factors. The out-of-school factors include hunger and nutrition, parent availability, and student mobility (Barton, 2004; Pitre, 2014). Recently, much more attention has been given to in-school factors such as teacher quality, rigor of the curriculum, student engagement in academic tasks, and a school culture of high expectations (Pitre, 2014). More recent research has suggested that poverty, the number of parents in the home, and parental participation are *not* related to low performance by African American male students or other minorities (Delpit, 2012; Pitre, 2014). The research carried out in this study attempts to link the various arguments and ideas into one overarching argument that must be addressed: how teachers and administrators perceive gifted male African American students is that linking factor.

As an indication of the possibility of this connection, Hargrove and Seay (2011) stated that there was evidence from recent data collected by the federal government and various state agencies that highlighted the low percentage of African American males participating in public gifted and talented education programs (p. 434). Rather than add to the time spent on debating ideologies, this research provides data and documentation to confirm that in-school factors, out-of-school factors, internal factors, and external factors all give some weight to understanding how and why teachers and administrators perceive African American male students as they do. If we explore the reasons for these perceptions, whether they are appropriate or inappropriate, then there is room for discussion to begin on how to correct not only those perceptions, but also the

problems that provide the reasons for the perceptions. As we proceed along this path, it is important to note: "... poor achievement among high-ability, African American males can be reversed. Poor achievement is learned, and it can (and must) be unlearned" (Ford & Moore, 2013, p. 400).

Urban schools, as with suburban and rural schools, have a duty to serve adequately all students in both regular and gifted education classrooms. If urban schools are to balance properly the numbers of African American males in gifted and talented programs, more must be done to address their underrepresentation. The first step is to provide an understanding of how those who are directly connected to these students (teachers and administrators) perceive gifted male African American students in an urban school district. Once that is done, then schools can start to improve their identification of gifted minority students and maintain their participation in urban gifted and talented education programs.

Situation to Self

Research shows that the causes of underrepresentation may include teacher bias, lack of cultural awareness, or a lack of professional development in the area of gifted and talented identification and training (Shujaa, 1996). Similarly, Bonner (2010) examined the perceptions by academically gifted African American male college students themselves for evidence about their experiences in gifted education (p. 101). This study builds upon the work of Bonner by investigating how adult perceptions of students affect the issue of the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented programs. This study was designed to identify, examine, and analyze educators' and administrators' perceptions of gifted male African American students as a form of advocacy research. Creswell (2009) states that this type of

research provides a voice for participants, while raising their consciousness or advancing an agenda for change to improve their lives (p. 245).

At urban schools across the country, teachers are constantly faced with challenges simply to teach their students. Often these trials limit the length of time that teachers stay in the career of education and highlight teachers' lack of experience or lack of support, which makes the task of teaching in an urban area even more difficult (Darling-Hammond, 1995). For some teachers facing this overwhelming challenge, the idea of adding an additional layer of teaching to involve a specialty group with limited experience such as African American males presents yet another task, involving issues of beliefs in self-efficacy, attitudes towards teaching, and other duties such as referrals to special programs (Beaudin & Chester, 1996). That shift in responsibilities also affects the perceptions by educators and administrators. Given that the urban environment constantly presents challenges and obstacles that educators must overcome, a marginal ability to cope or be flexible, paired with inadequate preparation and minimal support, may very well limit the career lifespan of educators. Furthermore, according to Harris (2012), the effects of school reform happening in urban districts have often been "based on the experiences of urban school teachers who are the primary targets of accountability policy in urban school districts engaged in school reform in several regions of the United States between 1999 and 2004" (p. 204). Those types of educational agendas and programs directly affect educators and administrators and the minority students they serve. This study has allowed the researcher to explore the thoughts and perceptions held about urban African American male students without fear of bias or malice. This advocacy/participatory worldview presented a clear opportunity for research designed to add to the canon of relevant literature and promote change in urban gifted education.

Problem Statement

The underrepresentation of African American male students in gifted and talented education programs in urban areas is well documented (Shujaa, 1996; Ford and Moore, 2013; Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2004). Staiger (2004) noted in an ethnographic study of an urban high school's gifted program that there was a "glaring scarcity of ethnic minority students in gifted education programs and that lack of participation is likely to intensify the psychological damage that segregated schools had on minority children which *Brown v. Board of Education* was supposed to overcome" (pp. 161-162). Henfield, Moore, and Wood (2008) identified critical issues facing the few African American students in gifted education programs, especially in the way that they navigated through them. The authors even asked if the presence of African American students in such programs was truly beneficial to the small number of participants; moreover, those who were in the programs frequently under-achieved or performed poorly (College Board, 2010). Reasons for this outcome have been explored in works by Worrell (2007) and by the NCES (2011), and in classrooms around the United States. This study, therefore, is focused on examining the perceptions by teachers and administrators and how these impact gifted and talented enrollment within an urban public school system; it follows on the work by Bonner (2010), who examined the perceptions of academically gifted male African American college students themselves for evidence about their experiences in gifted education (p. 101). The problem is simply that male African American students in urban areas are under-enrolled in gifted education programs. It is imperative that these factors, combined with teachers' and administrators' perceptions, be studied to further the case of educating gifted African American males.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological case study is to identify, explore, and examine the reasons for specific perceptions of gifted African American male students by middle and high school teachers and administrators. In addition, the study examines how those perceptions impact gifted and talented enrollment within an urban public school system in Georgia.

Significance of the Study

This case study is characterized by the in-depth and descriptive examination of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2014). The researcher searched for meaning and understanding, utilizing himself as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis and providing a detailed and descriptive end product. The results analyze the totality of the perceptions by urban educators and administrators of gifted male African American students. In the process, the researcher explores how these perceptions have impacted the enrollment of these students in programs for the gifted and talented in an urban public school system in Georgia. Since the 1980s, numerous national reports have identified concerns with the training, bias, organization, curriculum, and instructional practices found in urban public high schools (Legters, 2000). This study provides relevant data specifically about the problem of underrepresentation of African American males in urban programs for the gifted and how those data affect the level of enrollment.

Cleary and English (2005) note that lawmakers and other researchers have examined the physical and curricular structures of schools in general, resulting in the restructured school movement. There has been no true exploration, however, of the gifted aspect of instructional practices, related bias, organization, or the impact of programs for the gifted in urban schools. There must be greater understanding of the historical, cultural, and racial issues that have acted as a barrier to upward mobility for African Americans in this country. That understanding or lack

thereof illuminates the disproportionate levels of African American males in gifted and talented education and special education (NIUSI, 2012). The location for the study was an urban public school system in Georgia, concentrating on a select number of middle and high schools serving gifted populations that are small in contrast to the overall enrollment of the school. Research uncovered during the review of literature suggested that there were barriers to African Americans and other minorities being admitted into programs for the gifted and talented, based on assessment methodology and identification criteria (Ford, 2010). Those studies examined how existing structures and organization promoted the underrepresentation of African American students; however, they did not focus on how the specific perceptions by teachers and administrators might impact the underrepresentation and enrollment of African American males in gifted and talented education programs in urban areas. This type of research should help educators understand the perceptions by teachers and administrators in order to advance further the cause of educating young urban African American males. In addition, the research should help remove barriers to the identification of African American male for gifted and talented programs, lessen areas of bias, and increase the sustainability of African American male participation in these programs; this would be especially useful in urban areas where the number of students placed in gifted education is disproportionate to the entire enrollment of a school.

Research Questions

In designing research questions, Creswell (2009) suggested that qualitative research begin with a central, broad, guiding question that was full and concise. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) stated, “Good research questions should be clear, specific, and unambiguously stated. They should also be interconnected; that is, related to each other in some meaningful way” (p. 37). In this light, the research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What are the perceptions by urban educators and administrators in an urban school district of male African American students in gifted and talented programs?
2. In what ways do the perceptions by educators and administrators in an urban school district of male African American students impact how these students are referred to gifted and talented programs?
3. How are the perceptions by educators and administrators of male African American students reflected in their enrollment in the gifted and talented programs in an urban public school system in Georgia?
4. To what extent does professional development in gifted pedagogy impact the perceptions by educators of the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs?
5. To what extent does personal experience – i.e., social, cultural, and ethical factors – impact perceptions by educators of the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs?

To recapitulate, the major research question that this study explored was: What are the perceptions by educators and administrators in an urban school district of male African American students in gifted and talented programs? The responses to this question allowed the researcher to establish whether or not educators hold any specific perceptions at all of African American males, and, if so, whether they impact how these students are referred to such programs.

The second research question to be explored was: In what ways do the perceptions by educators and administrators in an urban school district of male African American students impact how these students are referred to gifted and talented programs? This question allowed

the researcher to determine if and how such perceptions have an impact on the referral rate of male African American students to gifted and talented programs; it also helped to uncover the connection between referral and enrollment.

A third question this study explored was: How are the perceptions by educators and administrators of African American male students reflected in their enrollment in the gifted and talented programs in an urban public school system in Georgia? Research (Hopkins, 1997; Franklin, 2007) has shown that the level of personal experiences and biased procedures that districts and schools use to identify African American males impacts participation and lessens interest in gifted and talented programs. Answers to this question allowed the researcher to discover if there is an impact and, if so, how it is reflected in the enrollment of African American males in gifted and talented education.

The fourth research question was: To what extent does professional development in gifted pedagogy impact the perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs? Responses to this question allowed the researcher to uncover in what ways professional development impacts the perceptions by educators and administrators as to why underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs currently exists. Previously, Hargrove & Seay (2011) presented a similar question in a study exploring whether participation in professional development in gifted education impacted teacher perceptions about obstacles faced by African Americans in being identified as qualified for gifted and talented education (p. 452).

The final research question was: To what extent does personal experience – i.e., social, cultural, and ethical factors – impact perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs? This question allowed the

researcher to examine how educators' and administrators' personal experiences, as well as their understanding of social, cultural, and ethical factors, impact their perceptions about African American males and their subsequent underrepresentation in gifted and talented education programs.

Research Plan

“Qualitative research provides some real insight into the ‘Whys’ and the ‘What,’ enabling one to become a more sensitive and thoughtful research practitioner” (Smith, 2011, p. 1141). Bloomberg & Volpe (2008) stated that “the intent of qualitative research is to examine a social situation or interaction by allowing the researcher to enter the world of others and attempt to achieve a holistic understanding” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 80). Indeed, qualitative research is often used in the social sciences. In some areas, such as anthropology, qualitative research has long been the primary strategy for developing and testing ideas and theories. Qualitative research has likewise had a long history in education, along with the concept of phenomenological research (Vockell, 2009). It is important to acknowledge that “qualitative methodology implies an emphasis on discovery and description, and the objectives are generally focused on extracting and interpreting the meaning of experience” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 80). Since the design of this study was best supported by using the methodology of a case study, the researcher chose to use a single developmental instrument design (Moon, 1990), suitable for when there is purposeful concentration on one issue in the attempt to understand a component or concept faced by individuals. In a single instrument case study, a bounded case (here, an urban public school district in Georgia) is selected to illustrate the issue (here, the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs) in order to test the generalization of under-enrollment of minorities in gifted education programs, rather than

focusing solely on a single case (Rockinson-Szapkiw & Spaulding, 2012). A case study is defined as “the study of an issue through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., setting, context,) concentrating on “a single individual, organization, event, program, process, a specific, unique bounded system” (Stake, 2000, p. 345). This study was conducted in an urban public school district in Georgia over a period of two months during the latter half of the school year. The study assumed that educators and administrators would provide truthful and candid views about why African American males are underrepresented in gifted and talented education programs. Another assumption was that a trend in underlying bias would surface even though participants might be unaware of it.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study was limited to the identification of the perceptions by middle and high school educators (teachers trained in regular education and others trained to work with gifted and talented students) and administrators (principals and assistant principals) in an urban public school district in Georgia. The study was also limited to urban educators and administrators who had regular contact with African American students. This choice was made to obtain a realistic view of the perceptions by educators and administrators in a particular urban metropolitan district. One limitation of the study is evident in that it presents only the findings of the perceptions by urban middle and high school educators and administrators in a certain region of the country. Another is that the study captures only the views of educators who deal with urban students who are predominantly African American or members of other minority groups.

Definitions

The terms listed and defined below are pertinent to the confines of this study.

1. *Bandura's theory on self-efficacy* – Miller (2011) defined Bandura's theory as "people's perception of their competence in dealing with their environment and exercising influence over events that affect their lives" (p. 243). This guiding theory supports the framework of this study.
2. *Constructivism Theory* – Piaget's learning theory of "constructivism" serves as a basis for this study; as referenced by Miller (2011), Jean Piaget (1936) stated that "how students learn" comes from "an active understanding rather than a static, passive state" (p. 61).
3. *Critical Race Theory (CRT)* – Fay (1987) and Tierney (1993) defined this theory as "an attempt to understand the oppressive aspects of society in order to generate societal and individual transformation" (Tierney, p. 4). CRT is often used to decipher meanings that are tied to race, have social implications, and explore the cultural experiences of people of color (Parker, 2004).
4. *Gifted* – There are various definitions of the term *gifted*; however, this study emphasizes the one designated by the National Association for Gifted Children, which states that "gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude or competence in one or more domains" (National Association for Gifted Children, 2016).
5. *Urban School Factors* – These can be considered, in part, to be the presence of culturally incompetent teachers who have existing biases that may contribute to

inadequate outcomes for the gifted African American male student (Ford & Moore, 2013, p. 406).

Summary

Chapter One provided an overview of the entire focus of the study, including its purpose – that is, to explore the reasons behind specific perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of qualified African American male students in educational programs for the gifted and talented. The study was designed to provide relevant data specifically about the problem of underrepresentation of African American males in these programs and how those data affect the level of enrollment. Pertinent background information about gifted education, as well as the general description of the look and feel of gifted education in urban areas compared to that in more rural or suburban areas, was also to be collected. Information about differences in student achievement by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES) was also to be collected. Finally, research questions and a research plan for carrying out this study about gifted education and the relevance of teacher perceptions were articulated.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two explores the current literature related to gifted education, the education of gifted minority students, opposing viewpoints, and the theoretical frameworks that provided a primary basis of the study. In conducting the literature review it was important to remember that the ultimate goal of education is to inspire students to search within for enlightenment (Zunjic, 2009). It matters not which subject is taught, or how much knowledge of the subject is acquired and retained, if the students are not applying that knowledge to their personal development. Eventually, students forget most of what they “learned” in school unless they use it repeatedly as a part of their careers. If indeed they use it, the information becomes a part of who they are (Herbert, 2010). The purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore, examine, and understand the reasons for the specific perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of gifted male African American students. In addition, the reviewed works of literature allowed the researcher to search through current trends and previous research to seek an understanding of how perceptions impact gifted and talented enrollment. Perceptions about gifted male African American students were generally derived from the views, thoughts, and patterns of educators. Little prior research appeared to explore the idea that educators’ generalized perceptions impact their recommendations for admission of students into gifted and talented education programs. A thorough effort was made to locate research providing insight into social and psychological factors impeding the participation of African American males in such programs. Indeed, the intent of the review of literature was to uncover any additional information to support or contribute significantly to the underlying purpose of the study, which was to explore, examine, and understand the reasons for specific

perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of gifted male African American students. The hope was that the literature presented would help identify a gap in the research and demonstrate a need for this type of information in the field of gifted and talented education.

Theoretical Framework

The philosophy of science as it is known today emerged out of a combination of three traditional concerns: (1) the classification of the sciences, (2) methodology, and (3) the philosophy of nature. *Philosophy* is not easily defined, as it has no specific subject matter and hence cannot be identified in terms of any particular area of investigation. Since it may deal with every dimension of human life, it can raise questions in any field of study or endeavor. Thus trying to tie philosophy exclusively to any specific sphere would be an unjustified limitation of its reach (Zunjic, 2009).

Research in social science has had a tremendous influence on 20th century educational theory and practice (Zunjic, 2009). In dealing with this influence, one must look first at the brief history of the connection of education and philosophy (Dale, 2004). *Education* can be defined as any process, either formal or informal, that shapes the potential of a maturing organism. *Informal education* results from the constant effect of environment; thus its strength in shaping values and habits cannot be overestimated. *Formal education* is a conscious effort by human society to impart the skills and modes of thought considered essential for social functioning. Techniques of instruction often reflect the attitudes of society, i.e., authoritarian groups typically sponsor dogmatic methods, while democratic systems may emphasize freedom of thought (Dale, 2004). John Dewey, as presented in Dale (2004), argued that there was an ancient idea, held by Socrates, that the rightly trained mind would turn toward virtue. This idea has actually never

been abandoned, although varying criteria of truth and authority have influenced both the content and the techniques of education. The concept of education leading toward virtue was reflected in the classical curriculum of the Renaissance, the theorists for which included Erasmus, Sir Thomas More, and George Buchanan.

Since the 17th century, however, the idea has grown that education should be directed at individual development for social living. In the 20th century, John Dewey declared that young people should be taught to use the experimental method in meeting problems of the changing environment. Later in the century, the psychologist B. F. Skinner developed a theory of learning based on animal experimentation that came to have a strong effect on modern theories of education, especially through the method of programmed instruction. More recent educational models based on the theories of Jean Piaget, Jerome Bonner, and Howard Gardner have gained wide support in educational theory (Dale, 2004).

This study is based on several of the above-mentioned ideas. One is that of the theoretical framework of Piaget's learning theory of "constructivism" as presented by Miller (2011). Jean Piaget (1936) stated that "how students learn" comes from "an active understanding rather than a static, passive state" (p. 61). His theory supports this mode of research, because it suggests that actively engaged students retain content material more efficiently than passive recipients, which has allowed the researcher to examine and understand the reasons for specific perceptions about the underrepresentation of gifted male African American students by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators (McLeod, 2009).

Fox (2008) stated that Piaget "stressed a holistic approach to education in believing that children construct meaning through many channels: reading, listening, exploring, and experiencing their environment" (p. 82). Fox (2008) presented Piaget's theory of constructivism

by quoting him to the effect that “people must ‘construct’ their own knowledge through experience, building on existing knowledge and beliefs, and cannot grasp the next level of thinking until they’ve mastered the step before it” (p. 82).

Another approach that supports this research is Bandura’s theory on self-efficacy. Miller (2011) defined Bandura’s theory as “people’s perception of their competence in dealing with their environment and exercising influence over events that affect their lives” (p. 243). Christensen, Horn, Curtis, and Johnson (2008) stated that “strong self-esteem is a foundation that can give children the confidence they need to successfully grapple with difficult educational challenges and life issues as they are encountered” (p. 153). Positive learning interactions are needed in order truly to establish the self-efficacy needed for healthy emotional and cognitive growth and development within the students. Christensen et al. (2008) theorized that, “when children whose cognitive capacities have been expanded ... confront and succeed at the initial academic challenges they encounter in school, their sense of self-efficacy – their excitement and confidence in their ability to succeed at difficult intellectual tasks – can blossom” (p. 153). Educators, especially urban educators, must create a positive learning atmosphere for students, provide a strong system of support, and be realistic in terms of the needs and shortcomings of the students with whom they work each day. When Crews (2007) described the role of the teacher, he stated that “the teacher builds a safe place for the child by acknowledging him as a person, builds the confidence in him to take risks, and then sets expectations that he must reach through a considered, tactical approach that’s right for the child” (p. 84).

Lastly, this study used Critical Race Theory as well. Fay (1987) and Tierney (1993) defined this theory as “an attempt to understand the oppressive aspects of society in order to generate societal and individual transformation” (Tierney, p. 4). Recent studies by Ford, Moore,

and Scott (2011) and Henfield, Moore, and Wood (2008) suggested that many researchers used Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical basis for understanding and interpreting qualitative data (Moore, Henfield, & Owens, 2008). These researchers further asserted that CRT could be used to decipher meanings that are tied to race, have social implications, and explore the cultural experiences of people of color (Parker, 2004).

Moreover, Matsuda (1991) argued that CRT is the work of a progressive group of legal scholars of color who are trying to determine reasons to account for the role of racism in American law; their interest is in striving for the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of abolishing all forms of subordination (p. 1331). Both these definitions are valid in supporting this study, as their varied components together provide an adequate foundation for it. Henfield, Moore, and Wood (2008) emphasized that researchers utilizing CRT make known their level of care, concern, and compassion for certain sets of people. Additionally, such researchers attempt to advocate and confront the social and cultural challenges faced by certain groups of people.

This theory was chosen as a basis for this research because of its usefulness and its previous use in multiple studies (Henfield, 2006; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Thus, “this type of theoretical approach has been found useful for theorizing and examining the ways in which race and the meanings attached to race influence the educational context for students of color” (Moore, Henfield, & Owens, 2008, p. 913). Moreover, research shows that this type of theoretical framework is frequently used in “educational research to develop methods that can be used to support school discipline, curriculum, and assessments” (Moore, Henfield, & Owens, 2008, p. 913).

Within the constraints of this study, the researcher collaborated with others, spent time in the field with various participants, and himself became a part of the research. The scope and

worldview of an epistemological perspective were referenced along with an Advocacy/Participatory notion. This research endeavored to measure the problem with a view to heightening awareness of the importance of educators' perceptions. The study's results should serve as a catalyst to educational policy and other actions to solve the problem in question by providing a voice for participants that otherwise would go unheard or unnoticed.

Related Literature

The idea of gifted education is not a new one, as it has been around since the turn of the twentieth century. It was at that time that advancements in education and psychology brought empirical and scientific credibility to the field of gifted education (Marland, 1972). Since then, the concept of giftedness has been in a constant state of flux and growth (Jolly, 2009). One clear example of the humble beginnings of gifted education can be recognized in the St. Louis Public Schools during 1868, when there was an attempt to create a program to promote students who demonstrated academic prowess early on (Jolly, 2009). That program, however, was not based in scientific research or theoretically tested to measure students' level of intelligence or giftedness (Jolly, 2004; Passow et al., 1955).

The early studies of gifted education in the 1920s and 1930s tended to evolve from research on mental issues, the challenges of educating abnormal children, and the realization that graded schools could not adequately meet the needs of all students. Several pioneers, such as Lewis Terman and Leta Stetter Hollingworth, spearheaded the movement for gifted education and conducted some of the first widely published research studies on gifted children (Marland, 1972). During this era, "Hollingworth and Terman established characteristics of gifted behavior, definitions of giftedness, and guidelines for school programming based on empirical research" (Jolly, 2004, p. 38).

The work of Terman and Hollingworth evolved into continued research to measure both the sub- and super-normal, along with the realization that graded schools were not meeting the needs of all students (Danielian, 2008). Tannenbaum (1983), an authority on the research in gifted and talented education, as quoted in Jolly (2009), proclaimed that, “The cyclical nature of interest in the gifted is probably unique in American Education. No other special group of children has been so alternately embraced and repelled with so much rigor by educators and laypersons alike” (p. 37).

After a while, the push for gifted education began to fade, and then, after the early space exploration led by other countries, the United States began to press for legislation to support the need for a solid gifted education program. The definition of *giftedness* also expanded, along with programming options available for gifted students (Danielian, 2008). Independent funding and research agencies such as the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented began to support the need for gifted education. *A Nation at Risk* (1983) and *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent* (1993), reports issued by the federal government, highlighted the missed opportunities to identify and serve gifted students nationally. This push in support provided additional resources for continued research and funding in the area of gifted education (Young, 2010).

Although interpretations of the word “gifted” seem endless, many definitions may be categorized from conservative (related to demonstrated high IQ) to liberal (a broadened concept that includes multiple criteria that might not be measured by an IQ test) (Jolly, 2008). The National Association for Gifted Children defines *gifted individuals* as those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (or an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in the top 10% or less) in one or more domains. These

include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or a set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports) (2008).

In Georgia, a *gifted student* is defined “as a student who demonstrates a high degree of intellectual and/or creative ability(ies), exhibits an exceptionally high degree of motivation, and/or excels in specific academic fields, and who needs special instruction and/or special ancillary services to achieve at levels commensurate with his or her abilities” (Georgia Department of Education, 2009). Gifted and talented education comes in and out of focus in terms of its importance. When the need to showcase a level of excellence is present, gifted and talented students are prioritized; however, when budgets are in jeopardy, the needs of the gifted learner are considered to be nonessential (Jolly, 2009). It is important for society and the education superpowers to recognize the importance of gifted and talented education; moreover, there must be a clear view and expectation of excellence and equity within this area (Jolly, 2004; 2009).

The Nation’s Perspective

The United States is desperately seeking highly skilled workers to widen the gap between it and other nations and maintain its standing as one of the world’s largest economies. President Barack Obama is highly concerned with Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education, as he made clear in the 2012 State of the Union address, when he said, “Think about the America within our reach: A country that leads the world in educating its people. An America that attracts a new generation of high-tech manufacturing and high-paying jobs” (Avery & Reeve, 2013, p. 56). In order to compete globally, existing education systems must be thoroughly analyzed and examined in view of STEM education and other areas where gifted and talented students thrive. In addition, as African Americans have historically contributed to

innovation, technology, and the building of this nation, it is essential to revisit the possibility of changing the perceptions by teachers and administrators in regard to the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs.

As our closest competitor, China boasts the #1 international ranking for education in Math, Science and Reading, while the U.S. is ranked #31 in Math, #23 in Science, and #17 in Reading, internationally (master-of-finance.org, n.d.). Is it possible that the underrepresentation and underachievement of African American males is one of the flaws in the U.S. education system that causes such poor international rankings? To raise the level of the position held by the U.S. in international rankings, the treasure that can be found in gifted African American students should be recognized and nurtured (Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008). As there is exhaustive research providing evidence of failed potential for African American male students, maintaining this situation will further the cause of a workforce unable to compete in the global marketplace (Bush, 2006; Moore, 2006; Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008). To be more specific, Henfield, Moore, and Wood (2008) offer the following:

In other words, if teachers, school counselors, and administrators better understand the experiences of African American students in gifted education programs, they might be able to develop comprehensive initiatives designed to increase the pool of high-achieving African American students who have an interest in taking advanced coursework in K to 12 educational settings; entering science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields in higher educational settings; and subsequently fulfilling the nation's need for a highly skilled workforce. (p. 435)

Before African American male students can expect to fill highly skilled positions in the U.S. workforce, they must first excel in postsecondary settings. Clearly, the training and

education provided at the postsecondary level are much more significant than they were in the past. Meaningful access to such education and training is a very powerful determinant of the gifted African American male student's opportunities for economic security and achievement (blackboysreport.org, n.d.).

In understanding the need to educate gifted African American males by preparing them to fill highly skilled positions in America's workforce, it is important to understand the *leadership* ability factor and how research in this area is insufficient. If we are to be thorough in our investigation of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of African American males in gifted education, the recognition of leadership ability must be addressed in order to circumvent the cycle of underrepresentation (Bonner, Jennings, Marbley, & Brown, 2008). In 1972, U.S. Commissioner of Education Sydney Marland contributed to expanding the definition of *giftedness* as follows:

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons, who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society. Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas singly or in combination: (1) General Intellectual Ability, (b) Specific Academic Aptitude, (c) Creative or Productive Thinking, (d) Leadership Ability, (e) Visual and Performing Arts, and (f) Psychomotor Ability. [This was dropped from the definition. It was thought that students with great athletic talent were being highlighted.] (Bonner et al., 2008, p. 94)

In the 1993 U.S. Department of Education refinement of the definition, even greater attention was given to the fact that more services needed to be provided for those gifted students with the unique qualities and potential for leadership. In addition, the development of leadership ability in male African American high-school students was seen as significant if these abilities were to transfer into future advancement (Bonner et al., 2008). One of the major perceptions that must be addressed by teachers and administrators is that gifted male African American students are fully capable of leadership and that effective programs to enhance their abilities must be developed. History has proven through such leaders as W. E. B. DuBois, Malcolm X, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that the African American leader has great potential for changing community, society, and the world.

In the realm of leadership abilities, there is also the potential for entrepreneurship, which is another possible contributing factor to the competitiveness of the U.S. in the global market. Clifton (2013) concluded the following in relation to gifted students and entrepreneurship:

... If you were born with rare entrepreneurial talent – unusual determination, optimism, and problem-solving skills – the system has no way of finding you, certainly not in Compton or Watts. Nothing finds you; there is no formal identification system, there are no formal special classes, no colleges bidding for you, no evening classes with the best teachers, nothing sent to your parents that identifies you as gifted. Colleges and universities place tremendous weight on SAT or ACT scores, but nobody asks about the applicant's ability to start a company, build an organization, or create millions of customers. America leaves that one to chance.... When, and if, the country executes this leadership intervention to perfection, it will fix what I believe is the single most serious cause of America's failing economy and failing GDP growth. (p. 2)

Learning experiences that take leadership potential into consideration are those experiences that compel gifted students to advancement. The strategic and creative thinking found in leaders and entrepreneurs can be best developed in academic settings that favor the unique skillsets of the gifted male African American student as opposed to programs that further their underachievement and underrepresentation in gifted programs.

Power in the Perceptions

The following are a variety of alarming statistics related to the destructive power inherent in teacher and administrator perceptions of African American males (ocrdata.ed.gov, 2012):

- *Disparate Discipline Rates* – African-American students represent 18% of students in the CRDC sample, but 35% of students suspended once, 46% of those suspended more than once, and 39% of students expelled.
- *Arrests and Referrals to Law Enforcement* – Over 70% of students involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement are Hispanic or African-American.
- NOTE: Across all districts, African-American students are over 3½ times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their white peers. In districts that reported expulsions under zero-tolerance policies, Hispanic and African-American students represent 45% of the student body, but 56% of the students expelled under such policies.
- *A Look at Race and Gender: Out-of-School Suspensions* – African-American boys and girls have higher suspension rates than any of their peers. One in five African-American boys and more than one in ten African-American girls received an out-of-school suspension.

- *Unequal Access to Rigor* – The CRDC reveals disparity in access to high-level math and science courses. While 82% of the schools (in diverse districts) serving the fewest Hispanic and African-American students offer Algebra II, only 65% of the schools serving the most African-American and Hispanic students offer students the same course.
- *Access to Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Programs* – White and Asian students make up nearly three-fourths of students enrolled in GATE. On the other hand, Hispanic and African-American students are disproportionately underrepresented in these educational opportunities.
- *Retention Rates* – African-American students represent 16% of 6th-8th graders, but 42% of students in those grades held back a year.
- *Teacher Assignments: First and Second Year Teachers* – Schools serving the most African-American and Hispanic students are nearly twice as likely to employ teachers who are newest to the profession.
- *Teacher Salary Differences* – Teachers in elementary schools (in the sample's diverse districts) serving the most Hispanic and African-American students are paid on average \$2,251 less per year than their colleagues in other schools in the same district who serve the fewest Hispanic and African-American students.
- *Teacher Absenteeism* – 37% of teachers (approximately 900,000 teachers) in the CRDC sample were absent for 10 or more days of school, for non-school-related reasons. (Note: The data showed no differences associated with the racial enrollment of the schools or districts with these teacher absences.) (pp. 2-14)

More statistics follow from blackboysreport.org (n.d.):

- White males outperform Black males in reading by 26 percentage points and 32 percentage points in mathematics.
- Nationally, 38% of White males scored at or above proficient on the National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment in reading, as did 17% of Latino males and 12% of Black males.
- Nationwide, 13% of Black males scored at or above proficient on the 2013 NAEP Grade 8 math assessment, as did 21% of Latino males and 45% of White males.
- Nationally, 15% of Black males received out-of-school suspensions, compared to 7% of Latino males and 5% of White males. The average expulsion rate for Black males nationally was 0.61%, compared to 0.29% for Latino males and 0.21% for White males. These suspension and expulsion data indicate that Black students across the country were suspended at least twice as often as their peers, and were more likely to be expelled from school.
- Of the 48 states where data was [*sic*] collected, in 35 states and the District of Columbia, Black males remain at the bottom of four-year high school graduation rates. This fact, once again, provides clear evidence of a systemic problem *impacting* Black males rather than a problem *with* Black males.
- At the national level, the 2012-13 school year estimates indicate a national graduation rate of 59% for Black males, 65% for Latino males and 80% for White males.

Reasons for the Perceptions

A Bleak Future Predicted

In attempting to understand the reasons for teacher and administrator perceptions of gifted male African American students, the prophecy of renowned author, educator, and activist W.E.B. DuBois (1960) follows (Hill, 1986):

Take, for instance, the current problem of the education of our children. By the Law of the Land today, they should be admitted to the (White) public schools. If and when they are admitted to these schools ... Negro teachers will become rarer and in many cases will disappear. Negro children will be ... taught under unpleasant, if not discouraging, circumstances. Even more largely than today, they will fall out of school, cease to enter High School, and fewer and fewer will go to college. Theoretically, Negro universities will disappear. Negro History will be taught less or not at all and ... Negroes will remember their White or Indian ancestors and quite forget their Negro forbearers....

Long before the year 2000, there will be no school segregation on the basis of Race. The deficiency in knowledge of Negro History and Culture, however, will remain and this danger must be met or else American Negroes will disappear. Their history and culture will be lost. Their connection with the rising African world will be impossible. (p. 4)

No Child Left Behind

In 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Raising educational standards and minimizing the achievement gap between traditionally high-achieving and low-achieving groups of students were two of the most important goals of the law (Chamberlain, 2004). The law, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act responsible for Title I, presented a very controversial approach to

high-stakes standardized testing as a measurement tool for all students, including those with disabilities and from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Chamberlain, 2004; Lewin & Rich, 2015). Although there has been much discussion about the defects in NCLB, some experts agree that the law has provided a platform for dialogue and even training for teachers to assist them in closing achievement gaps based on their own prejudices and biases (Chamberlain, 2004). Dr. Alba A. Ortiz explains (Chamberlain, 2004):

If your teachers and administrators are lamenting the fact that diverse kids are in their schools, then you're not going to get very far because attention will be focused on how to get rid of them, rather than on how to help them.... NCLB is short on provisions for accomplishing some of its key goals, particularly in terms of culturally and linguistically diverse students. (p. 96)

Educators have paid close attention to the Obama Administration's federal waiver that in essence granted exemptions to more than half of the states from the law's requirement that all students be proficient in reading and math by 2014 (Gerson, 2012). This can be considered as a revision to the No Child Left Behind law, eliminating many of the elements that were viewed as punitive and requiring test scores to be made public. The expectation was that the revision/waiver would also help to eliminate teachers' job performance being measured largely by students' test scores. In the argument for the bill's approval, Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers, stated that the bill would provide improved leverage with a minimized emphasis on high stakes testing (Lewin & Rich, 2015). Weingarten also believed that such breathing room would redirect appropriate attention to creative and innovative teaching as well as to the power and significance of learning (Lewin & Rich, 2015). On the other side of the argument, teachers' union representatives and other experts understood that the new bill did not

actually eliminate annual testing requirements and students would be required to take the same number of tests as before (Lewin & Rich, 2015).

The Absent Advocate

A variety of studies place the responsibility for the low achievement of gifted male African American students on “what takes place in schools relative to attitudes, policies, and practices” (Ford & Moore, 2013, p. 401). For example, as discussed in this study, teacher and administrator perceptions are a major factor combined with and/or fueled by: low educator expectations, deficit thinking, racism, sexism, irrelevant curricula, poor-quality and culturally incompetent educators, few or no resources, etc. (p. 401). When teacher and administrator perceptions include deficit-oriented views, there is a dangerous, up-hill battle for the gifted male African American student who could just as easily give up as fight against such a system. These students are desperately in need of advocates – *but isn't that exactly what teachers are supposed to be?*

Among the *Urban school factors* is the presence of culturally incompetent teachers who have existing biases that may contribute to inadequate outcomes for the gifted African American male student. Documented research and evidence prove that African American male students in urban schools suffer as a result of teachers who are unfamiliar with the particular area of expertise in which they teach, are unqualified and poorly prepared, lack certification, possess few or no credentials, have low test scores and college grades, have minimal academic training, and have low levels of cultural competence (Ford & Moore, 2013, p. 406). Ford and Moore (2013) provide additional insight based on the following statistics:

In schools with large Black enrollments, nearly thirty percent of teachers do not even have a minor in the subject area in which they teach. In mostly White schools (e.g.,

suburban schools), the percentage drops to 21%. Relating teacher quality to the issue of academic rigor, ill-qualified teachers tend to have difficulty teaching and challenging African American males, including those who are gifted and high achievers. In schools with high percentages of African American students, which are often located and segregated in urban settings, twenty-one percent of the teachers have less than 3 years of experience. Conversely, in schools with low African American enrollment, ten percent of teachers have less than 3 years of teaching.... Further, in 2007, eight percent of White 8th graders attended schools where six percent or more of the teachers were absent on an average day; this percentage was almost double (11%) for African American students.... Essentially, larger classes are more difficult to manage; more time is spent on behavior than teaching, resulting in Black students being denied the opportunity to learn at the same rates as White students. (pp. 406-407)

Testing

There is further concern that assessment based on testing programs that have proven to be ineffective is widening the achievement gap for African American male students, other diverse groups, and students with disabilities (Chamberlain, 2004). Experts agree that NCLB is a test-driven approach to learning and assessment of learning. A powerful argument is that such high-stakes standardized testing is invalid and should not be the primary focus when decisions are made that will permanently affect the lives of the students. In addition, the anxiety in the standardized testing environment is terrifying, not only for students, but also for teachers (Chamberlain, 2004).

Anxiety based on testing is learned during the socialization process of early childhood. As the young student strives for approval of parents and teachers but fails in meeting standards

that are excessive, anxiety is greatly increased. The more these young students apply worry, humiliation, and fear of failure to their performance, the more anxiety inhibits that performance (Ford & Harris, 1992). In addition to anxiety, there is the *Attribution theory*, based on Fritz Heider's 1920 research concluding that learned helplessness is developed early in life (Malle, 2012, p. 73). As students believe repeated failure to be due to a lack of ability, their expectation of success decreases (Ford & Harris, 1992). The subsequent feeling of individuals that they have no power to control their achievement results in underachievement.

There is an assumption, based on research by Eisner (2003), that frequency of testing increased based on its use by the military during the First World War. The truth is that more tests are given to students in the U.S. than anywhere else in the world. It is a highly profitable industry. Some experts argue that standardized testing minimizes teacher judgment and provides more concise data on the students being tested. Supposedly, in regard to resultant statistics, tests are considered to be very reliable in providing information for decision-making in regard to education programs. Conversely, other experts argue:

What test scores predict best are other test scores. Their status as proxies for other forms of performance is dubious.... In other words, the really important dependent variables in education are not test scores or even skills performed in the context of schools; they are the tasks students are able to complete successfully in the lives they lead outside of schools.... In fact, I would argue that the major aim of schooling is to enable students to become the architects of their own education so that they can invent themselves during the course of their lives. (Eisner, 2003, p. 3)

Those who have researched the potential for non-testing environments believe that curricula are narrowed as a result of a small array of data that can be measured by testing.

(Eisner, 2003). There is also the consideration that testing offers minimal predictive validity based on students' capabilities in the context of an environment outside of the classroom. Testing also leads to teachers, administrators, and students being overly focused on scores as opposed to enhancing the students' ability to engage in the task itself (Eisner, 2003). Indeed, Eisner concludes that testing is an ineffective tool for evaluating students' capabilities and that effective evaluation must take place beyond the testing and measurement environments – in the course of their everyday lives (2003). Testing clearly appears to be ineffective in examining and enhancing the value judgments or critical- and creative-thinking capabilities of gifted male African American students. In the context of understanding that leadership qualities are rooted in such capabilities, it is of extreme importance that more research be done in this area.

IQ Testing

In the history of intelligence testing, provocative but unfounded research that formed the basis for prevailing beliefs is what gave rise to what we know today as *IQ Testing*. In attempting to create a method to analyze children with demonstrated learning deficiencies, the French minister of public education commissioned Alfred Binet (1904) to test these students for special education (Rosenblum & Travis, 2011). Arguing that intelligence was much too complicated to be relegated to a simple number, Binet refused to believe that the score produced by his test could equate to intelligence (Rosenblum & Travis, 2011). Unfortunately, Binet's findings were found to be appropriate by pioneers in the field of American psychology, who used intelligence methodologies to explain social hierarchies. And so it began – the race to categorize children of the “successful and cultured” as intelligent and children of “wretched and ignorant homes” as *less* intelligent. This new approach assumed intelligence to be based on heredity and set in place

the future of establishing class boundaries based on “innate intelligence” (Rosenblum & Travis, 2011, p. 345):

Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests were used to assess mental deficiency, including the newly developed categories of idiots, imbeciles, and morons. Morons were judged the highest of the “mental defectives,” with the potential to be trained to function in society. Nonetheless, Goddard recommended that they be “institutionalized, carefully regulated, made happy by catering to their limits, prevented from breeding, and not allowed into the country as immigrants.” (Rosenblum & Travis, 2011, p. 346)

In attempting to thwart the growth of populations of the *defective*, “Eugenicists lobbied for state laws endorsing the sterilization of the ‘feebleminded, insane, criminalistics, epileptic, inebriate, diseased, blind, deaf, deformed, and dependent’” (Rosenblum & Travis, 2011, p. 346). Not only did the Supreme Court approve this practice, but *Buck v. Bell* (1927) was the precedent supporting sterilization of those considered to be “feeble-minded” – *to this day* (p. 346).

Still, by 1930, a considerable body of research showed that social environment more than biology accounted for differing IQ scores and that the tests themselves measured not innate intelligence but familiarity with the culture of those who wrote the tests. In the end, the psychologists who had promoted intelligence testing were forced to repudiate the idea that intelligence is inherited or that it can be separated from cultural knowledge.” (Rosenblum & Travis, 2011, p. 346)

The horrors of IQ testing and all of its varied applications failed to destroy African Americans, but similar to the Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, IQ testing left its scar. Today, experts view standardized testing and the remnants of IQ testing in the same light. Renowned author and education activist Dr. Asa Hilliard heavily criticized these dangerous tools, declaring

that IQ testing was the “enemy of millions of children who have unrecognized genius” (Tillman, 2008, p. 5). Hilliard concluded that both standardized testing and IQ testing “have no meaningful validity, measure low levels of thinking, are not connected to teacher competence, and impede opportunities for educators and communities to structure an excellent education for African American and other children of color” (p. 5).

In order to address the problem of the lack of minorities in gifted and talented education programs, it is important to uncover the reasons for this situation and seek out research that attempts to solve the problem (Chamberlin, 2008). However, in Chamberlin’s analysis (2008), he found that, out of more than “9,000 articles that discussed gifted education in the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) data base from 1966-1996, only 795 (8%) addressed issues with gifted minority students” (p. 86). There is definitely a gap in the literature, which supports the need for this study. Minority students across the country deserve a quality education that addresses the needs of each student independently (Ford & Grantham, 1996). Recent research indicates that the responsibility of gifted education is to “... promote the utilization of students’ talents, aptitudes and capabilities ... in order for students to achieve success and personal fulfillment” (Feldhusen, 2003, p. 34). For this to hold true for urban students – especially minority urban students in gifted and talented education programs – the mission must continue. Ford and Grantham (1996) stated, “There is a fundamental belief that all people must be given respect, regardless of ... race, ethnicity, ... socioeconomic status and ability” (p. 73). In that context, it must be noted that there is a vast disparity in the recruitment of minorities into gifted and talented education programs; the numbers are dismal and, to-date, less than desired and completely unsatisfactory (Chamberlin, 2008).

The Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act

Jacob K. Javits was a member of the United States House of Representatives (1947-1954) and of the Senate (1957-1981) from New York State. During his several terms in office in the course of his successful political career, he had an impact on world leaders. Buildings throughout the Northeast are named in his honor, including a convention center in New York City, a federal building in Washington, DC, and a building at Stony Brook University (Winerip, 1983). He was very sensitive to the plight of marginalized people. Throughout his life, Javits focused his methods and actions on individuals less fortunate than others. He believed that government assistance could help improve the circumstances of people in general. Although he himself was able to escape poverty, he recognized that many people were not able to do so, even those who were very talented and could help contribute to society if given a chance. His thinking was that government could help develop these talents and abilities (Javits, 1981).

Thus the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Student Education Program, which was created in 1988, sought to advance the education of gifted children through scientifically based research projects and school-based strategies for students in K-12 (Winkler & Jolly, 2011). Due to the care, concern, and compassion of Senator Javits, particular emphasis was given to underserved students – i.e., economically disadvantaged, limited English-proficient, and with multiple disabilities (also known as twice-exceptional). The program also supported the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act was originally passed by Congress in 1988, as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, to support the development of talent in U.S. schools. The Javits Act, however, is the only federal program dedicated specifically to gifted and talented students, although it does *not* fund local gifted education programs. The

purpose of the act was to develop a specific program that was research-based, provided demonstrations of various projects, promoted innovative strategies, and enhanced the ability of elementary and secondary schools to meet the special educational needs of gifted and talented students (Jolly, 2008).

The Javits Act also focused resources on identifying and serving students who were traditionally underrepresented in gifted and talented programs, particularly – as noted above – economically disadvantaged, limited English-proficient, and disabled students. Its purpose was to help reduce gaps in achievement and to encourage the establishment of equal educational opportunities for all students, including those with multiple disabilities (twice-exceptional) (Jolly, 2008). Even with additional federal funding set aside to assist local school districts, state education departments, and, particularly, areas with high economically disadvantaged populations, culturally diverse populations, students with learning and physical disabilities, and English as a second language learners, these types of students remain largely underrepresented in gifted and talented education programs throughout the country (Davis & Rimm, 1989, 2004; Elhoweris, 2008; Reffel & Reffel, 2004). However, in April of 2011, the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Student Education Program, known more commonly as the Javits Act, was terminated due to budgetary constraints (Winkler & Jolly, 2011). Even though the amount of funding was relatively small, the grant money had helped identify underrepresented gifted students, provide for professional development, and greatly assist in the development of new curriculum and instructional methods (Winkler & Jolly, 2011).

Gifted Funding

The idea of gifted education being a necessity is often sacrificed to the cost of running gifted and talented education programs (Jolly, 2004). The financial implications may have a

direct impact on the perceptions by both teachers and administrators and inadvertently impact referrals and recommendations to gifted and talented education programs (Jolly, 2009). Gifted funding varies depending on state and local district appropriation; moreover, in the metro Atlanta area alone, gifted funding allocation is implemented in vastly different ways. Georgia, for example, uses a weighted formula for gifted education, which is one of 19 categories of instruction funded through the state's Full-time Equivalent Funding Formulas. A Full-Time Equivalent Student (FTE) is defined as a child who has six (6) segments of instruction per day. A "segment" is then defined as one-sixth of the instructional day – morning bell to ending bell, minus all non-instructional time, divided by six. In most schools this comes out to about 45-50 minutes – a typical class period (Georgia Department of Education, 2009).

The FTE count is not a student "head count," but a "service count." Thus a Gifted FTE might be one (1) student served in a gifted education program all day (one student x 6 segments = 6 segments = 1 FTE); or it might be six (6) gifted students getting one (1) segment of gifted education service (6 students x one segment = 6 segments = 1 FTE); or it might be three (3) gifted students getting two (2) segments of gifted education service (3 students x 2 segments = 6 segments = 1 FTE); or any other combination that equals six (6) segments of instruction. Twice a year (on the first Tuesday in October and the first Thursday in March), school systems are required to report the amounts and types of instruction they are providing, and those figures serve as samples for calculating their earnings according to the state funding formulas (Georgia Department of Education, 2009).

Funds earned for all instructional programs are based on the previous year's FTE counts (the periodic counts of the types and amount of instruction a school system is providing). Thus the counts conducted in FY 2008 (which served as samples to predict the district's funding

needs) were used in the funding formulas for each type of instruction to determine allotments for FY 2009. If a school system reduced the amount of instructional services it was providing to gifted students during the 2007-2008 school year, that change would be reflected in a reduced allotment (state funds earmarked for that program) in FY 2009 (Georgia Department of Education, 2009).

Of the 19 instructional categories, the six (6) listed below provide an idea of the relative weights of different kinds of instruction. Regular high school instruction, in sum, is considered to be the base funding weight (1.0); in 2009 it generated funds for schools at a rate of \$2,698.50 per FTE. All other instructional categories were given proportionally higher weights. For example, the Gifted Education category had an FTE weight of 1.6673, so it earned almost \$4,499/FTE for school systems.

For comparison purposes, the FTE weights and total earnings per FTE for several instructional categories appear in Table 1 below.

Funds earned through gifted FTEs may be spent in other instructional categories. Prior to the 2003-2004 school year, state law required that 90% of the direct instructional funds earned in any particular category (such as Gifted Education) had to be spent in the same instructional category (Georgia Department of Education, 2009). That changed, however, during the 2003 legislative session, when lawmakers looked for ways to help local systems deal with budget cuts. With amendments to the education law, they gave local boards of education the flexibility to use funds earned through the various Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) formulas to fund other instructional programs. That is, QBE funds no longer had to be spent in the same category in which they were earned (Georgia Department of Education, 2009).

Table 1
FTE Weights and Earnings

Kindergarten	1.6587 (\$4,453)
Primary Grades (1-3)	1.2855 (\$3,452)
Upper Elem Grades (4-5)	1.0323 (\$2,761)
Middle Grades (6-8)	1.0162 (\$2,731)
Grades (9-12)	1.0000 (\$2,698)
Spec. Ed VI (Gifted)	1.6673 (\$4,499)

Georgia State law HB 1190, which was passed during the 2004 legislative session, extended for another year local school systems' ability to shift funds from one state-funded program to another. It eliminated (for FY 2005) the program-level test that formerly required school systems to spend at least 90% of the funds earned in a certain category of instruction in the same category. This flexibility was extended for subsequent years via education legislation. Georgia Senate bill SB 610, which was passed in the 2008 legislative session, allows a superintendent to contract with the DOE to use funds earned in any categories of critical need (i.e., wherever the pen will drop).

Georgia state law requires school systems to identify and serve gifted students. The Georgia State Board of Education rule says that local systems must provide a minimum of five segments a week (or the annual equivalent) of gifted education services, and that instruction must be delivered through an approved delivery model. The implementation of multiple criteria in 1997 has resulted in additional state expenditures under the existing QBE funding mechanism. However, unlike other states with multiple eligibility criteria, Georgia currently has no means to

programmatically control the magnitude of total gifted education program expenditures. Hence, while the total earnings for FY99 were \$87,944,484, they increased to \$244,720,823 in FY09.

In recent years, the state school systems have identified significantly more gifted students. Thus, in the first full year of multiple criteria implementation, FY98, 56,000 students, or 5.7% of Georgia's student population, were served; the number was 150,000, or 9.9%, in FY09. However, at the Georgia Department of Education, currently only one person is assigned to ensure that the gifted education program criteria are met, and more importantly, to verify that schools systems are reporting FTE student data accurately – two figures on which the QBE funding for the gifted is based. Without reliable measures in place to monitor and audit programs, the districts, especially the savviest districts, soon figure out how to milk the proverbial cow (Georgia Department of Education, 2009).

As with any education program, gifted programs across Georgia still strive to provide relevant quality education opportunities for all students. When successful, these opportunities greatly enhance the development of the necessary skills facilitating the potential for all students to become responsible, productive citizens and life-long learners. Most districts claim that all students need differentiated instruction to achieve at levels commensurate with their abilities.

The successful attainment of this goal is dependent upon a collaborative effort by the community, educators, and parents. To show how policy varies from district to district, another example is drawn from a neighboring school district. Gifted funding is tied to FTE (or full time equivalency) students, whether in elementary, middle, or high school. In one regional school district in North Georgia, the district receives monies primarily from the state at 50%, federal funding at 10%, local property tax at 27%, local sales tax at 9%, and other revenue at 4%. The state places a weight of 1.6673 on each FTE, with a value thereof of \$4,499.13. The formula that

represents the amount of money received for one (1) FTE is $1.6673 \times \$4,499.13$, equaling \$7,501.39. One (1) FTE multiplied by 872 brings in millions of dollars for the aforementioned school system (Clayton County Public Schools, 2009).

In this case there are no site-based schools, as all schools are under the supervision of the district office, which provides each of them with an allotment based on FTE and projected student enrollment for that school. The allotment indicates the number of certified and classified staff that principals can hire for their schools. Salary levels are not a consideration for hiring qualified teachers; therefore, the majority of all funds received for the district is spent on salaries (Clayton County Public Schools, 2009).

In comparison, the office of the Gifted Education Coordinator is also under the direction of the district office. The coordinator submits a budget for approval for test materials and teaching supplies, staff development, and expendable equipment. Based on countywide FTE numbers, the coordinator is allotted a number for placing teachers within schools to serve the gifted and talented students. In this example from a metro district, it is clear that the amount of money the gifted department receives for FTEs within the county does not matter; the district uses funds appropriately in the best interests of overall county operations. That is, the amount of funds received by the county from the FTE count of the gifted education department does not equate to more money for any specific individual schools, nor does it mean additional money for the gifted education department's use. Quality-based education at the school level determines whether a teacher is .3, .5, or 1.0 within the school. If an individual school earns a full-time gifted teacher (1.0) due to the FTE count, additional monies will not necessarily be allocated to that school – only additional teaching resources (Clayton County Public Schools, 2009). So it is clear that there is funding use autonomy from district to district, which in turn has a direct

correlation with the morale, motivation, and perceptions by gifted teachers, as they are funded from that source. The funding concept could be viewed as both a hindrance and a threat regarding how gifted students are served and perceived by their teachers. When there is job security, teachers are more apt to do more and support students better than when there is no job stability and funding is an issue. In times of strain, teachers may become frustrated with their jobs and their students; their perceptions of the students and the students' needs may suffer as a consequence. Gifted and talented education will continue to be a sacrificial item in education budgets until gifted and talented students are prioritized; however, when financial crises linger, the needs of the gifted learner are generally considered expendable (Jolly, 2009). It is important for society to recognize the importance of gifted and talented education; moreover, there must be a clear view and expectation of excellence and equity within gifted and talented education (Jolly, 2004; 2009).

The Teacher Perspective

Gifted education in the context of urban schools is viewed drastically different from how it is viewed in a suburban environment (Kaplan & VanTassel-Baska, 2011). Kaplan and VanTassel-Baska (2011) have identified a wide range of problems and issues faced by teachers and students in urban areas. They have further asserted that these issues take the form of personal, professional, academic, and social constraints (p. 5). In attempting to uncover the possible reasons why African American boys were underserved and underrepresented in gifted programs, Kaplan and VanTassel-Baska (2011) suggested that educators often had different views of what giftedness looked like in various cultures. With that approach came the possibility of misunderstanding and misidentifying males who might qualify for gifted education. To support this notion, the authors offered the example of a student identified as Armar, claiming

that “Armar came to school with strict rules to pose as a ‘smart student’” (p. 703). This was defined according to the researchers as posing as a scholar by sitting still with hands folded, focusing on the teacher at all times, speaking only when called upon, and responding with explicit and direct answers. The authors declared that that was the pattern that Armar’s parents, of Eastern European decent, were taught and what they demanded of their son. As a result, the teacher assumed that that persona was a characteristic of giftedness (Kaplan & Van Tassel-Baska, 2011). Educators’ perceptions of urban students in general is that they show poor academic performance, based on teachers’ awareness of the lack of work completed and turned in to them, and that they have difficulty understanding expectations in both the regular and gifted education classrooms (Kaplan & VanTassel-Baska, 2011). Lastly, it is important for educators to recognize their differing expectations of students from various cultures and to develop and support students from multicultural backgrounds (Kaplan & VanTassel-Baska, 2011). Although this research speaks to the perceptions by educators, it was not specifically aimed at examining the perceptions by gifted education teachers and the reasons why African American males were underrepresented in gifted and talented education programs.

Chester and Beaudin (1996) stated that, in reviewing teacher perceptions, it was powerful to look at the views of newly hired teachers in urban schools, where the life expectancy of a new teacher is less than 5 years. It is common knowledge that many of the major urban districts across the country fill vacant positions with noncertified or under-qualified personnel (Chester & Beaudin, 1996). Teachers in urban districts generally have less expertise, little to no prior experience, and fewer preparation courses compared to teachers in non-urban districts (Darling-Hammond, 1990). If educators are barely prepared even to teach, they are even less prepared to teach special populations of students like those in Title One schools, or in special-needs and

gifted and talented education programs (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Chester & Beaudin, 1996). According to Elhoweris (2008), with regard to the perceptions by teachers and their possible connection to the lack of representation of minority students in gifted and talented education programs, one must acknowledge that teacher judgment could be impeded by negative attitudes towards culturally diverse students. To support this notion, Elhoweris et al. (2005) conducted a study wherein teachers were asked for their thoughts and perceptions about fictitious student profiles of candidates for gifted and talented education. The study showed that teachers referred candidates who were not labeled (by ethnicity) more often than those who were labeled as minorities (p. 35). While minimal available research has investigated the reasons behind how and why teachers feel the way they do, the Elhoweris et al. study (2005) did suggest a vast discrepancy between minority/ethnic and non-minority enrollment in gifted and talented education programs (p. 29). This study also confirmed that even unconscious teacher bias towards African American students could result in the underrepresentation of African American students, particularly males, who were, in contrast, often overrepresented in special education programs (Elhoweris et al., 2005; Moore, Henfield, & Owens, 2008). Hargrove and Seay (2011), in a study titled *Schoolteacher Perceptions of Barriers that Limit the Participation of African American Males in Public School Gifted Programs*, confirmed one major factor that possibly prevents African American males from participating successfully in academically challenging gifted and talented education programs, namely, teacher bias. Speirs Neumeister et al. (2007) also suggested that such bias could be related to teachers not attaching significant value to the benefits of gifted and talented programs, coupled with possible personal preferences that might limit the number of students qualifying according to their diverse cultural, linguistic, or gender status (p. 440). The Hargrove and Seay (2011) study does contribute significantly to the literature

that offers reasons for the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs by highlighting the lack of teacher knowledge in terms of recognizing what gifted is, along with recognition of possible socioeconomic bias and racist predispositions about minority students (p. 440).

Teacher Morale

This is an age of accountability for school officials, and many districts are in major stages of reform. Questions remain: Is this type of reform working? Are education officials allowing time for the programs implemented actually to work before they move on to another one? Are teachers' thoughts and perceptions being used as a valuable tool in the education process? Educators in various school districts should wonder who is leading the reform efforts in their district and listening to the staff. Do the reforms seem to trickle down the pipe rather haphazardly? Research shows that the "powers that be" often do not think sufficiently before they impose certain sanctions or actions. Elmore and McLaughlin (1988) have aptly noted that laws and policies operate at a very high level of abstraction until socially processed. Given that the sanctions imposed on schools and teachers are often instituted by those far removed from the trenches of education, this judgment indicates that the policy effects are not truly felt until they are implemented. Indeed, many reform models and mandates are started, but not given time to work before others are initiated. Many of these mandates have a strong adverse effect on teachers' morale and their perceptions of students, even though ordinarily teachers are the main individuals who are implementing the mandates and who have a direct connection to the students.

As Creswell (2009) states in terms of qualitative research, a researcher creates an agenda for change or reform and brings personal values into the study. Similarly, teachers must be able

to improvise and find innovative solutions to promote not only the well-being of their students but their own mental well-being as well, none of which is possible without adequate and often extremely high levels of morale (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000). What is teacher morale? *Morale* has been defined variously as a feeling, a state of mind, a mental attitude, and an emotional attitude (Mendel, 1987). Washington and Watson (1976) define *morale* as the feeling workers have about their job based on how they perceive themselves in the organization and the extent to which the organization is viewed as meeting the workers' own needs and expectations.

Teacher morale is a problem in many of today's schools. It is often overlooked or not considered to be an important factor in the overall success of the school. But research has shown that teacher morale and student achievement are closely related. White and Stevens' study (as cited in Hayden, 2007) identified statistical relationships between teacher morale and student scores on achievement tests. Indeed, Hayden advocates for the importance of teacher morale throughout her article. A Henderson study (as cited in Hayden, 2007) supports the idea that teacher morale is a major issue as it pertains to teacher performance, retention, and engagement, adding that it continues to be a problem in schools across America. This 1996 research showed an alarming problem, as the researchers found that 44% of teachers were considering leaving the profession due to concerns about morale. These facts, along with the increased accountability required by school districts for teachers to show improvement in student achievement, support the claim that teacher morale is a serious issue in public education today.

Moreover, the problem takes on even greater implications in an urban school environment. When a healthy school environment exists and teacher morale is high, "teachers feel good about each other and, at the same time, feel a sense of accomplishment from their jobs" (Hoy & Miskel, 1987, p. 127). Teacher morale is the driving force for success in an urban school

environment, and even more so in a small learning community (SLC); with fewer people available to complete demanding tasks, their happiness is critical to the success of the school. In the current ever-increasing state of accountability, the buzzword is *student achievement*. No matter the format or method, the end result desired by communities, school boards, superintendents, principals, teachers, and students is a successful school. Miller (1981) has said that teacher morale “can have a positive effect on student attitudes and learning” (p. 483), arguing that raising the level of teacher morale not only makes the act of teaching more pleasant for teachers, but also makes learning more pleasant for the students. This combination creates an environment more conducive to learning and ultimately more successful in terms of student achievement. Thus teacher morale is a crucial element of the school climate that is often overlooked. It is as important for teachers to be happy and productive as it is for students to feel safe and parents to be involved – all of which are contingent on the level of teacher morale. Lumsden (1998) proclaimed that teachers could take steps individually to preserve their professional satisfaction and morale. However, she added, they must also be nurtured, supported, and valued by the broader school community. She concluded with a point of great significance, namely, that, “when teachers are provided with what they need to remain inspired and enthusiastic in the classroom,” students as well as teachers will be the beneficiaries (p. 5).

In further exploring the importance of teacher morale, it must be noted that often new teachers are left on their own and given less desired positions in schools. However, providing support to teachers is crucial to their becoming effective practitioners (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999a). Veteran teachers often see new teachers as a burden; some may even find enjoyment in their failure. This attitude, which is common in large traditional schools, has a negative impact on novice morale. Even today, new secondary teachers are still given unreasonable teaching

assignments. Many teachers float from room to room, are assigned the most educationally needy students, and are given extra duties (Andrews & Quinn, 2004). The negative effects of this type of treatment could even lessen the average teaching life span, which is about eleven years, with a quarter of all new teachers leaving the profession within four years (Benner, 2000; Stephens, 2001). Increased support and peer mentoring, along with ample professional development, are needed to help sustain teacher morale and improve teacher perceptions.

Teacher-Student Interaction

Hill (1986) has presented a most relevant and timely statement illustrating the necessity and potential for teacher interaction and the subsequent benefits for students and teachers:

Education is an act; it is not a resolution. It is an event, not a description of it. It is the struggle, not the preparation for it. It combines thinking, feeling, and acting into a single whole. It is a human act. It respects the learner and frees the teacher to learn. It is a people building, family building, community building, and a nation-building act – or else it is indoctrination, brainwashing, domination and westernization. It places the major responsibility for learning on the learner, himself. It vests the teacher with the skill to foster liberation, but not the skill to control. It is a human loving act between two people whose common destinies are bound together.... (pp. 2-3)

Paulo Freire, one of the most authoritative leaders in education, suggested that education is deeply based on respect and is dialogical, as opposed to a curriculum format (Smith, 2002). This dialogical or conversational perspective allows for holistic dialogue between teacher and student. As many experts explain, much of the turmoil in today's African American communities is due to *disrespect* (DeGruy, 2005). Enacting bi-directional, reciprocal dialogue can provide constructors for *respect*. Throughout the history of African Americans, there is evidence of

societal disrespect. In undergoing the humiliation, frustration, and denigration resulting from disrespect, many African-American students have heightened sensitivity and, as a result, exhibit dissonance and anger when they have a sense that they are being disrespected (DeGruy, 2005).

Being disrespected has been a long-term experience for African Americans, built deeply into their psyches. It can appear to be genetic and intended nearly to the point of expecting disrespect at every turn. For the non-disrespected, it may be unfathomable; for the African American, it is as real as life itself (DeGruy, 2005). Much more is going on behind the scenes of episodes of disrespect. The reality for African Americans is that disrespect is an integral, deeply rooted part of their history in America – over 400 years of slavery’s brutality and humiliation. DeGruy (2005) describes it as “a history of racial conflict, inequality and contempt that culminates in a moment that few people not of this culture could comprehend, let alone predict” (p. 168).

As the African American student is searching for relationship, many teachers are blinded by their own search for “teachable moments” (Smith, 2002). They miss the opportunity simply to talk, share, listen, teach, and learn. In the African American culture, interpersonal relationships are vital. Experts have found that whether or not a teacher demonstrates any form of compassion toward a student can affect class participation and the learning experience (DeGruy, 2005, p. 33). DeGruy (2005) concludes with the following:

Whether or not these students accurately perceive what teachers feel towards them is less important than the fact that their teachers’ feelings “matter” at all. What it does suggest is that it is important for black students to feel well regarded by their teachers.... At the heart of this culturally based model is the establishment of strong relationships as the fundamental and essential ingredient for the academic success of these students....

Consequently, many students have been emotionally assaulted before they can even get to class. This is a major problem if you accept the concept that perhaps the most effective motivator for black children is love. (pp. 33-34)

Freire insisted that the teacher-student interaction should not be based simply on the teacher's influence *on* the student but on the teacher and student working together (Smith, 2002). In such a learning exchange, the teacher is as much the student as the student is. In classroom encounters where there is a divided awkwardness in the relationship, Freire suggests that, as students' consciousness develops, the divide can be transcended as the teacher dies to self – a certain type of selflessness (Smith, 2002):

The educator for liberation has to die as the unilateral educator of the educatees, in order to be born again as the educator-educatee of the educatee-educators. An educator is a person who has to live in the deep significance of Easter. (p. 17)

In "SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind," Hilliard (1999) argues that defective families and environments are *not* the reason for the low achievement of male African American students., but that teachers who refuse to fail are the perfect answer to revolutionary change. These are the teachers who get the students who are expected to fail to achieve at high levels of excellence (Hilliard, 1999).

Teacher Education and Competence

Hilliard stated, "The only thing we have to lose is our children.... We as adults have failed our children and created walking time bombs, whose minds are externally controlled" (cited in Hill, 1986, p. 8).

As many teachers have the responsibility for referring students into gifted programs, research suggests that these teachers need training and preparation in order effectively to identify

gifted male African American students. Such training and preparation would enable teachers to look beyond their negative perceptions and biases and make appropriate decisions affecting the futures of these students (Milner, Tenore, & Laughter, 2008). As students who excel in academics are also known to excel in extracurricular activities, including arts and athletic programs, teachers must be prepared to “identify and nurture the talent that high-achieving culturally diverse males possess. Paying closer attention to these students could circumvent the dismal representation of these students in gifted education” (p. 19).

Because so much of what teachers are exposed to in the media and other settings unfairly represents African American males as being “remedial or unreachable, it is necessary for teachers to experience literature that points to the expertise – the strengths – that many culturally diverse males bring into the classroom” (Milner, Tenore, & Laughter, 2008). As teachers fade into dark expectations based on their refusal to believe in what students have, choosing to believe instead in what students do *not* have, they continue to function in the context of deficit perspectives and negative perceptions (Ford, 1996; Milner, Tenore, & Laughter, 2008). Ford and Grantham (2003) suggest that, to reverse the deficit thinking, teachers and administrators should engage students through *dynamic* thinking – that is, considering the strengths of the students as opposed to what they perceive to be their weaknesses. In addition, “courses are needed that provide teachers with access to readings that can serve as counter narratives to the pervasive discourses and realities that they have experienced and come to know and understand” (Milner, Tenore, & Laughter, 2008, p. 20). Experts have concluded that there is sufficient meaningful literature available to teachers that addresses such critical problems as achievement, racism, privilege, and stereotyping (Milner, Tenore, & Laughter, 2008). Another issue that needs to be addressed in re-teaching teachers is that of White teachers who have adopted Eurocentric

perspectives based on reading authors such as “Shakespeare, Pope, and Eliot” and who then attempt to teach African American students in terms of that sort of literature (Milner, Tenore, & Laughter, 2008). The disconnect occurs as students realize that teachers do not respect their own cultural experiences enough to look for ways to present data that are more relevant to them. To alter the flawed perceptions by teachers and administrators, “teacher education programs must provide teachers with the tools and the permission to step outside the canon and include literature that models high achievement from culturally diverse writers” (Milner, Tenore, & Laughter, 2008, p. 21). In current classroom environments, students must conform to Eurocentric standards, which means teachers “continuing to exclusively use the canon to teach high-achieving males that they must be White in order to be successful, which is not the case” (p. 21).

It is important to note that biased perceptions by teachers and administrators will no longer prevail if they attempt to “walk in the shoes” of gifted male African American students. This would be more than simply externally examining the culture. This type of identifying with these students should be mandatory training for teachers and administrators. In such activities, teachers and administrators “can identify and spend significant time with a cultural group different from their own.... The primary goal [would be] for the student [teacher] to engage in an experience in which he or she is the ‘other’” (Milner, Tenore & Laughter, 2008, p. 22):

Acquaintance with another culture by this process is a step toward lessening deficit thinking about high-achieving culturally diverse male students and toward learning to value their assets in the classroom as much as they are valued in their homes and communities. It is important for the teachers in these intercultural experiences to act as learners and researchers, in the context of building and broadening their knowledge. (p. 22)

The victimization of gifted male African American students based on the perceptions by teachers and administrators can be corrected only by making the perpetrators aware of their own lack of education. Kenyatta (2012) suggested the following:

A teacher-training program with the goal of eliminating racialized processes must focus on practitioner inquiry that pushes teachers to honestly interrogate their beliefs about African American students, consider the impact they have on students, and work to create curricula and practices that promote inclusion and consideration of student difference.

‘In-service professional development efforts focused on discipline should be designed to identify and critique teacher perceptions’ (Monroe, 2005, p. 48) and charge teachers with incorporating ‘culturally responsive’ strategies. (p. 42)

Perceptions of Minority Gifted Students

The effect of teacher perceptions on school improvement and student achievement is significant. The perceptions by persons in the school shape its culture and the methodology of instruction (Senge, 1990; Senge & Lannon-Kim, 1991). It is also important to acknowledge the power of perception in terms of programs that service twice-exceptional (gifted and learning disabled) students in urban public schools. Historically, being gifted has equated to students’ high performance levels on standardized tests. These tests, however, generally do not reflect the social, cultural, or educational experiences of minority, poor, or disadvantaged students (Franklin, 2007). In attempting to determine the impact of teacher perceptions of giftedness, researchers should consider both teachers who provide service to gifted students and those who offer special education services to twice-exceptional students. It is imperative that these factors, combined with teachers’ perceptions, be studied to further the case of educating minorities in urban areas who are both gifted and in need of special education services (Elsner & Somik, 2010). In other words, it is important to analyze the impact of teachers’ perceptions on the type

of service that twice-exceptional (gifted and learning disabled) minorities receive in urban public schools, in order to understand the power of teachers' perceptions and to determine if these inhibit their ability to support these students.

Elsner and Somik (2010) assert that a twice-exceptional child is hard to define, even when considered as just another term for gifted/learning disabled. These authors also believe that the term includes gifted children who have learning differences as well as diagnosed learning and physical disabilities (Elsner & Somik, 2010). The various definitions and beliefs about twice-exceptional students bring to the forefront the problems involved in identifying and serving them, particularly in urban areas. Such children may well have autism, for example, which is one of the most common disabilities found in gifted students. The key to serving this type of student is to make accommodations. For instance, students with autism have difficulty with verbal and nonverbal communication, social interaction, and educational performance (Turnbull, Turnbull, & Wehmeyer, 2010). And yet students with autism are capable of learning and achieving favorable outcomes in school. Therefore, specific accommodations must be found to ensure an environment in which these students can succeed. That process must become routine for both students and staff. Research supports several methods of accommodation for students with autism, which can easily be incorporated into a classroom that includes students who are twice exceptional.

At the same time, because of the needed accommodations, teachers' perceptions could be influenced by the additional tasks or steps involved in meeting the needs of these students. Often twice-exceptional students are overlooked and underserved, particularly in urban areas (Hume & Reynolds, 2010). Many times the only exceptionality that is noticed is the one that limits the student. Therefore, success for students with both learning disabilities and gifted abilities

requires a focus on individual achievement, individual progress, and individual learning, including specific, directed, individualized, and intensive remedial instruction (Idantl.org, 2010).

Achievement

Many urban gifted programs have obstacles that inhibit success in an era of federal mandates and budget cuts. Most notable are the achievement differences by ethnicity and socioeconomic level, which are especially pervasive in urban districts in the United States. Most poor children and immigrants reside in cities that are underfunded and basically struggling to make ends meet (Olszewski-Kubilius & Thomson, 2010). Studies show that in these types of districts gifted students are particularly at risk, as they are often overlooked and underserved; often it is rare that a program exists at all (Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2002). In urban districts, it is common for problems such as students struggling with disabilities, lack of resources and personnel, lack of funding, prevalent drug use and abuse, high rates of dropping out and teen pregnancy, and major issues of the poor to receive the attention and focus, while gifted students are practically ignored (Olszewski-Kubilius & Thomson, 2010).

Teachers in these programs may be especially frustrated, because the job description differs greatly from the actual job required. Gifted teachers are serving double duty, being forced to support general education students with minimal gifted programming and funding that is actually due to gifted students, not to mention those who are disabled or twice-exceptional (Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2002). Many of the students lucky enough to participate in a gifted program find that their school lacks a rigorous curriculum, is far behind in terms of technology and media resources, and often has less qualified and less experienced teachers in the program (Barton, 2003). Minority and poor students are often lumped together as low-achieving and underperforming, deemed unworthy of even being tested for gifted designation (Wright, 2009).

Research indicates that, in discussing the educational status of African American males, many studies center on their deficits rather than their strengths (Perry, Steel, & Hilliard, 2003; Spencer, Harpalani, Fegley, Dell'Angelo, & Seaton, 2002; Wright, 2009). Researchers have also suggested that possible stereotypes exist, because preconceived notions such as “genetics, dysfunctional families, lazy and unmotivated students, and the ‘culture of poverty’ in inner-city neighborhoods explain the academic underachievement of African American students, particularly males” (Steele, 1999, p. 52). This view could influence the reasons for specific perceptions about the underrepresentation of gifted male African American students by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators. For years research has reviewed the academic shortcomings of minority students, labeling them as underachievers and low achievers in public school settings across the country (Ford, 1992, 1996, 2010; Ford & Grantham, 1996; Ford, Moore, & Milner, 2005). Clearly, the issue of the underachievement of gifted students of color will remain at the forefront until misconceptions relating to cultural diversity are resolved (Ford, Moore, & Milner, 2005). Teachers and administrators often see underachievement in minority students, despite research suggesting that a solution to this culture of failure is clear (Ford, Moore, & Milner, 2005). Thus Ford, Moore, & Milner state that “... the underachievement and low achievement among gifted students of color can be better understood and addressed when teachers, school counselors, and administrators deal first with their deficit thinking related to students of color and focus on the school and non-school needs of these students” (p. 176). Educators must understand the how and why of the achievement levels of gifted minority students. Kofi Lomotey, in a foreword to *Academically Gifted African American Male College Students*, asserts that little to no research has been completed on gifted and talented

students in higher education and even less on gifted and talented male African American students at that level (Bonner, 2010, p. vii).

Social, Psychological, and Cultural Factors

Stereotypes. As stereotyping is based on one person's perceptions of another person and expectations of how that person will behave in particular situations, the subject matter lends itself to our discussion of teacher and administrator perceptions of gifted male African American students. In stereotyping, the assumption is made that the characteristics of an individual are the same for all individuals in a grouping (Rosenblum & Travis, 2011). In addition, in predicting the activities or behaviors of an entire population, stereotyping denies the uniqueness and diversity of that population. This way of thinking "denies the reality of historical and cultural variation by suggesting that this has always been the case.... Thus, stereotypes essentialize: they assume that if you know something about the physical package someone comes in, you can predict that person's behavior" (p. 337). The negative impact of stereotyping not only has historical significance, but recent studies show that a majority of Americans participate in stereotyping. At least 68% of several thousands of people tested showed generally negative associations toward Blacks as compared to Whites (Sinclair & Lun, 2010; Rosenblum & Travis, 2011). When teachers and administrators believe that African American males are inferior, genetically and/or culturally, to White American males, negative stereotypical attitudes and perceptions are not far away (Allport, 1954; Ford et al., 2002; Ford, 2010; Ford & Moore, 2013). In that case, no degree of academic performance or potential can change those attitudes and perceptions.

In the research and conceptual or theoretical literature, numerous education scholars (e.g., Menchaca, 1997; Hart & Risley 2003; Jackson et al., 2010; Steele, 2010; Valencia, 2010) have concluded that a far-reaching consequence of this negative perception is low expectations and

the denial of access to educational opportunities that could drastically improve the educational, economic, vocational, and social status of gifted and highly capable African American males, such as greater access to gifted education and advanced courses (Ford & Moore, 2013).

It is suggested that further research is warranted regarding the stereotypical conceptions arising when the term “urban” is used to describe education systems or environments (Ford & Moore, 2013). Studies prove that use of the term implies notions of violence, poverty, apathy, and crime and promotes other stereotypical conceptions of African American males, including those with high potential (Ford & Moore, 2013).

Criminalization

Criminalization is a factor that resides at two different points on the education continuum. First, the societal criminalization of the African American culture – the environment in which most male African American students must exist, is a serious enemy to giftedness and achievement. Second, the criminalization of those students who have either rejected participation in gifted programs or have *been* rejected by teachers, administrators, or gifted programs is another contributor to the failure of these students. Living in a society that presumes you are a criminal or, at least, that you have tendencies toward criminality is a serious threat to the gifted male African American student. Coupled with the presumption of criminality is the threat that the African American male is violent or dangerous. It is such presumptions that lead to the biased perceptions that exist in the minds of teachers and administrators. How can a teacher successfully establish rapport with and educate students whom they perceive to be dangerous and violent? Why would any school administrator want such students in their school?

Peer Pressure and Perceived Non-Acceptance

Two important factors supporting the underrepresentation of African American males in programs for the gifted are Peer Pressure to *not* participate and Perceived Non-Acceptance in such programs. It is also evident that, even when African American males are identified and placed in gifted education programs (however rarely), they not only perform poorly but are also relegated to a state of underachievement (College Board, 2005; NCES, 2003; Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008). Some of the reasons for the lack of participation in gifted programs are: (1) low teacher expectations, (2) lack of motivation, (3) fear of separation from social/peer groups, and (4) feelings of not belonging (Ford, 1996; Staiger, 2004; Moore et al., 2005a, 2005b; Henfield, Moore & Wood, 2008).

In the African American culture, the importance of relationships and *belonging* has historical complexities. In the pursuit of academic excellence, there is the severing of ties – a pulling away from community, family, and peers – that is a grievous task indeed. Many male African American students with the potential to succeed in gifted programs extricate from academic pursuits in the hope that they will be accepted by their peers. One of the tools used in such disengagement is the complete denial of the existence of their giftedness (Swiatek, 1995; Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008). Barton and Coley (2009) report that the duress and even bullying that take place as a result of students excelling and participating in gifted education is another factor related to the realities faced by gifted male African American students. In urban school classrooms, African American males are those who most often report discipline issues, disruptions, and negative peer pressures (Barton & Coley, 2009).

As external, *out-of-school* factors in the cultural/familial factors category, family involvement and peer pressure are proven, valid elements in the underachievement of gifted male

African American students. Evidence suggests that, when family and peers are non-supportive of highly able, gifted African American males in their various educational endeavors, such negative energy creates challenges to those students' performing well in the classroom. It is not always the case that the family is actively opposed to the student's achievement, but often an entire family can be involved in various forms of survival struggles based on under/unemployment, inadequate housing, financial issues, and much, much more. Such involvement prevents support and participation in the gifted student's necessary activities. If there is a father in the home, that father may be overwhelmed with his issues related to his own achievement and may not have the time to provide any form of support. If there is not a father in the home, so that a single mother is attempting to parent a family, it is not likely that the mother will be able to provide support to her son either. Of course, African American families may be encouraged by the potential for their gifted male African American student to succeed in gifted programs and are often very much interested in that student's success. At the same time, "... they sometimes have little social, cultural, educational and fiscal capital to assist them. In turn, these families find themselves challenged, relative to more privileged families, to effectively support their sons' education and expose them to pivotal educational experiences" (e.g., Olszewski et al., 1987; McAdoo & Younge, 2009; Ford & Moore, 2013). Of course, many gifted male African American students are resilient and have proven the statistics wrong. They have succeeded in the face of adversity. Those students are not the norm, as the following statistics presented by Ford and Moore (2013) reveal:

Among all students living in homes with mothers only, the rates are 17% for White children, compared to 49% for African American children (Barton, 2003). Hodgkinson (2007) reported that "regardless of race, the children in married couple families are much

less likely to be poor (about 8%), while 29% of White children and 52% of Black and Hispanic children who live with a single mother are likely to be poor” (p.10). When families’ presence is low to nonexistent, African American males, including those with high potential, are left to make choices and fend for themselves. The lack of supervision frequently results in less structure and discipline for these students; African American males seldom spend their unsupervised time studying and/or participating in school-related activities, causing them to fall behind academically and further behind their White male counterparts. (p. 408)

Passing and “Acting White”

Another factor presented by Staiger (2004) is the concept of “acting White.” In the ethnographic study of a California urban high school’s gifted program, Staiger found that many ethnic minority students believed that being gifted or participating in gifted education was equivalent to “whiteness.” There is significant research noting that gifted African American males are often teased and ridiculed by their peers. Many of them are labeled as “acting White” by the very friends, family, and other students to whom they are closest (Staiger, 2004; DeGruy, 2005; Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008; Ford & Moore, 2013).

Being considered as “acting White” is a very serious dilemma. In current educational settings where the dominant acceptable learning style is Eurocentric, or White, the more the gifted male African American student gravitates toward achievement in such an environment the more he is considered to be “acting White.” Acting the class clown is another method of masking giftedness. Both of these learned behaviors have notable roots in African American history. Indeed, Rosenblum and Travis (2011) suggest the following in further explanation of the concept of *passing*:

The discreditable are those who are *passing*, that is, not publicly acknowledging the stigmatized status they occupy. (Were they to acknowledge that status, they would become discredited.) The term *passing* comes from “passing as white,” which emerged as a phenomenon after 1875 when southern states reestablished racial segregation through hundreds of “Jim Crow” laws. At that point, some African Americans passed as white as a way to get better-paying jobs. “Some who passed as white on the job lived as black at home. Some lived in the North as white part of the year and as black in the South the rest of the time. More men passed than women ... the vast majority who could have passed permanently did not do so, owing to the pain of family separation, condemnation by most blacks, their fear of whites, and the loss of the security of the black community....

Passing as white probably reached an all-time peak between 1880 and 1925. (p. 205).

Although many refuse to admit to any knowledge or recollection of minstrel shows in American history, their existence is indeed fact. Beginning as far back as 1840, minstrel shows grew to immense popularity and were viewed in movies and cartoons of the 1930s and 1940s (Rosenblum & Travis, 2011). Minstrels were White males who performed in “blackface” ridiculing Blacks. The impact of the minstrel show, which greatly affected the stereotyping of African American males, was an early influence on clowning in the classroom. Of course, there is also evidence throughout American history of the blatant entertainment provided by slaves for their “Massas.” From singing and dancing to “clowning,” African Americans have always benefitted from a wealth of resourcefulness and creativity in order to survive. Some experts also add athleticism and “dumbing down” to the list of *masking* mechanisms available to the gifted male African American student.

Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy

Not only are gifted male African-American students burdened by teacher and administrator perceptions, but they are also grieved by how they see themselves. Two related concepts vitally relevant to perceptions of self are (1) self-esteem – beliefs based on one’s value or worth; and (2) self-efficacy – beliefs about one’s ability, effectiveness, and competence (DeGruy, 2005).

In an assessment of self-esteem, DeGruy (2005) concluded that recognition of self-esteem occurs in three stages: (1) as those who have significant others in their lives provide input and/or appraisals of one’s value; (2) as one’s contributions to family, work, school, society, etc., are recognized appropriately; and (3) as one’s life develops meaningfulness. As the direct result of children being given minimal responsibility but high levels of praise for virtually meaningless contributions, they can become narcissistic, seeing themselves in a greater light than reality can justify. Where there is minimal appreciation for their contributions, children can perceive themselves to be of minimal value because of being undervalued (DeGruy, 2005). The greatest damage occurs when children decide that they have minimal worth or no worth at all, compounded by society or group labels of being considered to be “less than.” DeGruy (2005) concludes that this belief about one’s worth is “vacant esteem,” defined as “not a true picture of one’s actual worth” (p. 125).

Vacant Esteem

Through spheres of influence such as society, family, and community, vacant esteem can be further refined. Laws, policies, media, and society’s institutions (including schools) provide societal influence in a number of ways. The overrepresentation of African Americans in prisons, functionally segregated schools with inadequate funding to support them, and a variety of

financial dilemmas such as exorbitant interest rates on auto, home, and small business loans are some of the societal influences contributing to vacant esteem (DeGruy, 2005). In addition, the media's depiction of African Americans as "criminals, disadvantaged, academically deficient and sexually irresponsible is a community influence of vacant esteem" (p. 126). Finally, in the African-American family there is evidence of a sufficient amount of fuel for the momentum of vacant esteem. How children are parented greatly influences their belief in their value and worth. The absence of competent parenting can further affect children's concept of self detrimentally. In the African-American family, Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome as passed down from "generation to generation through family, community and society" has greatly furthered the development of vacant esteem not only in the past and present, but made it more likely also in generations to come (p. 125).

The damage caused by vacant esteem has long-reaching toxicity. As African American students believe that they actually do have minimal ability and limited potential, they experience what some experts call the "glass ceiling effect." Created by discriminatory practices, that effect begins to shape the lives of African American students life, so that they will soon refuse to believe that educational achievement is for them at all (Kenyatta, 2012). The practices in today's education systems enforce "dominant culture ideologies that stifle and repudiate students of color.... Constant interaction with stereotypes and limiting policies and practices can weigh on students' self-esteem and cause them to construct an identity that mirrors expectations or is accepting of failure" (p. 40).

In support of the truth about the damage to the lives of African-American male students based on concepts of vacant esteem and glass ceilings, child psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott has presented a similar view. Reflections mirrored back to a child immensely form that child's sense

of self. As in vacant esteem, community, family, and society influence these reflections, so that the child becomes dependent on them for development. A positive reflected image provides feelings of competence and value; a negative one generally results in a deeply intense inability to sustain any sense of value or self-worth (Winicott, 1971; Suárez-Orozco, 2000; Rosenblum & Travis, 2011):

In the classic “Pygmalion in the Classroom” study, teachers who believed that certain children were brighter than others (based on the experimenter randomly assigning some children their designation, unsubstantiated in fact) treated the children more positively and assigned them higher grades.... W. E. B. DuBois famously articulated the challenge of what he termed “double consciousness” – a sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity (DuBois, 1903/1999). When the expectations are of sloth, irresponsibility, low intelligence, and even danger; the outcome can be toxic. When those reflections are received in a number of mirrors, including the media, classroom, and street, the outcome is devastating. (Rosenblum & Travis, 2011, p. 208)

The gifted male African American student is far too often left with the choices to believe the negative social mirror, succumb to the glass ceiling effect, and exist in a vacuum of vacant esteem. Too many African Americans accept these negative influences, with results such as low aspirations, self-defeat, depression, hopelessness, self-depreciation, self-doubt, and shame (Rosenblum & Travis, 2011). Continuous bombardment from all possible influences, with no positive ones serving to offset the negative ones, the male African American student forms the heart-felt assumption that all the influences are correct and that he never will amount to anything ... so why try? (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Rosenblum & Travis, 2011).

Contrasting the Millennial Factor

A recent consideration that requires further research is the contrast between African American male Millennials and white Millennials. Commonly referred to as Generation Y (Gen Y), this category includes those born between 1980 or '81 and 2000 or '01. This category, which represents the largest generational cohort in history, includes more than seventy-six million people (Black, 2010; Bonner, Lewis, Bowman-Perrott, Hill-Jackson, & James, 2009). These are the students who are expected to be attending public middle and high schools in the coming years, as well as others students currently enrolled in our nation's colleges and universities. In most examinations of Gen Y, the focus has been on the majority population as opposed to the African American population. In researching the perceptions by teachers and administrators of gifted African American males, it is important to note that African American males, in general, are an inherently diverse population. To aid in the examination of this group, the following table reveals how the White majority population and African American Millennials have very different social experiences:

Table 2
Differing Social Experiences of White and African American Millennials

White Generation M (GEN Y) (McGlynn, 2005)	Black Generation M (GEN Y) (Dilworth & Carter, 2007)
Grew up in economically stable conditions	Did NOT grow up in economically stable conditions
Felt protected by the government	Did NOT feel protected by the government
Have been indulged by their parents	Have NOT been indulged by their parents
Have been sheltered from the harsh realities of life	Have NOT been sheltered from the harsh realities of life

Of course, there are exceptions in both categories. However, Table 2 provides a unique view of the struggle and potential for failure that exist in the lives of African American students.

Bonner et al. (2009) present the following statistics as they relate to the above information:

Culture, giftedness, identity, and generational status should be woven on this same loom of critical educational consciousness. Additionally, practitioners need to understand that who these students are and how they conceptualize their worlds have profound implications for how schools should go about delivering education.... Although considering generational status might add another layer of complexity, clearly it is an important component in the efforts to better address the unique needs of gifted African American males. (p. 187)

Although there is a significant amount of research on the African American male, there is insufficient research on the African American Gen Y male's threat of extinction or annihilation. The number of recent reports of police brutality and shootings of African American males is staggering. In 2006 the following statistics were presented:

A black man is more than six times as likely as a white man to be slain. The trend is most stark among black men 14 to 24 years old: They were implicated in a quarter of the nation's homicides and accounted for 15 percent of the homicide victims in 2002, although they were just 1.2 percent of the population.... (Fletcher, 2006, para. 32).

In terms of the Gen Y characteristic of "Sheltered," there is no equivalent in the African American cohort (Black, 2010; Bonner et al., 2009). It is evident that the common traits associated with Gen Y – Special, Sheltered, Confident, Team-Oriented, Conventional, Pressured, and Achiever – have unique implications for Gen Y African Americans. A history of well-documented scholastic success is a contributing factor for a student being considered to

have appropriate levels of *confidence* or the status of being an *achiever*. As the gifted male African American student is *pressured* to fit into a Eurocentric education system, he is more likely to feel an absence of confidence and self-efficacy. In addition, it is likely that the more he attempts to *Achieve* and become more successful, the farther he separates himself from his own “blackness” (Bonner et al, 2009).

Underrepresentation/Referrals

In most major urban areas around the country, teachers, administrators, and school staff are disturbed by the fact that students of color (African-American, Hispanic, and Native American) are not reaching their full academic potential, including those who are gifted (Moore, Ford, & Milner, 2005). Indeed, gifted students in urban districts are less likely to be referred to gifted programs for several reasons. One is that teachers in urban districts, who may have only a few high-achieving students in their classes, want to keep them there. Thus they may simply not put in the time and effort necessary to implement the referral process (Barton, 2003). Another problem with identifying students who may be both gifted and learning-disabled is how to serve them appropriately.

Olszewski-Kubilius and Thomson (2010) asserted that other school-related issues may cause additional confusion, because gifted urban students generally underperform on standardized achievement and mental ability tests. This is especially so if a student’s learning disability is masking the gifted ability, with the result that both go unnoticed or are not appropriately served (Olszewski-Kubilius & Thomson, 2010). Research has further suggested that schools with high poverty levels must still serve their gifted students properly, or poor minority students identified as gifted may be at a disadvantage if placed in programs with other students of a different socioeconomic status and broader experience. This does not mean that

minority students are inferior or not able to succeed, but rather that some of them may have trouble adjusting to other students who are more verbal in both content and focus levels (Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2002). Teachers in these programs can clearly see the difference in how the urban gifted programs serve students who are minority and possibly more needy, and how they serve other students who may be more affluent. The views of teachers in these programs show that there is a discrepancy in how the students are treated. In essence, overburdened teachers feel that the challenges are too great even to establish programs that serve and maintain appropriate levels of educational progress for all students (Barton, 2003). It is common knowledge that often students themselves do not have a voice when it comes to reform programs that serve their needs or educational limitations. Creswell (2009) stated that “advocacy research provides a voice for participants, raising their consciousness or advancing an agenda for change to improve their lives” (p. 201). This notion alone provides support for examining the perceptions by both teachers and students in terms of dealing with rules, regulations, and reforms that have a direct effect on the education system.

The research shows overwhelmingly that gifted students are widely underserved. It also shows that the effectiveness and success of urban gifted programs and factors related to the programs are highly dependent upon such issues as funding, staffing, and identification of students, along with adequate serving of students who are twice- exceptional. Although limited to-date, there is some research that names teachers as the prime factor in determining the success of gifted education programs in urban areas. Thus Blasé (1982) evokes the idea that stress and the lack of administrative support shape a teacher’s effectiveness with students in direct proportion to the level of funding and programming. Additionally, the research on urban gifted programs and teacher perceptions shows that many programs are extremely unclear and

ineffective in urban areas, because they lack adequate funding, professional development for teachers, and strong support from administrators, as well as support from teachers themselves to identify poor, urban gifted students. Black (2001) asserted that, when teachers felt good about their work, student achievement rose. The reverse was also true, in that, when support and morale were low and teachers did not feel empowered about the work that had to be done, student achievement, especially in urban areas, tended to stagnate.

The Fruit of Misguided Perceptions

Experts in the field of education have found that very few Latino and African American students participate in advanced classes such as gifted or honors courses where class and race are used to predict achievement. Yet these students are overrepresented in remedial classes and special education (Pitre, 2014; Boykin & Noguera, 2011). What is even more significant is that these same experts conducted research indicating that when teachers possessed negative attitudes and beliefs there was a direct parallel to minimal effort and complacency in regard to improving levels of achievement among ethnic and racial minority students (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Pitre, 2014). The danger in such a conclusion is that, as these beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions are maintained, they become the accepted culture for teachers, administrators, and education systems. In addition, Boykin and Noguera concluded that, “in such communities, the failure of students of color can become normalized as educators and others rationalize and accept low-performance as the byproduct of factors they cannot control” (p. 33). In the complex situations where toxic and degrading beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions are dominant, unfortunately, a great number of gifted male African American students will compromise, accepting this culture as it is forced upon them, thus avoiding the pursuit of gifted and challenging education (Pitre, 2014).

Another dilemma that is a direct result of teacher and administrator perceptions of African American male students is the concept of *labeling*, specifically in special education. The weight of labeling, using terms such as *disability* and *special needs*, is far too much for any student to bear, as discussed by Gold and Richards (2012) in the following excerpt:

The very term “disability” suggests a deficit mode of thinking about the labeled students. Since the prefix “dis” is derived from Latin meaning “not” or “without,” the term disability can be literally defined as “not having ability.” To illustrate the sociolinguistic implications of this term, when combined with the word “learning” (i.e., learning disability), the term suggests not having the ability to learn. An educational system that operates on the premise that some students do not have the ability to perform at a prescribed level can promote not only deficit thinking but also discrimination – a treatment endured too frequently by African Americans. (p. 144)

Labeling places individuals into specific categories with others whose characteristics are similar (Gold & Richards, 2012). When used for discriminatory purposes, the specified group can be separated from mainstream society. In 1963, Howard Becker developed the theory of labeling, suggesting that it influences the perceptions by society in general as well as those by individuals (Gold & Richards, 2012). What is extremely dangerous about labeling is that, when a dominant group decides that specific activities or behaviors are abnormal or even unlawful, those who exhibit such behaviors are considered willing to engage in criminal or deviant activity (Gold & Richards, 2012). In further examination of Becker’s theory, the belief emerges that labeling as “deviant,” “disabled,” or “learning disabled” can result in the identified abnormal individuals assuming the related behaviors – actually believing themselves to be what the dominant group has labeled them to be (Gold & Richards, 2012). The labeling creates a “self-fulfilling prophecy;

that is, the individual labeled a criminal becomes a criminal” (Gold & Richards, 2012). If society has pre-labeled a particular group, for example, male African American students, as predestined for failure, incapable of learning, low achievers, having tendencies toward criminality and other taboos, then teachers and administrators placed in positions of authority in these students’ lives will have no choice but to approach such labeled, abnormal students with trepidation and, more likely, fear.

It is possible that, due to teacher and administrator perceptions, many gifted male African American students have been inappropriately labeled as learning disabled or having special needs and placed in special education programs as the antithesis of gifted education programs. Gold and Richards (2012) have presented the following empirical research to assist in interpreting the facts in regard to inappropriate labeling in our school systems:

While guidelines are stipulated for the identification of relevant characteristics, the teacher has to make a determination based on his or her observation. It is possible that *biases* may affect the teacher’s referral. This may be due to a teacher’s unfamiliarity with or disapproval of a cultural behavior exhibited by a student. As Becker (1963) suggests, the labeler (in this case the referring teacher) is subject to *biases, prejudices and stereotypes* reflective of the majority (i.e., European Americans). In making a referral, a teacher who is a member of the majority group in society may be influenced by what is considered “normal” based on standards set by European Americans. When this occurs, the African-American student who might learn differently because of his or her cultural influences is at-risk of misidentification, misassessment, misclassification, misplacement, and misinstruction. (Obiakor, 1998, p. 147)

Biases and perceptions are fraught with the potential for permanently damaging the lives of thousands of gifted male African American students. Research has proven that cultural bias in testing, test administration, and interpretation of test scores ultimately results in African American males being labeled as intellectually disabled (Gold & Richards, 2012). It is apparent that further research is needed in the area of labeling, as it is one of the major tools being used to further the negative perceptions by teachers and administrators responsible for educating gifted male African American students. The following are additional pertinent statistics presented by Gold and Richards (2012):

In 2002-2003, African American students were three times more likely to be labeled mentally retarded (intellectually disabled) and 2.3 times more likely to be labeled emotionally disturbed than all other racial ethnic groups combined (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2009). In 2000, statistics indicated that, although African-American males represented only 9% of the total student enrollment in the United States, they constituted 20% of the students labeled mentally retarded; similarly, in the category of emotional disturbance, they accounted for 21% of that group (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). (p. 148)

In addition to the damage done by labeling, African American students are often required to conform to Eurocentric or traditional mainstream forms of education. Instead of utilizing the benefits from the cultural competencies presented by the African American students, such teachable moments are ignored, and inappropriate and negative perceptions continue. Embracing the culturally diverse learning opportunities presented by African American students and students of other cultures could be a powerful tool for creating exciting learning experiences for all students. Conversely, as teachers ignore the potential that students of diverse backgrounds

bring to the classroom, the hazards of unrelenting negative perceptions will continue to infect our education systems.

What Is Necessary

Rosenblum and Travis (2011) suggest the possibility of a “strong white ally” in interpersonal relationships with African Americans. As mentioned previously, gifted male African American students do not need negative perceptions from teachers, administrators, or society in general; rather, they need advocates – they need *allies*. The following list is the result of discussion with people of color in response to the question of “what people of color want from White allies”:

- “Respect.”
- “Find out about us.”
- “Don’t take over.”
- “Provide information.”
- “Resources.”
- “Money.”
- “Take risks.”
- “Don’t take it personally.”
- “Understanding.”
- “Teach your children about racism.”
- “Speak up.”
- “Don’t be scared by my anger.”
- “Support.”
- “Listen.”

- “Don’t make assumptions.”
- “Stand by my side.”
- “Don’t assume you know what’s best for me.”
- “Your body on the line.”
- “Make mistakes.”
- “Honesty.”
- “Talk to other White people.”
- “Interrupt jokes and comments.”
- “Don’t ask me to speak for my people.” (p. 514)

Deeply embedded in the perceptions by teachers and administrators is the “culture of poverty” theory that has more recently been rejected by many scholars (Delpit, 2012; Pitre, 2014). When the blame for low performance is placed on poverty, low-income students suffer. Teachers who fail to assume responsibility for the learning experience being provided often believe that they have no control over these students and cannot guide them to achieve at levels of excellence; Delpit (2012), in contrast, visited and compared high-performing and low-performing schools that accommodated the same low-income populations of African American students. In her analysis, she found that meaningful learning experiences, academic rigor, connections with culture, and unquestionable belief in the capabilities of students to achieve existed in all of the low-income, majority-minority, and high-performing schools.

Knowledge can be acquired from all life experiences and contexts. Teaching based in “a context of real experiences” equates to *meaningful learning*. “In literacy instruction, students have multiple opportunities to use new words and skills in reading, writing and discussion.

Literacy skills are explicitly taught but embedded in real writing, reading, and communication” (Delpit, 2012, p. 63).

Attempting to disguise sub-par instructional practice and content as *rigorous academic instruction* does not work with African American students (Pitre, 2014). There is so much in African American students’ history involving falsehood and depravity masked as liberty. When the gifted male African American student is presented with less than rigorous academic instruction, there is a tendency to disengage and even resist (Pitre, 2014). The more challenging and thought-provoking the content, the more the student will engage and absorb the information being presented. Based on Delpit’s (2012) comparative research, rigorous academic instruction is vital to the success of programs in “high-performing, high-minority schools” (Pitre, 2014):

For example, teachers engage students in cross-discipline project-based learning where students identify, investigate and propose solutions and/or take actions to address real world problems or controversial issues they care about (i.e., stand your ground legislation, gun violence, climate change, texting while driving, food deserts/food justice). (p. 213)

As teachers bridge the gap between the presentation of new information and students’ existing knowledge and cultural frameworks, students excel. Delpit (2012), referring to this practice as *cultural connection*, found administrators and teachers celebrating and focusing on the abundance of what students can do and what they know instead of constructing curricula based specifically on what the students did not know or could not do (Pitre, 2014). Successful learning environments must implement approaches that are asset-based. In doing so, curricula should be designed with student assets and strengths in mind, resulting in higher levels of student achievement and learning (Delpit, 2012; Pitre, 2014).

The fourth characteristic Delpit (2012) found to be true in high-performing schools is the profound and passionate belief that students' capabilities are limitless. In this context, the teachers never question *if* the student can learn; they simply proceed with teaching. Delpit (2012) believed that this methodology is the result of the Freedom Schools of the Civil Rights Movement and traditional African thought (Pitre, 2014). There is never any doubt of the students' potential and, thus, never a negative perception of any kind in the teachers' or administrators' behaviors or thought processes.

Educators in high-performing schools are convinced of their students' brilliance, humanity, and inherent intellectual capability. As a result, their instructional approaches are aligned with these beliefs. The teachers design rigorous, intellectually challenging curricular experiences that are more likely to engage students. In addition, because they believe their students can achieve at high levels, they set high expectations for performance and support students toward their success. (Pitre, 2014, p. 215)

Pitre's (2014) research provides additional hope for effectively changing the outcomes for gifted male African American students. Such hope can be found in the examination of the U.S. Department of Education's Equity and Excellence Commission (2013), which declared that "all students must have access to high quality instruction.... Highly effective, well qualified teachers must be equitably distributed across districts and schools" (p. 21).

Summary

The idea that teacher perceptions are tied to several components of gifted education is multifaceted, including such factors as morale, funding, support, achievement, and concerns about twice-exceptionality and bias. All the components together affect how teachers feel and think. The research is plentiful on connections such as that between funding and the achievement

of gifted students. However, there is a glaring gap in the literature regarding the direct impact of teachers' perceptions on their support for gifted minority students. The challenge is to examine the interactions among the education of gifted African American students, achievement gaps, and teacher and administrator perceptions. That challenge relates to the overall impact of these issues on society and on public school systems across the country. Therefore, this study explored multiple approaches comprising Piaget's theory of constructivism (1936), Bandura's theory on self-efficacy (1986), and Critical Race Theory (CRT) as defined by Fay (1987) and Tierney (1993). The intent was to help to fill the gaps by uncovering how the perceptions by urban educators truly impact the instruction, referrals and identification of gifted male African American students. It was also deemed important to examine how educators' perceptions about gifted minority students affect their achievement level, their perceived learning ability, and the perceived support required.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore, examine, and understand the reasons for specific perceptions about the underrepresentation of gifted male African American students by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators. In addition, the study examined how those perceptions impact gifted and talented enrollment within an urban public school system. Such perceptions about gifted male African American students were defined as the views, thoughts, and patterns of educators pertaining to (1) the characteristics of gifted students, (2) recommendations for admission into the gifted and talented program, and (3) social and psychological factors that impede the entry of African American males into gifted and talented education programs in urban schools. The research questions, a description of the setting, and information about the participants are reviewed here. In addition, this chapter looks at the role of the sole researcher and the methods of data collection, aiming to show how the study examined social, cultural, and psychological factors through interviews, participant observations, and physical documents or artifacts. In terms of data analysis, data were coded and analyzed for themes and patterns. In terms of reliability and trustworthiness, data triangulation, coding, and member checking were utilized for accuracy and validity. Lastly, ethical considerations and a chapter summary are included.

Design

Stake (2000) defined a case study as the consideration of an issue through one or more cases within a unique bounded system (a specific setting or context); moreover, it focuses on a single individual, organization, event, program, or process within that system. Merriam (2009) similarly defined a case study as an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (p.

41). Yin (2008) defined it as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (p. 18). The case study approach to research design is used to showcase an intensive effort to understand a single unit of study within a complex context, in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the case (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, & Yocum, 2012). This study called for the “presented design” type, as its goal was to seek to understand the reasons for specific perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of male African American students in gifted education programs. The study explored the effect of these perceptions on a Georgia public school system. The phenomenon under study, or bounded system, was urban middle and high school teachers and administrators in this school system.

It is important to acknowledge the power of perception in terms of programs that serve exceptional (gifted) students in urban public schools. Historically, being gifted equated to high performance levels on standardized tests, but these tests generally do not reflect the social, cultural, or educational experiences of minority, poor, or disadvantaged students (Franklin, 2007). It is imperative that these factors, combined with the perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators, be studied to further the case for educating gifted minority males in urban areas. Previous qualitative studies such as those conducted by Wood et al. (2010), Hebert (1998), and Moon (1991) have utilized this type of design method. These studies also dealt with the provision of gifted education in an urban environment.

The case study design of research methodology, according to Baxter and Jack (2008), is based on the philosophical underpinnings of a paradigm (p. 545), which is “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990, p. 17). Paradigms can be both the basis for a theoretical framework and an interpretive lens for data analysis (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, & Yocum,

2012). Qualitative research utilizes methods such as direct observation and interviews to obtain data about a phenomenon. It seeks to attain credibility by obtaining data from three or more sources and/or by three or more means of data collection (known as data triangulation) (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, & Yocum, 2012). This type of systematic and grounded theory case study design allows the researcher to rely on systematic procedures for generating theory through theoretical sampling, the conduct of multiple interviews, and the use of various coding formats. Merriam (2008) suggested that the purpose behind grounded theory design was to generate or discover a theory, “grounded” in the data, which explains a specific process or practice; thus this study endeavored to understand the components or concepts that influenced the participants. Merriam (2008) further asserted that a grounded theory study sought more than understanding; rather, it assisted in building a substantial theory about a topic or phenomenon (p. 23). In addition, Calman (n.d.) concurred that grounded theory was the direct result of findings based on data systematically derived from social research. The researcher used this design as a way of conceptualizing the similarities of the individuals (urban middle and high school teachers and administrators in a Georgia public school system) in regard to their views about gifted male African American students, as well as the impact that those perceptions had on the underrepresentation of such students in gifted and talented education programs. Moreover, the researcher used, as part of the analysis, the tenets of critical race theory (CRT), which is founded in thought processes and assessments of social systems and groupings based on the following understandings: (1) that a critical component of family, social organizations and systems is race; (2) that racism is an ingrained aspect of racialized social systems and is institutionalized; (3) that, through social behaviors and norms, all people within racialized social systems have the capability of reproducing these systems; and (4) that ethnic and racial identities are phenomena

that are socially constructed and are being revised continually based on the self-interests of a particular group (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010, p. 442). It is fair to say that CRT had a great amount of influence on the design of this research.

Qualitative research utilizes methods such as direct observation and interviews to obtain data about a usually hard-to-quantify phenomenon. Creswell (1998) asserted that qualitative inquiry represented a legitimate mode of social and human science exploration, without the necessity for apology or comparisons to quantitative research. This idea supports the design and implementation of the current study.

Research Questions

Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) have stated that “good research questions should be clear, specific, and unambiguously stated. They should also be interconnected; that is, related to each other in some meaningful way” (p. 37). The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What are the perceptions by educators and administrators in an urban school district of male African American students in gifted and talented programs?
2. In what ways do the perceptions by urban educators and administrators of male African American students impact how these students are referred to gifted and talented programs?
3. How are the perceptions by educators and administrators of male African American students reflected in their enrollment in the gifted and talented programs in an urban public school system in Georgia?
4. To what extent does professional development in gifted pedagogy impact the perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs?

5. To what extent does personal experience – i.e., social, cultural, and ethical factors – impact perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs?

Setting

Permission was obtained from multiple urban learning institutions within the Georgia public school system to be the sites for the study (see Appendix H). The setting was chosen because of the characteristics of large urban school districts within the state and the overwhelmingly high number of minority students enrolled in the system. Of particular interest was one district, which was under the leadership of a new superintendent, which boasts a message and belief that all children can learn when educators open students' minds to learning, discovery, and achievement. This district comprises 60,000 students and 6,000 employees, with an annual operating budget of \$578 million.

Participants

The participants in this study were a combination of twelve urban educators and administrators in a large metropolitan school district in the southeastern region of the United States, who had received an invitation to take part (see Appendix F). Once the potential participants responded to the invitation, they were given a consent form (see Appendix E), of which they returned a signed version before any further actions were taken. It was a random purposive sample, an approach selected because of the limited number of teachers who interact with gifted students in the Georgia public school system. Purposive sampling does target a particular group of people. When the desired population for the study is rare or difficult to locate and recruit, purposive sampling may be the only option. In this approach, the participants are selected because of some characteristic. Purposive sampling is popular and acceptable in

qualitative research (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Patton (1990) has proposed the following rationales for purposive sampling, all of which apply to this study: Homogeneous (focuses, reduces variation, simplifies analysis, facilitates group interviewing); Theory-Based or Operational Construct (finding manifestations of a theoretical construct of interest so as to elaborate and examine it); and Combination or Mixed Purposeful (triangulation, flexibility, meets multiple interests and needs) (Patton, 1990).

The purposive sample approach was used because of the small number of teachers and the feasibility of their participation. In addition, a purposive sample adds credibility to the study when the potential sample is too large. The demographic characteristics of the participants varied in terms of ethnicity and race, gender, and age. Given the nature of qualitative research, pseudonyms were utilized.

Procedures

Hughes (1990) asserted that the most common qualitative data collection methods involved field observations, interviews, and a survey/questionnaire. The researcher, therefore, employed a series of observations, interviews, participant observations, and physical artifacts during the data collection portion of this study. Once the researcher received University IRB approval (see Appendix I), he used a multi-method data collection process to access the research data. Specifically, the following types of instruments were used:

Hughes (1990) asserted that the most common qualitative data collection methods involved field observations, interviews, and a. The researcher, therefore, employed a series of observations, interviews, participant observations, and physical artifacts during the data collection portion of this study.

- a. Teacher interviews (structured and semi-structured)

- b. Administrator interviews (structured and semi-structured)
- c. A researcher-created field tested questionnaire/survey
- d. Document, report, and/or artifact analysis

The Researcher's Role

The researcher, a native of Valdosta, Georgia, was the first one in his immediate family to obtain a college degree. The researcher currently lives in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area, where he is the Assistant Principal of Literacy at Hendley Elementary School in Washington, D.C., a turnaround school in Phase One of redevelopment and a part of the District of Columbia Public School System. After graduating from high school with honors, the researcher matriculated to Troy University, where he earned Bachelor of Arts degrees in English Education and in French Education. The researcher pursued a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction and an Education Specialist degree in Administration at Central Michigan University.

The researcher, with over 18 years of experience in education, has held multiple positions of leadership at urban public schools in the Southeast and the Midwest. As a public school administrator, he held such roles as member of a school leadership team and a teacher support specialist; master scheduler; Title I, new-hire interviews; and director of vertical team planning and facilitation. As an active youth advocate, the researcher is a male mentor for several young men in the Washington, D.C., community, in which role he strives to provide multiple opportunities for success, along with constant and consistent exposure to post-secondary options. His passion for education and being a proponent for change are what drive him to continue his work in urban areas. The researcher plans to continue to work in urban education, in the sincere belief that all children have potential, although it is the cultivation of that potential that makes dreams a reality.

Data Collection

There were multiple sources of data collection for this study, as noted below.

Interviews

Interviews with all teachers and administrators were conducted a maximum of two times during the study. Interview responses over time were compared, in order to highlight consistency. Administrators and teachers of minority-gifted students in grades 6-12 from multiple schools in an urban north Georgia school district were the participants. The focus groups were held twice within the 2-month study period. The researcher conducted a series of semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A), referring to sessions organized around a set of predetermined, open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). For the purposes of this study, a semi-structured interview was not considered to be a strict formal interview, but one that was more relaxed. This approach coincided with the suggestion of Dicicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) that semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research and can occur either with an individual or in groups. Dicicco-Bloom and Crabtree further asserted that most often they are conducted only once for an individual or group and take between 30 minutes to several hours to complete (2006). All research questions fell within the interview protocol, although in semi-structured interviews the researcher retained the flexibility to ask for clarification or additional information. The point of using this type of interview was to create a friendlier and more sociable interviewing atmosphere, as is often characteristic of qualitative studies. The style is most useful when one is investigating a topic that is very personal to the participants. "Benefits include the ability to gain rapport and

participants' trust, as well as a deeper understanding of responses. Data sets obtained using this style will be larger than those with structured interviews" (Santiago, 2009, p. 7).

The interviews with the administrators were both structured and unstructured (see Appendix B). In unstructured interviews, researchers utilize a checklist of topics to be covered, but there is no order and no script. The interaction between the participant and the researcher is more like a conversation than an interview (Santiago, 2009). The benefit of unstructured interviews is that they often uncover information that would not have been exposed using a structured or semi-structured format, because the researcher and the participant are not limited by a protocol or a rigid structure (Santiago, 2009). Data from all interviews were recorded and transcribed for accuracy and clarity.

The answers to questions about the perceptions by urban educators and administrators about African American males allowed the researcher to determine if and how these perceptions had an impact on the rate of referral of African American males to gifted and talented education programs. Hargrove and Seay (2011) cited evidence from recent data collected by the federal government and various state agencies that highlighted the low percentage of African American males participating in public gifted and talented education programs (p. 434). Questions about student enrollment in such programs in the urban school district under study attempted to uncover if participants thought that there was a valid reason for the varied representation of students in those programs. Research has shown that personal experiences, along with biased procedures used by districts and schools to identify gifted African American males, impact participation and lessen interest in gifted and talented programs (Hopkins, 1997; Franklin, 2007). These types of questions allowed the researcher to discover if there was an impact and, if so,

how it was reflected in the enrollment of African American males in gifted and talented education programs.

All interview questions (see Appendices A and B), which were checked for content validity, were developed to provide the participants an open forum in which to express adequately their views and feelings. Research has shown that the effect of teacher perceptions on school improvement efforts is significant. The perceptions by school personnel shape that culture and the methodology of instruction (Senge, 1990; Senge & Lannon-Kim, 1991). In addition to a review of the design of the questions, Raywid (2006) claimed that effective schools were organized around themes and distinguished by engaged students and collaborative faculties, which further supports the idea of teacher morale being relevant to school success and student involvement. Teachers must have a sense of motivation in order consistently to support students, especially those who are gifted, of lower SES, and members of a minority.

Questionnaire/Survey

Questionnaires are popular and modest tools for acquiring information on participant perceptions, thoughts, knowledge, and feelings. Since they can provide valuable information to researchers, they are generally used to gather the opinions of a larger group of people than would be able to be reached by interview or focus group alone (Bird, 2009). The researcher compiled the data from the questionnaire and analyzed the information for themes, shifts, and patterns. A Researcher-Created Field Tested Questionnaire/Survey (see Appendix G) was also validated and used as a tool to gather data. The information gleaned from a questionnaire/survey is helpful if the researcher seeks to understand how people feel about certain issues, which is often the main objective of a qualitative study design.

Observations

The researcher conducted observations of the teachers providing quality instruction in class, using an observation notes protocol and a table of descriptive notes and dialogue reconstruction form (see Appendices C and D). The researcher also used observation, which involves looking and listening carefully, to document professional development sessions or meetings relating to gifted and talented education. In the social sciences, observation requires that the observer watch in order to uncover information or view a behavior (Langley, 1988). The study was carried out through direct observation, wherein the researcher was not a participant but strove to be as unobtrusive as possible, while formulating a detached perspective of the participants being observed. In addition, there are other unobtrusive methods of collecting information about participants such as document and artifact analyses; prior research supporting the use of these techniques has been noted in Higgins and Rice (1991), Reiser and Mory (1991), and Moallem (1993), which highlighted studies of teachers' planning, thinking, behaviors, and conceptions of testing, along with documents developed by the teachers such as instructional plans and actual tests, which were collected and analyzed (<http://www.aect.org/edtech/ed1/40/40-02.html>). The researcher conducted observations of teachers in team planning meetings (i.e., vertical teams or collaborative team meetings) and also collected artifacts during, before, and after observation to support the study. Observations were approximately 30 minutes each and conducted on a rolling basis.

In addition, the researcher gathered information via the protocol form (Appendix C), which was checked for content validity, used, dated, and timed for each observation completed. The time stamp had a starting and ending time. A computer-generated map of the room clearly indicated what was happening and where. The researcher focused on the teacher, as well as on

the reactions of the students with whom the teachers were working in the classroom. The observations were both scheduled and unscheduled, pending teachers' and administrators' availability. The role of the researcher, who conducted observations during the period of the study, was that of a non-participant observer.

Physical Artifacts/Documents

The documents and physical artifacts that were viewed were received from the Atlanta Public Schools Central Office, the Atlanta Public Schools Office of Gifted and Talented Education, or participants who were employed by the Atlanta Public School System. The documents, which consisted of reports, handouts, meeting agendas, lesson plans, and meeting minutes, were utilized for observation sessions and reviewed when participants made reference to them in interview sessions. Document analysis provided the researcher with instantaneous access to prior actions and instances related to the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012) and was also used to interpret and synthesize data collected from a variety of printed sources (Yin, 2008).

Data Analysis

Following the example of data analysis provided by Creswell (1998, p. 163), the following methods of analysis were used:

Classifying

When completing data analysis procedures, researchers must be able to recognize and comprehend strategic differences in context and philosophy of the common features of qualitative data analysis (QDA) (Baptiste, 2001). This researcher used categorical data from the interviews to see if patterns or themes emerged as the result of extensive review of the field notes and observation protocol forms. This process allowed the researcher the opportunity to determine if there was a commonality of thought among the participants. Uncovering patterns of behavior,

cultural background, and training was crucial. Baptiste (2001) asserted that “all QDA (regardless of methodological or disciplinary orientation) comprise four interrelated phases: defining the analysis, classifying data, making connections between data, and conveying the message(s)” (p. 22). Baptiste also claimed that “to classify, then, is to tag, label, define, and refine groups of data. This is a tedious and often time consuming process that goes back and forth between the four intellectual moments – tagging, labeling, defining, and refining” (p. 31). Although tedious, this process is needed to ensure that data are organized and clear for accurate interpretation.

Open Coding

Within any qualitative research study the researcher will scan recorded data and develop categories of phenomena, called codes. In the course of using this process the researcher can manage data by labeling, storing, and retrieving it according to the codes (<http://www.aect.org/edtech/ed1/40/40-02.html>). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that data can be coded descriptively or interpretively. The types of codes depend on the type of research design.

For this study, data from interviews, surveys, and observations were organized into codes in order to discover if any themes emerged from the data collection. The information gathered through this analysis process was coded and placed into a file. Once the data were entered, the file was reviewed for developing themes or categories of themes that might provide pertinent information about the participants. This process allowed the researcher to analyze blindly the words and actions of participants, while searching for commonality in the entered data. This is an important method of analyzing data in a case study, because it offers an opportunity to seek underlying meaning from interviews, observations, and other forms of data collection, while the researcher is still acting as a part of the study.

Description of the Study

This analysis process was intended to provide a detailed view of various aspects of the study as the facts were collected and disaggregated. From this point on, the data were sorted into themes and compared and contrasted for commonalities.

Trustworthiness

In a case study, the results must be substantiated through the use of data triangulation. The researcher's intention was to establish and validate the evidence uncovered by using multiple sources as presented through standard qualitative research practices. In the data collection phase of the case study, emphasis was placed on multiple forms of data collection such as participant observation, structured and semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Data triangulation allowed the researcher to share findings leading to a conclusion, establish a sense of reliability from the perceptions of various participants, and share varied meanings of the case through lessons learned and established themes. These components, combined with case study methodology, provide a framework from which the researcher was able to draw conclusions and make recommendations based on the findings (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the argument that the inquiry's findings are "worth paying attention to" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290).

Krefting (1991) suggested that trustworthiness was the demonstration that (a) the evidence for the results reported was sound, and (b) the argument made based on the results was strong. This definition alone suggests that the trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be increased by maintaining high levels of credibility and objectivity as displayed through the use of various techniques (Krefting, 1991). Thus to establish the reliability of this study and its trustworthiness,

the following methods were used: data triangulation, the technique of an audit trail, memo-ing, and member checking.

Data Triangulation

The study employed multiple data sources while seeking accuracy and integrity throughout. This process was important, as it provided for credibility. Wilson (2006) proclaimed that “research method triangulation or data triangulation is when a researcher uses explicitly different research methods like questionnaires/surveys, focus groups, informal testing, and event logging to understand the user experience” (p. 40). Wilson further asserted that “triangulation can be used to look for convergence on product requirements or problem areas” (2006, p. 46). The researcher indeed used data triangulation to uncover possible problems and concerns hidden within the data.

Audit Trail

Qualitative research is often viewed as less compelling or serious than quantitative research. Qualitative researchers are tasked with convincing the scientific community that the analysis and findings of qualitatively based studies are systematic, objective, and worthy. One way to accomplish this goal is to use an audit trail (Wolf, 2003). Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined an audit trail as “a transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings” (pp. 319-320). Moreover, “the use of an audit trail helps to establish the credibility of qualitative studies and serves to convince the scientific community of the rigor of the study and its data” (Wolf, 2003, p. 175). In this study, the observations of the teacher participants were documented and time-stamped. This is important, because it created a sense of dependability and consistency, along with a pattern for future replication of the study. Wolf (2003) added that an audit trail consisted of raw data,

including a complete results section with proven data analysis. The researcher incorporated all the elements and components of the suggested type of audit trail in this study.

Memo-ing

Memo-ing is the process of recording and dictating reflective notes about what has been learned from the data. This process is vital to ensure that no opportunities were missed to analyze or interpret what the researcher observed or concluded. The data were re-read, and the marginal notes and annotations were analyzed from the interviews and other data sources. “Through the use of memos, the researchers are able to immerse themselves in the data, explore the meanings that these data hold, maintain continuity and sustain momentum in the conduct of research. As a chronicle of the research journey, memos remain as an indelible, yet flexible, record for personal retention or dissemination to others, a must in qualitative research” (Birks et al., 2008, p. 68). This was an important task, because it allowed for a clear interpretation of ideas that might have been missed by reading the data source only once. This strategy was employed throughout the duration of the study.

Member Checking

Member checking is a process whereby each of the research participants reviews summaries of the data analysis and the final results of the inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This researcher conducted a series of revisits to participants to review responses and analyses to ensure clarity and accuracy. The exact documents used in the member checking process remain on file and are available upon request.

Ethical Considerations

It was conceivable that some results in the study could have a negative impact on the researcher or on the participants who were providing educational services to gifted students. All

participants, therefore, received, read, and signed an adult consent form (Appendix F). In addition, the policies for conducting research in the Georgia public school system were followed, including obtaining permission to conduct research within a specified period of time and providing clear documentation about the study and its benefits to the system. The names of the study participants were altered to protect their identities. Recordings and transcriptions of interviews were to be stored securely by the researcher for the requisite number of years and then discarded to prevent subsequent identification. IRB approval from Liberty University to conduct this research was sought according to the university's guidelines, given that the study involved human subjects. It was hoped that positive results from the study might lead to an increased awareness of the impact of the perceptions by teachers about educating special populations of students. This awareness, in time, could lead to professional development that would help provide best practices to educate students better.

Summary

Chapter Three explained how the research for this phenomenological case study was conducted. Complex amounts of planning, scheduling, and coordinating throughout the specified period of research were critical in order to stay true to the design aspects of the study. The researcher utilized purposeful sampling to select a combination of twelve teachers and administrators from multiple urban middle school and high school educational environments to participate in the case study. All data were collected through a series of interviews, a questionnaire/survey, and participant observations. The data from the study were analyzed in order to categorize the information into themes, through an open coding system, use of an audit trail, memo-ing, and member checking.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the reasons behind specific perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of qualified African American male students in educational programs for the gifted and talented. The analysis of data emerging from this phenomenological qualitative study was carried out in the context of social, cultural, and psychological factors in an effort better to understand the phenomenon at hand, namely, educator perceptions about the underrepresentation of minority male students in programs for the gifted and talented.

Participants

The participants in this study were all licensed and certified educators or administrators in urban public middle and high schools in the Atlanta Public School System. All participants had exposure to gifted students through teaching a fully certified gifted course, working collaboratively with a gifted certified teacher in a course, or being an administrator in a school that served a gifted population. The targeted number of 12 respondents participated in the study. They consisted of eight teachers and four administrators at the middle and high school levels. The range of teaching experience of the participants ranged from one to 20 years. All were certified to teach one or more of the core subjects of Math, Science, English/Language Arts, Social Studies/History, or Foreign Languages. Seven of the participants were fully gifted-certified, two were not fully certified, two had had some training in gifted pedagogy, and one was currently in training to be fully gifted-certified. Permission to conduct the study was received from the research and accountability department of the Atlanta Public School System. After proper notification was received, the researcher sent the e-mail invitation to various

teachers of the gifted and talented at numerous school sites within the school system. Once respondents agreed to participate and returned the consent form electronically, the research began. Of the twelve participants, two, a teacher and an administrator, were housed at a middle school; the remaining ten participants were housed at four different high school sites within the district. All twelve of the study participants took the online survey/questionnaire, and all agreed to be interviewed and observed in their daily teaching or administrative roles at their respective school sites. Table 3 provides an overview of the demographics of study participants.

Table #3
Participant Information

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Experience in years	Position	Level	Subject	Gifted Certified
1. Albert	Male	African American	11-15	Teacher	High School	History	Yes
2. Beth	Female	African American	16-20	Teacher	High School	English	Yes
3. Carla	Female	African American	11-15	Teacher	High School	Science	In Process
4. Darla	Female	African American	11-15	Teacher	High School	Math	Yes
5. Erica	Female	African American	7-10	Teacher	High School	Spanish	Had Training
6. Frances	Female	African American	11-15	Teacher	High School	Science	Yes
7. George	Male	African American	11-15	Administrator	N/A	Math	No
8. Harriet	Female	African American	1-3	Teacher	High School	History	No
9. Isaac	Male	African American	11-15	Administrator	N/A	Other	Yes
10. Janice	Female	African American	11-15	Administrator	N/A	English	Yes
11. Kelly	Female	African American	11-15	Teacher	Middle School	English	Had Training
12. Lionel	Male	African American	4-6	Administrator	N/A	English	Yes

Individual Descriptions of Participants

Following are descriptions of each participant. All were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and privacy.

Albert teaches history and has 11-15 years of experience. A fully certified teacher of the gifted, he currently teaches in the gifted program at his school. His experience has traditionally been in high-performing urban schools in the southeastern region of the country. He believes that all students, especially minority students, have a unique perspective on learning and is an advocate for harnessing that uniqueness and helping his students be successful. During the confines of the study period, Albert taught Government and Civics to 9th and 11th grade students.

Beth teaches English/Language Arts and has 16-20 years of experience. Beth is a supportive and experienced certified teacher of the gifted who currently teaches in the gifted program at her school. Her experience has traditionally been in suburban schools in the southeastern region of the country. Beth is a sponsor of a female mentoring group for at-risk youth and young teen mothers. Her passion for students and their personal success is evident in her daily interactions with her students. Beth, who is energetic and very relationship-oriented with her students, Beth taught American Literature and British Literature to juniors and seniors during the study.

Carla teaches Science and has 11-15 years of experience. She is not a fully certified teacher of the gifted, but is up-to-date in the process of becoming certified. She is teaching in the gifted program at her current school. Carla, who believes that all students have the potential for greatness, uses her positive rapport with her students to motivate them. She is a member of the district's Science Curriculum Review Team and a grade-level chair in her building. Carla is also

a member of the Gifted Eligibility Team, which meets to review gifted testing data to determine if a student qualifies to be identified as gifted and talented.

Darla is a math teacher with over 14 years of experience. Gifted certified, she is currently a member of the Gifted Eligibility Team at her school. Darla teaches advanced mathematic courses such as A.P. Calculus and statistics. She has a master's degree in Special Education, with a concentration on gifted and talented education. Darla expressed a wealth of knowledge in terms of meeting the needs of gifted learners.

Erica is a Spanish teacher with 10 years of experience. She is not fully certified to teach gifted students, but has had training that allows her to do so. Erica teaches advanced level language courses and has a strong background in urban education. She is confident in her abilities to teach and meet the needs of minority gifted students.

Frances is a traditionally trained science teacher with over 14 years of teaching experience. She is a fully certified teacher of the gifted. Her experience has predominately been in the STEM areas and in single-gender schools, specifically all-boys' schools. Frances firmly believes that it takes consistent nurturing and probing to motivate gifted minority males to go above and beyond in their studies.

George is an administrator, with prior teaching experience at both the middle and high school levels. Certified to teach mathematics, he has 11-15 years of experience as an administrator of a school that serves a population of gifted students. His experience has traditionally been in high-performing urban schools. George has a Ph.D. in educational leadership and is a facilitator of professional development sessions that cater to meeting the needs of gifted minority students in urban schools. George mentors a small group of African American high school males on a weekly basis and is helping those students apply to college.

Harriet is a history teacher at the high school level with less than 3 years of experience. She is not a fully certified teacher of the gifted, but has worked collaboratively with a fully certified gifted education specialist in an arrangement that allows her to teach gifted students. She is a youth advocate with little-to-no experience in urban schools. Harriet confirmed that she herself was designated as gifted and talented throughout her high school career. She brings her rich experiences as a gifted minority person into the classroom to help meet the needs of those whom she supports each day.

Isaac is an administrator who is certified to teach special education. He has over 14 years of teaching experience at the middle and high school levels. As a fully certified teacher of the gifted, and an administrator at a school that serves a population of gifted students, he brings a unique perspective to the research study. Isaac is a vocal and outspoken advocate for gifted education; he requires blanket testing to be conducted yearly for all newly enrolled students at his school.

Janice is an administrator with 11-15 years of prior teaching experience at both the middle and high school levels. Certified to teach English/Language Arts, she is also a fully certified teacher of the gifted; currently, she is an administrator at a school that serves a gifted population. Her experience with gifted education is tremendously positive. There is a large gifted population at the school she serves, and she consistently has inquiries about potential enrollment in the specialized gifted courses offered by her school.

Kelly is a history teacher at the middle school level with 11-15 years of experience. She is not fully gifted certified, but has had training that allows her to teach gifted students. Kelly is new to the school site where the study took place. She was eager to participate in the study in

hopes that it would allow her better to meet the needs of her minority students who might be identified as gifted and talented.

Lionel is an administrator. He has experience at both the middle and high school levels and is gifted certified to teach English/Language Arts. His school has a small gifted population. A proponent of gifted education, he is determined to increase the gifted population at his current school site. He has made a conscious effort to hire and retain gifted certified teachers at his school.

Results

Observations

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the reasons behind specific perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of qualified African American male students in educational programs for the gifted and talented. During the time of the research study, eight of the participants were observed in the classroom while teaching a class that was either purely gifted (all students in the class certified as gifted and talented) or blended (a combination of gifted and regular). After the participants were interviewed, they signed up for a time to be observed during a lesson where they were actively meeting the needs of gifted learners through various inquiry-based activities or lessons (e.g., a Socratic Seminar). Data analysis was conducted on all observations that were held, which clearly revealed very similar information in terms of crafting the lesson, student engagement, and interaction with students. The observations provided the researcher with a visual representation of the participants' teaching skills related to gifted minority and high-achieving students. The four administrative participants were not observed, because they were not teaching. The observations, which took place over a specified period of time, ranged from 20

to 30 minutes in length. Field notes were taken during all of the observations that were completed, using the documented protocol form (see Appendix C). The form was used, dated, and timed for each observation completed. A computer-generated map of the room indicated clearly what was happening and where. There was a special focus on the teacher in the room, as well as on the reactions of the students with whom the teacher was working. Throughout the observations, concentration was directed to the following aspects:

- Who is being observed? How many people are involved, who are they, and what individual roles and mannerisms are evident?
- What is going on? What is the nature of the conversation? What are people saying or doing?
- What is the status or role of people present? Who leads? Who follows? Who is decisive? Who is not?
- What was the tone of the session? What beliefs, attitudes, values seemed to emerge?
- What was the observer doing during the session? What was the observer's level of participation in the course of observation (that is, as a participant observer or non-participant observer)?

The data retrieved from the observations revealed significant points and themes. The observations showed that teachers generally had a caring capacity for all the students with whom they interacted during the specified period. They also indicated a consistent effort to ask higher-order thinking questions based on meeting the needs of gifted students through inquiry and investigation.

Survey/Questionnaire

The survey/questionnaire participants in this study were the identical licensed and certified educators or administrators in urban public middle and high schools within the Atlanta Public School System. The participants had exposure to gifted students through teaching a full-certified gifted course, working collaboratively with a gifted certified teacher in a course, or acting as an administrator in a school that served a gifted population. All participants took the same survey/questionnaire.

Interviews

All study participants actively engaged in individual interviews during their respective planning periods, or before or after school at an agreed-upon time that was convenient to them. Each interview lasted approximately 15-20 minutes in length, depending upon the responses of the interviewee. All interviews were held in a private office located on the campus of the school to which the administrative team allowed the researcher access. All teacher participants were asked the study's standard questions (Appendix A), as were the administrator participants (Appendix A). The focus topics (Appendix B) were introduced, as openings in the conversation allowed. The use of these focus topics allowed the researcher to gain a deeper level of understanding from the administrator participants, and a keener insight into the phenomenon being investigated. The last two interview questions gave participants a chance to share other concerns that they might have had that were not addressed in the preceding questions.

Throughout the process all the participant interviews were audio-recorded, as permitted by each participant's signed and dated consent form, and then transcribed verbatim. Once the transcriptions were completed, all the interviews were coded and reviewed for existing themes; then they were triangulated through the use of an audit trail member checking and memo-ing as

indicated in the methodology section above (Chapter Three). To ensure validity, all interviewees were given an electronic copy of their individual responses to review for accuracy. This form of member checking utilized ensured answer and response validity. Noting the process of recording, and dictating reflective notes about what was learned from the data, were used to ensure that no opportunities were missed to analyze or interpret what the researcher observed or concluded.

Statements of Significance

Themes

Throughout the period of data analysis, themes emerged from the participants' responses as the data were analyzed by open coding. As big ideas continued to emerge, additional commonalities were manifested in many of the participant responses to interview questions, on the one hand, and to individual survey questions, on the other. The initial set of significant statements was established as a grouping of major ideas that emerged from the transcriptions of the interview and survey responses. Moustakas (1994) used the data analysis to understand and uncover revelations from the data provided by the interviews, surveys, and observations. Thus, in reviewing the data collected in this study, the researcher sorted all the statements of significance from the various forms of data collection, identifying the major ideas that were occurring across multiple sources, multiple times. The initial codes derived from the significant statements were as follows: identity, self-image, society, self-pity, environment, adult interaction, no training, wasted time, no support, time, professional development, and collaboration. Any major ideas or concepts that were neither repeated nor relevant were omitted from the data. These codes captured major components from a wide array of participants. The significant statements and ideas were coded in various colors to allow identification of a series of commonalities or trends, leading to the emergence of a set of themes. The coded data appeared over and over as indicated

in Table #4, which provides a visual representation of the frequency of the codes that led to the development of the themes.

Table #4
Frequency of Codes Leading to Development of Themes

Open Codes	Frequency of Appearance across data sets	Themes
Identity	22	Internal Dual Struggle
Self-Image	12	Internal Dual Struggle
Teacher Thought	31	Perception
Administrator Thought	12	Perception
Society	19	Perception/Uniqueness
Self-Pity	5	Perception/Uniqueness
Environment	20	Dual Environmental Impact
Adult Interaction	23	Negative Adult Perceptions
No Training	10	Training/Personal Experiences
Wasted Time	6	Training/Personal Experiences
Time	9	Training/Personal Experiences
Professional Development	11	Training/Personal Experiences
Collaboration	7	Training/Personal Experiences
No Support	12	Training/Personal Experiences

Since the purpose of this study was to explore, examine, and understand the reasons for specific perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of qualified male African American students in educational programs for the gifted and talented, the themes emerging from the interviews, observations, artifacts and surveys were as follows:

1. Internal Dual Struggle: African American males have a sense of an internal struggle that has social and academic components.

2. Perception/Uniqueness: African American males are unique (are perceived in a certain way) in terms of fitting the typical mold of a gifted and talented student.
3. Dual Environmental Impact: There is a definite impact on gifted students who are being educated in a high-poverty urban area. The impact is both social and cultural.
4. Negative Adult Perceptions: Again and again the concept of negative adult perceptions of African American males became evident through both survey responses and interviews.
5. Training/Personal Experiences: Both professional training in pedagogy by the school staff and their own personal experiences in education play a role in the enrollment of African American males in gifted and talented education.

Research Question One

Research Question One examined: What are the perceptions by educators and administrators in an urban school district about male African American students in gifted and talented programs? This particular question was designed to garner a greater understanding of the power of perception and its relationship to African American males. The participants were very clear about their perceptions of African American males in gifted and talented programs. Two major points of significance were discovered after a comprehensive analysis was completed: (a) perception, and (b) uniqueness.

Perception. The participants in the study seemed passionate in their belief that gifted male African American students have a certain look or certain characteristics; they are unique (that is, perceived in a certain way) in terms of fitting into the typical mold of a gifted and talented student. George stated, “Gifted males usually are behavior problems in regular education classrooms. Often they do not want to be in the gifted classes, but they become bored and under-stimulated in regular education settings” (personal communication, 2016). Data analysis also

determined that George did not think that those identified as gifted were any different from other populations. George further explained, “I believe that, because of their behavior, they [African American males] were perceived as problems rather than as particularly intelligent” (personal communication, 2016). Erica’s views about how gifted African American males were perceived also supported this point: “Gifted young African American males are very loquacious. They tend to finish work quickly or become defiant if the work is not hard enough. This was typical and needed to be resolved” (personal communication, 2016).

Uniqueness. The importance of uniqueness was also proven by participants’ views. Isaac asserted, “I believe that gifted African American male students are unique in being witty, funny, and good with words” (personal communication, 2016). Uniqueness was also highlighted by Janice, who commented:

Gifted African American males are quick to refrain from trying again after they have made a mistake in front of the class. They are very good thinkers; however, they seem shy about being academically noticed when that does not complement the social norms of their environment, something unique in itself. (personal communication, 2016)

African American males were clearly showing themselves as unique, as evidenced also by Kelly’s comments:

Gifted African American males have a wicked sense of humor. Many of them can verbalize and explain better than they can write or type their thoughts, but they are extremely limited during traditional classroom activities that require more writing and varied communication types. They have the gift of gab and can talk their way out of a paper bag. (personal communication, 2016)

Observations also helped to support themes of perception and uniqueness. Teachers were seen preparing lessons and activities that showcased how they were attempting to meet the perceived needs of gifted African American males in terms of the low likelihood of their fitting into the typical mold of gifted and talented students. Their perceptions of these students and their unique abilities were derived from carefully crafted music or debate-type activities.

There was also an overwhelming conviction of the underrepresentation of African Americans in the gifted programs within the district, expressed in observed team meetings and document artifacts. Teachers and administrators shared the belief that gifted African American males could be behavior problems in regular education classrooms, as they tended to finish work quickly or become defiant if the work was not hard enough. This fostered discussion around how to meet the needs of this type of student. Observation also revealed that participants characterized gifted African American male students as unique, witty, funny, and good with words, even as they were perceived as being able to verbalize and explain better than they could write or type their thoughts, thus being somewhat academically limited during traditional classroom engagement.

Many participants shared the belief that gifted African American males were quick to refrain from trying again when they made mistakes. Teachers were heard expressing the thought that, “while they are often very good thinkers, they seem shy of being academically noticed when such attention does not complement the social norms of their environment” (personal communication, 2016). The responses indicated a certain perception of gifted African American males as not fitting into the typical mold of other gifted students. They had unique needs that needed to be addressed. Specific perceptions varied, but the common features overwhelmingly indicated strong, solid views about the students as a whole.

Research Question Two

Research Question Two asked: In what ways do the perceptions by educators and administrators in an urban school district about male African American students impact how these students are referred to gifted and talented programs? This question was crafted to find out if perceptions by educators and administrators had an impact on the degree to which African American males were referred to gifted and talented education programs. Data analysis suggested one major point of significance, namely, Negative Adult Perceptions.

Negative Adult Perceptions. Again and again the concept of negative adult perceptions of male African American students became evident through surveys, interviews, and observation. The common thread was that it impacted both the instruction of these students and their referral to gifted and talented programs. Harriet shared, “Adult perception impacts how many male African American students are referred to gifted and talented programs, and how they are taught” (personal communication, 2016). Her experiences were based on her being a member of the Gifted Eligibility Committee in her school for a number of years. As a member of this committee, she helped to determine the eligibility of potential students for gifted and talented services. Most of the time, the more outspoken or badly-behaved students did not make it through the process, due to what she called a “bad perception” (personal communication, 2016). This conclusion was further supported by many other participants. Through data analysis, another point that supported the idea of negative adult perception was articulated by Isaac:

If teachers and administrators do not know how to recognize gifted and talented students, they might not have them tested or referred. I know here that we did not use a standard test or measurement for referrals. I believe that many of us subjected students to our own

biases and nonobjective responses regarding their abilities. (personal communication, 2016)

With several participants sharing similar comments, it became clear that these perceptions could indeed impact the number of gifted and talented students who were referred.

In addition, through observation, it was noticed that teachers and administrators were responsible for providing rigorous instruction to enhance the academic environment for gifted and talented students. Whether or not these educators perceived students as gifted and talented had a direct connection to their treatment of them. In most cases, the impact was negative. Isaac, for example, was observed in a team meeting with Beth during a gifted eligibility discussion. Their interactions suggested that, in terms of instruction, the consensus was that gifted students had definite needs for social, emotional, and academic support, a point that was upheld in the literature review and through the data analysis. Participants further shared that, if the school faculty was perceived as non-nurturing, unintelligent, or uncaring, then students might well be unreceptive to learning. That concern also correlated with referrals or enrollment of African American males into gifted and talented programs. Teachers and administrators who were biased or uncomfortable because of negative interactions and perceptions relating to African American males often made fewer referrals to gifted and talented programs, which equated to fewer students being enrolled. Beth also commented on the relationship between instruction and negative adult interactions, noting that “Instruction was key, and teacher perceptions often impeded strong instruction” (personal communication, 2016). Considering the impact of the instructional component on meeting the needs of gifted – more specifically, gifted African American male – students, differentiation could be affected because of perceptions of the material being “easy,” or “he will get it,” as opposed to delivering the instruction in a

personalized way compatible with an individual student's learning patterns, rather than through perceptions of how students learn in general.

Data points analyzed also supported trends in recent research. Teachers and administrators often identified underachievement in minority students, despite research suggesting that a solution to this culture of failure is clear (Ford, Moore, & Milner, 2005). Thus Ford, Moore, & Milner stated that "... the under-achievement and low achievement among gifted students of color can be better understood and addressed when teachers, school counselors, and administrators deal first with their deficit thinking related to students of color and focus on the school and non-school needs of these students" (p. 176).

The impact of negative adult perceptions was mentioned by several participants in separate instances during the study; moreover, from the data analysis of multiple data sets, observations, interviews, and surveys it can be concluded that negative adult perceptions have a negative impact on the likelihood of African American males being referred to gifted and talented education programs in an urban school district. Participants also indicated that, when all teachers play a part in the referral process, their views (many of them being negative) about students, their personal biases, and negative perceptions can make the approach (of all teachers making referrals) ineffective. This is due to the fact that many teachers disregard the request to make referrals, or they make referrals that identify only those students whom they really like or perceive as worthy of being considered gifted. The idea that perceptions matter – especially, negative adult perceptions of African American males – was evident as demonstrated by staff interactions at team meetings. Staff also foster this, as indicated by Beth's response, as she noted, "Negative adult perceptions impact when and how African American males are referred to gifted and talented programs" (personal communication, 2016). Further data analysis revealed that

participants thought that personal bias, and, to some degree, a level of discomfort with African American males, often negatively impact referrals of African American males to programs for gifted and talented students.

Research Question Three

Research Question Three asked: How are the perceptions by educators and administrators about male African American students reflected in their enrollment in the gifted and talented programs in an urban public school district in Georgia? This question was intended to discover how teachers' and administrators' perceptions both positively and negatively impacted enrollment of African American males in gifted programs. Data analysis suggests the major point of significance as Perceptions.

Perceptions. Perceptions are extremely powerful. The data analysis showed that participants believed it was important that African-American males be referred and enrolled into gifted and talented programs to ensure that they are accurately recognized for who and what they are. George asserted in an interview:

I think that gifted males are generally looked at as behavior problems in regular education classrooms. Often they do not want to be in the gifted classes, but they become bored and under-stimulated in regular education settings. I do believe that, because of their behavior, they are perceived as problems rather than as particularly intelligent. (personal communication, 2016)

That view is one of many, uncovered through observation and document analysis, revealing that many participants did not think that those identified as gifted were any different from other populations. At the same time, the negative perceptions by those who actually make referrals impact enrollment because, again, referrals are not made; without referrals, there can be no evaluations that might lead to enrollment into gifted programs.

Experts in the field of education have found that few African American students participate in advanced classes such as gifted or honors courses where class and race are used to predict achievement. Yet these students are overrepresented in remedial classes and special education (Pitre, 2014; Boykin & Noguera, 2011). What is even more significant is that these same experts conducted research indicating that, when teachers possessed negative attitudes and beliefs, there was a direct parallel to minimal effort and complacency in regard to improving levels of achievement among ethnic and racial minority students (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Pitre, 2014). The danger in such a conclusion is that, as these beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions are maintained, they become the accepted culture for teachers, administrators, and education systems.

During a collaborative planning session observed by the researcher, Erica commented that “gifted young African American males are very loquacious. They tend to finish work quickly or become defiant if the work is not hard enough” (personal communication, 2016). During her interview, Erica mentioned that this was a typical problem that needed to be resolved, because the perception of the behavior of African American males has an impact on the level of enrollment in gifted and talented programs. She also suggested that a possible solution could lie in increased cultural awareness and other training sessions that could help to educate teachers and administrators. Isaac shared his belief that “gifted African American male students were unique in being witty, funny, and good with words” (personal communication, 2016). That positive view was in juxtaposition with Janice’s, as she commented that “Gifted African American males are quick to refrain from trying again after they made a mistake in front of the class” (personal communication, 2016).

These opposing views in regard to perceptions were constantly contrasted, as evidenced throughout a series of survey questions and observation sessions, which exposed decisions and reflections concerning the abilities of African American males in the Atlanta Public School district. Lionel added:

Here enrollment, which is directed related to referrals, relies heavily on perceptions, which impact how data are collected, but, because many African American males are not even referred to programs for the gifted and talented, there is a lessened chance that data on their participation can be collected or reviewed at all. (personal communication, 2016)

Data analysis also indicated that perceptions or preconceived notions sometimes taint the judgment of decision makers in a negative way. If there is no buy-in, there can be no testing or referral, which then leads to lower enrollment, which still supports the importance of perceptions. Urban educators and administrators could possibly improve the numbers if they had strict and distinct guidelines or viewpoints, unrelated to their own individual perceptions of students. In essence, if there is no clear initiation of the process by referrals, there can be no enrollment of African American males in gifted and talented programs at the end of the process.

Research Question Four

Research Question Four asked: To what extent does professional development in gifted pedagogy impact the perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs? This question was crafted to uncover how gifted pedagogy or professional development of educators and administrators impacts perceptions in regard to the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented programs. Data analysis suggests two major point of significance: (a) training, and (b) personal experiences.

Training. Professional training and development in gifted pedagogy play a vital role in having students referred and enrolled into gifted and talented programs. Data analysis showed that participants believed that professional development was critical in making the process of referring students into the gifted and talented programs fair and appropriate. Lionel, during his interview session, added that “professional development works well with providing new and refreshing information regarding gifted pedagogy” (personal communication, 2016). However, in his own career, he expressed that “the practices are seldom exercised, which has an impact on how and how many of these students [African American males] are referred to gifted and talented programs (personal communication, 2016). Throughout several interviews and observation sessions, various participants shared their belief that, without proper training, teachers were not aware of the right things to look for in regard to the gifted designation; as a result, students were being missed and not admitted into the gifted programs.

Across all methods of data collection and data analysis, participants agreed that it was essential that teachers become aware of how to teach gifted students. All participants identified that professional development (training) in gifted pedagogy plays a huge role, because trends, behaviors, and other indicators are likely to continue to evolve. Carla added in her interview that “the responsibility to be aware and informed directly impacts the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs” (personal communication, 2016).

Personal Experience. Beth expressed a similar belief during an observation session to the effect that professional development as experienced through her personal career played a major role in helping her to identify and save gifted young black males. She, along with her colleague Carla, agreed that “far too often, this group was misdiagnosed as presenting simple behavior problems, when a second look should be taken” (personal communication, 2016). Moreover,

participants claimed, as evidenced through interviews, that teachers have limited experience in the gifted identification process. In her interview, Carla suggested that “teachers should learn to identify objectively when bad behavior is just a behavior and when it is due to boredom, because many students truly are gifted and able to do much more than they are being asked to showcase” (personal communication, 2016). That idea is supported through a lack of personal experiences with these types of students and the small amounts of time spent with them. Darla, for one, shared that her personal experiences with gifted pedagogy and actual teaching of the gifted

... played a major and integral role in my being able to identify students for the gifted and talented program, given that most gifted students, minority students in particular, were never even nominated by their classroom teachers due to a lack of professional knowledge regarding what giftedness looked like, both inside and outside a classroom setting. Time, or rather the lack of it, to be trained and exposed is the issue. (personal communication, 2016)

Document analysis confirmed that the first step in gifted identification is being nominated by teachers. Further review of documents and artifacts, along with Lionel’s commentary from his interview, highlighted a flaw in the process of identifying students for gifted testing, namely, that due to teacher bias, lack of knowledge, and little personal experience with the process, many qualified African American students never even receive a nomination. Lionel, Carla, and Darla all supported the notion, through interviews and observation, that most study participants believed in a connection between training and a teacher’s level of personal experience. Beth also added that “the strength of that connection may well influence how African American males are taught and when and whether they are referred to gifted and talented education programs” (personal communication, 2016).

Across all data collection methods, all participants in the study concluded that personal experiences did impact the enrollment of African American males in gifted and talented education programs. According to each individual participant, there was an overwhelming belief that too many young black males were being overlooked because of questionable behavior that teachers experienced on a daily basis, which inhibited referrals and, ultimately, enrollment. Lionel suggested through his interview that “a lack of training perpetuates the ignorance of gifted characteristics that are often coupled with behavior challenges, something many of us don’t understand” (personal communication, 2016). Data from various observations and interview sessions suggest that participants believed that they themselves had a heightened sense of awareness, as several of them felt able to identify some students’ strengths that may have been overlooked. Darla mentioned during her interview that training that encourages teachers and administrators to recognize and instruct gifted students to maximize their level of academic ability is absolutely an essential component in countering the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted programs. The lack of proper training leads to the lack of identification and to a clear underrepresentation of African American males in these programs.

Participants also indicated a unique perspective, namely, that if they were to experience additional training they would be willing to look again at students whom they might not think were gifted, but whom other colleagues recommended. This suggests that the extent to which personal experiences impact the perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs can be summarized in this way: their personal experiences will lead them either to promote that very underrepresentation *or* to lessen its effects by referring and enrolling students in gifted and talented education programs.

Research Question Five

Research Question Five asked: To what extent does personal experience – i.e., social, cultural, and ethical factors – impact perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs? This question was intended to ascertain how various social, cultural, and ethical factors impact perceptions of the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted programs. Data analysis suggests these major points of significance: (a) Internal/Dual Struggles and (b) Dual Environmental/Societal Impact.

Internal /Dual Struggles. Throughout the data analysis period interviews, observations and survey data sets suggested that African American males have a sense of an internal struggle that has social and academic components. A majority of the participants expressed their feelings that gifted African American male students did struggle, either academically or socially (dual struggle), as evidenced through the sharing of their teaching experiences in urban school settings during the various interview sessions. This premise of struggling also presented itself through observations in a unique and interesting way. Most participants seemed to understand that there was some type of internal battle that many African American males were dealing with. Beth further supported this during an observed team meeting where she, commented, “gifted African American male students do struggle, and especially if they are in a learning environment in which they are invisible”. This is less of a problem if they are in an environment in which they are seen and nurtured. However, she added, “the invisibility issue was more common at her school, which was sad, seeing that the school population was over 99% African American” (personal communication, 2016).

Through an opposing view that varied from the sense of struggling experiences expressed by most participants Carla strongly asserted in her interview and through a teaching observation that, “I (she) did not believe that African American male students struggled academically. In working with gifted African American males, she had observed that they worked even harder than their peers from other ethnic backgrounds in an effort to prove their intellectual giftedness. This was one of the few participants that expressed the viewpoint of not struggling; very little literature supported that feat. It is understood that educators must understand the how and why of the achievement levels of gifted minority students. Kofi Lomotey, in a foreword to *Academically Gifted African American Male College Students*, asserts that little to no research has been completed on gifted and talented students in higher education and even less on gifted and talented male African American students at that level (Bonner, 2010, p. vii). So there is clearly a gap in the literature starting from the work of high students through post secondary options for Africa American males.

Some students seemed to face an internal struggle that was very noticeable in their daily actions. In observations as well as through interviews with Carla, she expressed the opinion that simply being in an urban area impacted the gifted student’s academic ability negatively, because the social norm of street credibility as a social deviant or a criminal was celebrated over academic success was an internal battle that was winning over her students (personal communication, 2016). Most gifted male students in urban school settings tended to mask their giftedness in order to be accepted by their peers and to avoid ridicule and bullying for being “smart.” Carla expressed that she was personally aware of a few students who began failing on purpose, so that their peers of lesser cognitive ability would not feel bad or inferior. Darla shared that it was unfortunate that some of the gifted students would actually try to hide their giftedness

from their peers of lesser ability in order to fit in and be accepted, a duel struggle of personal prowess versus being one of “the boys”. If the very community from which a child emerged does not value that child’s education, then the child will, in turn, not place value on his or her education and have a consistent struggle of will to advance.

Dual Environmental/Societal Impact. Albert mentioned in his interview that ... there are a number of reasons why gifted male African American students struggle. For example, if there is no support at home or in their individual communities, they may not develop the vocabulary and reading skill set needed early on to be successful in the later years of their school career. Their level of frustration intensifies as they get older, and their academic deficiencies and faulty social interactions start to compound. (personal communication, 2016)

Carla also shared her happiness with the way that her gifted male African American students displayed metacognitive and critical thinking skills regularly, and eagerly accepted more rigorous and challenging coursework. However, through tedious conferencing with her students and mentoring, she had observed some social challenges. Which, she believed, were due in part, to language barriers; nevertheless, once these language barriers were addressed and students were exposed to social norms beyond those common to African American culture, then these social challenges tended to dissipate. Participants in the study continuously identified social and or cultural challenges noticed within their African American male students. Darla also supported this factor when she share her feelings as to how gifted male African American students struggled socially as a result of the stereotypes associated with being an African American. She noted that, “It was clear that at her school some young men were struggling to maintain their “street cred” while accentuating their level of intellect (personal communication, 2016). This

idea of fitting in socially and culturally permeated throughout all participant data sets within the study.

Frances expressed a need for a social support group for non-identified gifted African American males in her team meetings. She was adamant in sharing how she

... was overtly aware of how these specific students tend to struggle both socially and academically, because they had found no value in being smart or gifted. Those students who were so identified might well, depending on the culture of the school, struggle socially to fit into the gifted box when their peers did not value that designation.

(personal communication, 2016)

Several of the participants were perplexed with the social challenges and societal issues at hand in one particular school that was designated as an Early College Campus. Participants from that particular environment expressed how, working at a school where groups of students were considered “early college,” they witnessed male students who desired to be academically outstanding and positive members of their social group at the same time. However, the portion that was not in early college seemed to be unaffected by their peers success. These responses resonated consistently throughout interviews and observational data points. The teachers were clearly aware that gifted African American male students did face extreme challenges in both academic and social arenas. Their conclusions as to why they struggled also related to levels of support, academic standards, current cultural social structures, and the school environment.

The environmental impact was massive, as expressed by all participants; it was evident that participants saw a definite impact on gifted students being educated in a high-poverty urban environment. That impact was both social and cultural. It is often said that people become products of their surroundings and prey to their environment. This concept intertwined in the

data as evidenced by Lionel's belief that, "poor urban areas negatively impacted a gifted student's academic ability" (personal communication, 2016). Within that particular context, the environment affected gifted students negatively.

There was a grey area regarding ways that environmental factors impacted social growth, because the gifted program at some schools did not cater to students in a way that supported their unique cultural or environmental challenges. Not all of the data supported negative environmental factors. As evidenced by an interview with Albert who felt that overall, the environmental factors were positive for many of his students. Some participants shared a belief that many urban areas were more cosmopolitan, providing a wider variety of intellectual stimuli. In regards to culture, even in a poor home, "if the culture nourished and promoted academic success, gifted students would receive tremendous benefits, no matter where they were living" is what Albert shared as a concrete belief in an interview (personal communication, 2016).

In addition, several of the participants that were administrators shared that, the type of environment that students are in determined whether it affected students academically. If they were invisible or brushed aside, they would likely not do well and end up with a negative outcome. Administrator views seemed to be more holistic and "big picture" type ideas as opposed to teacher participants who had more stream-lined concerns and thoughts as it pertains to their students. So it is safe to assume that in environments where gifted students were identified and nurtured, they were much more likely to thrive. In an urban area, there was as much of an opportunity for gifted students to lean toward the immense opportunities of enlightening or uplifting social and cultural structures as for a gifted student to be swallowed up by socially and culturally deficient circumstances.

Synthesis Statement

Moustakas (1994) suggests that, in a phenomenological study, multiple types of data should be collected in order to uncover a series of commonalities and obvious themes. These are essential to process and determine an overall understanding of the intended phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The current researcher, in following that suggestion, intertwined multiple layers of data with strong descriptors in order better to understand and process what the data were actually indicating about the common thread in the lived experiences of all participants. A thorough analysis of teachers and administrators' perceptions about the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented programs revealed the importance of professional development and professional training for educators and administrators. Participants communicated strong beliefs that African American males were underrepresented in urban gifted and talented programs, as they struggled with internal and external environmental factors in such a way that their academics were affected both positively and negatively. The data collected provided evidence that negative perceptions by teachers and administrators impeded the referral and enrollment of African American males and continuously contributed to the problem of the underrepresentation of this group of students in urban gifted and talented education programs. Participants felt that, unless the barriers of training, societal, and environmental factors were addressed, it would be extremely difficult to change the perceptions by teachers and administrators in order to combat the problem of underrepresentation. All data sources evidenced a need for increased pedagogical training and support to prepare educators better to meet the needs of identified and non-identified gifted African American males.

Summary

Chapter Four featured a restatement of the purpose of this research, which was to explore, examine, and understand the reasons for specific perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of qualified male African American students in educational programs for the gifted and talented. Throughout the chapter, participant profiles, data analysis, and synthesis occurred. The participants in this study were very much engaged in the data collection methods, from interviews to survey participation. They were also committed to the validation process through member checking, meaning that the participants' responses were sent back to them to ensure accuracy and truthfulness prior to further analysis. Thus, the summation of all of the data reviewed made it possible to answer the research questions. The research process led to the accumulation of themes, and the coding system used for participant responses from both interviews and survey questionnaires generated useful data for analysis and synthesis. The chapter concluded with presentation of answers to the five research questions originally posed.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

In the research and conceptual or theoretical literature, numerous scholars (e.g., Menchaca, 1997; Hart & Risley 2003; Jackson et al., 2010; Steele, 2010; Valencia, 2010) concluded that a far-reaching consequence of perceptions can be low expectations and the denial of access to educational opportunities that could drastically improve the educational, economic, vocational, and social status of gifted and highly capable African American males, such as greater access to gifted education and advanced courses (Ford & Moore, 2013).

That knowledge, coupled with the effect of teacher perceptions on school improvement and student achievement, is significant and noteworthy. Perceptions by persons in the school shape its culture and the methodology of instruction (Senge, 1990; Senge & Lannon-Kim, 1991). Furthermore, Christensen, Horn, Curtis, and Johnson (2008) have asserted that positive learning interactions are needed in order truly to establish the self-efficacy needed by students for healthy emotional and cognitive growth and development. Christensen et al. (2008) theorized that, “when children whose cognitive capacities have been expanded ... confront and succeed at the initial academic challenges they encounter in school, their sense of self-efficacy – their excitement and confidence in their ability to succeed at difficult intellectual tasks – can blossom” (p. 153). Educators, especially urban educators, must create a positive learning atmosphere for students, provide a strong system of support, and be realistic in terms of the needs and shortcomings of the students with whom they work each day.

There is power in the perceptions of others. In attempting to understand the reasons for teacher and administrator perceptions of gifted male African American students, a variety of studies were examined. Many of these placed the responsibility for the low achievement of gifted

male African American students on “what takes place in schools relative to attitudes, policies, and practices” (Ford & Moore, 2013, p. 401). For example, as discussed in this study and supported through current research data, teacher and administrator perceptions are a major factor combined with and/or fueled by the following: low educator expectations, deficit thinking, racism, sexism, irrelevant curricula, poor-quality and culturally incompetent educators, few or no resources, etc. (p. 401). Documented research and evidence prove that African American male students in urban schools suffer as a result of exposure to teachers who are unfamiliar with the particular area of expertise in which they teach, are unqualified and poorly prepared, lack certification, possess few or no credentials, have low test scores and college grades, have minimal academic training, or have low levels of cultural competence (Ford & Moore, 2013, p. 406).

The purpose of this phenomenological case study, therefore, was to identify, explore, and examine the reasons for specific perceptions of gifted African American male students by middle and high school teachers and administrators. In addition, the study examined how those perceptions impacted gifted and talented enrollment within an urban public school system in Georgia. Such perceptions about gifted male African American students were defined as the views, thoughts, and patterns of educators pertaining to (1) the characteristics of gifted students, (2) recommendations for admission into the gifted and talented program, and (3) social and psychological factors that impede the entry of African American males into gifted and talented education programs in urban schools. The study was guided throughout by a set of research questions, all five of which sought to determine the role played by perceptions and how they impacted the enrollment of African American males in an urban public school system in programs for the gifted and talented. The research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions by educators and administrators in an urban school district about male African American students in gifted and talented programs?
2. In what ways do the perceptions by educators and administrators in an urban school district about male African American students impact how these students are referred to gifted and talented programs?
3. How are the perceptions by urban educators and administrators about male African American students reflected in their enrollment in the gifted and talented programs in an urban public school system in Georgia?
4. To what extent does professional development in gifted pedagogy impact the perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs?
5. To what extent does personal experience – i.e., social, cultural, and ethical factors – impact perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs?

These research questions were explored and resolved through use of the data collected from a series of interviews, observations, document analysis, and a peer-reviewed survey/questionnaire. The collected data were then transcribed, systematized, coded using an open coding system, and, finally, analyzed. Through consistent data analysis, the researcher shared the thoughts and views of twelve participants, restructured in the form of a narrative in Chapter Four, which reported the findings of this study.

Chapter Five discusses, presents, and synthesizes the results of the research supported by the five questions, the three theoretical framework concepts referenced, and the literature review (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, 2012). A concise summary of the findings, along with a discussion

of the findings in terms of the theoretical frameworks presented and other related works of literature, is offered. In addition, implications, recommendations, limitations, and recommendations for future research are offered.

Summary of Findings

The answers to the research questions presented in this body of research were based upon the specific thoughts and perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of gifted male African American students in educational programs for the gifted and talented. Thus, one of the major research questions that this study explored was: What are the perceptions by educators and administrators in an urban school district about male African American students in gifted and talented programs? This question allowed the researcher to identify and examine the perceptions by urban educators and administrators regarding male African American students. The question also allowed the researcher to determine whether these perceptions impacted how African American males are referred to gifted and talented programs. The answer to this research question was grounded in the participants' perceptions of African American males in gifted and talented programs. The overwhelming belief was that there was an underrepresentation of male African Americans in the gifted programs within the district. Data analysis further suggested that participants characterized gifted male African American students as unique, witty, funny, and good with verbalization, leading to possibly limited academic success in a traditional classroom environment. The responses of the participants indicated that there was a certain perception of gifted African American males in terms of not fitting into the typical mold of gifted students. The specific perceptions varied, but the common features overwhelmingly indicated strong, solid views about what a gifted male African American student looked like and how he acted in an urban school.

A second question this study explored was: In what ways do the perceptions by educators and administrators in an urban school district about male African American students impact how these students are referred to gifted and talented programs? The data suggested to the researcher that the perceptions by educators and administrators do have an impact on the degree to which African American males are referred to gifted and talented education programs. It was clear that, when all teachers played a part in the referral process, personal biases could make the approach ineffective. Perceptions matter, and negative adult perceptions of African American males impact when and how they are referred to gifted and talented education programs. Further data examination revealed that, if teachers and administrators were unaware of the common characteristics of gifted and talented students, there was a large chance that some African American students would not be identified or referred to the program. It could also be determined, grounded in the data, that personal bias and a discomfort with African American males impacted referrals to gifted and talented programs in urban schools. Finally, it could be concluded that perceptions, especially negative ones, had an impact on the likelihood of African American males being referred to gifted and talented education programs in an urban school district. This research study, along with the work of Hopkins (1997) and Franklin (2007), has shown that the level of personal experience and biased procedures used by districts and schools to identify gifted African American males impacts participation and lessens interest in gifted and talented programs. This question allowed the researcher to discover that there was an impact and that it was negatively reflected in the enrollment of African American males in programs for the gifted and talented.

The third research question was: How are the perceptions by educators and administrators about male African American students reflected in their enrollment in the gifted and talented

programs in an urban public school district in Georgia? Perceptions are tremendously influential. Exploration of the data showed that decisions and reflections concerning the abilities of African-American males rely greatly on data collection, but, because many African American males are not referred to gifted and talented programs, there is a diminished chance that data on their participation will be gathered or examined. The study also indicated that preconceived notions impact the judgment of decision-makers in a negative way, for, if there is no buy-in, there can be no testing or referral, which then leads to lower enrollment. Perceptions by urban educators and administrators clearly impact the numbers of African American males enrolled.

The fourth research question was: To what extent does professional development in gifted pedagogy impact the perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs? Responses allowed the researcher to uncover in what ways professional development impacted the perceptions by educators and administrators as to why underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs currently exists. This current research study was supported by the research of Hargrove & Seay (2011), who presented a similar question in a study exploring whether participation in professional development in gifted education impacted teacher perceptions about obstacles faced by African Americans in being identified as qualified for gifted and talented education (p. 452). Professional development in gifted pedagogy plays a fundamental part in the referral of African American males to gifted and talented programs; without proper training, teachers are not well enough informed to make a fair decision. As a result, students are being overlooked for enrollment. The lack of proper training leads to the lack of identification and thus to a clear underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs.

The final research question was: To what extent does personal experience – i.e., social, cultural, and ethical factors – impact perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs? This question allowed the researcher to examine how educators' and administrators' personal experiences, as well as their understanding of social, cultural, and ethical factors, impacted their perceptions about African American males and their underrepresentation in gifted and talented education programs. Evaluation of the participant data led the researcher to conclude that personal experiences do impact the enrollment of African American males in gifted and talented education programs. Participant response analysis suggested that there was a belief that young black males were being overlooked for referral into programs for the gifted and talented because of the consistent behaviors that teachers experienced from African American males, which hinder referrals and enrollment. Other study data suggested that participants believed that through unique experiences they themselves had a heightened sense of awareness, which enabled them to strengthen the identification of African American males for entry in to gifted and talented education programs. Data indicated that personal experiences would lead educators either to support underrepresentation or minimize it through referral of African American males to gifted and talented education programs.

Discussion

Focusing on this study's findings revealed connections with the conclusions of prior work coinciding with the study's theoretical framework. John Dewey, for one, as presented in Dale (2004), argued that young people should be taught to use the experimental method in meeting problems of the changing environment, a technique often utilized today in gifted and talented education programs. Similarly, the theoretical framework of Piaget's theory of "constructivism,"

was covered in Miller (2011). Piaget (1936) observed that “how students learn” comes from “an active understanding rather than a static, passive state” (p. 61). His theory supports this mode of research, because it suggests that actively engaged students retain content material more efficiently than passive recipients, a construct that allowed the researcher to examine and understand the reasons for specific perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of gifted African American male students (see McLeod, 2009). Through the lens of Piaget’s theory, the data analysis supported the issue of engagement of African American males in the academic classroom. Participant observations, furthermore, showed that many believed that gifted African American males could be behavior problems when they were not actively engaged in regular education classrooms – that is, they tended to finish work quickly or become defiant if the work was not hard enough, while at the same time being described as unique, witty, funny, and good with words. Yet they were more likely to have difficulty writing or typing their thoughts, thus appearing somewhat academically limited during traditional classroom engagement.

Bandura’s (1977) theory on self-efficacy is also relevant; as explained by Miller (2011), it encompasses people’s perceptions of their own competence in dealing with their environment and exercising influence over events that affect their lives (p. 243). Aspects of that theory appeared throughout this study, embedded in the ideals of professional development in gifted pedagogy and in the theme of Internal Dual Struggle (African American males having a sense of internal struggle with social and academic components). One connection to this theory is through the process of the professional development of educators. Professional development in gifted pedagogy plays a massive function, because the responsibility to be aware of trends and to stay informed directly impacts the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and

talented education programs. Training clearly promotes awareness of the characteristics of gifted students in order to maximize their level of academic ability. Educators, especially those in urban schools, must create a positive learning atmosphere for students, provide a strong system of support, and be realistic in terms of the needs and shortcomings of the students with whom they work each day, especially gifted male African American students.

When Crews (2007) described the role of the teacher, he stated that “the teacher builds a safe place for the child by acknowledging him as a person, builds the confidence in him to take risks, and then sets expectations that he must reach through a considered, tactical approach that’s right for the child” (p. 84). Throughout the study it became apparent through multiple participant responses that African American males have a sense of an internal struggle with social and academic components that are directly related to their own self-perception. Data analysis indicated that a majority of the participants believed that gifted African American male students did struggle, academically or socially or both. African American gifted students’ level of frustration intensified as they got older, and their academic deficiencies and faulty social interactions started to compound, leading to the pursuit of different avenues for self-realization. Another view supported the notion that gifted African American males who were not identified as such did tend to struggle both socially and academically, because they had found no value in being “smart” or gifted. Those students who were so identified might well, depending on the culture of the school, struggle socially to fit into the gifted box, when their peers did not value that designation. This factor again correlates to Miller’s (2011) explication of Bandura’s theory in terms of perception of competence.

A final theory used in this study is that of Critical Race Theory. Fay (1987) and Tierney (1993) defined this approach as “an attempt to understand the oppressive aspects of society in

order to generate societal and individual transformation” (p. 4). Recent studies by Ford, Moore, and Scott (2011) and Henfield, Moore, and Wood (2008) suggest that many researchers use Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical basis for understanding and interpreting qualitative data (Moore, Henfield, & Owens, 2008). The sole purpose for utilizing the theory in this study was to decipher meanings that are tied to race, have social implications, and explore the cultural experiences of people of color (Parker, 2004). This approach had a direct connection to the final research question: To what extent does personal experience – i.e., social, cultural, and ethical factors – impact perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs?

Study data suggest that the participants believed that they themselves (most of them being African American) had a heightened sense of awareness, as several of them felt able to identify some students’ strengths based on their cultural awareness and knowledge that might have been overlooked had they not had that experience. This is supported by Henfield, Moore, and Wood (2008), who stressed that researchers who utilize CRT make known their level of care, concern, and compassion for certain sets of people, which clearly rings true with the primary researcher of this study. During the study, the researcher collaborated with peers, spent time in the field with various participants, and became a part of the research, as it measured the problem with a view to heightening awareness of the importance of educators’ perceptions.

This study confirms and supports many of the arguments of current and earlier research. Avery and Reeve (2013), for example, suggesting that education systems must be thoroughly analyzed, examined areas of education where gifted and talented students thrive. Moreover, as African Americans have historically contributed to innovation, technology, and the building of this nation, it is crucial to revisit the possibility of changing the perceptions by teachers and

administrators in regard to the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs. This current study also supports the extensive research providing evidence of failed potential for African American male students, as continued failure and resultant unreached potential will further promote a workforce unable to compete in the global marketplace (Bush, 2006; Moore, 2006; Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008).

This study sought to investigate why gifted African American males were not in programs that challenged their academic potential and prowess, a crucial factor to ensure that African Americans continue to make meaningful contributions in innovation and technology. This study helps to fill in the gaps in previous research by uncovering why these students are not in programs that would support such a critical component of our national info-structure, by heightening awareness of the importance of educators' perceptions.

In attempting to understand the reasons for teacher and administrator perceptions of gifted male African American students, this research drew upon the work and foresight of renowned author, educator, and activist W. E. B. DuBois (1960), as referenced in Hill (1986):

The current problem of the education of our children is clear. DuBois believed that "Negro children will be ... taught under unpleasant, if not discouraging, circumstances. They will fall out of school, cease to enter High School, and fewer and fewer will go to college. The deficiency in knowledge of Negro History and Culture, however, will remain and this danger must be met or else American Negroes will disappear. Their history and culture will be lost. Their connection with the rising African world will be impossible" (p. 4).

This new research is adding to and extending prior research by seeking out reasons why teachers and administrators feel the way they do about gifted male African American students. Such an

analysis is pivotal in ensuring that these students thrive and have their academic needs met rather than continue to be overlooked. Analysis of the data determined that participants think that personal bias and lack of experience with and exposure to African American males often impact referrals to programs for gifted and talented education. Unless researchers understand these perceptions and their impact, these students will continue to be underserved. Rectifying this situation is what this study hoped to achieve by investigating how African American males in an urban school district are being referred to gifted and talented education programs.

One purpose of this study was to contribute to the current field of research in regard to the power of teacher perceptions. The teacher perspective, especially in terms of gifted education, is powerful. Kaplan & VanTassel-Baska (2011) asserted that gifted education in the context of an urban school district was viewed drastically differently from education in a suburban environment. The researchers Kaplan and VanTassel-Baska (2011) also attempted to identify a wide range of problems and issues faced by teachers and students in urban areas, including personal, professional, academic, and social constraints (p. 5). This study extends their research aimed at discovering the possible reasons why African American boys are underserved and underrepresented in gifted programs. Based on Kaplan and VanTassel-Baska's (2011) research suggesting that educators often had different views of what giftedness looked like in various cultures, this research took that methodology and furthered it by exploring the reasoning behind specific perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of qualified African American male students in educational programs for the gifted and talented. Educators' perceptions of urban students in general were that they showed poor academic performance, based on teachers' awareness of the lack of work completed

and turned in to them, and that they had difficulty understanding expectations in both the regular and gifted education classrooms (Kaplan & VanTassel-Baska, 2011).

This body of research goes a bit further by examining why these perceptions may exist, based on two of the research questions noted above, namely: What are the perceptions by educators and administrators in an urban school district about male African American students in gifted and talented programs? and To what extent does personal experience – i.e., social, cultural, and ethical factors – impact perceptions by educators regarding the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs?

This work discovered that, through the analysis of participant data, it could be concluded that there was an overwhelming belief that there was an underrepresentation of male African Americans in the gifted programs. Possible reasons were connected to negative perceptions of gifted African American males that were not limited to their being behavior problems in regular education classrooms, at times to the point of perceived defiance.

This study also revealed views that characterized gifted African American male students as unique, witty, funny, and good with words, but who were likely not to try again once they had made a mistake, something previously not entirely clear from other modes of research. Further exploration indicated that gifted male African American students seemed shy of being academically noticed when such attention did not complement the social norms of their environment, again something that was not highlighted in previous research.

Finally, it is important to understand that previous research was limited, as the focus was only on encouraging educators to recognize various cultures and their differing expectations in order to support students from multicultural backgrounds (Kaplan & VanTassel-Baska, 2011). At the same time, although this research spoke to the perceptions by educators, it was not

specifically aimed at examining those of gifted education teachers and the reasons why African American males were underrepresented in gifted and talented education programs.

Implications

The data derived from this study can be used to assist various education agencies and groups of education stakeholders in understanding the reasons behind specific perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of qualified African American male students in educational programs for the gifted and talented. All educators, but specifically those working in urban areas with high minority populations, can benefit from this research in its outlining various influences on teacher and administrator perceptions. It is, therefore, recommended that:

1. Certified teachers of the gifted sign up for professional development courses that specialize in the characteristics of gifted and non-gifted minority students.
2. Teachers engage in professional development courses that equip all educators with strategies to help overcome environmental and societal concerns that impede academic success and the referral of gifted minorities – specifically, African American males – who are greatly underrepresented in gifted and talented programs.

Implications for School Districts and Gifted Education Departments

As the study revealed reasons why teachers and educators have certain views of gifted African American students and varied perceptions of their capabilities and needs, gifted education departments in urban school districts can utilize these data to reform and streamline their identification process. The point would be to make the process more equitable and fair, a hopefully fruitful undertaking to help diminish the issue of African American males being underrepresented in gifted and talented programs, especially in urban districts with high numbers

of African American students enrolled, but relatively few of them in gifted and talented education programs. The work of districts in regard to professional development and professional learning could also benefit from the results of this study, which could be used to design professional development sessions, create a clear concise identification process, and systematically help to cultivate and develop students' talents, specifically by addressing the needs of minority students. A talent development network is defined thus: "A framework that emphasizes the deliberate cultivation of psychosocial skills supportive of high achievement, persistence, and creativity rather than leaving these to chance" (Olszewski-Kubilius & Thomson, 2015, p. 49).

Professional learning could also assist in countering the bias of potential evaluators of those selected to be referred into gifted and talented education programs. This research could prove valuable to school districts by helping them see the need for funding programs that serve gifted and talented students. Education funding is always a matter of concern from year to year; moreover, funding gifted education is often sacrificed due to the cost of running such programs (Jolly, 2004). As noted previously, the financial implications may have a direct impact on the perceptions by both, teachers and administrators, thereby inadvertently impacting referrals and recommendations to gifted and talented education programs (Jolly, 2009). As funding varies depending upon state and local district appropriations, the allocation for gifted education funding can be implemented in vastly different ways. The results of this study help bring to light the need for such funding to support this area of education in all districts with a gifted and talented population. Budgetary decision-makers could utilize this information to set aside sufficient funding to ensure that districts are serving all students, not just those in general or special education, which is where the bulk of funding is directed. As with any education program,

programs for the gifted should strive to provide relevant quality education opportunities for students. When successful, these opportunities greatly enhance the development of the necessary skills, facilitating the potential for all students to become responsible, productive citizens and life-long learners, another aspect that became apparent from this research as a need in our country. Most districts believe that all students need differentiated instruction to achieve at levels corresponding to their abilities. The successful attainment of this goal is dependent upon a collaborative effort by the community, educators, parents, and boards of education, as they inevitably make life-changing decisions. It is, therefore, recommended that:

1. School districts have in place written guidelines for identifying minority gifted students. The process should be advertised to community stakeholders and clearly communicated to staff so that it is equitable and fair.
2. Gifted and talented departments develop talent development program services that target minorities in order to help increase the referral and enrollment of African American males in gifted and talented education programs.
3. School districts create a sustainable means of financing and implementing gifted programs that serve all students in urban areas.

Implications for General Education Personnel and Teachers and Potential Teachers of Gifted Students

General educators and potential teachers of gifted students alike can utilize the results and findings of this study to become more aware of the needs, attributes, and characteristics of gifted and talented students. This renewed sense of self-awareness can help to promote advocacy for more professional development, as well as advocacy for the student populations that they serve. This advocacy could then promote more enriched educational planning to meet the needs of gifted students and enhance the referral process, so that additional students could be referred

to and ultimately enrolled in gifted and talented education programs. Gifted education teachers could utilize this work to become teacher leaders and help support the gifted and talented education programs established at their respective schools. Through aspects of teacher leadership, educators of the gifted could promote, encourage, and support both staff and students, so that there is a clear understanding of what being gifted is, what it looks like, and how best to support those in urban school settings who display characteristics of being gifted. It is, therefore, recommended that:

1. Teachers shadow or collaborate with a certified teacher of the gifted to experience teaching gifted minority students.
2. Teachers be encouraged to implement portions of curriculum designed for gifted classes. They should increase the level of rigor to a point that will challenge and motivate all students.
3. Teachers be urged to research or assist in the implementation of programs geared toward the encouragement and motivation of gifted students as a means of enrichment.

Limitations

As with any body of research, there are limitations. One that is evident is that this study presented only findings related to the perceptions by urban middle and high school educators and administrators in a certain region of the country. Another is that the study captured only the views of educators dealing with urban students who are predominantly African American or members of other minority groups. As the participants in the study are human beings, their views could be unique and not expressive of the large majority of society, thereby limiting potential outcomes and changes in practice. As with any qualitative research study, the information

provided may not be applicable or relevant to other settings or individuals in different situations; that is, the specific findings could be unique to those involved in the research study itself. One must keep in mind that the participants were limited specifically to twelve educators and administrators serving a specific set of schools with gifted populations located in an urban school district. Had there been a larger sample from various other types of school systems or communities, capturing a wider view from a wider range of individuals, the findings could have been more convincingly transferrable.

Another limitation of this study is that the researcher was a gifted certified educator with a direct interest in promoting awareness of the specific needs of gifted education programming in urban areas. As research shows, the causes of underrepresentation may include teacher bias, lack of cultural awareness, or a lack of professional development in the area of gifted and talented identification and education (Shujaa, 1996). That the researcher deliberately aimed to showcase this component could be considered a limitation because of potential perceived researcher bias, although this bias was combated through the use of use of an audit trail and memo-ing, and through data analysis. Since qualitative research is often viewed as less compelling than quantitative research, qualitative researchers are often tasked with proving that the analysis and findings of qualitatively based studies are systematic, objective, and worthy. In this study this was done through the use of an audit trail. Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 319-320) defined an audit trail as “a transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings.” Moreover, “the use of an audit trail helps to establish the credibility of qualitative studies and serves to convince ... readers of the study that there is rigor in the study and its data” (Wolf, 2003, p. 175). Subsequently, memo-ing is the process of recording and dictating reflective notes about what has been learned from the data.

This process is vital to ensure that no opportunities to analyze or interpret what the researcher observed or concluded were missed, in an effort to eliminate researcher bias. “Memos remain as an indelible, yet flexible, record for personal retention or dissemination to others, a must in qualitative research” (Birks et al., 2008, p. 68).

Recommendations for Future Research

The outcomes of this study clearly indicate that there is a need for additional research. The study’s results should be used to serve as a catalyst to change and enhance educational policy in regard to gifted and talented education training and funding. Since the study was limited to the voices of twelve participants, additional studies should be completed to gather a wider range of views from a more diversified audience. This researcher would also suggest that additional studies be carried out in multiple urban districts to ensure a broader dimension to the problem of underrepresentation of gifted African American males. Future research should also require a more diverse ethnic breakdown of participants in order to obtain more holistic views about these types of students and the reasons why they are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs. This study, although not by design, was limited mostly to the thoughts and views of African American participants. It is the profound hope of this researcher that the information in this study be presented to educators and administrators in urban schools with gifted populations as well as to parents, gifted coordinators, and personnel. It is intended to allow future researchers to conduct additional research and assist in combating the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs across the country. It is vital to add to the body of knowledge in the field of gifted and talented education to help combat the glaring underrepresentation of African American males in such programs.

Summary

This study in its entirety looked at reasons for specific perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about reasons for the underrepresentation of gifted African American male students in educational programs for the gifted and talented. Through a series of observations, interviews, and surveys, data were accumulated, triangulated, and analyzed to uncover specific themes from the participants' responses. Those that emerged from the interviews and surveys were as follows:

- Internal Dual Struggle (where African American males have a sense of an internal struggle with both social and academic components);
- Perception/Uniqueness (meaning that African American males are unique – that is, are perceived in a certain way – in terms of fitting the typical mold of gifted and talented students);
- Dual Environmental Impact (wherein there is a definite impact on gifted students being educated in a high-poverty urban area);
- Negative Adult Perceptions (becoming evident through both survey responses and interviews); and
- Training/Personal Experiences (both of which play a role in the enrollment of African American males in gifted and talented education).

These themes helped to answer the research questions presented in the study and to solidify the concept that there is a true underrepresentation of African American males in gifted and talented education programs. Moreover, it became clear that perceptions do have an impact on referrals and enrollment of male African American students in these programs in urban areas. It is important to reiterate that educators can utilize the findings of this study to become more

aware of the needs, attributes, and characteristics of minority gifted and talented students. This renewed sense of self-awareness can help educators promote increased professional development opportunities and advocate for the student populations that they serve. It should also be re-emphasized that this research can prove valuable to governing boards of education in their attempts to secure funding for programs that service gifted and talented students. The work of the early studies of gifted education in the 1920s and 1930s established that normal graded schools could not adequately meet the needs of all children. The work of pioneers such as Lewis Terman and Leta Stetter Hollingworth spearheaded the movement for gifted education in that period (Jolly, 2004, p. 38); it is hoped that this body of research will inspire and promote further study of gifted and talented education for the underrepresented category of African American males.

REFERENCES

- Allday, R. A., Duhon, G. J., Blackburn-Ellis, S., & Van Dycke, J. L. (2011). The biasing effects of label on direct observation by preservice teachers. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 34*(1), 52-58.
- Allen, B. A., & Boykin, A. W. (1992). African American children and the educational process: Alleviating cultural discontinuity through prescriptive pedagogy. *School Psychology Review, 21*(4), 586-597.
- Allport, G. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Andrews, B. D., & Quinn, R. J. (2004). The struggles of first year teachers investigating support mechanisms. *Clearing House, 77*, 4.
- Atlanta Public Schools. (2009). Finance Department. Retrieved March 10, 2009, from <http://www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/>
- Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD)*. (2010, September 2). Retrieved April 2, 2011, from Learning Disabilities Association of America at <http://www.ldanatl.org>
- Avery, Z., and Reeve, E. (2013, Fall). Developing effective STEM professional development programs. *Journal of Technology Education, 25*(1), 55-69.
- Baker, B. D., & Friedman-Nimz, R. (2004). State policies and equal opportunity: The example of gifted education. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 26*, 39-64.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

- Baptiste, I. (2001). Qualitative Data Analysis: Common phases, strategic differences. *Forum Qualitativ Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 2(3). Retrieved from <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0103226>
- Barbe, W. (1953). *A follow-up study of graduates of special classes for gifted children* (unpublished doctoral dissertation). Chicago, IL: Northwestern University.
- Barton, P. (2004). Why does the gap persist? *Educational Leadership*, 62(3), 8-13.
- Barton, P., and Coley, R. (2009). *Parsing the achievement gap II*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Barton, P. E. (2003). *Parsing the achievement gap*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559.
- Beaudin, B. Q., & Chester, M. D. (1996). Efficacy beliefs of newly hired teachers in urban schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 33(1), 233-257.
- Benner, A. D. (2000). *The cost of teacher turnover*. Austin, TX: Texas Center for Educational Research. Retrieved July 2, 2012, from <http://www.sbec.state.tx.us/SBEC/Online/turnoverrpt.pdf>
- Bentley, R., & Rempel, A. (1968). *Purdue Teacher Opinionaire*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue Research Foundation.
- Bianco, M., & Leech, N. L. (2010). Twice exceptional learners: Effects of teacher preparation and disability labels on gifted referrals. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 33, 319-334.
- Bianco, M., Harris, B., Garrison-Wade, D., & Leech, N. (2011). Gifted girls: Gender bias in gifted referrals. *Roeper Review*, 33(3), 170-181.

- Bird, D. K. (2009). The use of questionnaires for acquiring information on public perception of natural hazards and risk mitigation – a review of current knowledge and practice. *National Hazards Earth System Sciences*, 9, 1307-1325. Retrieved from <http://www.nat-hazards-earth-syst-sci.net/9/1307/2009/>
- Birks, M., Chapman, Y., & Francis, K. (2008). Memoing in qualitative research. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 13(1), 68-75.
- Black, A. (2010, Winter). Gen Y: Who they are and how they learn. *Educational Horizons*, 88(2), 92-101.
- Black, S. (2001, January). When teachers feel good about their work student achievement rises. *American School Board Journal*, 188(1), 63-74
- Blackboysreport.org. (n.d.). *Quality matters*. Retrieved June 19, 2015, from <http://blackboysreport.org/national-summary/creating-healthy-living-and-learning-districts-matters/quality-matters/>
- Blasé, J. J. (1982). A socio-psychological grounded theory of gifted teachers' stress and burnout. *Educational Research Journal*, 18(4), 93-113.
- Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2008). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2012). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and methods* (4th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

- Bonner, F. A., II. (2010). *Academically gifted African American male college students*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- Bonner, F., Jennings, M., Marbley, A., & Brown, L. (2008, Apr.-Jun.). Capitalizing on leadership capacity: Gifted African American males in high school. *Roeper Review*, 30(2); ProQuest Central.
- Bonner, F., Lewis, C., Bowman-Perrott, L., Hill-Jackson, V. & James, M. (2009). Definition, identification, identity, and culture: A unique alchemy impacting the success of gifted African American Millennial males in school. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 33(2), 176-202.
- Boykin, A., & Noguera, P. (2011). *Creating the opportunity to learn*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Burger-Veltmeijer, A. E. J., et al. (2010). The co-occurrence of intellectual giftedness and autism spectrum disorders: A literature review. *Educational Research Review*, doi: 10.1016/j.edurev.2010.10.001
- Burney, V. (2008). Applications of social cognitive theory to gifted education. *Roeper Review*, 30(2), 130-139.
- Bush, G. (2006). President Bush's State of the Union Address. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved Feb. 3, 2006, from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/01/20060131-10.html>
- Callahan, C. M. (2000). Intelligence and giftedness. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of intelligence* (pp. 159-175). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Calman, L. (n.d.). *What is grounded theory?* Retrieved Nov. 15, 2015, from <http://www.methods.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/docs/gt.pdf>

- Casey, R., Koshy, V., & Smith, C. P. (2011). Opportunities and challenges of working with gifted and talented students in an urban context: A university-based intervention program. *Gifted Child Today*, 34(1), 35.
- Chamberlain, S. (2004, Nov.). Asa G. Hilliard III and Alba A. Ortiz: The effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on diverse learners. *Intervention in School and Clinic*; 40(2), 96. ProQuest Research Library.
- Chamberlin, S. A. (2008). An examination of articles in gifted education and multicultural education journals. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 32(1), 86-99.
- Chester, M. D., & Beaudin, B. Q. (1996). Efficacy beliefs of newly hired teachers in urban schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 33(1), 233-257.
- Christensen, C. M., Horn, M. B., Johnson, W., & Curtis, W. (2008). *Disrupting class: How disruptive innovation will change the way the world learns*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Clayton County Public Schools. (2009). *Finance Department*. Retrieved March 10, 2009, from <http://www.clayton.k12.ga.us/>
- Cleary, M., & English, G. (2005). The small schools movement: Implications for health education. *Journal of School Health*, 75(7), 243-247.
- Clifton, J. (2013). *Dead wrong: America's economic assumptions*. Retrieved June 19, 2015, from <http://i4j.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/i4jJimClifton-DeadWrongAmericasEconomicAssumptions-4.pdf>
- Colangelo, N., & Davis, G. (1997). *Handbook of gifted education* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Allyn and Bacon.
- College Board. (2005). *Advanced placement report to the nation*. New York, NY: Author.

- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crews, R., & Dyja, T. (2007). *Only connect: The way to save our schools*. New York, NY: Sarah Crichton Books.
- Dale, J. (2004). History of education. In *The Columbia Encyclopedia* [Web]. Longridge, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved April 27, 2009, from <http://www.questia.com/library/education/history-of-education.jsp?CRID=history-of-education&OFFID=se2q&KEY=history%20of%20education#>
- Danielian, J. (2008, January 17). *National association for gifted children: Supporting the needs of high potential learners*. Retrieved July 2, 2012, from <http://www.nagc.org/>
- Daniels, V. I. (2002). Maximizing the learning potential of African American learners with gifts and talents. In F. E. Obiakor & B. A. Ford (Eds.), *Creating successful learning environments for African American learners with exceptionalities* (pp. 95-105). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1990). Teacher quality and equality. In J. Goodlad & P. Keating (Eds.), *Access to knowledge: An agenda for our nation's schools*. New York, NY: College Entrance Examination Board.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1995). Inequality and access to knowledge. In J. A. Banks & C. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 465-483). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

- Davis, G. A., & Rimm, S. B. (1989). *Education of the gifted and talented* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Davis, G. A., & Rimm, S. B. (2004). *Education of the gifted and talented* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Dean, K. (2011). *The effects of gifted programming on student achievement: Differential results by race/ethnicity and income*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Public Management and Policy Dissertations: Paper 33 Full Text, http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/pmap_diss/33
- Definitions of Giftedness. (n.d.). Retrieved March 07, 2016, from <http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/definitions-giftedness>
- DeGruy, J. (2005). *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's legacy of enduring injury and healing*. Portland, OR: Joy DeGruy Publications Inc.
- DeKalb County Public Schools. (2009). *Finance Department*. Retrieved March 11, 2009, from <http://www.Dekalb.k12.ga.us/>
- Delpit, L. (2012). *Multiplication is for white people: Raising expectations for other people's children*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Dicicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*. 40(4), 314-321.
- Dijkstra, P., Kuyper, H., Van der Werf, G., Buunk, A. P., & Van der Zee, Y. (2008). Social comparisons in the classroom: A review. *Review of Educational Research* 78(4), 828-879.
- Dilworth, P. and Carter, S. (2007). Millennial versus hip-hop: Exploring Black undergraduate students' perspective on socially constructed labels. *National Association of Student Affairs Professionals Journal*, 10(1), 70-84.

- Disability Specific Instructional Strategies*. (2008, March 15). Retrieved April 5, 2011, from Disability Specific Instructional Strategies – University of Illinois, <http://www.disability.uiuc.edu>
- Eisner, E. (2003). Questionable assumptions about schooling. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84(9), 648-657.
- Eisner, W., & Somik, M. (2010, June). *Fostering the home school partnership: Strategies that support twice exceptional students*. Presented at Twice Exceptional: Gifted Children with Learning Disabilities Conference. New York, NY: Columbia University.
- Elhoweris, H. (2008). Teacher judgment in identifying gifted/talented students. *Multicultural Education*, 15(3), 35-38.
- Elhoweris, H., Kagendo, M., Alesheikh, N., & Holloway, P. (2005). The effect of the child's ethnicity on teachers' referral and recommendation decisions in gifted/talented programs. *Remedial and Special Education*, 26(1), 25-38.
- Elmore, R. F., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1988). *Steady work: Policy, practice, and the reform of American education*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- Fay, B. (1987). *Critical social science: Liberation and its limits*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Feiman-Nemser, S., Carver, C., Schwille, S., & Yusko, B. (1999). A conceptual review of literature on new teacher induction. *National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teachers*, 35, 44-59.
- Feldhusen, J. F. (2003). Beyond general giftedness: New ways to identify and educate gifted, talented, and precocious youth. In J. H. Borland (Ed.), *Rethinking gifted education* (pp. 34-45). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Finnigan, K. S. (2012, March). Principal leadership in low-performing schools: A closer look through the eyes of teachers. *Education and Urban Society*, 44(2), 183-202.
- Fletcher, M. (2006). Being a Black man: At the corner of progress and peril. *The Washington Post*, p. A01. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/01/AR200606060203284.html>
- Foley-Nicpon, M., Allmon, A., Sieck, B., & Stinson, R. D. (2011). Empirical investigation of twice-exceptionality: Where have we been and where are we going? *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 55(1), 3-17. doi: 10.1177/0016986210382575
- Ford, D. (1996). *Reversing underachievement among gifted Black students*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Ford, D. (2010). *Reversing underachievement among gifted Black students* (2nd ed.). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Ford, D., & Moore, J. (2013). Understanding and reversing underachievement, low achievement, and achievement gaps among high-ability African American males in urban school contexts. *Urban Review*, 45, 399-415.
- Ford, D. Y. (1992). Determinants of underachievement as perceived by gifted, above average, and average black students. *Roeper Review*, 14, 130-136.
- Ford, D. Y. (1996). *Reversing underachievement among gifted black students: Promising practices and programs*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Ford, D. Y. (2010). Culturally responsive classrooms: Affirming culturally different gifted students. *Gifted Child Today*, 33(1), 50-53.
- Ford, D. Y., Moore, J. L. III, & Milner, H. R. (2005). Culture blindness: A model of culture with implications for gifted education. *Roeper Review*, 27(2), 97-103.

- Ford, D., & Grantham, T. (1996). Multicultural gifted education: A wakeup call to the profession. *Roeper Review*, 19, 72-78.
- Ford, D., Harris, J., Tyson, C., & Frazier Trotman, M. (2002). *Beyond deficit thinking: Providing access for gifted African American students*. *Roeper Review*, 24, 52-58.
- Fox, J. (2008). *Your child's strengths: Discover them, develop them, use them*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.
- Franklin, J. H., & Moss, A. A. (2000). *From slavery to freedom: A history of African Americans*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.
- Franklin, V. P. (2007). The tests are written for the dogs: African American children, and the intelligence testing movement in historical perspective. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 76, 261-230.
- Gadamer, H. G. (1975). *Truth and method*. New York, NY: Seabury.
- Garn, A. C., Matthews, M. S., & Jolly, J. L. (2010). Parental influences on the academic motivation of gifted students: A self-determination theory perspective. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 54(4), 263-272.
- Gay, G. (2002). In F. E. Obiakor & B. A. Ford (Eds.), *Creating successful learning environments for African American learners with exceptionalities* (pp. 95-105). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Georgia Department of Education. (2009). *Data Reporting*. Retrieved March 12, 2009, from <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/>
- Gerson, M. (2012, July 19). Obama's quiet overturn of No Child Left Behind. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved February 20, 2016, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/>

michael-gerson-obamas-quiet-overturn-of-no-child-left-behind/2012/07/19/
gJQAbE8hwW_story.html

- Gold, M. (1965). *Education of the intellectually gifted*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Books.
- Gold, M., & Richards, H. (2012, Winter-Spring). To label or not to label: The special education question for African Americans. *Educational Foundations*, 26(1-2), pp. 143-156.
- Grantham, T. C. (1997). The under-representation of black males in gifted programs: Case studies of participation motivation. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 58, 45-54.
- Grantham, T. C. (2002). Underrepresentation in gifted education: How did we get here and what needs to change? *Roeper Review*, 24(2), 50-51.
- Habib, A., Truslow, C., Harmon, C., & Karellas, G. (n.d.). *Changes in child psychology: Binet-Simon Scale*. Retrieved November 14, 2015, from <http://childpsych.umwblogs.org/intelligence-testing-2/binet-simon-scale/>
- Harding, S. (Ed.). (1993). *The racial economy of science: Toward a democratic future*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Hargrove, B. H., & Seay, S. E. (2011, July). School teacher perceptions of barriers that limit the participation of African American males in public school gifted programs. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 34(3), 434.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. (2003). The early catastrophe. *American Educator*, 27, 6-9.
- Hayden, P. A. (2007). *Small schools, great strides: A study of new small schools in Chicago*. New York, NY: Bank Street College of Education.

- Hebert, T. P. (1998). Gifted black males in an urban high school: Factors that influence achievement and underachievement. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 21(4), 385-414.
- Henfield, M. S. (2006). *"I am a rarity in my school": Hidden obstacles for African Americans in gifted education*. Unpublished dissertation. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University.
- Henfield, M., Moore, J., & Wood, C. (2008, Summer). Inside and outside gifted education programming: Hidden challenges for African Americans. *Exceptional Children*, 74(4). ProQuest Central.
- Herbert, F. (2010). The true teacher source. *Texas Heart Institute Journal*, 34(2), 23-35.
- Higgins, N., & Rice, E. (1991). Teachers' perspectives on competency-based testing. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 39(3), 59-69.
- Hill, P. (1986). *Liberation education*. Education Resources Information Center. Retrieved June 15, 2015, from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED287926.pdf>
- Hilliard, A. (1999). *SBA: The reawakening of the African mind*. Gainesville, FL: Makare Publishing Company.
- Hollingworth, L. S. (1926). *Gifted children: Their nature and nurture*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Hopkins, R. (1997). *Educating black males: Critical lessons in schooling, community and power*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Hoy, W. K., & Miskel, C. G. (1987). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Random House.
- Hughes, J. (1990). The interpretive alternative. In J. Hughes (Ed.), *The Philosophy of Social Research*, pp. 89-112. New York, NY: Longman.

- Hume, K., & Reynolds, B. (2010). Implementing work systems across the school day: Increasing engagement in students with autism spectrum disorders. *Preventing school failure: Alternative education for children and youth*, 3(5), 228-237.
- Inman, J. (2001). *Social cognitive theory, basic concepts and understanding*. (Master's thesis). Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University.
- Inman, L. (2010). *The placement and participation of gifted African American students in advanced academic services: A case study*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved June 27, 2012, from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text. (Publication No. AAT 3418070).
- Jackson, J., Moore, J., & Leon, R. (2010). Male underachievement in education across the globe: A shift in paradigm for gender disparities regarding academic achievement. In B. McGaw, E. Baker, & P. L. Peterson (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Education* (pp. 838-844). St. Louis, MO: Elsevier.
- Javits, J. K. (1981). *Javits*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Jolly, J. (2008, May 1). *National association for gifted children*. Retrieved July 2, 2012, from <http://www.nagc.org/>.
- Jolly, J. (2009). A resuscitation of gifted education. *American Educational History Journal*, 36(1), 37-52.
- Jolly, J. L. (2004). *A conceptual history of gifted education*. (Doctoral dissertation). Waco, TX: Baylor University.
- Kaplan, S. N., & VanTassel-Baska, J. (2011). Gifted education in urban centers: The perspectives of teachers and students. *Gifted Child Today*, 34(1), 5-6.

- Kenyatta, C. (2012). From perception to practice: How teacher-student interactions affect African American male achievement. *Journal of Urban Learning, Teach, and Research*, 8, 36-44.
- Koh, C., Wang, C., Tan, O., Liu, W., & Ee, J. (2009). Bridging the gaps between students' perceptions of group project work and their teachers' expectations. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 102(5), 333-347.
- Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 8(2), 214-222.
- Langley, P. (1988). Machine learning as an experimental science. *Machine Learning*, 3, 5-8.
- Ldantl.org. (2010, Sept. 2). *Successful strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities*. Retrieved April 2, 2011, from Learning Disabilities Association of America at <http://ldantl.org>.
- Lee, S., Olszewski-Kubilius, P., & Peternel, G. (2010). The efficacy of academic acceleration for gifted minority students. *The Gifted Child Quarterly*, 54(3), 189-208.
- Legters, N. E. (2000, January). *Small learning communities meet school-to-work: Whole-school restructuring for urban comprehensive high schools*. Report No. 31. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University, Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk.
- Lester, S. (1999). *An introduction to phenomenological research*. Taunton, UK: Stan Lester Developments. Accessed August 12, 2012, at www.sld.demon.co.uk/resmethv.pdf
- Lewin, T. and Rich, M. (2015). *Senate plan to revise No Child Left Behind Law would not measure teachers by test scores*. Retrieved June 18, 2015, from <http://nyti.ms/1NRNzfR>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. London, UK: Sage Publications.

- Litster, K., & Roberts, R. (2011). The self-concepts and perceived competencies of gifted and non-gifted students: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Research in Special Education Needs*, 11(2), 130-140.
- Lumsden, L. (1998). Teacher morale. *ERIC Digest*, 120. Retrieved July 1, 2012, from <http://www.ericdigests.org/1999-2/morale.htm>
- Macann, C. (1993). *Four phenomenological philosophers*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Malle, B. (2011). Attribution theories: How people make sense of behavior. In D. Chadee (Ed.), *Theories in Social Psychology* (pp. 72-95). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Marland, S. (1972). *Education of the gifted and talented*. Report to Congress. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative researching*. London. UK: Sage.
- Masterofffinance.org. (n.d.). *U.S. vs China: Superpower showdown*. Retrieved June 19, 2015, from www.master-of-finance.org/us-vs-china/
- Mastropieri, M. A., & Scruggs, T. E. (2000). *The inclusive classroom: Strategies for effective teaching*. Columbus, OH: Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Maton, K., & Hrabowski, F. (2004). Increasing the number of African American PhDs in the sciences and engineering: A strength-based approach. *American Psychologist*, 59, 547-556.
- Matsuda, M. (1991). The voices of America: Accent, antidiscrimination law, and a jurisprudence for the last reconstruction. *Yale Law Journal*, 100, 1329-1407.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- McAdoo, H., and Younge, S. (2009). Black families. In H. A. Neveille, B. M. Tyes, & S. O. Utsey (Eds.), *Handbook of African American psychology* (pp. 103-125). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- McGlynn, A. (2005). Teaching millennials, our newest cultural cohort. *The Education Digest*, 71, 12-16.
- McLeod, S. A. (2007). *Abraham Maslow | Hierarchy of Needs*. Retrieved June 19, 2015 from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>
- McLeod, S. A. (2009). *Jean Piaget | Cognitive Theory – Simply Psychology*. Retrieved June 19, 2015, from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html>
- Menchaca, M. (1997). Early racist discourses: The roots of deficit thinking. In R. Valencia (Ed.), *The Evolution of Deficit Thinking* (pp. 13-40). New York, NY: Falmer.
- Mendel, P. C. (1987). An investigation of factors that influence teacher morale and satisfaction with work conditions. (Doctoral dissertation). Eugene, OR: University of Oregon, Division of Educational Policy and Management.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (2014). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Merriam, S. B. A. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mickelson, R. A. (2003). When are racial disparities in education the result of racial discrimination? A social science perspective. *Teachers College Record*, 105, 1,052-1,086.

- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miller, P. H. (2011). *Theories of developmental psychology*. New York, NY: Worth.
- Miller, W. C. (1981). Staff morale, school climate, and education productivity. *Educational Leadership*, 38(6): 483-486.
- Milner, H., Tenore, F., & Laughter, J. (2008, Winter). What can teacher education programs do to prepare teachers to teach high-achieving culturally diverse male students? *Gifted Child Today*, 31(1), pp. 18-23.
- Moallem, M. (1994, February). *An experienced teacher-model of thinking and teaching: An ethnographic study on teacher cognition*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Communications and Technology, Nashville, TN.
- Monroe, C. (2005). Why are “bad boys” always Black? *The Clearing House*, 79(1), 45-50.
- Moon, S. M. (1991, April). *What research says: Pullout programs*. Presentation at the annual meeting of the Indiana Association for the Gifted, Indianapolis, IN.
- Moon, T., & Brighton, C. (2008). Primary teachers’ conceptions of giftedness. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 31(4), 447-480, 505-506.
- Moore, J. (2006). A qualitative investigation of African American males’ career trajectory in engineering: Implications for teachers, school counselors, and parents. *Teachers College Record*, 108, 246-266.
- Moore, J. L. III, Henfield, M. S., & Owens, D. (2008). African American males in special education: Their attitudes and perceptions toward high school counselors and school counseling services. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51, 907-927.

- Moore, J. L., Ford, D. Y., & Milner, R. H. (2005). Underachievement among gifted students of color: Implications for educators. *Theory into Practice*, 44(2), 167-177.
- Moore, J., Madison-Colemore, O., & Smith, D. (2003). The prove-them-wrong syndrome: Voices from unheard African-American males in engineering disciplines. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 12. 61-73.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- NAGC.org. (n.d.). *A brief history of gifted and talented education*. Retrieved November 14, 2015, from <http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/gifted-education-us/brief-history-gifted-and-talented-education>
- NAGC.org. (n.d.). *Addressing excellence gaps in K-12 education*. Position Statement. Retrieved November 14, 2015 from <http://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/Position%20Statement/Excellence%20Gaps%20Position%20Statement.pdf>
- National Association for Gifted Children. (2008). *Gifted Education Practices*. Retrieved March 4, 2012, from <http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/gifted-education-practices>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2003). *Status and trends in the education of Blacks*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- National Institute for Urban School Improvement. *The urban expansion* (2012). Retrieved April 21, 2012, from <http://www.urbanschools.org/>
- Obiakor, F. (1998). *Teacher expectations of multicultural exceptional learners: Impact on "accuracy" of self-concepts*. Paper presented at the Council for Exceptional Children (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 419 311).

- Office for Civil Rights Data Collection. (2012). *Revealing new truths about our nation's schools*. Retrieved June 22, 2015, from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-2012-data-summary.pdf>
- Olszewski-Kubilius, P., & Thomson, D. (2015). Talent Development as a Framework for Gifted Education. *Gifted Child Today*, 38(1), 49-59. Retrieved January 5, 2016.
- Olszewski-Kubilius, P., & Thomson, D. L. (2010). Gifted programming for poor or minority urban students: Issues and lessons learned. *Gifted Child Today*, 33(4), 58-64.
- Olszewski, P., Kulieke, M., & Buescher, T. (1987). The influence of the family environment on the development of talent: A literature review. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 2, 6-28.
- Parker, L. (2004). Commentary: Can critical race theories of or on race be used in evaluation research in education? *New Directions for Evaluation*, 101, 85-93.
- Passow, A. H., Goldberg, M., Tannenbaum, A., & French, W. (1955). *Planning for talented youth*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pendarvis, E., & Wood, E. (2009). Eligibility of historically underrepresented students referred for gifted education in a rural school district: A case study. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 32(4), 495-514, 577.
- Perry, T., Steele, C., & Hilliard, A. (2003). *Young, gifted, and black: Promoting high achievement among African-American students*. Boston, MA: Beacon.
- Piaget, J. (1936). *Origins of intelligence in the child*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Piirto, J. (1999). *Talented adults and children: Their development and education* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Pitre, C. (2014, Winter). Improving African American student outcomes: Understanding educational achievement and strategies to close opportunity gaps. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 38(4), 209-217.
- Raywid, M. A. (2006, May). Themes that serve schools well. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(9), 654-656.
- Reffel, J. A., & Reffel, J. M. (2004, April). *Limited participation of low-SES and minority children in gifted education programs*. Poster session presented at the annual meeting of the Council of Exceptional Children, New Orleans, LA.
- Reiser, R. A., & Mory, E. H. (1991). An examination of the systematic planning techniques of two experienced teachers. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 39(3), 71-92.
- Renzulli, J. (2012). Reexamining the role of gifted education and talent development for the 21st century: A four-part theoretical approach. *Gifted Child Quarterly* 56(3), 150-159.
- Rockinson-Szapkiw, A., Spaulding, L., & Yocum, R. (2012). *Research design* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved July 1, 2012, from Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA.
- Rosenblum, K., and Travis, T. (2011). *The meaning of difference: American constructions of race, sex, and gender, social class, sexual orientation, and disability*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Sankofa, B. M., Hurley, E. A., Allen, B. A., & Boykin, A. W. (2005). Cultural expression and Black students' attitudes toward high achievers. *The Journal of Psychology*, 139(3), 247-259.

- Santiago, N. (2009, September 24). *Interview types: Structured, semi-structured, and unstructured*. Retrieved September 18, 2012, from <http://www.examiner.com/article/interview-types-structured-semi-structured-and-unstructured>
- Schram, T. (2003). *Conceptualizing qualitative inquiry: Mindwork for fieldwork in education and the social sciences*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Schwandt, T. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.), pp. 243-361. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline*. New York, NY: Doubleday Currency.
- Senge, P., & Lannon-Kim, C. (1991). Recapturing the spirit of learning through a systems approach. *The School Administrator*, 48(9), 8-13.
- Shade, B. (1978). Social-psychological characteristics of achieving Black children. *The Negro Educational Review*, 29(2), 80-85.
- Shujaa, M. (Ed.). (1996). *Beyond desegregation: The politics of quality in African American schooling*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Siegle, D., Moore, M., Mann, R. L., & Wilson, H. E. (2010). Factors that influence in-service and preservice teachers' nominations of students for gifted and talented programs. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 33(3), 337-360.
- Siegle, D., Rubenstein, L. D., Pollard, E., & Romey, E. (2010). Exploring the relationship of college freshmen honors students' effort and ability attribution, interest, and implicit theory of intelligence with perceived ability. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 54, 92-101.

- Sinclair, S., & Lun, J. (2010). Social tuning of ethnic attitudes. In B. Mesquita, L. Feldman Barrett, & E. R. Smith (Eds.), *The Mind in Context*, pp. 214-232. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Smith, B. (2011). The sense and sensibility of qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 16(4), 1141-1147. Retrieved July 14, 2014, from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR16-4/smith.pdf>
- Smith, J. C. (Ed.). (1994). *Black first: 2000 years of extraordinary achievement*. Washington, DC: Visible Ink Press.
- Smith, M. (2002). Paulo Freire and informal education. *The Encyclopaedia of Informal Education*. Retrieved June 19, 2015, from <http://infed.org/mobi/paulo-freire-dialogue-praxis-and-education/>
- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). From racial stereotyping and deficit discourse: Toward a critical race theory in teacher education. *Multicultural Education*, 9, 2-8.
- Speirs Neumeister, K. L., Adams, C. M., Pierce, R. L., Cassady, J. C., & Dixon, F. A. (2007). Fourth-grade teachers' perceptions of giftedness: Implications for identifying and serving diverse gifted students. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 30, 479-499.
- Spencer, M., Harpalani, V., Fegley, S., Dell'Angelo, T., & Seaton, G. (2002). Identity, self, and peers in context: A culturally sensitive, developmental framework for analysis. In R. M. Learner, F. Jacobs, & D. Wertlieb (Eds.), *Handbook of applied developmental science* (Vol. 1), pp. 123-142. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Staiger, A. (2004). Whiteness as giftedness: Racial formation at an urban high school. *Social Problems*, 51(2), 161-181.

- Stake, R. E. (2000). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, pp. 435-445. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Steele, C. (1999, August). Thin ice: "Stereotype threat" and Black college students. *Atlantic Monthly*, 284, 44-47, 50-54.
- Steele, C. (2010). *Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do*. New York, NY: Norton & Co.
- Stephens, C. E. (2001). *Keepers of the American dream: A study of staff development and multicultural education*. London, UK: The Falmer Press.
- Suárez-Orozco, C. (2000). Identities under siege: Immigration stress and social mirroring among the children of immigrants. In A. Robben & M. Suárez-Orozco (Eds.), *Cultures under siege: Social violence and trauma*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Suárez-Orozco, C., & Suárez-Orozco, M. (2001). *Children of immigration* (1st ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Swanson, J. (2006). Breaking through assumptions about low income minority gifted students. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 50, 11-25.
- Swiatek, M. (1995). An empirical investigation of the social coping strategies used by gifted adolescents. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 39, 154-161.
- Tannenbaum, A. J. (1983). *Gifted children: Psychological and educational perspectives*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Taylor, P. (1993). *The texts of Paulo Freire*. Buckingham, IL: Open University Press.
- The College Board. (2010). Retrieved April 21, 2012, from <http://press.collegeboard.org/advocacy>
- Tierney, W. (1993). *Building communities of difference: Higher education in the twenty-first*

- century*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey.
- Tillman, L. (2008). The scholarship of Dr. Asa G. Hilliard, III: Implications for Black principal leadership. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(3), 589-607.
- Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., & Wehmeyer, M. L. (2010). *Exceptional lives: Special education in today's schools* (6th ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- U. S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program awards. Retrieved July, 15, 2014, from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/javits/awards.html>.
- U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. (2009). *Minorities in special education*. Retrieved November 17, 2010, from <http://www.uscce.gov/pubs/MinoritiesinSpecialEducation.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2000). *Twenty-second annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act*. Retrieved on November 17, 2010, from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2003/25th-vol-1-sec-1.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2013). *For each and every child – A strategy for education equity and excellence*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Valencia, R. (2010). *Dismantling contemporary deficit thinking: educational thought and practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- VanTassel-Baska, J. (2010, Fall). The history of urban gifted education. *Gifted Child Today*, 33(4), 18.
- VanTassel-Baska, J., Feng, A., Swanson, J., Quek, C., & Chandler, K. (2009). Academic and affective profiles of low-income, minority, and twice-exceptional gifted learners: The role of gifted program membership in enhancing self. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 20(4), 702-739, 748-749, 751-752.

- Vockell, E. (2009) *Educational psychology: A practical approach*. Calumet, IN: Purdue University–Calumet. Retrieved October 17, 2009, from <http://education.calumet.purdue.edu/vockell/EdPsyBook/>
- Washington, R., & Watson, H. F. (1976, April). Positive teacher morale: The principal's responsibility. *NASSP Bulletin*, 60(399) 4-6.
- Watts, B. L. (2003). Education versus incarceration. *NABSE News Briefs*, 22-24.
- Wilson, C. (2006, November/December). Triangulation: The explicit use of multiple methods, measures, and approaches for determining core issues in product development. *Interactions*, 4, 46-63.
- Wilson, H., & Hutchinson, S. (1991). Triangulation of qualitative methods: Heideggerian hermeneutics and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 1, 263-276.
- Winerip, M. (1983, October 18). Memories for Javits as archive is dedicated. *The New York Times*. Retrieved July 15, 2014, from <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/10/18/nyregion/memories-for-javits-as-archive-is-dedicated.html>
- Winicott, D. (1971). *Playing and reality*. Middlesex, UK: Penguin.
- Winkler, D. L., & Jolly, J. L. (2011). Historical perspectives on the Javits Act: 1988-2011. *Gifted Child Today*, 34(4), 61-63.
- Wolf, Z. R. (2003). Exploring the audit trail for qualitative investigations. *Nurse Educator* 28(4), 175-178.
- Wood, S., Portman, T. A. A., Cigrand, D., & Colangelo, N. (2010). School counselors' perceptions and experience with acceleration as a program option for gifted and talented students. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 54(3), 168-178.

- Worrell, F. C. (2007). Identifying and including low-income learners in programs for gifted and talented: Multiple complexities. In J. VanTassel-Baska & T. Stambaugh (Eds.), *Overlooked gems: A national perspective on low-income promising learners: Conference proceedings from the National Leadership Conference on Low-Income Promising Learners* (pp. 47-51). Washington, DC: National Association for Gifted Children.
- Wright, B. L. (2009). Racial-ethnic identity, academic achievement, and African American males: A review of literature. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 78(2), 123-134.
- Yin, R. K. (2008). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yoon, Y. S., & Gentry, M. (2009). Racial and ethnic representation in gifted programs: Current status of and implications for gifted Asian American students. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 53(2), 121-136.
- Young, K. (2010). LD and the rise of Highly Gifted and Talented Programs: Examining similar rationales across decades and designations. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 30(2), 7.
Retrieved July 15, 2014, from EBSCOhost
- Zunjic, B. (2009). *What is philosophy?* Retrieved April 27, 2009, from Home Page of Slobodan Bob Zunjic at <http://www.uri.edu/personal/szunjc/index.html>

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Please note: Experts in the field reviewed the interview questions to ensure content reliability and validity. The researcher conducted all the interviews.

Date _____
 Place/location _____
 Interviewer _____
 Interviewee _____

Icebreaker questions/statements

How are you feeling today? How has your week been? Would you mind telling me a little about yourself?

Proposed interview questions for teachers

1. Would you please share with me if you feel that gifted male African American students struggle academically or socially? Why?
2. How would you describe gifted minority students? What might they look like? Give me a scenario of how they might act. Describe what you think their ability level should be.
3. Please describe how African American males are referred to gifted and talented programs in your school district.
4. What are the unique identifiers of giftedness in African American males? Explain.
5. In your opinion, what role does professional development in gifted pedagogy play in referring students to gifted and talented programs?
6. What is the importance of minorities being referred to or enrolled in gifted and talented programs?
7. Do you think that being in an urban area impacts a gifted student's academic ability positively or negatively? Explain.
8. Do you think that being in an urban area impacts a gifted student socially? Or culturally? Explain.
9. Do you think that teacher/administrator perceptions impact the quality of instruction for gifted minority students, and if so, how? If not, why not?
10. Do you think that teacher/administrator perceptions impact how many male African American students are referred to gifted and talented programs, and if so, how? If not why not?
11. Explain how your school meets the needs of gifted minority students.
12. How important is your personal morale in determining what you do for students on a daily basis?
13. Do you think that your own personal experiences impact the enrollment of African American males in gifted and talented education programs? Explain.
14. If you could change something about the way you or your school provides services for gifted male minority students, what would that be and why would you change it?

15. With whom should I visit in order to learn more information about gifted students and gifted programming in your school?
16. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about gifted education that I may not have asked about?

Thank You Statement

I would like to thank you for your time and assure you that your responses will be coded for the strictest confidentiality. Thank you, and have a wonderful day.

APPENDIX B
Checklist of Topics for Administrator Interviews

- Thoughts about urban education, both positive and negative
- Thoughts about gifted males maybe needing additional points to address
- Thoughts about gifted African American males
- Thoughts about barriers encountered by urban gifted students
- Feelings about gifted versus non-gifted students in an urban school
- Perhaps a section on teachers of the gifted

APPENDIX C

Protocol Form

I gathered information via the protocol form below. It was used, dated, and timed for each observation completed. The time stamp had a starting and ending time. A computer-generated map of the room clearly indicated what was happening and where. I had a special focus on the teacher in the classroom as well as on the reactions of the students with whom the teachers were working.

Date _____

Start Time: _____

End Time: _____

Description of setting _____

Notes addressed the following questions:

1. Who is being observed? How many people are involved, who are they, and what individual roles and mannerisms are evident?
2. What is going on? What is the nature of the conversation? What are people saying or doing?
3. What is the status or role of people present? Who leads? Who follows? Who is decisive? Who is not?
4. What was the tone of the session?
5. What beliefs, attitudes, values seemed to emerge?
6. What was the observer doing during the session?
7. What was the observer's level of participation in the observation? (Participant observer or non-participant observer)

APPENDIX D
Table of Descriptive Notes and Dialogue Reconstruction

Descriptive Notes Sample	Dialogue Reconstruction Sample
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cool, level-headed approach • Positive attitude of 3/5 meeting members • Strong passion from Carla about the need to support the kids • Darla is in agreement with most, but seems hesitant to move forward with the concept of additional planning time. • Seems to be a good talk or show, but no immediate action or desire to move forward if it requires more work. 	<p>Carla: Thank you for all agreeing to meet today so that we can discuss next steps in planning for our gifted cohort of students.</p> <p>Darla, Harriet, Kelly: No problem.</p> <p>Carla: Last meeting we talked about how we can better support the kids in meeting their needs. It was suggested that we create additional plans that directly support the differentiation of assignments and presentation for our gifted learners.</p> <p>Darla: Yeah, about that, I am OK with doing the work, but the additional planning seems like overkill....</p>

APPENDIX E

Adult Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional Review
Board has approved this document for use
from 1/8/16 to 1/7/17 Protocol # 2378.010816

Study Title: TEACHERS' AND ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Research Investigator's Name and Department: Roy Demetri Sermons, Liberty University, School of Education. Contact information for researcher: [REDACTED]

Introductory Statement

You are invited to participate in this educational research study, which is being conducted to fulfill requirements for Roy Demetri Sermons to obtain a Doctor of Education Degree from Liberty University. Details of the study are contained below. As a participant, you can be assured that any information that you provide will be kept confidential and destroyed upon completion of the study. You may choose to participate on a voluntary basis and withdraw from participation at any time. The researcher is available to answer any questions or concerns that you may have about the study.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this case study is to explore, examine, and understand the reasons for specific perceptions about the underrepresentation of gifted male African American students by middle and high school teachers and administrators. In addition, the study will examine how those perceptions impact gifted and talented enrollment within an urban public school system in Georgia.

What will I do in this study?

The tasks and procedures participants will be asked to perform will involve taking part in interviews, being assigned to a focus group, and being observed in daily teaching routines. There could be possible audio recordings. The length of time required for participation is minimal, and the number of interviews will be no more than three.

The results of the research study will be shared at a professional development presentation for educators, administrators, and other educational stakeholders.

Over how long a period will I need to participate?

It will take approximately 3 months for this study to be conducted and completed.

Are there any risks of participating in the study?

The risks are minimal – no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life. Participation is completely voluntary.

What are the benefits of participating in the study?

The benefits of this study are to members of the educational community. Your participation will help inform stakeholders about the importance of educators' perceptions relating to gifted minority students in urban schools. By participating in this study, you can be part of an advocacy

research study and be assured that your views will be heard, documented, and shared to improve education in your school district.

Will anyone know what I do or say in this study (or, what is the level of confidentiality)?

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report that might be published, no information that will make it possible to identify a subject will be included. Research records will be stored securely, and only researchers will have access to them.

Roy Demetri Sermons will be the only person to whom confidential information will be disclosed. In all other instances, any data under the investigator's control will, if disclosed, be presented in a manner that does not reveal the subject's identity, except to the extent that may be required by law.

Will I receive any compensation for participation?

There is no compensation or fee to be paid to the subject for participating in the study.

Whom can I contact for information about this study?

The researcher conducting this study is Roy Demetri Sermons. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact the researcher, Roy Demetri Sermons [REDACTED].

Note:

You are free to refuse to participate in this research project or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision as to whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd., Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or e-mail him [REDACTED].

* * *

My signature below indicates that all my questions have been answered. I agree to participate in the project as described above.

Signature of Subject

Date Signed

A copy of this form has been given to me.

Subject's Initials

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX F
Participation Invitation Letter/Email

Date: December 2015

Dear Teacher of the Gifted/Administrator of the Gifted,

As a graduate student in the Education Department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctoral degree. I am inviting you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore, examine, and understand the reasons for specific perceptions by urban middle and high school teachers and administrators about the underrepresentation of gifted male African American students in educational programs for the gifted and talented. The major research question that this study will explore is: In what ways do the perceptions by urban educators and administrators of male African American students impact the degree to which African American males are referred to gifted and talented programs in an urban school district? This question examines the perceptions that urban educators and administrators have about male African American students. Answers to the question can also determine whether these perceptions impact how African American males are referred to gifted and talented programs.

If you would like to participate, please respond to my email and further information will be sent to you. The deadline for participation is **January 5, 2015**. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey and be interviewed. It should take approximately 10-15 minutes for you to complete the procedure[s] listed. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal identifying information will be required.

To participate, respond to the email and you will be sent a link to take a survey and a chance to request an interview for the study. An informed consent document will be given to you should you choose to participate in the study. This document contains additional information about my research, but you do not need to sign and return it. There will be no compensation if you choose to be a participant.

Sincerely,



Graduate Student, Liberty University

APPENDIX G

Survey Questions

UNDERREPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS QUESTIONNAIRE

Gifted educators have researched the underrepresentation of minorities, specifically African Americans, in gifted education for more than twenty years, and it continues to be a concern. This questionnaire is part of a research study designed to assess reasons for the underrepresentation of African American males in gifted programs based on the perceptions by administrators and teachers in middle and high schools. Your participation in completing and returning this questionnaire will greatly assist in this research.

Please return to [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Mark your answer.

1. What is your gender?

1. Female 2. Male

2. What is your ethnicity?

1. African American/Black 2. Asian 3. Hispanic 4. Anglo American/White 5. Other ____

3. What is your school level?

1. High 2. Middle

4. What is your position at your school?

1. Principal 2. Assistant Principal 3. Teacher 4. Counselor 5. Other _____

5. How many years have you worked in the field of education?

1. 1–3 years 2. 4–6 years 3. 7–10 years 4. 11–15 years 5. 16–20 years 6. 21 or more years

6. What subjects are you certified to teach?

1. English/LA 2. Mathematics 3. Science 4. Social Studies 5. Other _____

7. Is there a gifted program at your school?

1. Yes 2. No

8. Are you gifted certified?

1. Yes 2. No

9. Do you teach in the gifted program?

1. Yes 2. No

10. How many students are enrolled in your school?

1. Less than 500 2. 500–700 3. 701–900 4. 901–1000 5. 1001–1200 6. More than 1200

11. How many African American students are enrolled in your school?

1. Less than 100 2. 100–300 3. 301–500 4. 501–700 5. 701–900 6. More than 900

15. How many students are enrolled in the gifted program at your school?

1. Less than 25 2. 25–50 3. 51–100 4. 101–150 5. 151–200 6. More than 200

16. How many African American students are enrolled in your school's gifted program?

1. Less than 5 2. 5–14 3. 15–24 4. 25–34 5. 35–45 6. More than 45

17. Do you believe that gifted students need special services?

1. Yes 2. No

18. Do you believe that African American students are underrepresented in the gifted program at your school?

1. Yes 2. No

Please indicate your responses concerning your perceptions about the reasons for the underrepresentation of male African American students in gifted education programs.

(RESPONSE KEY: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, and 4 = Strongly Disagree)

Circle your answer.

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 19. Culture does not value intellectual giftedness. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. Definition of giftedness prohibits identification of minority students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 21. Identification process for admission into the program. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 22. Low socio-economic status of African American students prohibits their recommendation to the gifted program. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 23. Non-standard language of African American students prohibits their identification in the gifted program. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 24. The educational level of African American parents is low. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 25. Race causes students not to be nominated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 26. Late identification of African American students causes them not to stay in the gifted program. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 27. Teachers do not recognize gifted potential of African American students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 28. The standard intelligence testing has limited the participation of students from culturally diverse backgrounds. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 29. Students are unwilling to participate in the program. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 30. As a result of the training I received, I believe that all children, regardless of race and/or culture, are intelligent and may have gifted qualities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

APPENDIX H

Permission from Atlanta Public Schools (APS)



Office of Research & Evaluation for School Improvement

130 Trinity Ave., SW, 6th Floor | Atlanta, Georgia 30303 | P: 404.802.2672 | F: 404.802.1601

August 31, 2015

Mr. Roy Sermons
5594 Malone Ridge Street
#5107
Alexandria, Virginia 22312

Dear Mr. Sermons,

Your request to conduct research within the Atlanta Public Schools (APS) was reviewed by the Research Screening Committee in accordance with its guidelines. Your research study entitled **"TEACHERS' AND ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS IN THE UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS"** has been approved. The purpose of this study is to seek to understand and discover the reasons for specific perceptions about minority-gifted students by middle and high school teachers within a large urban school system. This study will take place during the 2015-16 school year in four middle and four high schools. Three (3) teachers from each of the grades 6-12 will be asked to participate. Data collection procedures to obtain insight into the perceptions of gifted minority students will consist of interviews, the administration of a researcher developed instrument, observations, results from any other tools available from the resources of the study. The results of the analysis of the data collected by these procedures will be used to address the research questions associated with this study. In the review of this study, the Research Screening Committee has cited the following items that need your attention and emphasis.

1. The activities of this study must not interrupt instructional time.
2. Your assurance of maintaining confidentiality of the participants must be strictly followed. Pseudonyms for people and the schools, as well as references to APS as "a large urban school system," are required in the title and text of your final report before publication or presentation outside of APS.
3. If you make changes in the implementation of your study or, particularly, revise the instruments used, please notify the Department of Research and Evaluation prior to the beginning of your study.
4. A completed copy of your dissertation must be submitted to the Department of Research and Evaluation.

Please contact [REDACTED] if you need any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rubye Sullivan



Director of Research and Evaluation for School Improvement

"The mission of the Research and Evaluation Department is to build capacity through research, evaluation, and the application of data to inform school improvement for student success."



APPENDIX I
Liberty University IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 8, 2016

Roy Demetri Sermons

IRB Approval 2378.010816: Teachers' and Administrators' Perceptions in the Under-Representation of African American Males in Gifted and Talented Education Programs

Dear Demetri,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971