

URBAN GIFTED EDUCATION AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS: PARENT
AND TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

A Dissertation

By

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Submitted to the Graduate College of Hampton University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Urban Gifted Education and African American Students:
Parent and Teacher Perspectives. (May 2015)

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The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain a better understanding of parents and teachers' perspectives on the schooling experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program. More specifically, the research examined the social, emotional, and academic challenges that contribute to the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted and talented programs. The study involved one urban middle school gifted program in Prince George's County in Maryland. Ten parents and ten teachers comprised the study sample. Four major themes emerged from the study; work ethics, self-confidence, transitioning to secondary gifted program, and camaraderie with peers. As a result, the negative influences that typically contribute to the underrepresentation of African Americans in gifted programs were not major factors in this urban gifted program.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated
to my niece and nephews who call me
“a Doctor of Words...”

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Identification of minority gifted and talented students is a challenge for educators at both state and local school district levels (Jarosewich, Pfeiffer, & Morris, 2002; VanTassel-Baska & Feng, 2004). Research has documented that most students who qualify for and are admitted into gifted and talented programs are Caucasian or Asian (Bernal, 2002; Ford, Harris, Tyson, & Trotman, 2002; Lee, Matthews, & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008; Worrell, 2007b; Wyner, Bridgeland, & DiIulio, 2007), which indicates an underrepresentation of approximately 55% nationally for African American students (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008). At the same rate, African American students compose 17.2% of school districts' student population while representing 8.4% of those identified as gifted (Ford et al., 2008). Major factors that have contributed to the underrepresentation of African American students are identification, recruitment, teacher training, student-teacher relations, student peer relations, and learning environment for students (Ford, 1998; Ford et al., 2008). Extant studies have addressed the unequal participation that plagues the educational system (Donovan & Cross, 2002). A key area of concern for researchers is how to identify and serve this group of students to increase their representation in gifted programs (Ford et al., 2008).

Few programs take into account the needs of culturally diverse students (Mattai, Wagle, & Williams, 2010). Traditionally, the student population of the gifted and talented programs has been comprised of primarily middle and upper income Caucasian and

Asian students (Mattai et al., 2010). Although there has been an increase in the representation of minority students identified as gifted, studies have addressed the unequal participation that plagues the educational system (Donovan & Cross, 2002). This study explored the perceptions of parents and teachers of minority students in a predominately minority urban middle school gifted and talented program. The purpose was to gain a better understanding of parents and teachers' perceptions of the support given African American students attempting to enroll or who were enrolled in an urban gifted and talented program.

Problem Background

Since the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), race and education have been intricately connected. It is estimated that the percentage of people of color will rise to 38% by 2025 and could be as high as 47% by 2050 in the United States (Wong, 2008). This increase will cause a demographic shift in the number students of color in public schools and also in gifted and talented programs (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006; Balfanz & Legters, 2004; Lewis et al., 2007).

In 1972, after the U.S. Congress mandated a study on the characteristics of gifted children (McClellan, 1985), the former U.S. Commissioner of Education, created the Marland Report or Public Law (PL) 91-230 (Scott, 1996; Walker, 2002). Within PL 91-230, gifted children are described as demonstrating high-performance achievement singly or in a combination in the following areas: (a) specific academic aptitude, (b) general intellectual ability, (c) creative or productive thinking, (d) leadership ability, (e), psychomotor ability and (f) visual and performing arts (McClellan, 1985).

In the 1970s, many Caucasian parents took advantage of opportunities to bypass court-ordered racial desegregation by advocating for pullout-gifted programs. These actions were supported with evidence that Caucasian students had a tendency to score higher than minority students on intelligence (IQ) examinations (Golden, 2004; Staiger, 2004). Researchers have argued that minority students' inability to pass qualifying assessments for gifted programs might be due to the scope of the definition and perception of giftedness (Bonner, 2005; Ford & Moore, 2005; Joseph & Ford, 2006; Huff, Houskamp, Watkins, Stanton, & Tavegia, 2005; McGlenn-Nelson, 2005; Nugent & Shaunessy, 2003; Villarreal, 2004). Lee and Olszewski-Kubilius (2006) asserted that traditional forms of assessment are ineffective because they are one-dimensional and ethnocentric and cannot benefit non-mainstream ethnic groups.

Robinson (2005) argued that providing an equitable and adequate education for all children remains a contentious issue. Since society is constantly becoming more diverse, a paradigm shift in programming and curricula needed to take place to reflect the new multicultural reality (Ford et al., 2008). Ford et al., (2008) asserted that intelligence and giftedness are complex concepts. Furthermore, there should be a restructuring of the identification process used to recommend students for gifted and talented programs. The identification process should also take into consideration the dilemma of historically marginalized gifted and talented minority children to include cultural ecological issues (Ogbu, 2004), deficit thinking perspectives (Ford et al., 2002; Ford et al., 2004) and the need for culturally relevant programming (Moore, Ford, & Milner, 2005; Sternberg, 2004; Tatum, 2005). These dilemmas were key factors that contributed to the problem in the underrepresentation and retention of African American students in gifted and talented

programs. Exploring these factors, social competence, emotional health, and academic success that normally impact economically deprived urban students also merit studying their impact on middle class gifted minority students. The need for expanded research in this area was a primary purpose for this study.

Purpose of the Study

Studies exist that address the issue of the underrepresentation of gifted African American students (Donovan & Cross, 2002). However, there is a lack of research exploring the experiences and issues of African American children in gifted programs (Huff et al., 2005). Having a limited understanding of the experiences and needs of gifted students from diverse backgrounds results in fewer diverse students being referred for gifted and talented programs (Brighton & Moon, 2008; Pierce, Adams, Neumeister, Cassady, Dixon, & Cross, 2007). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of parents and teachers' perspectives on the schooling experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory refers to a theory that originated from work by Bell (1976). The theory claimed that traditional approaches of combating racism were producing smaller gains than in previous years (Bell, 1976). Bell (1976) recognized that racism is engrained in the fabric and system of the American society and while reinforcing "White privilege" and "White supremacy", which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color. The theory spread into other fields. The Critical Race Theory was used to explain how educational theory and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups in America, especially in gifted programs (Henfield, Moore & Wood, 2008; Lynn,

2006; Saddler, 2005). Research in this study in effect examined this and other theories as they apply to the parents and teachers' perspectives on the schooling experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program.

Two sub-theories supported the Critical Race Theory in this study: The Cultural Ecological Theory and The Deficit Thinking Theory. The Cultural Ecological Theory observed the phenomena of race and intelligence (Ogbu, 1978, 1989, 1992, 2003, 2004; Ogbu & Simons', 1998). This theory directly focused on how race and ethnic differences affected educational achievement (Ogbu, 2004). Ogbu (2004) explained the evolution of the negative concept of "acting White" through an historical account during and after the American slave era. Ogbu (2004) reported that after emancipation, some African Americans opposed adopting White cultural and language frames of reference or "acting White" in society because they believed or feared that this would mean giving up their African American race and culture. In addition, African Americans faced the continual lack of social acceptance in the Caucasian culture after gaining their freedom, which created a coping strategy of ambivalence. Ogbu's (2004) research suggested that some students might perform poorly because high achievement was considered "acting White" by their peers. Other researchers have disclosed that academic achievement for African Americans may occur at the expense of this group's sense of ethnic identity (Worrell, 2007a).

Perry et al. (2003) argued that through omission and distortion, the curriculum and treatment of African American children tended to make matters worse year after year, which results in alienation of African American people from each other. The Deficit Thinking theory (Ford et al., 2002, 2004) addresses situations involving minority students

who are culturally different from their Caucasian counterparts when viewed as culturally deprived or disadvantaged. This resulted in a lack of acknowledgement of the students' talent and led to an underrepresented and underserved population (Ford et al., 2004).

Indicators of deficit thinking include:

- A lack of educator preparation to interpret correctly the results of standardized tests.
- A failure to identify students of color.
- A rejection of offers to participate in gifted programming by students of color (Ford et al., 2002).

Ford et al. (2002) stated that many teachers do not receive adequate preparation in testing and assessment, which leads to poor interpretation of intelligence and achievement test scores.

Tatum (2005) revealed that when designing enrichment programs for students of color, cultural sensitivity is essential for creating an environment for enthusiastic learners. Students may drop out of gifted programming or refuse to participate when the students' culture is not considered in the development of curriculum or enrichment opportunities.

In this study, these theories reinforced the claim that the same factors that may hinder social competencies and academic success for low income gifted African American students (Ford et al., 2008; Ogbu 2004) have the same effect for middle class African American students in an urban gifted program. These theories helped provide a lens through which to interpret data for this study.

Research Questions

This study examined the gifted and talented program in one middle school in a school district in Maryland. It focused on parents and teachers perspectives of the social, emotional and academic challenges that African American students experience. This study explored, analyzed, and presented data regarding parents and teachers' perceptions of this urban gifted and talented program by discussing the ensuing research questions.

Three qualitative research questions guided this study:

1. What are some of the academically challenging experiences provided in an urban gifted program?
2. What are some of the emotionally challenging experiences provided in an urban gifted program?
3. What gifted program schooling experiences have been provided that encourage academic engagement between students of similar ability?

Definition of Terms

The following are definitions of operational terms used in this study.

Acceleration means that a student may be advanced when his/her demonstrated achievement, as well as measured ability, significantly exceeds that of his/her grade level peers. For example, consideration may be given to promoting him/her to a grade other than the next succeeding one (i.e., whole-grade acceleration), or permitting him/her to enroll in a course other than the next one in the academic sequence [i.e., individual subject acceleration] (Bailey, 2004; Feldhusen et al., 1986).

African American refers to an American who has African and especially Black African ancestors (Webster, 2014) and will be used interchangeably with Black.

Baby Boomers refers to the generation born immediately following the end of World War II, 1946 to 1964 (Webster, 2014).

Culturally relevant programming refers to meaningful learning opportunities that are designed or developed for the enrichment of individual students or small groups of students. It encourages connections between societal norms and a student's cultural and ethnic background in order to motivate talent development in its curriculum (Perry et al., 2003; Sternberg, 2004; Tatum, 2005).

Generation Xers refers to the generation of Americans born in the 1960s and 1970s (Webster, 2014).

Gifted and Talented or Giftedness, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education (1993), "Children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment."

Millennial refers to a person born in the 1980s or 1990s (Webster, 2014).

Minority refers to a group of people who are different from the larger group in a country, area, etc. (Webster, 2014).

Urban relates to characteristic of, or constituting a city (Webster, 2014).

Single-subject acceleration refers to curriculum intervention intended for Academically Talented and Gifted students. The student would be accelerated by taking a subject at a higher grade level or permitting him/her to enroll in a course other than the next one in the academic sequence (i.e., individual subject acceleration) (Bailey, 2004; Feldhusen et al., 1986).

Stereotype means to describe the individual belief systems that negatively impact student assessments and other forms of evaluations in the public school system (Morgan & Mehta, 2004).

Whole-grade acceleration is a curriculum intervention intended for academically talented and gifted students. The student would accelerate by skipping a grade level (Colangelo et al., 2004).

Limitations

Creswell (2005) defined limitations as providing future researchers with a list of weaknesses or potential problems that could affect the generalization of the findings to other situations or people. The limitations of this study were willingness of individuals to participate in the study and truthfulness of participants when being questioned.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the applicability of research results beyond the targeted research sample, as well as the number of research participants who offer similar responses in various contexts (Moffett, 2005). While data collection included all racial groups represented in the program, the researcher chose to focus on African American students, which made the study inapplicable to other students and parents who may have similar experiences in an urban gifted program. Thus, this information was significant only in understanding the parent and teacher perceptions of equitable accessibility for an urban gifted minority program. Three delimitations were associated with this study:

- One urban school district in Prince George's County in Maryland.
- One selected middle school from an urban school district in Prince George's County in Maryland.

- Parents and teachers comprised the participants in the study.

Significance of the Study

This study may provoke attention and inspire additional research of gifted and talented programs for predominately minority populations in urban areas. More research about underrepresented and underserved minority students might assist educators and parents in implementing more effective recruitment strategies. School and community functionaries could design these strategies to increase minority student enrollment in gifted and talented programs nationwide.

Summary

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter I introduced the research study, the statement of the problem, the research questions, theoretical framework, the definition of terms, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Chapter II reviews the literature related to exploring the social, emotional, and academic challenges African American students experience in gifted programs. Chapter III discusses the research method, research procedures, confidentiality, and ethical considerations of the study, and data analysis. Chapter IV provides an analysis of the data. Chapter V presents a summary of the findings of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature explored in Chapter II relates to the research associated with parents and teachers' perspectives on the schooling experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program. More specifically, the literature explores the social, emotional, and academic challenges African American students experience in gifted programs. The literature review is comprised of the definition of gifted, the history of inequality in gifted education, and middle school gifted education programming. In addition, the academic achievement and self-identity of minority-gifted students is discussed. Chapter II concludes with a discussion of the parents and teachers of gifted minority students and the theories that support the research.

Definition of Gifted

The U.S. Department of Education (1993) defined gifted and talented students as those who exhibit evidence of high achievement in areas such as intellect, creativity, artistic ability, leadership capacity or specific academic fields, and need services or activities not ordinarily provided by their school to develop these capabilities fully.

Maryland's definition is very similar to the federal government's definition of giftedness. According to the Annotated Code of the Public General Laws of Maryland §8-201, the State of Maryland defines giftedness as an elementary or secondary student identified by professionally qualified individuals as:

- Having outstanding talent and performing or displaying the potential for performing at extraordinarily high levels of accomplishment when compared to other students of similar age, experience, or environment;
- Exhibiting high performance competency in intellectual, creative, or artistic areas;
- Possessing unusual leadership capacity; or
- Excelling in specific academic fields.

The Maryland State Department of Education (2012) encouraged all school districts to develop and implement programs for gifted and talented students as stated in the Annotated Code of the Public General Laws for Maryland. The State of Maryland further asserted that educators should focus on identifying gifted students for placement and design special programs to facilitate the unique needs of these children. Services for gifted and talented students are offered from kindergarten through grade 12 in Maryland.

A report by the Maryland State Department of Education (2008) identified two characteristics that separated gifted and talented students from non-gifted peers: the ability to (a) learn very rapidly and master subject matter at much higher levels, and (b) display more complex type of reasoning. To respond to these differences, Maryland provides special instruction to gifted students for enrichment and accelerated academic opportunities. Enrichment opportunities allow students to delve more deeply into specialized areas of interest, while accelerated opportunities allow them to progress more rapidly. Some of these opportunities for enrichment and acceleration include early entrance into kindergarten, single-subject, or whole-grade acceleration, dual enrollment in college, pull-out enrichment classes, a gifted curriculum or curricular units, magnet

programs, advanced placement courses, original research opportunities, and/or mentoring programs (Thomerson, 2010).

In 2008, Maryland also recommended that differentiating learning experiences regarding process, content, and learning context be embedded in the design of special programs for gifted students. The Maryland State Department of Education: Criteria for Excellence (2007) provided research-based suggestions for developing gifted curricula, appropriate learning environments for gifted learners, and instructional strategies for gifted classrooms. The program guidelines also suggested that gifted and talented teachers receive training for strategies that will identify and serve student groups historically underrepresented in gifted and talented education programs. This underserved population may also live in poverty, be culturally and linguistically diverse, and/or disabled (MSDE, 2007). However, it is important to note that Maryland does not require local school districts to develop and implement gifted programs for exceptional students.

The Maryland Coalition for Gifted and Talented Education (2013) reported that 18 of 24 counties in Maryland offer some form of special services for gifted students. These programs group students together and provide an advanced comprehensive curriculum from elementary through high school to include enrichment groups during the day or in after school settings. Some counties have been grouping gifted children for over 20 years while others are still at the beginning stages of designing programs (Bowie, 2007).

A research of literature has revealed that gifted individuals exhibit high levels of functioning in the cognitive, physical, affective, and intuitive areas (Clark, 2002; Davis &

Rimm, 2004; Karnes & Bean, 2001). Individual intellectual processing varies in the degree to which they are exhibited and no one child possesses all of these characteristics. The following items are a synthesis of common characteristics of gifted students from the literature (Merriman, 2012). The cognitive area of logical and rational thought processing is

- an unusual capacity for processing information at an accelerated pace,
- an extraordinary quantity of information,
- persistent, goal-directed behavior,
- flexibility of thought,
- high levels of abstract thought, and
- rapid acquisition of new language.

The affective area is the social and emotional interaction are characterized by

- empathy and high levels of awareness of the expectations and feelings of others,
- unusual sensitivity to the environment,
- emotional intensity,
- high expectations of others, and
- early development of idealism and a sense of justice.

The physical and sensory area are categorized by a(n)

- heightened sensitivity to light, sound, touch, smell, and taste;
- tendency to avoid physical activity in favor of intellectual pursuits,
- asynchrony, the unusual discrepancy between physical and intellectual

development; and

- high energy, alertness, and eagerness that might be misdiagnosed as hyperactivity disorder.

The intuitive characteristic, expressed through non-linear reasoning, is

- sensitivity to aesthetic qualities,
- creative approaches and inventiveness,
- curiosity,
- interest in the future,
- ability to predict, and
- insightfulness leading to leaps in understanding.

Characteristics of some gifted children can act as a barrier to success and their achievement of positive self-efficacy. These barrier characteristics are extensive daydreaming, keen sense of humor that may not be understood, failure to complete work, argumentativeness, and lack of organization. In addition, challenge to authority and assignments that seem pointless to the student, inability to prioritize interests that can result in mediocrity, perfectionism, and emotional intensity are characteristics that can possibly act as barriers.

For over three decades, progress has been slow in identifying minority students with the characteristics required for inclusion in the gifted programs (Ford, 1998). The unresolved problem with identifying gifted minority students has been well-documented in gifted education literature (Boothe & Stanley, 2004). Identifying the characteristics of minority students has come with many challenges. Gallagher (1994b) noted that there

were difficulties related to sorting out the unique characteristics of many minority students because they come from poverty. Clark (1992) supported that claim by asserting that a major problem encountered in providing for gifted students among the low socio-economic population is parents and teachers alike share the belief that giftedness could not exist in this population.

Whiting and Ford (2009) conducted a study examining why intelligence tests are culturally biased against minority students. The study also explored what has been done to reduce test bias and what types of intelligence tests are less culturally grounded. Using charts and tables, Whiting & Ford argued that many tests are not only racially and culturally biased, but the testing environment and/or atmosphere can be biased as well. In some cases, Whiting and Ford (2009) contended that the examiner's race could also determine if students perform well on the test.

History of Inequality in Gifted and Talented Programs

The underrepresentation of students from specific racial, ethnic, and cultural groups in gifted and talented programs has been documented over the last 30 years (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Yoon & Gentry, 2009). However, Michael-Chadwell (2008) asserted that quantitative and qualitative studies have researched the relationship between African American students and gifted and talented programs since the early 20th century. During a 1920s study, researchers claimed that testing outcomes were unduly influenced by unwritten cultural rules applied to African American students (Michael-Chadwell, 2008). The IQ (Binet-Simon Scales) test scores of students from various socio-economic backgrounds increased on average by 25%. One student's score exceeded 130 out of 140 points when an African American administered the test (Michael-Chadwell,

2008). In addition, research revealed that although gifted African American students are not a rarity, their talents need to be cultivated for optimal development. In the 1940s, a mixed method research study revealed a connection between African American students, racial identity, and prejudice regarding their intellectual giftedness (Michael-Chadwell, 2008).

As early as 1865, articles began to surface on the topic of hereditary genius claiming that through observations and inquiries, research suggested that outstanding academic abilities ran in families (Kirk & Gallagher, 1983). Later in 1979, Jensen perpetuated the belief in research that claimed that IQ scores that tended to show that the difference of 15 points between the Africans and Caucasians tested did not result from cultural or environmental factors, but was of genetic origin (Jamieson, 1990).

Jamieson (1990) reported that Jensen's research theorized that genetic factors contributed to the cause of 80% of the differences in intelligence among humans. This research sought to perpetuate the belief that the intelligence levels of African American and Caucasian would never be equated simply because of inherent variables. Holloway (1999) asserted that ongoing race-IQ debates were failed by claims that African Americans, on the average, were genetically inferior to Caucasians (Holloway, 1999).

In contrast, the Flynn effect challenged genetically based intelligence claim by reporting that heredity did have an impact on intelligence; however, the strongest, most prevalent determinant of intelligence was the environment (Restak, 2007, p. 133). The research revealed that 36% of genes account for IQ, while 64% were indirect effects of genes plus environmental differences unassociated with genes. Gallagher (2008) concluded that the belief that IQ is genetically based is absolutely flawed. African

American student underrepresentation may be a result of recruitment and retention barriers (Ford et al., 2008).

Elhoweris et al. (2005) sought to examine the effect of students' ethnicity on teachers' referral and recommendation for placement in a gifted program. The study revealed that teachers were found to refer students of indeterminate ethnicity at a slightly higher rate than African American peers. The researchers concluded that stereotypical notions on the part of teachers deciding African American capability might be effectively creating a barrier for African American gifted youngsters from participating in gifted programs (Elhoweris et al., 2005).

Data suggested that gifted and talented programs were the most segregated educational programs in the country (Ford, 1995). Gifted students represented 7% of school age children in the United States (National Association for Gifted Children, 2008). African American students were underrepresented by as much as 55% nationally in traditional gifted and talented programs (Ford et al., 2008). Further, African Americans represented one third of the American public school population, yet they represented only 8% of all students in gifted and talented programs (Ford, 1995). Overall, it was estimated that minorities were underrepresented in gifted and talented programs nationwide by 20% to 50% (Ford et al., 2000).

Identifying and serving the needs of this unique group has been a main area of concern for researchers focused on increasing minority representation in gifted and talented programs nationwide (Ford et al., 2008). Research shows that traditional gifted and talented programs fail to meet the needs of minority students and few consider the needs of students who are culturally and ethnically diverse (Mattai et al., 2010).

The desegregation of schools was a brief victory in 1954. Yet, public schools have once again returned to an apartheid-type educational system (Kozol, 2005). Gifted and talented educators, among others, have been fighting to correct this. In 1998, Congress passed the Jacob J. Javits Gifted and Talented Education Act to address the lack of cultural diversity among gifted students specifically. With this Act, Congress maintains that all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, or culture, should be given the same opportunities to excel academically. Federal funding was provided to increase identification and retention of minority students in gifted programs. With the reduction of state funding for several years and high stakes associated with improving academic performance, many states without strong policies for gifted and talented education have seen these programs eliminated (Brown et al., 2006). Table 1 illustrates the amount of federal funding that was allocated under the Javits Act. In 2011, Congress defunded the Javits Act, which resulted in states applying for flexibility waivers from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policies.

Table 1

Timeline Depicting the Status of Gifted Funding at the Federal Level

Timeline	Federal Gifted Funding
2008-2009	Javits Act provided \$7.4 million
2010	Javits Act provided \$7.4 million
2011	Javits Act defunded-\$0
2012-2013	Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) under the U.S. Department of Education issues waivers to states for flexibility from the No Child Left Behind Act.

However, in 2014, The Maryland Coalition for Gifted and Talented Education (MCGATE) reported that the United States Senate and House appropriators released a Fiscal Year 2014 spending bill that included \$5 million for the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act. The Javits Act will continue to support applied research to develop classroom strategies for identifying and serving these learners.

VanTassel-Baska (2005) declared that the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) neglected the needs of gifted and talented students. The author asserted a need to consider non-negotiable options for this population, and offered a broad variety of possibilities that could have assisted in the talent development of advanced learners. These possibilities included creating an appropriate curriculum, resource availability, quality teaching, and accessibility of opportunities in the classroom. These factors are all important when implementing gifted and talented programs in a school system.

One of the results of NCLB is the decision-making of teachers in the classroom (Cooper, 2007). Curriculum and instruction were reduced because teachers felt the burden of preparing students for high stakes achievement tests. Because NCLB only measured group performance as opposed to individual performance, the teachers were forced to restructure the curriculum. These limitations in the curriculum led to less challenging and stimulating curriculum for high ability students, thus depriving them of a quality education. Less focus was given to individual students, including support of gifted and talented students, which had negative implications that impacted not only students, but teachers and administrators as well.

Gifted and talented programs have received attention for concentrating on the underrepresentation and underachievement of minority students for many decades.

Educational leaders were required to identify problems affecting the performance of students and access to all educational programs under NCLB (Dimock, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). NCLB, established in 2002 by the Bush Administration, was supposed to lessen the achievement gap between poorly performing students and their more advanced counterparts—this did not happen. Bush’s goal of reforming America’s educational system was supposed to ensure that the nation’s students would be able to compete on a global level. Although it was successful in some areas, there has been much criticism of this federal law in many academic journals. NCLB has had a negative effect on student dropout rates, especially in poor urban centers. These schools lack the funding to assist students in their areas of weakness. Most were behind from the beginning because of poor early childhood education, poor home circumstances, and/or poor test preparation.

Moore, Ford, and Milner (2005a) concluded in a study that the problem of African American underrepresentation in gifted and talented programs could also be attributed to their removal from these programs due to underachievement and poor performance, and not to underrepresentation. However, given the historical exclusion of minority children from such programs, there is little empirical data to support this perspective.

Access to an equal and quality education is the right of every child in this country, and all students must be provided equal access to adequate preparatory services. Whiting and Ford (2009) asserted that when addressing the improvement of knowledge, dispositions, and skills of racially different families to work with school on behalf of their children change is possible.

Middle School Gifted Education Programming

There are several methods at the middle school level utilized to meet the needs of gifted students. Each method carries its own strengths and weaknesses depending on the school, district, student, and teacher. Gallagher (1994) asserted some change or school adaptation that allows these students to interact with each other needs to be challenged by material at their developmental level and to acquire skills useful in independent learning.

Gilbert (2009) identified several types of services offered to maximize the potential of gifted and talented students that have been the focus of research:

- The grouping of students: This most common method included was based primarily on the school philosophy and student population size,
- The grouping of students in clusters: Students normally in the same grade level were allowed to work separately during a specified period of the school day completing differentiated materials,
- The pullout group method: This method occurred when students were removed from the classroom to complete specific activities with other gifted and talented students for part of the day or week,
- The self-contained classroom: Gifted students were placed in a homogeneous population of gifted and talented students, and
- The entire school site: These schools were often magnet schools, which serviced only gifted and talented populations (Gilbert, 2009).

Davidson and Davidson (2004) claimed that gifted education does not operate at the level needed to meet the needs of the gifted student due to each state, district, and school-making decisions about what represents gifted education programming. The

researchers added that gifted programming was haphazardly designed, ineffective in creating challenges, and underfunded. Clark (2002) asserted that the lack of effective secondary gifted programming is apparent when gifted students repeatedly find their secondary programs either inadequate or having specific insufficiencies. The most evident complaint from students in middle school gifted program is the lack of challenge, quantity of work, and the similarity of gifted programming to the regular education curriculum (Clark, 2002).

The same findings in research was replicated in Moon et al. (1995) wherein one principal revealed that the school had money and several programs for disabled students, however, they inform the parents of advanced learners that the school would challenge their child the best way they could. The studies also focused on other researchers' findings that learning disabled students always received extra support while advanced learners, if served, were placed in advanced classes or pullout services. The study found that 68% of teachers believed that special classes for gifted students were appropriate at least some of the time.

Walker (2002) stated that gifted programming exists to provide children with appropriate educational opportunities that meet their needs so they can reach their potential. Clark (2002) studied the feelings of a group of diverse gifted students towards their gifted program. In the research, Clark (2002) found that gifted students generally found their secondary programs to be inadequate or lacking in at least one area. The following program areas were lacking:

- time allotment for gifted services,
- challenge of the program,

- curriculum, or
- emotional and social considerations

Considering the inadequacy of gifted programming in the past, the design of future gifted programming to meet the needs of the student, school, and district is imperative. Rogers' (2002) meta-analysis on the research concerning grouping of gifted students found a variety of options and resources available and advantageous for the grouping of gifted students. Rogers (2002) suggested that these are the best options ranging from the most to the least supported:

1. Full-time gifted program is the most supported method of grouping gifted students.
2. Cluster grouping within heterogeneous classes.
3. Grouping for acceleration.
4. Regrouping for enriched learning in specific subject areas.
5. Cross-grade grouping.
6. Enrichment or pullout programs.
7. Within class ability grouping.
8. Cooperative grouping for regular instruction.

Coleman and Gallagher (1995) researched a school that attempted to meet the needs of early adolescent learners by developing some form of gifted programming. Their research was on successful blending of middle schools and gifted education programs and cooperative learning programs and gifted education. Coleman and Gallagher (1995) analyzed the utilization of five exemplary sites as recommended by education professionals for each concurrent research exploration. The researchers found

that successful blending occurs and includes some form of instructional grouping and enrichment and the presence of at least one professional on-staff mentor with expertise in gifted education.

Rogers (2002) noted that variations in population, structure, personnel, and culture and differences might exist from district to district because gifted programming options must be able to meet the needs of the individual to be successful and adequate. Rakow (2005) recommended that middle schools needed to provide both cognitive and affective support services and programming for gifted students. These services should include specially trained teachers and counselors in every middle school. In addition, Rakow (2005) believed that gifted programming must comprise a range of services and require more than one hour a week.

Academic Achievement and Self-Identity of the Minority Gifted and Talented Student

Kearney (2010) asserted that empirical research has focused on the link between self-esteem and racial identity among African Americans. However, less attention has been focused on the link between self-concept and racial identity in regard to gifted and talented African Americans (Kearney, 2010). Self-esteem is defined as a positive or negative orientation toward oneself highlighting an overall evaluation of one's worth or value (Kearney, 2010). These feelings are based on individuals' assessment of their personal value with focus on implicit and explicit messages or appraisals provided by significant others and the social settings (positive or negative) in which they interact (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000).

Gray-Little and Hafdahl (2000) and Lockett and Harrell (2003) defined global self-esteem as the individual's overall feeling or general judgment of personal high or low self-worth. African Americans self-esteem has often been compared with the self-esteem of Caucasian Americans. Gray-Little and Hafdahl (2000) found in a meta-analysis study that African American children and adolescents have higher self-esteem than Caucasian children and adolescents, which is in contrast to an earlier belief that African American children would report lower self-esteem on account of their social status.

This pattern was also replicated in Caucasians during childhood, which emphasized a higher rating of self-esteem with their African American counterparts. In addition, there was a dramatic drop in self-esteem throughout adolescence, a slow rise throughout adulthood, and a very sharp drop during old age (Zeigler-Hill, 2007). A recurring theme throughout these studies was that when compared to Caucasian students, African Americans were also found to base their self-esteem on the approval of others less often than Whites (Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000; Zeigler-Hill, 2007).

Most of these studies also had an evaluating component of racial/ethnic identity and found a link between self-esteem and racial/ethnic identity for African American students. Twenge and Crocker (2002) identified in a meta-analysis study that while African Americans scored higher on self-esteem measures than Caucasians, Caucasians scored higher than other minority groups (Hispanics, Asians, and American Indians). They attributed this to the unique combination of racial identity and self-esteem for African Americans (Twenge & Crocker, 2002). Gray-Little and Hafdahl (2000) identified several studies that established a positive relationship between individual self-esteem and

strength of ethnic identity among African Americans. They suggested that among African Americans and other minorities, ethnic/racial identity is experienced more intensely and was more significant; therefore, they gained a sense of self-identification by relating to their ethnic group (Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000; Worrell, 2007b).

Some research has proven that while positive racial identity can account for some of the variation in self-esteem when comparing African Americans to Caucasians, it does not validate the differences in self-esteem reported in other minority groups (Twenge & Crocker, 2002). Lockett and Harrell (2003) argued that self-esteem and self-worth were necessary for helping students aspire toward academic achievement. Self-concept is often correlated with academic performance, and it appears to be a result of high achievement (Manning, 2007). Stronger effectiveness in enhancing self-concept is also associated with increasing academic skills of students. In addition to finding clear predictions of lower self-esteem in African American students based on lower academic achievement, Van Laar (2000) also indicated that African American students tend to have equal or higher self-esteem than Caucasian students. Constantine and Blackmon (2002) asserted the connection between self-esteem and academic performance among African American adolescents might be associated with how they interpret achievement experiences at school and in other facets of their lives. However, Obiakor (2004) asserted that a continued misdiagnosis of the abilities and talents of African American students would have a diminishing effect on both their self-esteem and self-efficacy. The tendency of these teachers was to respond more favorably to Caucasian students than to their culturally diverse counterparts (Obiakor, 2004).

Tyson et al. (2005) conducted a study that examined the underrepresentation of minority students in rigorous academic programs in North Carolina. The researchers investigated claims during the study that “acting White” was the source of the academic gap between Black and White students. The conclusion of the study reported that within African American peer groups, the burden of “acting White” was not a prevalent factor in comparison to elements of teasing because of achievement or being smart (Tyson et al., 2005).

Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as an individual's belief in his or her ability to perform behaviors that met his or her needs. In addition, self-efficacy has an effect on individual thought, learning, and emotional arousal (Bandura, 1993). Self-efficacy determines whether an individual will attempt a certain behavior, persist when meeting obstacles, exert effort, or attribute failure to self or others. Jonson-Reid, Davis, Saunders, Williams, and Williams (2005) argued that programs implemented to decrease and prevent dropout were not successful when attempting to address academic failure by improving student self-esteem. In fact, evaluations of programs geared to build self-esteem to improve school performance revealed a detachment between feeling good about oneself and academic achievement (Jonson-Reid et al., 2005).

Researchers have been focusing on self-efficacy rather than self-esteem (Pajares, 2002). This is supported through empirical data that suggests that academic self-efficacy, rather than self-esteem, is the main factor for school success. However, Jonson-Reid et al. (2005) contended that there have been limited studies examining the self-efficacy and self-esteem of African Americans. Choi (2005) found that students who have high levels of academic self-efficacy have high levels of academic performance. Whiting (2006)

emphasized that it was important for students to view themselves as learners when trying to enhance their achievement and confidence in school. Additionally, students with an underdeveloped sense of self-efficacy are less likely to be high achievers and less likely to be identified as gifted and persist in school. Many times, these students are disproportionately African Americans (Ford, 1996; Grantham, 2004; Whiting, 2006).

Teacher beliefs affect the instruction of minority children in gifted and talented programs (Szymanski, 2013). In effect, teacher attitudes may well shape the way these minority students perceive themselves in class (Hickey & Toth, 1990). There were limited studies prior to the 1970s on students' personal anxiety and perceived negative social consequences associated with the gifted and talented program label (Hickey & Toth, 1990). Hoge and Renzulli (1993) also studied the effects of such labeling on self-esteem and the impact of special placement on self-concept. Their research compared gifted and talented program students' self-concept with that of average children. They determined that children in gifted and talented programs displayed a moderately higher self-concept than did average children, but did not provide sufficient data about the effects of labeling on self-esteem (Hoge and Renzulli, 1993).

Parents of Gifted and Talented Minority Students

Throughout history, inner-city children in gifted and talented programs have faced the dilemma of rejection from their peers, family members, and community (Fordham, 1988). Children born between 1982 and 2002 have parents who have high expectations for them (Mattai et al., 2010). These children are referred to as the Millennial Generation—children of parents who are Baby Boomers or Generation Xers. The parents of millennial children often pursue educational objectives for their children. Monitoring

their children's educational program is crucial, especially for minority children. Students of color often need special assistance to overcome a long history of discrimination in education and employment (Schofield, 1991).

The relationship between academic achievement and family income is strong and pervasive (Viadero, 2006). The American Community Survey reported the median household income in Prince George's County in 2010 was slightly more than \$70,000, which placed this group firmly in the middle class bracket in the state of Maryland. In contrast, out of a small group of low-income first graders who were high achievers, 56% will still be in that category by fifth grade (Wyner et al., 2007). However, these students were also more likely to drop out of high school at a rate twice as high as higher income peers.

Parents who had positive educational experiences in school usually aspire for their children to pursue higher education (Spera, Wetzel, & Matto, 2009). In comparison, parents who were struggling learners, weak academically, and had little motivation for academics, usually passed these traits on to their offspring (Wilson & Michaels, 2006). Experiencing failure and frustration in school often results in a disconnected concept of education. This detachment resulted in a lack of encouragement by parents, which in turn translated into their children not performing well in school.

Scholastic success is also influenced by family structure. Research has shown that mothers typically have a stronger influence on their children's academic achievement than fathers, especially mothers not working outside of home. Furthermore, there is stronger involvement with children's schooling from highly educated parents and

mothers not working outside of the home. In addition, parents with fewer children are more inclined to be involved in their children's homework (Yan, 1999).

Parents of low socio-economic status and low educational background often have a challenging time setting high educational standards for their children (Davis-Kean, 2005). Impoverished parents in inner city environments are usually poorly educated and limited to minimum wage jobs. The lack of higher wage jobs forces them to work more than one job (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). This results in limited access to their families, decreased supervision of their children, and an inability to assist with academic assignments or interact with teachers and school activities (Camilleri, 2007). Children living in poor socio-economic environments usually lack parental stimulus compared to their middle class counterparts. The school dropout rate escalates when parents have little confidence in their own scholastic abilities and feel powerless to help their children academically (Jeynes, 2007).

The educational level of parents thus influences their children's scholastic success (Carranza, You, Chhuon, & Hudley, 2009; Nicholas-Omoregbe, 2010). When parents are exposed to education, they identify with the importance of parental involvement in school and community relationships and are more supportive of their children's academic attainment (Davis-Kean, 2005; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Okantey, 2008)

Miller (2004) indicated four possible reasons for the underrepresentation of minorities in gifted and talented programming. The first is the high percentage of Hispanics, Native Americans, and African Americans who live in low-income socio-economic environments, which has a tremendous impact on their ability to become high-achievers compared to their more affluent Caucasian and Asian counterparts. The second

factor is that parents of students classified as lower class tend to have lower expectations for their children than do parents of Caucasian and Asian students. Third, educators have not made it an operational priority to create strategies to increase the percentage of underrepresented groups in gifted and talented programs. Last, the scarcity of funding required to address the needs of gifted students is another impediment to address the underrepresentation of minority groups in these programs successfully (Miller, 2004).

Parents of children in gifted and talented programs are significant stakeholders in their children's academic success. Parents have distinct opinions and views about the educational needs of their gifted and talented children. Family values, the availability of school and community resources, and the concept of giftedness all influence parents' perceptions of their children's needs (Hertzog & Bennett, 2004). In their study, these researchers observed that many parents were confused about services provided for talented students at their schools. When addressing this issue, many parents believed that increased communication between schools and families is necessary.

VanTassel-Baska (2006) revealed in a survey that 87% of parents believed their children needed to be challenged and stimulated; they also needed more opportunities to display their creativity in class. Parents in the study argued that the information they shared with teachers about the education of their children in gifted and talented programs had no bearing or influence on learning outcomes. Several sources of data indicated that parental involvement in gifted and talented programs needed to be increased and unified into a network that protects and develops resources for gifted education (VanTassel-Baska, 2006). Research has suggested that greater parental involvement can result in beneficial outcomes such as higher grade point averages, better performances in reading

and mathematics, reduced grade retentions, and lower student dropout rates (Li, 2007; McKenna & Willms, 1998). Kim (2002), Jeynes (2003), and Yan and Lin (2005) asserted that this type of positive influence from parental involvement is believed to be applicable to all students regardless of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and grade levels. Hertzog and Bennett (2004) also suggested that parents could increase their children's learning potential by reading regularly to them, taking them on field trips, and participating in recreational activities.

Teachers of Gifted and Talented Minority Students

Urban educators unquestionably argue that despite the significant challenges many minority students face, many have the intellectual and cognitive capacity to learn and perform at average to well above average levels in any educational setting (Darling-Hammond, Williamson, & Hyler, 2007). There is a need for teachers to implement the pedagogy and strategies of culturally sensitive teaching when instructing minority students. These measures will assist in increasing the academic success rate of this demographic group in gifted and talented programs. Ford et al. (2002) indicated that the chief contributing factors to minority underrepresentation are (a) deficit thinking, (b) the use of traditional testing (especially IQ tests), and (c) the shortage of teacher referrals of minority students for gifted and talented education screening and placement. Mattai et al. (2010) examined teacher perceptions of minority students and determined that their perceptions about race does have an impact on the process of identifying minority students, specifically African American students, for gifted and talented programs. McBee's (2006) study researched how the various sources of referrals for gifted programming compared in terms of racial fairness. Upon examining a dataset that

consisted of over 700,000 records of Georgia students enrolled in grades kindergarten through fifth grade during the 2004 school year, it was determined that the quality of teacher nominations for African American students was especially deprived. In addition, McBee (2006) concluded that students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds were under nominated. Delpit (2006) argued that when they do not understand the learning potential of their minority students, teachers have the tendency to place limits on their instructional delivery. This will lead to minority students having fewer opportunities for gifted and talented recommendations and assessments (Delpit, 2006).

Many researchers have claimed that the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted and talented programs was a result of biased assessment methods (Erwin & Worrell, 2012). However, Erwin and Worrell (2012) argued that additional research through the examination of psychometric properties of scores on achievement tests, rating scales, and cognitive ability did not support this assertion. In addition, research of academically talented students that the underrepresentation of some racial or ethnic groups in gifted and talented programs was yet another demonstration of the long-standing and perennial achievement gap in the United States educational system. The researchers concluded that rather than changing assessment procedures, there should be a change in policy (Erwin & Worrell, 2012).

There might be a compromise of the teacher's ability to assess the student's potential for giftedness if there is an existence of difference between the student and the cultural background of the teacher (Staiger, 2004). In order to advocate more effectively for their children, African American parents must familiarize themselves with strategies on how to maneuver successfully among school and district policies and practices as well

as the system as a whole (Russell, 2005). Landsman and Lewis (2006) argued that deficit thinking leads many teachers to view minority students as liabilities rather than assets instead of capturing and engaging the wealth of knowledge all children bring to the classroom.

It is also apparent that the belief of educators may affect the way minority students are instructed in gifted and talented programs. Their belief plays a significant role in how students conduct themselves at school and the larger community. Most importantly, educators also contribute to the pool of knowledge that helps influence the decisions of students about long-term career goals as they move into adulthood.

Research has proven that there is a strong relationship between teacher expectations of students and academic performance (Rist, 2000; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Willis & Brophy, 1974). These expectations are usually covert and are rarely examined when considering student success and/or failure (Rist, 2000; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Willis & Brophy, 1974). Culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse gifted students were the focus of a de Wet & Gubbins (2011) study that examined teachers' attitudes toward the ability of the gifted students enrolled in gifted and talented programs. They found that some teachers believed that culturally, linguistically, and economically different students should be identified differently from their Caucasian middle class counterparts. Additionally, some teachers believed that the gifted and talented program should be modified to accommodate these children.

In the American public school system, research suggests a relationship between the shortage of African American teachers and the academic success of African American students (Berry, 2005; Mabokela & Madsen, 2003; White, 2002). After the desegregation

of schools in 1954, most African American children were no longer challenged academically (White, 2002). In addition, when Caucasian teachers enter the classroom, their personal experiences and views of themselves and the world around them often affect how they teach minority students; in effect many have lower expectations of this demographic group (Berry, 2005). The author also contended that African American educators tend to have a better understanding of African American students and unlike their Caucasian counterparts, they are more culturally in tune with the struggles and needs of minority children.

In 2003, Ferguson provided evidence that teacher beliefs are greatly influenced by race, ethnicity, and social class. In effect, teacher expectations, perceptions, and behaviors more than likely contribute to and even perpetuate the achievement gap between minority students and their Caucasian counterparts. Konstantopoulos, Modi, and Hedges (2001) reported in the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 that Caucasian and Asian students were more likely than ethnic minorities to be identified for participation in gifted and talented programs. In 2007, Williams reported similar findings when researching educator perspectives of gifted and talented programs and minority students.

Speirs Neumeister, Adams, Pierce, Cassady, and Dixon (2007) researched the implications of fourth grade teachers' perceptions of gifted and talented students. The study indicated that even the more experienced teachers had a narrow perception of giftedness. These teachers were also oblivious of how cultural and environmental factors impacted the expression of gifted minority students who were also economically disadvantaged. In conclusion, this study revealed that students dealing with grave family

issues and exhibiting poor behavior and work habits commonly resulted in teachers not recommending them for gifted and talented programs. Teacher referral practices are a significant problem contributing to the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted and talented programs. Referring to a generic characteristic checklist to identify gifted and talented students excludes many students who do not demonstrate these particular characteristics (Speirs Neumeister et al., 2007).

Kerison (2006) conducted a comparative cross-case study. Twelve students were chosen through convenience sampling. Teachers chose participants ranging from grades one to five. One school site was chosen. The study examined traits that students manifested in the home, school, and community environments. The research was conducted through interviews and documented reviews, and data was collected through observation. In addition, interviews were conducted and the researcher recorded data in journal entries. The significance of the study was that it determined key elements in the identification process of students in gifted and talented programs. The study proved that there were high-ability students in urban elementary schools (Kerison, 2006).

Kerison (2006) concluded that there was an underrepresentation of identified gifted and talented African American children in American public schools and advocated for a more successful identification and labeling process. The researcher primarily focused on students at the elementary level by re-examining the identification process used for identifying gifted and talented students and found that characteristics of gifted students were manifested in the home, the community, and the school. Through interviews that were conducted, it was found that parents were supportive of these students at home and were involved in their academic achievement at school. Most

importantly, parents and students had a positive view of school and learning (Kerison, 2006).

Researchers have suggested that training teachers to identify gifted students may affect their perception and expectations of students in the classroom (Hansen & Feldhusen, 1994; Moon & Brighton, 2008; Rizza & Morrison, 2003). In addition, Researchers found that teachers with more training were able to identify characteristics of gifted students better than did those without training (Rizza and Morrison, 2003). For example, Geake and Gross (2008) found that specific professional development on the social and academic characteristics, had a significant impact on the teachers attitudes regarding gifted students.

Teachers may rely on their own conceptions of the signs of giftedness, which may result in limiting their identification of students to those who have these characteristics (Pierce et al., 2007). Moon and Brighton (2008) disclosed that the majority of participants seemed unable to consider as gifted students who deviate from textbook definitions of giftedness. These beliefs seemed to apply mostly towards disadvantaged students from poverty and those students who spoke English as a second language (Moon & Brighton, 2008). Therefore, the researchers believed that teachers who rely on their own understandings of giftedness might be at a disadvantage when interacting with students who do not meet the teachers' expectations of what a gifted student should be. Moon and Brighton (2008) continued that teachers with naïve beliefs of giftedness might result in failing to identify students using accepted criteria and instead identify students based on their own criteria.

In 2011, the United States Federal Census reported that the minority population under the age of five in 2011 was 49.7% compared to 49.0% in 2010. This data supported claims that the minority population was increasing. Schools will have to adjust to this change in dynamics. Among other things, teacher beliefs and expectations will have to be modified when interacting with minority students. Ford, Grantham, Tarek, and Whiting (2008) explained that the challenge of eliminating barriers requiring minorities to be better represented in the gifted and talented programs are not insurmountable, and will require changes by educators as well as assessment instruments, policies, and practices.

In research provided by Wong (2008), teachers come to the classroom with differing worldviews that affect design of instruction and execution. There are three paradigms that may be used to describe teachers from the dominant culture. The first is the uninformed teacher who is fully aware of but does not acknowledge the presence of privilege. The second is the guilty teacher who knows about racism and feels disgrace for his or her ethnic identity but does nothing. Finally, there is the ally who actively battles to counteract racism. Speirs Neumeister et al. (2007) conducted a study on experienced gifted teacher perceptions when identifying gifted students from minority populations. It revealed that these teachers had limited conceptions of what constitutes giftedness, or how it may differ among minority and/or economically disadvantaged students who may be influenced by environmental factors and culture. With further investigation, teachers also had concerns for approximately one third of the students who initially qualified for gifted and talented programs. These perceptions were based mainly on students having a skill deficit in one area, poor work habits, and/or behavioral or family problems.

Ultimately, these students were less likely to be identified by teachers as gifted when compared to other students, although both groups were identified in the same manner (Speirs Neumeister et al., 2007).

Ford et al., (2001) claimed that teachers indirectly contribute to student underachievement when they fail to understand the students' cultural behaviors and values. Townsend (2002) emphasized that teacher perceptions of minority students influenced instructional practices, because they were frequently stereotyped. This influence may negatively affect the academic experience of racially diverse students, the English as a second language learner, and students of low socioeconomic status (Townsend, 2002).

Researchers have reported that pre-service teachers do not receive adequate training in cultural sensitivity and the understanding of diverse students (Ford & Harmon, 2001; Ford, Howard, Harris, & Tyson, 2000; Ford et al., 2001). These multicultural courses may only provide a brief introduction into the diverse cultures represented in the teachers' classrooms (Cho & De Castro-Ambrosetti, 2005). Ford et al. (2001) discovered while investigating multicultural competencies of gifted teachers, that gifted education textbooks provided characteristics and proficiencies that were beneficial for teachers to work successfully with gifted students. However, the additional skill set that was required to be an effective teacher of gifted multicultural students was absent. Ford et al. (2001) added that these educational texts rarely addressed the multicultural skills and understandings for educating gifted children.

Ford (2015) maintained that all classrooms must be culturally responsive, which will help with recruiting and retaining culturally diverse students in gifted education.

Ford (2015) contended that when considering recruiting and retaining students in gifted programs, one must consider the influential impact of the learning environment. When dealing with multicultural education, Banks (2009) provided four components: (a) learning environment, (b) philosophy about working with culturally different students, (c) curriculum, and (d) instruction. Ford (2015) added that teachers must have an inviting classroom. In an inviting classroom, the primary focus of education is for learners to display academic achievement and personal potential (Ford, 2015). The researcher continues, that the concentration is on what a student can do and who the student is affectively, socially, culturally, and racially.

Ford (2011) stated that classrooms were culturally insensitive. This shortcoming makes it difficult to retain underrepresented students in gifted education (Ford, 2013). To improve cultural sensitivity, Ford (2015) suggested including Invitational Learning (Purkey & Novak, 1966), into the classroom. Invitational Education provided a framework for thinking about who the individuals were and what they hoped to accomplish in education (Purkey & Novak, 1988, 1996). Ford (2015) listed the primary propositions of Invitational Learning:

- Trust: Education should be a cooperative and collaborative experience among students with equal status. Students must trust their teachers to be caring and responsible professionals. Educators should trust that their students could achieve at high/higher levels despite challenges and differences associated with their culture.

- Respect: Regardless of race, language, culture, income, and other socio-demographic backgrounds, students are capable and valuable, and should be treated as such.
- Optimism: Educators should recognize that students have untapped potential in all meaningful human endeavors. Optimism requires high and positive expectations for all students, regardless of race and cultural differences.
- Intentionality: Students' potential can be realized by creating places, policies, processes, and programs specifically designed to invite development. Educators must be intentionally inviting, and be followed up with accountability.

Ford (2015) concluded by asserting that Invitational Learning was intentional and that intentionally inviting classrooms were the most beneficial for positive achievement and higher levels of retention of culturally different students.

From a psychological perspective, Gilbert (1995) stated that some people might display attitudes that reflect a situational and/or dispositional response. Both of these concepts can be applied to classroom teacher perceptions. The situational response occurs when a teacher is more than likely to see a student's behavior as dependent upon the circumstances dictated by that situation. The author also contended that in the case of a dispositional response, the teacher is more likely to make certain judgments based upon pre-existing beliefs or perceptions about a student regardless of the situation. Gilbert (1995) concluded that it is more convenient for a person to use the dispositional response

because it requires less thinking and can be used to effectively categorize individuals. By utilizing this latter response, a teacher risks engaging in stereotyping.

Teacher perceptions and expectations combined with stereotyping exacerbate one of the most serious impediments to increasing the participation of minority students in gifted and talented programs. This issue should not only apply to teachers but also to parents, school planners, and policy makers (Mattai et al., 2010). In a qualitative study, Thomerson (2010) explored how the practices of novice elementary literature teachers in gifted and talented programs were influenced by the school district's curricular and pedagogical mandates. This qualitative case study revealed the strengths and limitations of the process by revealing three qualities that complicated effective teacher preparation programs in literature (Van-Tassel, Baska, & Stambaugh, 2006). When assessing the cognitive, psychological, academic, affective, cultural, and social needs and development of students of color, educators should prescribe a holistic approach through a culturally relevant framework (Moore et al., 2005a).

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Bell (1976), the originator of the Critical Race Theory, claimed that traditional approaches of combating racism were producing smaller gains than in previous years. Bell (1976) recognized that racism is engrained in the fabric and system of the American society and while reinforcing "White privilege" and "White supremacy," which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color. CRT was adapted for the education field to explain how educational theory and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups historically in America, especially in gifted programs (Henfield, Moore

& Wood, 2008; Lynn, 2006; Saddler, 2005). Saddler (2005) claimed that Critical Race Theory offers a powerful framework for reassessing the state of affairs within the current public education system.

Henfield et al. (2008) contended that because race is a social construct, it could not be ignored as an important aspect of the social life of students. Consequently, minority students could feel stereotypically threatened when challenged to display intellectual abilities, which might confirm any negative stereotype, thereby hindering his or her academic performance (Lehrman, 2005). Saddler (2005) defined it as a method of analyzing historical events in the classroom to gain an understanding of contemporary minority students in the gifted classroom.

To theorize about inequalities in education, CRT uses three themes. In the first theme, racism is ordinary and not aberrational (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Racism is so deeply ingrained in the social structure of society that it has become an integral part of normal daily life and is practically unrecognizable Saddler (2005). Saddler (2005) suggested that in order to expose its systemic presence in education, its many layers must be revealed. It can be argued that African American children in the past and present have been underrepresented in the nation's gifted and talented programs because racism is ingrained in the identification and retention processes associated with these programs. This results in an elitist culture in gifted and talented programs, which perpetuates the power of Caucasian middle class mainstream culture (Savick, 2009).

The second CRT theme emphasizes the voices and experiences of minorities through narratives in order to challenge Caucasian Americans' normative standards (Saddler, 2005). The author stated that because minorities have a different frame of

reference, their voices must be heard individually when examining issues pertaining to education. Knowledge of the experiences of African Americans subjected to racial inequity necessitates a clear understanding of the socially embedded principles of racism in present-day educational structures and practices.

The third CRT theme challenges liberal approaches to racism such as neutrality, colorblindness, and merit (Bergerson, 2003). Saddler (2005) added that a natural belief in the law created an equitable and just society. This was an innate belief in that laws are justified, fair, and maintain order. However, this perspective is hard to reconcile with the historic and contemporary underrepresentation of underserved minority students in gifted and talented programs.

Savage Inequalities by Kozol (1991) revealed the increasing differences between affluent Caucasian suburban schools and their poorer minority urban counterparts. Most of these differences were attributed to race and class (Kozol, 1991). Critical Race theorists analyze the concept of equal education opportunity before determining whether public education is equitable. This provides a better understanding of why desegregation laws have failed to improve the educational outcomes of African American children, including those in gifted and talented programs. Savick (2009), for instance, believed that it was necessary to analyze the unique needs of African American students and their barriers to academic achievement as a sub-group. This approach allowed for the delivery of equal educational opportunities. Savick (2009) also suggested that the criteria used to identify students for gifted and talented programs are racially and culturally biased. Critical Race theorists argue that the identification procedures exclude minority students, as opposed to including them.

Cultural Ecological Theory

Cultural Ecological Theory uses an ethnographic approach to explain minority academic achievement through a blend of history, ecology and psychology (Foley, 2004). The Cultural Ecological Theory conveyed that some minorities, specifically African Americans, develop an identity that is in direct resistance to the identity that mainstream society endorses, including academic achievement (Ogbu, 1978, 1989 & Ogbu & Simons 1998). This type of identification can lead to the failure of the minority student to engage fully in the academic mission of mainstream education and to resist actively achieving (Worrell, 2007a).

Hess and Shipman (1965) described Cultural Ecological Theory, as referring to a child's cultural, social, or economic environment as "depraved and deprived" of the elements necessary to "achieve the behavior rules (role requirements) needed to academically succeed. Worrell (2007a) suggested that there was a link between academic performance and social identity constructs. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) contended that African American students who minimize their association with their cultural backgrounds improved their chances of succeeding in academic domains. This action, labeled "the burden of acting White," ascertains that African American students become raceless or abandon their African American identity to compete with others in academic domains (Awad, 2007). African American and Latino students from economically advantaged backgrounds are typically perceived as trying to "act White" by their peers and are forced to choose between high academic achievement and social acceptance (Whiting & Ford, 2009; Ogbu, 2004).

Several researchers have explored the power of influence on the academic achievement of African American students. It has been determined that negative peer pressure has a detrimental impact on students who opt for academic achievement (Moore et al., 2005; Ogbu, 2004). It is also true that African American students confront peer rejection more frequently (Lindstrom and Van Sant, 1986). Steele (2003) argued that groups negatively stereotyped by society in a specific domain are hindered in performance in that domain when the stereotype is made clear or obvious (Worrell, 2007a). Worrell (2007a) further stated that an African American student would score low on a test because society has stereotyped African Americans as having low intelligence during academic situations. In conclusion, academic achievement for African Americans may occur at the expense of their sense of ethnic identity (Worrell, 2007a).

Access to rigorous and challenging learning opportunities can vary by race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status (Sunderman et al., 2011). Children from low-income households are more likely to live in low-quality neighborhoods and exposed or subjected to domestic and neighborhood violence. This environment includes single mothers who are depressed and may be high school dropouts (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005). These environmental factors can affect minority students' motivation and determination to succeed academically. Camilleri (2007) also asserted that children with a low socio-economic status usually lack parental stimulus compared to their middle class counterparts.

Raudenbush (2008) declared students from low-income families are less likely to be exposed to more learning opportunities from school than students from higher-income homes. Sunderman et al., (2011) argued that there were consequences of well-meaning

instructional practices that effectively “dumb-down” the curriculum based on biases, misconceptions, and because some students are sometimes reluctant to seek rigorous curricula. In addition, students of color are often less likely than Caucasian students and many Asian-descent students to be engaged in more rigorous coursework (Sunderman et al., 2011). Payne (2011) added that among the issues is also the selection of students for gifted and talented programs and honors courses. In 2005, the State of the States Report by the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) indicated that the average proportion of Caucasian students in states who reported the identification of gifted students by cultural diversity was 76%.

Researchers (Byrd & Chavous, 2009; Chavous et al., 2003) found that high identity awareness combined with an awareness of societal discrimination resulted in positive academic outcomes among African American students. In regards to racial identity development, research has been split in deciding whether African American achievement is determined through low or high racial/ethnic identity (Worrell, 2007b).

Deficit Thinking Theory

Deficit Thinking Theory refers to minority students who believe they are culturally different from White counterparts and are viewed as culturally deprived or disadvantaged, which inhibits the acknowledgement of talent or potential talent and leads to an underrepresentation and underserved minority population (Ford et al., 2002). The Deficit Thinking Theory is a significant concept to consider when examining the retention issues of African American students in gifted programs. Ford et al. (2002) identified the following indicators of deficit thinking:

- traditional IQ-based definitions, theories of giftedness and philosophies;

- identification practices and policies that have had an disproportionately negative impact on African American students;
- a lack of training geared at assisting educators in the area of gifted education;
- a lack of training geared at assisting teachers understand and interpret standardized test results;
- inadequate training of teachers and other school personnel in multicultural education;
- inadequate efforts to communicate with African American families and communities about gifted education; and
- African American students' decisions to avoid gifted education programs.

Gould (1981, 1995) and Menchaca (1997) proposed that deficit thinking in the past and in present has contributed to beliefs about race, culture, and intelligence. Gould (1995) and Hilliard (1992) argued that many educators have used standardized tests that were culturally biased in school districts faced with increased diversity. These assessments were based on American culture and English proficiency, rather than on intelligence (Gould, 1995; Hilliard, 1992). Research has reported that African Americans' IQ scores have tended to cluster about a standard deviation below the average, which has provided evidence for some that the tests are biased (Cloud, 2007). Ford et al. (2002) acknowledged that many teachers receive inadequate training in testing and assessment. This results in teachers not able to reliably interpret intelligence and achievement test scores (Ford et al., 2002). The test scores from culturally biased standardized tests often negatively affect students' perceptions of themselves. In addition, the test scores for culturally biased tests negatively affect the perceptions of students. As

a result of deficit thinking, gifted African American students may choose to underachieve purposefully and refuse to be assessed for gifted education services, and refuse placement in gifted programs (Ford et al., 2002).

Summary

Chapter II explored parents and teachers' perceptions of the schooling experiences of African American middle school students in an urban gifted program. Deeper insight was provided by conducting a review of literature, which was comprised of the definition of gifted, the history of inequality in gifted education, and middle school gifted education programming. In addition, the academic achievement and self-identity of minority-gifted students was discussed. The review also featured literature on parents and teachers of gifted minority students and the theoretical framework review. Chapter III outlines the methodology used to conduct the study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of parents and teachers' perspectives on the schooling experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program. Chapter III discusses the research design, rationale for the research methodology, research questions, and research setting. In addition, the population and sample selection, instrumentation, ethical considerations, data collection procedures, and data analysis will be discussed.

Research Design

The design chosen for this study was qualitative, using a phenomenological approach to explore parents and teachers' perspectives on the schooling experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program. Exploring participants' perceptions allowed the researcher to collect detailed information about the experiences of African American gifted students experiences in gifted urban gifted program. The researcher chose qualitative design because it utilizes document reviews, observations, interviews, and artifacts as sources of data (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative phenomenological research describes the meaning of the lived experience for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The selection of the phenomenological study was appropriate because there is a lack of literature published on phenomena using methodology (Hambrick, 2007). The research provided an understanding of a specific social belief while researching the implicit meanings of the

conscious human experiences, which otherwise cannot be done by observation (Cresswell, 2007; Sanders, 1982).

Streubert-Speziale and Carpenter (2003) contended that phenomenological inquiry uses four strategies: (a) intuiting, (b) bracketing, (c) analyzing, and (d) describing. *Intuiting*: the researcher thinks through the data to gather and accurate interpretation of what is meant in a particular description; when *bracketing* the researcher must remain neutral about any preconceived ideas or judgments about the phenomenon; when *analyzing* the researcher compares and contrasts descriptions of the phenomenon, categories, codes, and organizes the data collected (Creswell, 2007; Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2003); when *describing* the researcher describes and communicates what the researcher has found (Brink & Wood, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

Rationale for the Research Methodology

Qualitative researchers identify the phenomenon or the “object” of the human experience (Creswell, 2007; Van Manen, 1990). The researcher’s rationale for using qualitative data is that it offers a complete analysis and in-depth knowledge of participants’ perspectives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Qualitative inquiry holds the promise of discovery, creates new insight into old problems, and produces nuanced accounts that provide justice to the experience of all those participating in the research (McLeod, 2001). Strauss and Corbin (1998) contend that qualitative methods can be used to acquire the intricate details about the phenomena such as feelings, thought process, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about qualitative procedures. Exploring how parents and teachers viewed African American students’ experiences in an urban gifted program was the objective the researcher attempted to accomplish in this study.

Research Questions

The researcher used three qualitative questions for this study:

1. What are some of the academically challenging experiences provided in an urban gifted program?
2. What are some of the emotionally challenging experiences provided in an urban gifted program?
3. What gifted program schooling experiences have been provided that encourage academic engagement between students of similar ability?

Research Setting

The setting for this study was a public school in Prince George's County in Maryland. Prince George's county is the largest school district in Maryland. There are 207 schools in the school system (122 elementary, 24 middle, 23 high schools, two vocational schools, three alternative, nine special schools and centers, 12 K-8, and eight charter schools. Prince George's County Public schools have 23,785 employees of which 9,197 are teachers (Prince George's County Public Schools Facts and Figures, 2012). Prince George's County Public Schools serves over 125,136 students with a racial composition of 64.7% Black/African American, 25.8% Hispanic/Latino, 4.5% Caucasian, 2.8% Asian, and 2.2% Other (Prince George's County Public Schools Pupil Accounting and School Boundaries, 2013) (See Figure 1). Table 2 portrays the 2013-2014 racial breakdown of gifted students identified for Prince George's County Public Schools.

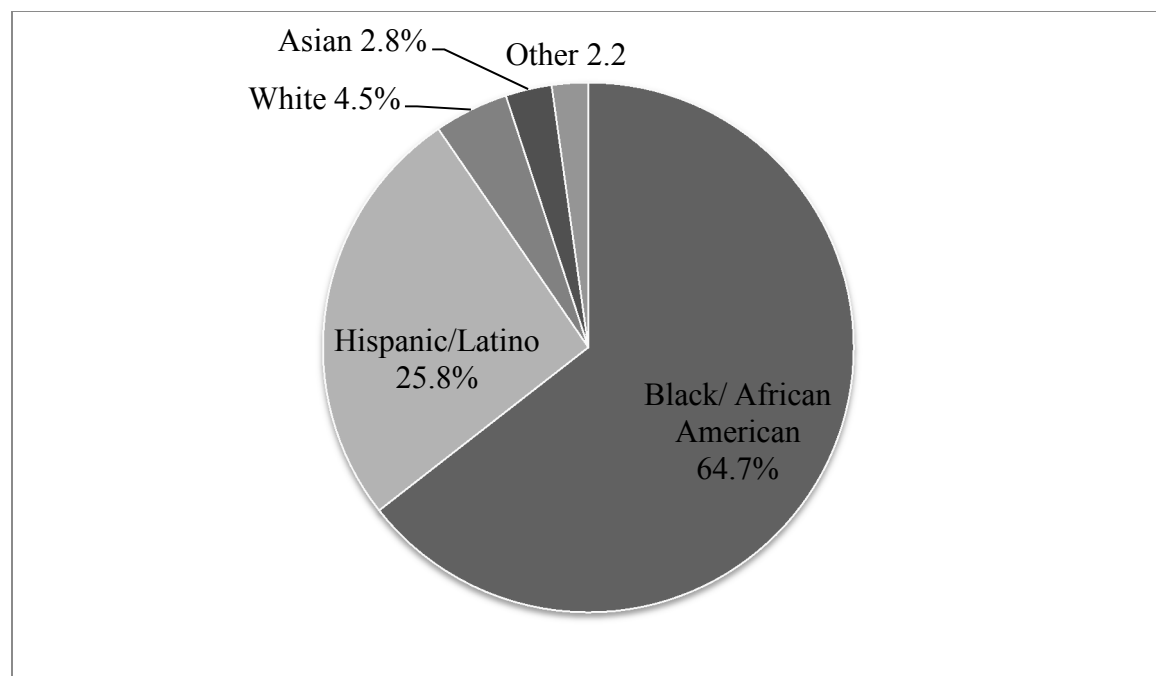


Figure 1. Prince George's County Public Schools Population by Race and Ethnicity 2013

Table 2

2013-14 Bridge to Excellence PGCPS TAG Demographics by Race

GRADE	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
All GT Students	1187	1264	1579	1434	1307	1215	1068	1035	928	748	698	12463
Hispanic/Latino of any race	228	238	313	279	202	206	133	110	123	64	63	1959
American Indian or Alaskan Native	62	104	166	141	94	92	71	47	38	16	2	833
Asian	77	60	94	91	90	83	65	11	13	6	12	602
Black or African American	709	777	986	917	841	781	717	272	219	133	141	6493

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	33	32	28	15	8	11	4	1	0	1	0	133
Caucasian	257	202	188	176	186	155	140	22	26	22	8	1382
Other (two or more races)	49	89	117	94	88	93	71	682	632	570	535	3020

Population and Sample Selection

The target populations in this study were parents and teachers from an urban school district in Prince George's County, Maryland. The sample included one middle school with a gifted and talented program in grades 6 through 8 as part of its curriculum. The school received the 2011 Excellence in Gifted and Talented Education (EGATE) Schools Award from The Maryland State Department of Education and the State Advisory Council on Gifted and Talented Education. This recognition program honors elementary, middle, and high schools that offer gifted and talented programs aligned with the objectives and criteria of the Maryland Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Program Guidelines and Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.04.07 Gifted and Talented Education.

Maryland Report Card (2013) indicated 99% percent of students enrolled in the gifted program were African American. This study focused primarily on the data generated from African American students' parents and the teachers who instruct them.

In purposeful sampling, the researcher intentionally selected individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Purposeful sampling was used to select participants because of their experiences and affiliation with African American students in an urban gifted program. For the focus group interview, the

researcher selected 10 African American parents who had children enrolled in a gifted and talented program at one middle school in Prince George’s County. The sampling criteria for teacher participation included the following: teachers that were currently enrolled in or completed the teacher certification program, and currently teaching in a gifted and talented program. There were seven African American, one Asian American, and two Caucasian teachers selected to participate in one-to-one interviews to determine divergent or convergent themes emerging from parents and teachers’ consciousness regarding the phenomenon from a cross-cultural perspective as suggested by the review of literature (Delpit, 2006; Park et al., 2005).

Parents

Parents of children currently enrolled in a gifted and talented program participated in the study. However, parents of students that were identified as Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian, and as “Other” were not considered for this study. Only parents of targeted students previously coded into racial categories by Prince George’s County Public Schools as African American were selected. The selection of participants was drawn from an urban gifted and talented program that had approximately 300 students (Table 3). Parents’ perceptions about their children’s experiences in a gifted and talented program were based on a number of influences including achievement and attitude.

Table 3

Gifted Student Population

Grade	Population	Gender
6th	100	M: 51 F: 49
7th	107	M: 44 F: 63

Table 3

Gifted Student Population (continued)

8th	90	M: 38 F: 52
Total:	297	

Note: M=Male, F=Female

Teachers

The teachers currently employed in a gifted and talented program in Prince George's County, Maryland and instructed African American students participated in the study. They currently instructed African American students in an urban gifted and talented program. Teachers' perceptions about their student's experiences in a gifted and talented program were based on a number of influences including achievement and attitude. The participants were drawn from an urban gifted and talented program that had approximately 16 teachers (Table 4).

Table 4

Gifted Teacher Population

Grade	Population	Gender
6th	4	M: 3 F: 1
7th	5	M: 2 F: 3
8th	7	M: 2 F: 5
Total:	16	

Note: M=Male, F=Female

Instrumentation

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument in the study (Hennink et al., 2011). The researcher's role during data collection required direct involvement with participants. Creswell (2012) asserted that the researcher is immersed in every aspect of the research process while collecting data. The characteristics of a researcher that provide credibility during a qualitative study are

- the ability to be responsive to environmental cues and interact,
- the ability to collect information simultaneously at multiple levels, and
- the ability to process data, provide feedback, and request verification of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The credibility of qualitative research is reliant on the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All the data was collected using protocols. Interviews were audio taped after participants gave their informed consent.

When designing a study, the qualitative researcher should be concerned with validity and reliability while designing a study, analyzing results, and judging the quality of the study (Patton, 2002). Creswell and Miller (2000) suggested that validity is affected by the researcher's perception of validity in the study. Thus, the researcher developed their own concepts of validity, which has often resulted in a generation or adoption of what they considered appropriate terms, such as, quality, rigor, and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Golafshani (2003) indicated that increasing the reliability, validity, trustworthy, quality, and rigor would be important to the research in any methodology. Participants in this study were informed of the topic of this study, the use of the information they

provide and privacy procedures followed. To ensure trustworthiness the researcher carefully documented all procedures, effectively coded, categorized, collected, and analyzed data in a fair and honest way. The researcher provided descriptions of the research methods, designs and procedures. The researcher strived to be fair and unbiased. All participants were informed of the purpose of the research study and consent to being audio taped to ensure accuracy of interpretations.

To address the issue of researcher bias, Walcott (1990) suggested the following: (a) be a good listener: the researchers job is to interpret the participants' responses, (b) record accurately: detailed notes and recordings should be kept, (c) include primary data in the final report: it allows the reader to see what the researchers conclusions were based on, and (d) write accurately without misspelled words, incorrect grammar, and inconsistent statements. The errors threaten the study.

Interviews

Interviews play a central role in the data collection in a phenomenological theory study. In this study, one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews were conducted. Once eligibility was determined, each teacher was given the option of scheduling the one-to-one interview session. The researcher interviewed teachers in a private designated research area in the school building. Eligible parents were given a scheduled time by the researcher to meet for the focus group interview. The interview took place in a private designated research area in the school building. Participants were advised that the interview would take 60 minutes. Creswell (2005) recommended that phenomenological studies involve primarily in-depth interviews with as many as ten individuals. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of parents and teachers' of gifted

African American students experiences, the researcher chose to explore beliefs, perspectives, and history through a series of in-depth interviews. The interview consisted of six open-ended questions. Parents (focus group) and teachers (one-to-one) received different interviews questions. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The researcher reviewed the transcriptions of the interview with the respective participant in order to verify key thoughts and words through a process of member checking. The application of member checking is necessary to assess the accuracy with which a researcher has represented a participant's subjectivity (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

Pilot Interview Questions

An exploratory study helped the researcher assess the questions considered for the interview (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The researcher chose to conduct a pilot test to establish validity of scores, improve questions, format, and scales of the instrument (Creswell, 2013). The pilot test reveals limitations, or other weaknesses within the interview design and allows the researcher to make necessary revisions prior to the collection of data (Turner, 2010). A pilot interview with three gifted and talented teachers and three parents of gifted African American students occurred in order to get their perspectives of the research study and interview questions. Parents and teachers were asked to volunteer for the interview pilot in the initial invitation email. The three parents selected for the pilot study were originally identified for the research study, but opted to do the pilot study due to time constraints. The three gifted and talented teachers contacted the researcher by email to volunteer to participate in the pilot study.

Each pilot interview participant received a matrix (see Appendix G) to mark whether he or she believed the questions to be feasible and appropriate. Six questions were asked in both parent and teacher pilot interview sessions. Any changes made to the interview protocols were a result of input from these participants. Prior to the beginning of the pilot interview session, the researcher read a verbal script pertaining to the study as well as the pilot interview (see Appendix G). The researcher recorded and transcribed the pilot interview for parents and teachers. In conclusion, the interview time of 60 min was appropriate and there were no changes to be made to the interview design. The following steps comprise the pilot testing process:

1. Identify participants.
2. Select and contact participants.
3. Arrange meeting time and location with participants.
4. Preview interview questions with each participant.
5. Modify questions based on feedback from each participant.
6. Conduct pilot interview with each participant.
7. Time and pilot interview.
8. Conclude the pilot interview.
9. Repeat process for second pilot participant.
10. Calculate the average time for both interviews.
11. Complete the pilot phase. (Williams, 2010)

Ethical Considerations

After successfully defending the dissertation proposal, the researcher received approval from Hampton University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The function of

the IRB was to review projects and activities that involve human subjects. This would ensure that no participant was at risk of harm, fully informed of the purpose and intent of the study. Participation from individuals was voluntary, and confidentiality of the participants' responses assured the anonymity of all who participated in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Following IRB approval, the researcher applied and was granted permission from the school district's research and evaluation department (see Appendix C), and the school under study (see Appendix D). Creswell (2009) posited that gaining approval to research emphasizes the implementation of the Code of Ethics that establishes trust and confidentiality as instituted by law. After receiving approval, an invitation to participate in the study was sent to parents and teachers via email (see Appendices E and F). The email included an outline of the study, location and time the interviews would be conducted. All participants who volunteered to participate in the study were required to sign a letter of informed consent that described the nature and purpose of the study and requested their permission to take part in the research (see Appendices H and I). Participants signed consent forms at the beginning of the interview sessions.

The researcher chose three methods of data collection to achieve triangulation and improve the study's validity and reliability: one-to one interviews, focus group interviews and a document review of Criteria For Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program Guidelines for the Maryland State Department of Education.

One-to-One Interviews

The first method consisted of one-to-one interviews with teachers to collect data on the experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program. Teachers

were assigned code names to ensure anonymity (example: Teacher 1= T1). In addition, teachers answered demographic questions for data collection. Moustakas (1994) argued that one-to-one interviews were one of the most popular interview techniques in collecting primary information of people's perceptions and feelings. The researcher scheduled a 60-minute, one-time interview with participants to record real-time responses. Six validated open-ended questions were used during the interviews. Interviews were conducted on site at the teachers' school, recorded, and transcribed.

Focus Group Interviews

The second method involved conducting an unstructured focus group interview to gather parents' collective perceptions of the experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program. Focus groups are likely to yield the best results from interviewees who are similar and cooperative with each other (Creswell, 2005). Parents were assigned code names to ensure anonymity (example: Teacher 1= T1). After collecting demographic data, focus group participants answered six open-ended questions. The focus group interview lasted no longer than one hour.

Document Review

Method three involved the researcher reviewing public documents (e.g. district policies, Common Core State Standards, Maryland's Bridge to Excellence Plan, Criteria For Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program Guidelines for the Maryland State Department of Education, districts strategic plan) to understand district and state expectations of gifted and talented programs. Document review revealed current data, standards, and professional jargon that participants used as daily guidelines (Creswell,

2009). The researcher located copies of the public document online at Maryland State Department of Education website.

Triangulation

Utilization of different data sources of information known as triangulation converges multiple sources to address the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Greene, Caracelli; Graham, 1989) (See Figure 2). This process helps increase the validity to the study (Creswell, 2013).

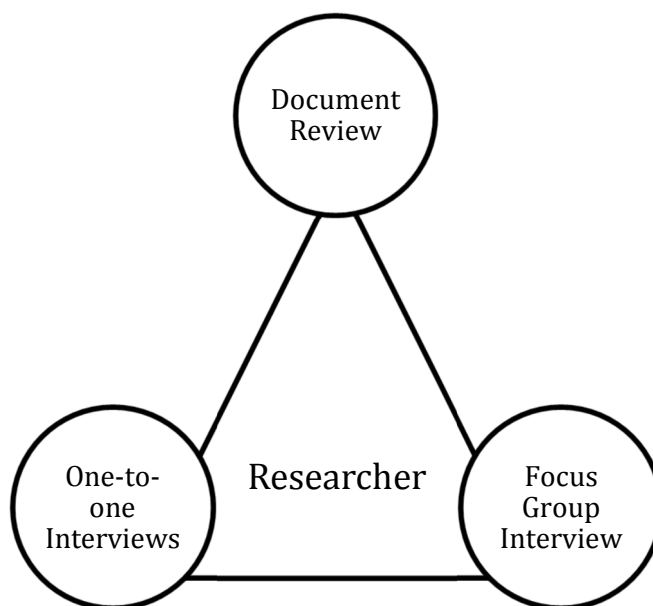


Figure 2. Data Methods for Triangulations

Validation of findings occurs through the research process (Creswell, 2009). Utilizing such procedures as keeping research journal, interviews information, data analysis and decisions, copies of transcripts, and tracking information in Dedoose addressed qualitative validity (Creswell, 2009; Gibbs, 2007). Qualitative reliability was

established through the detail protocol for data collection, analysis, and the description of the data results (Gibbs, 2007).

Data Analysis

Following the procedural steps suggested by Creswell (2012), an analysis and interpretation of data related to the three research questions involved the triangulation of comprehensive information from a variety of sources. Relative data associated with the three research questions were collected through questionnaires and interviews. After the data-gathering phase was concluded, the researcher first read and examined all the information to get an overall general idea of the many diverse pieces of information. To ensure validity, the researcher chose to conduct member checks with participants for verification of the study. After verification, the information collected was studied and dissected to bring meaning and make sense of the tone.

Upon reviewing interview transcripts, the data was aggregated and coded for themes. Creswell (2007) adds that data analysis includes: coding by segmenting and labeling the text; the use of codes to develop themes and to aggregate similar codes together; connecting and interrelating themes; and constructing a narrative.

The researcher used bracketing and intuiting to avoid bias while conducting the data analysis and increase validity. Researchers are advised to implement the technique of bracketing (preventing the superimposition of a researcher's memories, judgments, feelings, or biases) to reduce or minimize this effect (Creswell, 2005; Moustakas, 1994).

The thematic units provided the structure for the subsequent detailed descriptive narrative summarizing parents and teachers' perceptions on the schooling experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program. The researcher used the Dragon

Dictate data analysis software to transcribe interviews and capture themes, decipher data, and write the narrative (Creswell, 2009). The researcher carefully read the transcribed texts, which involved a thorough and time-consuming search of the text for reoccurring words or themes. To analyze transcribed interviews and capture themes, make meaning of the data, and write a narrative, the researcher used Dedoose data analysis software to facilitate the data analysis (Creswell, 2009).

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology for the research study. A phenomenological approach was used in this qualitative study to explore parents and teachers' perspectives on the schooling experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program. To enhance the accuracy of the study, the research design, rationale for the research methodology, research questions, and research setting were discussed. In addition, the population and sample selection, instrumentation, ethical considerations, data collection procedures, and data analysis will be discussed. Chapter IV discusses the research design, data analysis, description of case participants, and findings.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain a better understanding of parents and teachers' perspectives on the schooling experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program. This study utilized quantitative methodology, wherein triangulation was a data analysis method used to explore parent and teacher perceptions. The researcher interviewed parents and teachers' and utilized a quantitative survey for data collection and analysis.

Chapter four presents an analysis of one to one interviews, focus group interviews, and document review. The research questions are restated with the implementation of data collection process and procedures. The remainder of the chapter discusses each research question with summary findings and conclusions.

Review of the Problem Statement

Major factors such as identification, recruitment, teacher training, student-teacher relations, student peer relations, and learning environment have contributed to the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted education (Ford, 1998 & Ford et al., 2008). Brighton and Moon (2008); Pierce et al., (2007) added that having a limited understanding of the experiences and needs gifted students from diverse backgrounds results in fewer diverse students being referred for gifted and talented programs. However, limited research exists that focuses predominantly on African American students experiences in gifted and talented programs (Huff, 2005).

Review of the Research Design

The researcher used qualitative phenomenological research method to conduct this study. Phenomenological research is appropriate when there is limited information pertaining to a phenomenon (Beck, 1998). The researcher designed the interview protocol to gain detailed information from participants (see Appendices H and I). The protocol introduced the study and explained the purpose of the study, confidentiality, potential risks to the participants, and benefits from the findings of the study, as well as the right of participants to withdraw any time from the study. Ten teachers provided insight, reflections, and their experiences as responses to one-to-one open-ended, depth interview questions. Ten parents participated in focus group interviews. The interview data was used to answer the research questions:

1. What are some of the academically challenging experiences provided in an urban gifted program?
2. What are some of the emotionally challenging experiences provided in an urban gifted program?
3. What gifted program schooling experiences have been provided that encourage academic engagement between students of similar ability?

The interview questions for parents and teachers were as follows:

Interview questions for parents:

1. Has the program had an influence on your child's attitude toward school? Explain why or why not?
2. How has your child's self-confidence changed as a result of participating in the program?

3. How challenging is the work in the program for your child?
4. How has this program changed your child's academic achievement?
5. Does this program provide opportunities for your child to work with other children who have similar interests and abilities?
6. Do you think this program has been beneficial for your child? Explain why or why not?

Interview questions for teachers:

1. Has the program had an influence on the student's attitude toward school?
Explain why or why not?
2. How has the student's self-confidence changed as a result of participating in the program?
3. How challenging is the work in the program for the student?
4. How has this program changed the student's academic achievement?
5. Does this program provide opportunities for the student to work with other children who have similar interests and abilities?
6. Do you think this program has been beneficial for the student? Explain why or why not?

The interview questions for parents and teachers' corresponded or had some correspondence with the research questions (Table 5).

Table 5

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions

Research Questions Numbers	Parents and Teachers' Interview Questions Numbers
1	1,2,6
2	3,4,6
3	5,6

The researcher asked parents eight demographic questions and teachers six demographic questions that provided further background of their lives. Six open-ended, an in-depth one-to-one, and focus group interview questions allowed parents and teachers to expound about African American students' experiences in an urban gifted program. In addition, the researcher conducted a document review of the Criteria For Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program Guidelines for the Maryland State Department of Education.

Four themes were identified from the interviews, as suggested by Moustakas (1994). These themes reflected common interests and concerns of parents and teachers as they addressed the emotional, academic, and social experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program. Utilizing Dedoose data analysis software, the researcher aggregated themes by clustering interview responses, validating similar content themes throughout the one-to-one interview narratives, and constructing textual-structural descriptions from the one-to-one accounts that are representative of the entire participants group.

Pilot Interview Questions Findings

As a preemptive measure, an exploratory study or pilot interview helped provide a forum to discuss the interview protocols (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The researcher conducted a pilot of interview protocol and questions with three parents and three teachers to determine whether the data collection procedure was appropriate, the questions worded correctly, and the interview time of 60 minutes was adequate. Each of the pilot respondents agreed that the interview questions supported the research questions. There were no modifications made to the interview questions. The researcher determined that the interview could last between 45 to 60 minutes. Therefore, there were no changes made from the original time allotment of 60 minutes.

Data Analysis

Data analysis included transcribing interviews, reviewing interview transcripts for emerging themes, bracketing, coding interview data, and organizing document review data, which would ensure validity of the data. The interviews were conducted on the school campus. There were no distractions and participants felt safe and comfortable. Member checking did not take place, because the focus group participants and one-to-one participants gave feedback during the interview sessions to validate the study. The researcher used the phenomenology research design because it requires bracketing. This process enables the researcher to keep an open mind and avoid applying the researcher's perceptions and interpretations when interviewing individuals (Hycner, 1985). Each participant's interview and demographic data was stored as a different source file. The data was stored in a secured file cabinet. Although any coding procedure cannot be considered exhaustive when compared to other perspectives (Saldana, 2013), the

researcher conducted an in-depth review of the content through coding (Creswell, 2007). Emergent themes identified from the transcript data, and processed using Dedoose qualitative analysis software. The researcher grouped themes by participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The resulting themes were the lived experiences of the participants.

Description of the Case Study Participants

Parent Participants

Description of 10 parental participants includes demographic information (race and gender of participant and participant's child, age of participant, grade level of child, highest level of education completed, and number of parents in household). For parent participant summary table see Appendix A. To ensure anonymity, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to participants. The description of parent participants is as follows:

Parent #1

Parent 1 (P1) is an African American female, who is between the ages of 41 to 50 years old. She is a single parent and possesses an advanced professional college degree. She has a daughter who is in the 8th grade. English is the only language spoken the household. Parent 1 was calm during the discussion, while contributing limited responses to the questions.

Parent #2

Parent 2 (P2) is an African American female who lives with another adult and is between the ages of 31 to 40 years old. She has a college degree and English is the only language spoken the household. Her son is in the 8th grade. Parent 2 was excited to participate in the discussion. She answered every question during the interview.

Parent #3

Parent 3 (P3) is an African American female between 41-50 years old whose son is in the 6th grade. She went to college but did not finish. Her residence is a single parent household and English is the spoken language. Parent 3 was very direct with her answers.

Parent #4

Parent 4 (P4) is an African American female between the ages of 31-40 years old and has a college degree. She resides in a two-parent household and English is the only spoken language. She has a daughter who is in the 8th grade. Parent 4 was very jubilant and conversed with other participants during the interview.

Parent #5

Parent 5 (P5) is an African American female who has a daughter in the 8th grade. She is between 41 to 50 years of age and possesses an advanced professional college degree. She resides in a two-parent household and English is the primary language spoken. Her interaction was limited; however, she was very excited to participate in the interview.

Parent #6

Parent 6 (P6) is an African American female, who is between the ages of 41 to 50 years old. She holds a college degree and lives in a two-parent household. English is the household's primary language. She has a daughter who is in the 7th grade. Parent 6 was very friendly and comfortable during the interview.

Parent #7

Parent 7 (P7) is African American male who has a daughter in 7th grade. He is between the ages of 41-50 years old. He has a college degree and lives in a two-parent English-speaking household. Parent 7 was very confident and reserved when answering the interview questions.

Parent #8

Parent 8 (P8) is an African American female who is between the ages of 41 to 50 years old. She possesses a college degree and lives in a single parent English speaking household. She has a son in the 8th grade. Parent 8 participated in the interview with enthusiasm and was very receptive to the interview questions.

Parent #9

Parent 9 (P9) is an African American female and is between 41 to 50 years of age and possesses an advanced professional college degree. She resides in a two-parent household and English is the primary language spoken. She has a daughter in the 8th grade. Parent 9 was very cooperative during the interview. She was in a good mood throughout the interview process.

Parent #10

Parent 10 (P10) is African American male who has a daughter in 8th grade. He is between the ages of 41-50 years old. He has an advanced professional college degree and lives in a two-parent English-speaking household. Parent 10 was not as vocal during the interview and made limited remarks to interview questions.

African American participants represented 100% of parents that participated in the interview. Female parents represented 80% of participants, whereas male parents

represented 20%. All participants attended college; however, one parent did not finish a college degree. Fifty percent of participants had a college degree (Associate's or Bachelor's degrees), 40% of participants possessed advanced degrees (Master's degrees).

Teacher Participants

Demographic information of teacher participants included race and gender of participant, age of participant, grade level taught, teaching experience and highest level of education completed. For teacher participant summary table see Appendix B. Ten teachers participated in this qualitative inquiry. To ensure anonymity, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to participants. The description of teacher participants is as follows:

Teacher #1

Teacher 1 (T1) is an African American female who teaches Spanish to seventh and eighth grade gifted and talented students. She has 11 to 20 years teaching experience and holds a master's degree in Education. Although she asked a few times for the researcher to clarify a few research questions, she was very comfortable during the interview.

Teacher #2

Teacher 2 (T2) is an African American male who holds a bachelor's degree in English. He is a sixth grade gifted and talented English teacher with 11 to 20 years of teaching experience. Teacher 2 exhibited nervousness and some anxiety during the interview. However, his positive attitude was constant during his interview process.

Teacher #3

Teacher 3 (T3) is a Caucasian female who teaches English to eighth grade gifted and talented students. She has 0 to 4 years teaching experience and holds a master's degree in Education. Teacher 3 was reserved and displayed confidence when delivering her answers during the interview process.

Teacher #4

Teacher 4 (T4) is an Asian female who teaches Science to seventh grade gifted and talented students. She has 11 to 20 years teaching experience and holds a master's degree in Education. Teacher 4 was extremely reserved and asked the researcher to repeat a few questions during the interview process. She appeared comfortable and provided a response to all inquiries.

Teacher #5

Teacher 5 (T5) is an African American male who has a master's degree in Education. He is a seventh grade gifted and talented History teacher with 0 to 4 years of teaching experience. Teacher 5 expressed to the researcher that he was excited to participate in the interview. He was compliant during the interview process.

Teacher #6

Teacher 6 (T6) is a Caucasian female who teaches Math to eighth grade gifted and talented students. She has 0 to 4 years teaching experience and holds a bachelor's degree in Secondary Math. Teacher 6 displayed enthusiasm when answering questions during the interview process.

Teacher #7

Teacher 7 (T7) is an African American male who has a master's degree in Education. He is an eighth grade gifted and talented History teacher with over 20 years of teaching experience. Teacher 7 was very cooperative during the interview and answered all the interview questions with diligence. He had in-depth knowledge and gave detailed examples of the students' experiences.

Teacher #8

Teacher 8 (T8) is a Caucasian male who teaches Math to seventh grade gifted and talented students. He has 0 to 4 years teaching experience and holds master's degree in Education. Teacher 8 was very cooperative and inquisitive, and asked for clarity of interview questions during the interview process.

Teacher #9

Teacher 9 (T9) is an African American male who has a bachelor's degree in Biology. He is an 8th grade gifted and talented Science teacher with 5 to 10 years of teaching experience. Teacher 9 answered every question with diligence and appeared relaxed during the interview process.

Teacher #10

Teacher 10 (T10) is an African American male who has a master's degree in Education. He is a 6th grade gifted and talented History teacher with 11 to 20 years of teaching experience. Teacher 10 was reserved and displayed confidence when delivering his answers during the interview process.

African American participants represented 60% of teachers that participated in the interview, while Caucasians made up 30% and Asians represented 10% of teacher

participants. Male teachers represented 60% of participants and female parents represented 40%. All participants possessed at least a bachelor's college degree; however, 70% possessed a master's degree in education. Finally, 40% of teachers had 0 to 4 years teaching experience, 40% had 11 to 20 years, 10% for 5 to 10 years, and 10% for over 20 years.

The researcher's role in this study was as the primary collector and interpreter of data (Miles & Huberman 1994). Parents and teachers were committed to thoroughly answering the interview questions. The parents were supportive and expressed excitement and interest when conversing with each other during the interview process. In contrast, many of the teachers' body language was reserved and less expressive. The overall mood of the interview processes was welcoming.

Findings

Participants' responses were classified into themes based on meaning and similarity of experiences. Table 6 presents key themes for the focus group interview. The participants' emerging themes are presented in descending order (90% to 50%) of the interview data collected.

Table 6

Focus Group Interview Themes

Theme	% of Participants Discussing Theme	Brief Discussion
1	90%	Transitioning to Secondary Gifted Program
2	60%	Camaraderie Among Peers
3	50%	Self-Confidence

Themes presented below include interview question(s), and textual quotes from participants. The quotes presented are actual quotes from participants selected from interview transcripts.

Focus Group Interview Findings

Emergent Theme 1: Transitioning to Secondary Gifted Program

Ford (1997) found that gifted African American students who preferred not to be enrolled in gifted and talented programs voiced concerns of feelings of isolation from Caucasian students. These concerns related to socio-emotional/affective issues (Ford, 1997). Research has proved that children with a low socio-economic status usually lack parental stimulus compared to their middle class counterparts (Camilleri, 2007). In addition, gifted African American underachievement most likely related to poor study habits and time management (Ford, 1998). Ford (1998) added that underachieving gifted African American students more than likely have a negative relationship with teachers (Ford, 1995b). Nine out of the ten parents responded that their gifted African American children had to make adjustments when transitioning to an urban gifted program. These adjustments included an increase in being responsible with completing homework, time management, and monitoring grades.

The interview questions associated with the emergent theme were the following:

Interview Question 2: How has the student's self-confidence changed as a result of participating in the program?

Interview Question 3: How challenging is the work in the program for the student?

Interview Question 4: How has this program changed your child's academic achievement?

Interview Question 6: Do you think this program has been beneficial for your child?

Explain why or why not.

P1

My daughter is more independent. She's learning self-advocacy and assertiveness speaking with her teachers about her work and her grades. She is able to monitor herself and manage her assignments. Well, my daughter's first elementary school was not challenging her at all. It was just too easy. And now she has to work. She is challenged.

P2

My son actually made his first "B" when he first got here. So, that was an adjustment because he had never before been challenged like that in school. So, he learned that he had to really give 100% to get back where he was. That was a very interesting experience.

P3

My daughter basically knows she has to do it (school work) or she'll be out the program.

P4

My daughter had to build up her confidence and realize that she had to do work. She is being held more accountable in this program than in elementary school. It has made her understand that she has to organize her time so that she can manage her workload. She had no choice. She had to turn her assignments in on time. She was held accountable. Now she is making her school homework a priority before watching TV or playing on the phone. So, she is taking responsibility and doing her work.

P5

They continue to do that because they know that if they keep their grades and their focus up, they'll stay at a different level of learning.

P6

My daughter had to adapt to a rigorous schedule. To me, she has learned how to deal with a more rigorous schedule.

P7

She can't sit and stare at the wall and not do her work or choose to watch TV instead of doing her work. Her work has to be done.

P8

I think given the fact that some of the classes are grade levels above their normal grade averages. For instance, I think in sixthth or seventhth grade they were doing eighth [sic] grade math that type thing. I think it was challenging that time, I think that it is preparing them more.... For my son it has not been so much about the academics but the behavior. Where before he would finish up and he had time to chat and walk. Now he has to use all that class time to work.

P9

So, she is taking responsibility in doing that work.

Emergent Theme 2: Camaraderie among Peers

Huff (2005) observed that gifted African American students have a strong need for social connectedness to peers and significant adults with ensuing feelings of acceptance and approval (Huff, 2005). Hbert (1998) found that multicultural support group of gifted students, multicultural, intellectual, and educational experiences, and supportive teachers resulted in academic success. Reis, Hébert, Diaz, Maxfield, and Ratley (1995) researched a large urban high school and revealed that high ability minority students who received positive peer support participated in extracurricular activities and had an adult mentor in elementary and middle school tended to have a superior resilience and higher retention in the program. Six out of the ten parents responded that their gifted African American children developed camaraderie among their peers while enrolled in an urban gifted program. Students displayed camaraderie by challenging each other academically and socially.

The interview questions associated with the emergent theme were the following:

Interview Question 5: Does this program provide opportunities for your child to work with other children who have similar interests and abilities?

Interview Question 6: Do you think this program has been beneficial for your child? Explain why or why not.

P1

They are high achievers and they are all together. And that makes a difference.

P2

Yes, they encourage each other but if they weren't in this program they would sit back and say well, 'I don't care.' ... It's teamwork and I love it!

P3

I like the fact that the students encourage each other to do better.

P4

The program definitely pushed them, and they pushed each other. They strengthen each other in terms of 'oh, what I gotta A!', 'oh, you got an A!' 'Ohhhhh, I got an 85%' or 'I got an 87%.' So they definitely push each other more. Now being smart is not looked down upon within their group. ...The program also helps them connect socially. There are very few fights within the classroom and within the groups of students. There is less hostility and more camaraderie.

P7

I think it's a good thing that they have been together since the 6th grade. They can push each other. If you know your sister is not doing well, you are able to uplift her. If something may be happening at her home, they are there to support each other. When they get out of line, they are able to correct each other.

P8

The thing that I found out when I walked around is it's a good thing that the TAG (Talented and Gifted) kids had a group and the other kids knew that they were those smart kids.

P10

My child gets encouragement by her peers (classmates). She feels supported.

Emergent Theme 3: Self-Confidence

VanTassel-Baska, Johnson, and Avery (2002) reported that the gifted-class environment aided low-income Caucasian and African American students' learning and

that participation in the program played an important role in enhancing self-esteem and increasing confidence. Being in a challenging academic environment and having emotional support from like-minded peers led to the building of confidence in gifted African American students (Gilbert, 2009). Gifted and potentially gifted African American students feel more self-confident when other people are aware that they are gifted (Nisly, 2010). Nisly (2010) revealed that they realize that they may have a greater chance of attending college than other people. Five out of the ten parents responded that their gifted African American children displayed self-confidence while enrolled in an urban gifted program. Students exhibited self-confidence while preparing for and completing academic assignments. The interview questions associated with the emergent theme were the following:

Interview Question 1: Has the program had an influence on your child's attitude toward school? Explain why or why not.

Interview Question 2: How has the student's self-confidence changed as a result of participating in the program?

P2

He learned to be more assertive in school.

P3

She is ready for the next homework assignment. It's like a challenge for her.

P4

My daughter has built her confidence and realized that she has to do work. She is being held accountable, more so than in elementary school.

P7

Yeah, it's like the work is more challenging and they look forward to it.

P9

She is ready for the next challenge. She feels that she is prepared for the next assignment.

One-to-One Interview Findings

All participants were invited to participate in a one-to-one interview session.

Table 7 presents participants' interview emerging themes in descending order (50% to 80%) of the interview data.

Table 7

Themes from One-to-One Interviews

Theme	% of Participants Discussing Theme	Brief Discussion
1	80%	Transitioning to Secondary Gifted Program
2	60%	Work Ethic
3	50%	Self-Confidence

Emergent Theme 1: Transitioning to Secondary Gifted Program

Mattai, Wagle, and Williams (2010) identified that few programs take into account the needs of culturally diverse students. Frye and Vogt (2010) expressed that once African American students are included in gifted and talented programs, they are underserved and neglected due to resources dedicated to closing the achievement gap between their Caucasian counterparts. In addition to identification and recruitment, other factors that have contributed to the underrepresentation of African American students were: (a) teacher training, (b) student-teacher relations, (c) student peer relations, and (d) learning environment for students (Ford, 1998; Ford et al., 2008). Eight out of the ten parents responded that their gifted African American children had to make adjustments

when transitioning to an urban gifted program. These adjustments included an increase in being responsible with monitoring grades, time management, and completing homework. In addition, teachers expressed that students had to make adjustments to the academic rigor. The interview questions associated with the emergent theme were the following:

Interview Question 3: How has the student's self-confidence changed as a result of participating in the program?

Interview Question 4: Do you think this program has been beneficial for the student? Explain why or why not.

T1

Most of the students find that the work is very challenging. A lot depends on being able to switch from elementary school forum set up to a middle school set up. They have so many teachers and so many more responsibilities to juggle. The work is a challenge and the demands of the gifted education program is also challenging. For example, I think that on average most students are spending or should be spending about 2 to 3 hours daily on homework. They do have to work harder in order to make honor roll or in order to maintain what they were accustomed to in elementary schools. It is very common for us teachers of the gifted students to hear parents say 'my child has never has a "B" before or has never had a "D" before,' so in that case, it does change the students and the parents also.

T2

I found that I can throw lots of stuff at a lot kids and they get into it. And like if you get creative or weird or challenging, a lot of them will respond to that challenge instead of saying, 'I am out of here.'

T3

I think that the students, who have been in the program, have gotten used to the rigor and they've gotten used to being confident. They discover that there isn't always one right answer. I'm guessing that their level of achievement has gotten greater as they spend more time in the program.

T5

They come in with a self-serving mindset that they're supposed to be given certain things and that it is all about the grade, as opposed to the acquisition of knowledge. They are smart. They're very smart, and the new challenges act as

barriers and they have to face the question ‘am I really that smart, am I really that kid?’ or ‘is my teacher just being difficult and doesn't know what he or she is doing?’

T6

They value their grades. And with valuing their grades, they are more apt to do homework. They're more apt to come to tutoring if they don't understand something. They are more apt to that extra time to get those grades where they want them.

T7

They do have to work harder in order to make honor roll or in order to maintain what they were accustomed to in elementary schools.

T9

When they get here, most of them continue to improve on their work ethics. For a small minority of the students, their confidence actually goes down. So, for those few students, their confidence does go down because they are not able to do the work and they have not developed the self-efficacy and the work ethics in order to be successful at the TAG (Talented and Gifted) level.

T10

Well, coming in from elementary school to middle school is a big change for them in that the questions are no longer simple yes or no, true false, multiple-choice. It's more open-ended, it's more logical, more critical thinking and analysis involved, and it becomes challenging for some. The responses I've noticed most from students and parents are ‘I used to get all “A's,” why is it I don't I have an ‘A’ in your class?’ ‘Why don't I have an ‘A’ in this class or that class?’ So again, the program is moving them from the idea of a grade to that of knowledge acquisition and once they have acquired it they have to be able to apply it.

Emergent Theme 2: Work Ethic

Moore et al. (2005) attributed a strong work ethic and high achievement as a result of gifted African Americans students having a strong racial identity. In addition, VanTassel-Baska (1989) stressed that parents (including extended family members) of disadvantaged gifted minority learners maintain a strong belief in the values of education and work ethic. Specifically, intrinsic strategies (coping with peer pressures, conflict

resolution strategies, anger management strategies, and understanding the stages of racial identity [Ford, 1995b, 1996]) strengthen African American students' belief in their ability to succeed in gifted education classes (Whiting, 2006a, 2006b). Whiting (2006a, 2006b) added that supportive strategies help them to understand the benefits of participating in gifted education classes. Most importantly, remedial strategies help students to improve their engagement, academic performance, self-efficacy, and work ethic (Whiting, 2006a, 2006b). Six out of the ten parents responded that their gifted African American children exhibited strong work ethics while enrolled in an urban gifted program. Teachers expressed that students exhibited work ethic qualities by displaying determination to remain part of the gifted and talented program. Student's determination was showcased by displaying maturity, and meeting teacher expectations.

Teacher interview questions associated with the emergent theme were the following:

Interview Question 1: Has the program had an influence on the student's attitude toward school? Explain why or why not.

T1

The work ethic is not as strong as it should be in the elementary schools. To be successful in a TAG [Talented and Gifted] program or any gifted program you need a strong work effort. I see tremendous maturity in them by the time they leave in the eighth grade.

T2

They work in class. They know that it comes with certain level of responsibility and expectations. The majority of them meet the expectations and they work hard to maintain that status of the gifted and talented.

T3

Students in the gifted program are more focused than some of the student who are not in the gifted program. Having taught both, I would say that overall the trend is that the students are more serious.

T6

I think that it does create an environment where they value grades more. They tend to work a little harder.

T7

They define themselves based on their academic achievements.

T9

I believe that they show a change in attitude. Just from the standpoint that there are more expectations of them and that they want to live up to those expectations.

Emergent Theme 3: Self-Confidence

Ford (1995, 1996), and Ford and Whiting (2010) urged that intervention strategies used with gifted African American students focus on topics such as coping with peer pressures, conflict resolution strategies, anger management strategies, and understanding the stages of racial identity. These strategies provide students with the support they need to feel confident (Ford and Whiting, 2010). Hrabowski et al. (2002) noted that female African American students with high self-esteem perform better academically. Bonner (2010) revealed in a research study that gifted African American males' self-confidence was a primary ingredient in academic success. Five out of the ten teachers responded that gifted African American students displayed self-confidence while enrolled in an urban gifted program. Students exhibited self-confidence in their level of academic abilities and their academic performance in the classroom. Two out of the five teachers that were interviewed stated the gifted students' self-confidence could have an adverse effect. The adverse effect would be the student not meeting his or her own academic expectations

and it will have a negative impact on their emotional wellbeing.

The interview questions associated with the emergent theme were the following:

Interview Question 2: How has the student's self-confidence changed as a result of participating in the program?

Interview Question 6: Do you think this program has been beneficial for the student? Explain why or why not.

T2

Well, many of them already possess a lot of self-confidence. They are very confident in their abilities. They know that they are in the specialized program, and that they earned the right to be in this program. So, I would say that the majority of them are already confident and they continue to grow in their confidence the more they mature and the more they learn in this program. So, I would say, yeah, a lot of them, if not all of them are very confident in their abilities already.

T3

I would say most of our students in the program appear to be very confident in their abilities, but which is usually more than the new students who come from outside the program. So, I would say that it probably has a positive impact. I think that the students that continue in the program have definitely shown some success, but I think sometimes they have a false sense of confidence too. I think that it's kind of a double-edged sword. So, in that way it is beneficial that they are very self-assured in a time when children aren't always the most confident, but that confidence can sometimes work against them because they get a little full of it and may overestimate what they can do.

T4

They encountered a lot of higher-level activities, so if they did all those they have added to their self-confidence.

T5

I see the students actually become more confident to the extent that they will often say to me 'don't give me the answer,' or 'that's a good question, let me figure it out.' You see the transition from the place of uncertainty in the beginning of the year to more stability when they're two months into the year, when you see that shifting of confidence when they actually want less information and more time to explore the academic topic of discussion.

T7

But I think overall being a gifted student can help their confidence in terms of performing certain tasks because now they feel like they can overcome the challenge, but then like I said, it can have an adverse effect too. It can have a negative effect their confidence.

Document Review Findings

The document review revealed standards, current data, and professional jargon that participants used as daily guidelines (Creswell, 2009). The researcher chose to include a document review of the Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program Guidelines for the Maryland State Department of Education. This document used as a guideline for gifted and talented programs throughout the state of Maryland.

Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program Guidelines for the Maryland State Department of Education

This provided a guideline for gifted and talented programs. After the definition of gifted and talented was defined, there were six major program components that were addressed in the guideline:

- Identification of Students
- Instructional Program
- Professionally Qualified Teachers
- Professional Development
- Program Management
- Evaluation

1.0 Identification of Students

An identification process should ensure that all gifted and talented students are

recognized so they can be appropriately served. It is important that the process identify students performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment as well as those who are showing the potential for performing at remarkably high levels when compared with other students of a similar age, experience, or environment (§ 8-201). Appropriate procedures and criteria for giftedness should be developed for each of the various areas: general intellectual capability, creative or artistic areas, unusual leadership capacity, and specific academic fields. Information about a student's specific abilities and program needs obtained through the identification process should serve as a basis for planning the student's instructional program. In this way, the identification process is an integral part of the overall instructional program and should enhance the responsiveness of the school to the needs of all students. In addition, the guideline emphasizes that decisions regarding placement in gifted and talented education programs and services are based upon multiple criteria. A single criterion (i.e. test score or other measurement, teacher recommendation, or nomination) should not determine these decisions. Students should be recommended for programs and services based on demonstrated performance or potential during the identification process.

2.0 Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum and instruction must challenge the advanced academic needs of gifted and talented students. The regular instructional program must be differentiated to meet the unique learning styles, learning rates, interests, abilities, and needs of gifted and talented students. The differentiated instructional program includes both elements that are different from and elements that are similar to those in the regular program for their chronological peers. While some aspects of the regular curriculum can be adapted, others

will need to be added which may be unique to the gifted and talented students.

Appropriate programs and services for gifted and talented students reflect the differentiation of content (what is taught and when it is taught—sequence and pacing), instructional strategies (how content is taught), products (opportunities to demonstrate and apply learning), and the learning environment (the context in which learning occurs). The guideline dictates that a greater emphasis is placed on development and application of creative and critical thinking skills and a variety of acceleration opportunities are available, including early entrance to school, subject acceleration, grade acceleration, and dual enrollment in college. In addition, instructional strategies for gifted and talented students provide greater learner involvement in educational decision-making. There should also be various administrative arrangements are used to promote interaction among gifted and talented students and their chronological peers as well as among their intellectual or artistic/creative peers.

3.0 Professionally Qualified Teachers

There is a process to ensure the selection of professionally qualified teachers for gifted and talented students is established and clearly articulated.

Qualifications may include:

- Evidence of specific training in gifted education
- Successful teaching experience
- Genuine interest in and desire to work with gifted and talented students
- Demonstrated evidence of advanced content competence

4.0 Professional Development

Rapidly increasing knowledge about the developmental patterns and learning styles of gifted and talented students and about appropriate programs and services necessitate ongoing, high quality professional development as a component of a successful program. For example, all teaching staff, school administrators, central office staff, and pupil service personnel should receive training in the characteristics and needs of gifted and talented students, the procedures and criteria used to identify students, the meaning of differentiation, the design of the school system's program and services, the criteria for professionally qualified teachers of gifted and talented students, and the resources available for professional development in gifted and talented education. In addition, professional development planning should follow the accepted tenets of quality professional development as outlined in the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) standards, the Maryland Teacher Professional Development standards (MTPDS), the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework, and other relevant standards documents.

5.0 Program Management

A management structure exists that clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities for gifted and talented programs and services at the system and school levels to ensure the development and maintenance of program excellence. In addition, the local school system provides general program direction, and building-level administrators support program implementation within the school system's guidelines.

6.0 Evaluation

The evaluation process is based on data and provides accurate, timely, and relevant information to decision makers and stakeholders for program improvement. There is a systematic plan for ongoing evaluation is part of program planning and implementation. In addition, the evaluation should be conducted by persons having expertise in gifted and talented education and should assess processes and products of each component of the gifted and talented program. These include (a) Identification, participation, and retention; (b) Instructional program; (c) Professional development; (d) Teacher qualifications; (e) Program management; (f) Community outreach; and (g) The evaluation process.

Summary

Chapter four contained the findings of the research study revealed from the data through one-to-one interviews, focus groups interview, and document review. There were 10 participants for the one-to-one interviews and 10 participants for the focus group interviews. Four themes emerged in this study: (a) Work Ethic, (b) Self-Confidence [parents and teachers], (c) Transitioning to Secondary Gifted Program [parents and teachers], (d) Camaraderie with Peers. The conclusions, recommendations, and implications for further research appear in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of parents and teachers' perspectives on the schooling experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program. Chapter I introduced the study; Chapter II presented relevant literature review to support the study; Chapter III described the methodology of the research; and Chapter IV discussed the findings of the research. Chapter V will include the conclusions, implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

Providing an equitable and an adequate education for all children remains a contentious issue (Robinson, 2005). Ford, Grantham, Tarek, and Whiting (2008) argued that a paradigm shift in programming and curricula needed to take place to reflect the new multicultural reality in the classroom. In addition, understanding the experiences and needs of gifted students from diverse backgrounds will help reverse the underrepresentation of diverse students being referred for gifted and talented programs (Brighton & Moon, 2008; Huff et al., 2005; Pierce, Adams, Neumeister, Cassady, Dixon, & Cross, 2007). However, due to a lack of research exploring the experiences and issues of African American children in gifted programs (Huff et al., 2005), this study may contribute to a better understanding of African American students needs in urban gifted programs.

Conclusions

A qualitative design explored parents and teachers' perspectives on the schooling experiences of African American students in an urban gifted program. The approach to

the study was phenomenological and it guided the research of lived experiences of parents and teachers. Utilizing the triangulation method: focus group interview, one-to-one interviews, and a document review comprised the data collection process.

After interviewing participants and conducting a review of documents, the researcher draws the following conclusion from the study:

1. Gifted African American students appear to have a support system (emotionally and academically) when enrolled in the urban gifted and talented program.
2. Gifted African American students have a support system (emotionally and academically) from parents.
3. Gifted African American students have a support system (emotionally, socially, and academically) from peers.
4. The Maryland State Department of Education criterion for gifted programs appears to have general requirements for gifted and talented programs, but not specifically for urban gifted and talented programs.

In the study, 10 parents and 10 teachers shared their perceptions of African American students' experiences in an urban gifted program. There were several key findings in this study consistent with research literature. This study uncovered a number of perceptions that merit consideration and discussion. In contrast with the literature, the negative factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of African Americans in gifted programs were not major factors in this urban gifted program. Parents did not mention their children's sense of ethnic identity affecting their academic performance. In

addition, the parents' educational or economic level was not factored in as a barrier to their children's social experiences in school.

Overall, the results of these findings contradicted the theories presented in the study. The Critical Race Theory was irrelevant in this study because parents did not mention any concerns with the lack of teacher's cultural sensitivity towards African American students. Teachers were aware that students might experience social, emotional, and academic challenges while enrolled in the gifted urban program. In contrast with the Deficit Thinking Theory, this study found that the teachers, regardless of race, acknowledged gifted African American students' talent and incorporated rigor and academic challenges in their lessons. The Cultural Ecological Theory was dispelled because the parents and teachers did not make any comments regarding African American students academic performances hindered because of the fear of being labeled "acting White" by their peers.

Research Question One: Emotional Challenges

Parent and teacher participants recognized that students' self-confidence had increased since entering the urban gifted and talented program. In addition, VanTassel-Baska et al., (2002) argued that the gifted-class environment aided their learning and that participation in the program continued to play an important role in enhancing self-esteem and increasing self-confidence. Gilbert's (2009b) study underscored that by African American students in an academic environment where success is expected and strived for by many students and receiving the emotional support gained from with like-minded peers had a positive effect on their development of self-confidence and persistence.

Research Question Two: Academic Challenges

Parent and teacher participants believed that students made necessary adjustments when transitioning into a secondary gifted program. The most prominent change noted was that the students modified their life styles by changing their work ethic to attain academic achievement. For example, parents and teachers made reference to students having to adjust to receiving lower grades on report cards due to the increased rigor in the secondary gifted program. Parents and teachers also observed students making adjustments in study habits and minimizing their social time with peers to improve their academic standing. The study revealed that when students were faced with high academic challenges they were able to improve their study skills and meet the challenge. The findings showed that gifted African American students worked well when stimulated appropriately through rigorous classroom assignments and homework (Gilbert, 2009b; VanTassel-Baska, 1998).

Research Question Three: Academic Engagement Between Students

Parents interviewed in this study expressed their children's development of camaraderie with peers. Parents never expressed that their children played down their intelligence to be socially accepted by their peers. Instead, their children formed friendships that evolved around academic success. Gilbert's (2009b) research noted that African American students' feelings of camaraderie with classmates developed while enrolled in an urban gifted program.

Implications of the Study

As indicated throughout this study, there is limited research on the experiences and issues of African American children in gifted programs (Huff et al., 2005; Nisly,

2010). Gifted programs exist to provide educational experiences and opportunities that surpass those provided by the regular classroom. The study of parents and teachers' perceptions of gifted African American students enrolled in an urban gifted program will not only contribute to literature, but has implications for positive emotional and social change. This study revealed the real-life experiences and attitudes that are the foundation of the underrepresentation dilemma.

An effective gifted and talented program reviews its objectives regularly to insure that they address the emotional and social needs of students and are that these objectives are included in the planning and implementation in the classroom. The framers of The Criteria of Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program Guidelines for the Maryland State Department of Education may want to consider adding this provision in future revisions to ensure that students receive accommodations for emotional and social well-being. When examining the strength and weaknesses of the objectives for addressing emotional and social needs of gifted African American students, the examination could focus on the guidelines for gifted education on state and local level.

Social and emotional wellness is improved when gifted African American students are encouraged to participate in activities with their peers. They have the opportunity to develop or learn to develop stronger relationships with peers. After school or Saturday programs with or without their parents may be beneficial. Access to these socially and emotionally stimulating resources not only strengthens the gifted students' social and emotional needs, it is conducive to academic and intellectual growth.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is a need for more research to explore the urban gifted and talented programs. Qualitative inquiry may yield a depth of information and detailed account of experiences not well represented in the literature (Huff et al., 2005). These are the recommendations that developed from this study:

1. Future quantitative research on school districts strategic plans is needed to ascertain the modifications and steps made to increase representation of African American students in gifted programs.
2. Some parents and teachers expressed concerns about African American students anxiety when they underachieved academically in the urban gifted program.

Although it was not a part of this study, a longitudinal study should be conducted on the mental health of gifted African American students.

Conclusion

The researcher concluded that this urban gifted program met the need for social integration of gifted African American children with their peers. The successful social integration provided a catalyst for gifted African American students to build camaraderie and strive together towards high academic achievement. As a result, the negative influences that typically contribute to the underrepresentation of African Americans in gifted programs were not major factors in this urban gifted program. For instance, most of the parents were college educated and teachers identified and nurtured the students' talent, which positively reinforced the students' learning environment and academic achievement.

This urban gifted program could serve as a model for other urban programs that currently or are in the process of serving gifted African American student populations. Most importantly, there is a need for research on students enrolled in these programs.

The perspectives revealed in this study may be a basis for researchers and educators interested in extending the present understanding of gifted African American children, their families, and gifted program services.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Parent Participant Summary

APPENDIX A

Parental Participants	Parent's Race	Parent's Gender	Child's Race	Child's Gender	Child's Grade	Parent's Age	Highest Level of Education	Two Parent Household	English Spoken in Household
P1	African American	Female	African American	Child's Gender	8th	41-50	Advanced Degree	No	Yes
P2	African American	Female	African American	Female	8th	41-50	College Degree	Yes	Yes
P3	African American	Female	African American	Male	6th	41-50	Went to College but did not finish	Yes	Yes
P4	African American	Female	African American	Male	8th	41-50	College Degree	No	Yes
P5	African American	Female	African American	Female	8th	41-50	Advanced Degree	Yes	Yes
P7	African American	Male	African American	Female	7th	41-50	College Degree	Yes	Yes
P8	African American	Female	African American	Female	8th	41-50	College Degree	No	Yes
P9	African American	Female	African American	Female	8th	41-50	Advanced Degree	Yes	Yes
P10	African American	Male	African American	Female	8th	41-50	Advanced Degree	No	Yes

APPENDIX B
Teacher Participant Summary

APPENDIX B

Teacher Participants	Teacher Race	Teacher Gender	Teacher Experience	Assigned Grade Level	Highest Level of Education
T1	African American	Female	11-20 years	7th and 8th	Master's Degree in Education
T2	African American	Male	11-20 years	6th	Bachelor's Degree English
T3	Caucasian	Female	0-4 years	8th	Master's Degree in Education
T4	Asian	Female	11-20 years	7th	Master's Degree in Education
T5	African American	M	0-4 years	7th	Master's Degree in Education
T6	Caucasian	Female	0-4 years	8th	Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Math
T7	African American	Male	Over 20 years	7th	Master's Degree in Education
T8	Caucasian	Male	0-4 years	7th	Master's Degree in Education
T9	African American	Male	5-10 years	8th	Bachelor's Degree Biology
T10	African American	Male	11-20 years	6th	Master's Degree in Education

APPENDIX C

School District Approval to Conduct Research



April 2, 2014

Ms. Ericka Woods
1700 Albert Drive
Bowie, MD 20721

Dear Ms. Woods:

The review of your application to conduct the research entitled "Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions of Gifted and Talented Programs for Urban Miority Middle School Students" has been completed. Based on the examination, I am pleased to inform you that the Department of Research & Evaluation has granted authorization for you to proceed with your study.

Authorization for this research extends through the 2013-2014 school year only. If you are not able to complete your data collection during this period, you must submit a written request for an extension. We reserve the right to withdraw approval at any time or decline to extend the approval if the implementation of your study adversely impacts any of the school district's activities.

Please secure written approval of the principal of Walker Mill Middle School on the enclosed Principal Permission to Conduct Research Study form. The original signed copy of each form should be forwarded to my attention and a copy given to the principal. It is important that the procedure detailed in your proposal and related documents submitted be followed while conducting your study. Should you change the procedure, the revised procedure must be approved by this office before being implemented. Similarly, any revised documents must be approved by this office before being used in the study.

An abstract and one copy of the final report should be forwarded to the Department of Research & Evaluation within one month of successful defense of your dissertation. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at 301-780-6807 or by email, kolawole.sunmonu@pgcps.org. I wish you success in your study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sunmonu", is written over a circular stamp or mark.

Kola K. Sunmonu, Ph.D.
Director, Department of Research & Evaluation

KKS:kks
Enclosure

cc: Lisa D. Price, PMP CGPM, BSP, Performance Officer

APPENDIX D

Research Study Letter of Invitation to Principal

APPENDIX D

April 2014

Dear Middle School Principal:

I am a doctoral student at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia and teacher in the Prince George's County Public Schools System. A partial requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education is a research study. Therefore, I am requesting to gain permission to conduct my research at Walker Mill Middle School. Specifically, I am requesting to study parents and teacher's perception of gifted and talented programming for urban middle school students at your school.

The research sample will include parents of African American students enrolled in your gifted and talented program. Parents and teachers will be asked to volunteer to participate in a 45-60 minute interview in an email. This interview will be recorded and a consent forms will be signed by all participants. I have knowledge of your schools demographics. I am confident that your parent and teacher population will deliver a wonderful addition to my study.

If allowed to conduct the research study at your school, all data collected will remain completely confidential. The name of your school, individuals assisting with the study, and participants in the study will remain anonymous. All parents participating in the study will be emailed a survey that will ensure that their name, personal information, and completed survey questions remain confidential. A copy of the completed research study can be provided to your office.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. I genuinely appreciate your time. If you have any questions, please contact my professor Dr. Barbara Holmes at XXX.XXX@XXX.COM or myself at XXXXX@XXX.COM.

Sincerely,

Ericka Woods
Graduate Student
Hampton University

APPENDIX E

Research Study Letter of Invitation to Parents

APPENDIX E

April 2014

Dear Parent:

I am a graduate student at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. I wish to conduct a research study on parent and teacher perceptions of gifted and talented programming for urban middle school students in Prince George's County Public Schools. The supervisor for this study is Dr. Barbara Holmes, a professor at Hampton University.

You have been asked to participate in this study because of your affiliations with the school and your role during the implementation process. You will be asked to participate in a 45 - 60 minute audiotaped interview regarding your perception of your child's experience in an urban gifted and talented program. If you are unable to participate in the study, you may volunteer for a pilot interview session.

All data collected from the survey will remain completely confidential. The name of the school, individuals assisting with the study, and participants in the study will remain anonymous. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. Additionally, you may refuse to participate and you have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. If you would like to participate in this study or have questions or concerns related to this study, please contact Dr. Barbara Holmes at XXX.XXX@XXX.COM or myself at XXXXX@XXX.COM.

Sincerely,

Ericka L. Woods
Graduate Student
Hampton University

APPENDIX F

Research Study Letter of Invitation to Teachers

APPENDIX F

April 2014

Dear Teacher:

I am a graduate student at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. I wish to conduct a research study on parent and teacher perceptions of gifted and talented programming for urban middle school students in Prince George's County Public Schools. The supervisor for this study is Dr. Barbara Holmes, a professor at Hampton University.

You have been asked to participate in this study because of your affiliations with the school and your role during the implementation process. You will be asked to participate in a 45 - 60 minute audiotaped interview regarding your perception African American students experiences in an urban gifted and talented program. If you are unable to participate in the study, you may volunteer for a pilot interview session.

All data collected from the survey will remain completely confidential. The name of the school, individuals assisting with the study, and participants in the study will remain anonymous. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. Additionally, you may refuse to participate and you have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. If you would like to participate in this study or have questions or concerns related to this study, please contact Dr. Barbara Holmes at XXX.XXX@XXX.COM or myself at XXXXX@XXX.COM.

If you wish to participate in this survey, please visit the following link:

Sincerely,

Ericka L. Woods
Graduate Student
Hampton University

APPENDIX G

Pilot Interview for Parent and Teacher Participants

APPENDIX G

To: Potential Participant

From: Ericka Woods, Doctoral Student

Hampton University

Re: Consent

Date: April 8, 2014

Title of Study: Urban Gifted Education and African American Students: Teacher and Parent Perspectives.

I am a graduate student at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. I wish to conduct a research study on parent and teacher perceptions of gifted and talented programming for urban middle school students in Prince George's County Public Schools. The supervisor for this study is Dr. Barbara Holmes, a professor at Hampton University.

You have been asked to participate in this study because of your affiliations with the school and your role during the implementation process. You will be asked to participate in a 45 - 60 minute audiotaped interview regarding your perception of your child's experience in an urban gifted and talented program. During the process, your identity will be kept strictly confidentially. You will not be identified by name and you will be assigned a pseudonym that will only be available to the researcher.

As with any research, there are risks. However, the risks identified for this study are minimal. Because there are so few participants, the possibilities of candidates being able to identify and/or connected to their statements made during the interview is a concern. However, to safeguard against the occurring, pseudonyms will be used for all participants. These steps are being taken to ensure your full confidentiality. Furthermore, the recording will be kept in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home. Upon completion of the dissertation, the recorded interviews and transcripts will be destroyed.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. Additionally, you may refuse to participate and you have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. If you have questions or concerns related to this study, please contact Dr. Barbara Holmes at XXX.XXX.XXXX or Ericka Woods at XXX.XXX.XXXX.

I have read the procedures described above and I voluntarily agree to participate in the interview and I received a copy of this description. I also understand that the interviews will be audiotaped.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

OPEN ENDED STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Parent Interview Questions:

7. Has the program had an influence on your child's attitude toward school? Explain why or why not?
8. How has your child's self-confidence changed as a result of participating in the program?
9. How challenging is the work in the program for your child?
10. How has this program changed your child's academic achievement?
11. Does this program provide opportunities for your child to work with other children who have similar interests and abilities?
12. Do you think this program has been beneficial for your child? (Circle one)
YES/NO Why or why not?

Teacher Interview Questions:

7. Has the program had an influence on the student's attitude toward school? Explain why or why not?
8. How has the student's self-confidence changed as a result of participating in the program?
9. How challenging is the work in the program for the student?
10. How has this program changed the student's academic achievement?
11. Does this program provide opportunities for the student to work with other children who have similar interests and abilities?
12. Do you think this program has been beneficial for the student? Explain why or why not?

“This concludes our dialogue. I would like to for you to complete a pilot interview matrix.”

“Thank you for the interview and your participation in the study. The information you provided will be very beneficial. If you have any questions regarding the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at XXX.XXX.XXXX.”

“Thank you again.”

MATRIX FOR PILOT INTERVIEW FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Pseudonym: _____

Directions: Please answer Yes or No for pilot interview questions. Please add comments or suggestions if necessary.

Question #	Feasible (Y or N)	Appropriate (Y or N)	Comments or Suggestions
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
Note: Y=Yes, N=No			

APPENDIX H

Parent Participant Informed Consent Form

APPENDIX H

To: Potential Participant

From: Ericka Woods, Doctoral Student

Hampton University

Re: Consent

Date: April 11, 2014

Title of Study: Urban Gifted Education and African American Students: Teacher and Parent Perspectives.

I am a graduate student at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. I wish to conduct a research study on parent and teacher perceptions of gifted and talented programming for urban middle school students in Prince George's County Public Schools. The supervisor for this study is Dr. Barbara Holmes, a professor at Hampton University.

You have been asked to participate in this study because of your affiliations with the school and your role during the implementation process. You will be asked to participate in a 45 - 60 minute audiotaped interview regarding your perception of your child's experience in an urban gifted and talented program. During the process, your identity will be kept strictly confidentially. You will not be identified by name and you will be assigned a pseudonym that will only be available to the researcher.

As with any research, there are risks. However, the risks identified for this study are minimal. Because there are so few participants, the possibilities of candidates being able to identify and/or connected to their statements made during the interview is a concern. However, to safeguard against the occurring, pseudonyms will be used for all participants. These steps are being taken to ensure your full confidentiality. Furthermore, the recording will be kept in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home. Upon completion of the dissertation, the recorded interviews and transcripts will be destroyed.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. Additionally, you may refuse to participate and you have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. If you have questions or concerns related to this study, please contact Dr. Barbara Holmes at XXX.XXX.XXXX or Ericka Woods at XXX.XXX.XXXX.

I have read the procedures described above and I voluntarily agree to participate in the interview and I received a copy of this description. I also understand that the interviews will be audiotaped.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

**OPEN ENDED STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP
(PARENT)**

Date: _____ **Interviewer:** _____

Participant's Pseudonym: _____ **Position:** Parent

Introduction

Interviewer: "Throughout this dialogue session, I will ask you questions related to your perception of your child's experience in an urban gifted and talented program. As a reminder, I will be audio taping our dialogue and I will also document your responses to each question on an interview form to check for accuracy of your responses. Additionally, your responses will remain confidential and I have assigned you a pseudonym. Your name will not be used in the study."

"Are there any questions?"

"Let's begin"

Background Questions

1. Race/Ethnicity of child: Amer. Ind. ___ Hisp/Latin ___ Black/AA ___ Asian ___ White ___
Other ___

2. Sex of Child: Male ___ Female ___

3. Child's Grade Level: 6th ___ 7th ___ 8th ___

3. Your Race/Ethnicity: Amer Ind. ___ Hisp/Latin ___ Black/AA ___ Asian ___
White/Caucasian ___ Other ___

4. Your Sex: Male ___ Female ___

5. What is your age? 21-30 ___ 31-40 ___ 41-50 ___ 51-60 ___ 60+ ___

6. Is English the only language spoken in your household? Yes ___ No, please list other language(s): _____

7. Is this a two-parent household? ___ Yes ___ No, please specify: _____

8. What is the highest level of education a person has in your household?

___ Did not graduate from high school ___ Went to college but did not graduate

___ General Education Degree (G.E.D.) ___ College Degree

___ High School Diploma ___ Advanced professional degree

Interview Questions:

13. Has the program had an influence on your child's attitude toward school? Explain why or why not?
14. How has your child's self-confidence changed as a result of participating in the program?
15. How challenging is the work in the program for your child?
16. How has this program changed your child's academic achievement?
17. Does this program provide opportunities for your child to work with other children who have similar interests and abilities?
18. Do you think this program has been beneficial for your child? (Circle one)
YES/NO Why or why not?

“This concludes our dialogue. I would like to recap your responses to make sure that the answers you provided accurately reflect the response you intended.”

“Thank you for the interview and your participation in the study. The information you provided will be very beneficial. If you have any questions regarding the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at XXX.XXX.XXXX.”

“Thank you again.”

APPENDIX I

Teacher Participant Informed Consent Form

APPENDIX I

To: Potential Participant

From: Ericka Woods, Doctoral Student

Hampton University

Re: Consent

Date: April 11, 2014

Title of Study: Urban Gifted Education and African American Students: Teacher and Parent Perspectives.

I am a graduate student at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. I wish to conduct a research study on parent and teacher perceptions of gifted and talented programming for urban middle school students in Prince George's County Public Schools. The supervisor for this study is Dr. Barbara Holmes, a professor at Hampton University.

You have been asked to participate in this study because of your affiliations with the school and your role during the implementation process. You will be asked to participate in a 45 - 60 minute audiotaped interview regarding your perception of African American students experiences in an urban gifted and talented program. During the process, your identity will be kept strictly confidentially. You will not be identified by name and you will be assigned a pseudonym that will only be available to the researcher.

As with any research, there are risks. However, the risks identified for this study are minimal. Because there are so few participants, the possibilities of candidates being able to identify and/or connected to their statements made during the interview is a concern. However, to safeguard against the occurring, pseudonyms will be used for all participants. These steps are being taken to ensure your full confidentiality. Furthermore, the recording will be kept in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home. Upon completion of the dissertation, the recorded interviews and transcripts will be destroyed.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. Additionally, you may refuse to participate and you have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. If you have questions or concerns related to this study, please contact Dr. Barbara Holmes at XXX.XXX.XXXX or Ericka Woods at XXX.XXX.XXXX.

I have read the procedures described above and I voluntarily agree to participate in the interview and I received a copy of this description. I also understand that the interviews will be audiotaped.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

**OPEN ENDED STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL
INTERVIEWS (TEACHER)**

Date: _____ **Interviewer:** _____

Participant's Pseudonym: _____ **Position:** _____ **Teacher** _____

Introduction

Interviewer: "Throughout this dialogue session, I will ask you questions related to your perception of African American students experience in an urban gifted and talented program. As a reminder, I will be audio taping our dialogue and I will also document your responses to each question on an interview form to check for accuracy of your responses. Additionally, your responses will remain confidential and I have assigned you a pseudonym. Your name will not be used in the study."

"Are there any questions?"

"Let's begin"

Background Questions

1. Race/ethnicity: Amer. Ind. ___ Hisp/Latin ___ Black/AA ___ Asian ___ White ___
Other ___
2. Sex: Male ___ Female ___
3. Teaching Experience (In Years): 0-4 ___ 5-10 ___ 11-20 ___ Over 20 ___ N/A ___
4. Assigned Grade Level: 6th ___ 7th ___ 8th ___ N/A ___
5. What is your highest level of education?

___ Did not graduate from high school graduate	___ Went to college but did not graduate
___ General Education Degree (G.E.D.)	___ College Degree
___ High School Diploma	___ Advanced professional degree

Interview Questions:

13. Has the program had an influence on the student's attitude toward school? Explain why or why not?
14. How has the student's self-confidence changed as a result of participating in the program?
15. How challenging is the work in the program for the student?
16. How has this program changed the student's academic achievement?
17. Does this program provide opportunities for the student to work with other children who have similar interests and abilities?
18. Do you think this program has been beneficial for the student? Explain why or why not?

“This concludes our dialogue. I would like to recap your responses to make sure that the answers you provided accurately reflect the response you intended.”

“Thank you for the interview and your participation in the study. The information you provided will be very beneficial. If you have any questions regarding the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at XXX.XXX.XXXX.”

“Thank you again.”

VITA**ERICKA L. WOODS****Education**

Doctor of Philosophy, May 2015
Educational Management
Hampton University, Hampton, VA

Master of Education, May 2003
Secondary Education/Curriculum Specialist
Bowie State University, Bowie, MD

Bachelor of Science, May 2001
History
Bowie State University, Bowie, MD

Professional Experience

Teacher, Prince George's County Public Schools, Capitol Heights, MD
September 2003 - Present
Devise lesson plans in accordance with state and county curriculum for students of multiple levels and abilities, including specialized curriculum (i.e., Talented and Gifted and AVID [Achievement Via Individual Determination] programs). Taught courses in a variety of content areas, including: History/Social Studies, Government, Reading/Language Arts, and AVID elective.

Honors and Awards

Outstanding Talented and Gifted Educator - Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) - 2012
Finalist - My Favorite Teacher, Prince George's County (Gazette) - 2014

Presentations

Presenter at EdCamp John Hanson French Immersion (JHFI) (March 2014)

Professional Associations

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
Maryland Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (MDASCD)
Maryland State Education Association (MSEA)
National Education Association (NEA)