Young, gifted, and disadvantaged: a study of key program and personnel factors related to the underrepresentation of African-American disadvantaged students in the talented and gifted program in two urban middle schools in the Atlanta metro region

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ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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YOUNG, GIFTED, AND DISADVANTAGED: A STUDY OF KEY PROGRAM AND
PERSONNEL FACTORS RELATED TO THE UNDERREPRESENTATION
OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS IN THE
TALENTED AND GIFTED PROGRAMS IN TWO URBAN MIDDLE
SCHOOLS IN THE ATLANTA METRO REGION

Advisor: Dr. Moses Norman

Dissertation dated December 2012

African Americans continue to be the smallest represented segment of population in gifted education. The significance of this study was to determine the impact of teacher perception and influence on the screening process of African-American students into the gifted studies programs of two economically disadvantaged schools in a metro Atlanta school system. This study took a look at how teachers perceive students and what other influences have an impact on African-Americans students in economically disadvantaged communities and their choice to seek participation in the gifted studies program.

This research study also analyzed the multiple criteria process that has been the most successful instrument in the nomination process of students for testing into gifted studies. During the interview process, teachers were asked about characteristics that they attribute to gifted students and were also questioned on what other external or
environmental factors have a large impact on students’ ability to be screened and processed into gifted studies programs. The researcher also viewed lesson plans for the use of differentiated instructional practices and opportunities. The researcher also spent time completing classroom observations as a means of collecting additional data.

Based upon the findings, the researcher concluded that teachers have a significant impact on the ability of students to be screened for gifted studies. This is imperative as many of the teachers that participated in the research project did not always accurately identify behaviors that are sought after in accordance with the multiple criteria paperwork. It was also found that students were largely influenced by their friends and their participation in the gifted studies program. Another finding included the need for additional training and exposure by teachers in what gifted characteristics look like and ways to integrate gifted strategies into current lesson plans.
YOUNG, GIFTED, AND DISADVANTAGED: A STUDY OF KEY PROGRAM AND PERSONNEL FACTORS RELATED TO THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS IN THE TALENTED AND GIFTED PROGRAMS IN TWO URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOLS IN THE ATLANTA METRO REGION

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

BILLIE DESHUN RUCKER EDWARDS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

DECEMBER 2012
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to dedicate my work to the memory of my late father, Willie D. Rucker and to the love that I still feel in my heart. I dedicate this work also to my mother, Betty R. Rucker, who “tricked” me into teaching and for helping me to find my true calling in life. I am blessed to have a praying mother that continues to believe in my ability when I have doubts, loves me unconditionally, and constantly reminds me to be the “child that has her own.” I also dedicate my work to my loving husband, Willie Ryan Edwards. You continue to amaze me at the how deep real love is and for standing beside me through this entire journey. Not a word could be written in this if you were not willing to give of yourself so that I could make my dream come true. I love you! To my children, Jacobi and Ryan, words cannot explain the joy and love that you have given me. You two are my motivation to achieve and I thank God every day that I have to spend with you. I carried each of you through the classes that brought me to this work and I can only pray that this is the beginning of many more doors to open for us all. Mommy loves you! To the students that have ever sat in my class: I do this for you because I want you to know the world is yours! And if I am that conduit, then let me graciously show you the path to your greatness. I believe in you because you always believe in me! You make my job enjoyable and a blessing.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

To Be Gifted

Giftedness is not a thing. It has no physical reality, no weight, and no mass (Borland, 2004). Most refer to giftedness in a student as the academic superiority exerted by the student due to a high intelligence quotient or IQ. In the original definition of giftedness, students were labeled gifted solely based on results from an IQ test. It was in 1972 that the definition of giftedness was expanded to include multiple areas of creativity, leadership, artistic expression, academics, and intellectualism. Many researchers, including Howard Gardner, have also proposed the idea of multiple intelligences where human beings have strengths in varying areas. Joseph Renzulli (2005) proposes that there are different ways in which intelligence must be taken into consideration and context. Renzulli proposes that there are two types of intelligence: academic and creative-productive. As the definition of giftedness is ever changing with research, the following is the latest definition of giftedness written by the U. S. Department of Education in 1993:

Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance capacity in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic acts, and
unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools. Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor. (p. 19)

Academic giftedness is the type of giftedness typically associated with efficiency and success in traditional school learning situations (Renzulli, 2005). This form of giftedness traditionally is measured with the use of nationally normed IQ or other measurable cognitive ability tests. Students that demonstrate academic ability far superior to those of their age level are then considered academically gifted. The abilities people display on IQ and aptitude tests are exactly the kinds of abilities most valued in traditional school learning situations (Renzulli, 2005).

Researchers today are demonstrating empirically the importance of many abilities that are not measured on IQ tests (Williams, 2002). Howard Gardner (1983; 1993) introduced the concept of multiple intelligences that transcends the traditional definition of intelligence. Gardner contends that there are several areas of intelligence that includes: linguistic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, musical, visual, kinesthetic, logical, and naturalistic. Gardner suggests that due to these varying types of intelligences, individuals can exhibit giftedness as well in these areas in addition to or instead of solely in the traditional academic, intellectual realms.

In reference to Renzulli (2005), students that score high on these cognitive and IQ tests are according to research more likely to garner high grades in school. The results of this research should lead us to some very obvious conclusions about academic giftedness:
it exists in varying degrees; it can be identified through standardized assessment
techniques; and we should, therefore, do everything in our power to make appropriate
modifications for students who have the ability to cover regular curricular material at
advanced rates and levels of understanding (Renzulli 2005).

In the second type of intelligence, creative-productive giftedness there is a lot more grey area versus that of academic giftedness that lends itself to concrete evidence in test results that can be compared and normed to students of the same age and experience. This area of giftedness is more reliant on observation and interpretation. Creative productive giftedness describes those aspects of human activity and involvement where a premium is placed on the development of original material and products that are purposefully designed to have an impact on one or more target audiences (Renzulli 2005). Simply put, creative-productive giftedness is more about how a student interacts with its environment and ability to use discernment to apply problem solving skills to real life applications. In this area of giftedness, there is less reliance on standardized testing with focus primarily being on the student's ability to problem solve and use real life application to problems and situations. Furthermore, history tell us it has been the creative and productive people of the world, the producers rather than consumers of knowledge, the reconstructionists of thought in all areas of human endeavor, who have become recognized as “truly gifted” individuals (Renzulli 2005).

**Underrepresentation of Minority Students**

From the very beginning of the field, individuals labeled as gifted, either for educational or research purposes, have, to an overwhelming degree, been of European
descent and have deviated significantly upward from population-wide socioeconomic norms (Borland, 2004). Even in the creation of the field by Sir Francis Galton in 1869, there was an abnormally high skew or preference in what is now labeled as giftedness towards Caucasian upper-class individuals. As initially reported, Galton (cited in Borland, 2004) felt that it was 400 times more likely that children of the upper echelon of society would produce a child of mental superiority than to that of commoners, or lower class citizens.

Galton’s findings, even during the conception of gifted education, tended to conceptualize his ideas of giftedness based upon an economic construct that favored individuals from higher socioeconomic classes. Additionally, in research conducted by Borland (2004), Galton’s early findings that there is also reference to mental superiority based upon race in Galton’s prefatory chapter in his 1892 seminal work that states: “the natural ability of which this book mainly treats, is such as a modern European possesses in much greater average share than men of the lower races” (p. x).

Despite the seemingly liberal aforementioned definition of giftedness by the federal government, one would expect for there to be more cultural diversification in gifted studies. However, even with key terms as “potential” and “all culture groups” there is still a large discrepancy in representation amongst minority populations. Of the many represented minority groups in gifted education, Hispanic, Native Americans, and African Americans compose the lowest population percentiles of identified gifted student populations. African Americans, more specifically, have remained the lowest of all minority populations to be identified for gifted studies programs (Hertzog, 2005).
Admittedly, there are many complications in the process of identifying minority students for the purposes of gifted studies programs. Per many researchers, the heavy reliance of standardized tests to identify students for gifted studies programs oftentimes excludes many minority students that exhibit talents and gifts in other areas. The categories of class, ethnicity, gender, and race, have been well documented as influencing normal child development. In some form or manner, these forces interact to produce two significant problems in the development of talent in economically disadvantaged youth: an achievement gap and their underrepresentation among academically talented youth (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005).

In the case study of African-American Millennials (Millennial refers to the generational classification of students born between 1977 and 1994) conducted by Burley, Barnard-Brak, Marbley and Deason (2010) that focused on increasing African-American students in gifted studies, it was found that students needed to include additional factors to improve probability of identification. The researchers were able to increase the number of students that met at least one gifted criteria when they included nontraditional indicators such as leadership and artistic expression. This could potentially lead one to believe that when considering African-American students for gifted identification that a wider spectrum of criterion should be used.

In contrast, when the math and reading criteria were strictly applied to the same group of students, there was a 16% reduction in eligible candidates for gifted testing. It was also reported by the researchers that African Americans made up 8.6% of the students in the gifted studies program across the nation and were less than half as likely
to be selected for gifted studies programs as their Caucasian counterparts. Perhaps the core problem is not in the students, but how theorists, government, and educational agencies define giftedness (Burley et al., 2010). Better tests will lead to the admission of applicants with a wider variety of skills, thus diversifying further the pool of talent available to our society (Williams, 2002).

There are many implications that society and educational leaders will face with the continued underrepresentation of minority students in its gifted programs. As we look ahead to the demographic changes under way and recognize the need to distribute educational and employment opportunities fairly and broadly, it becomes even more essential for us to assess people’s capabilities accurately (Williams, 2002). This includes students receiving the best type of instruction and curriculum that best celebrates their interests and passions that leads to a true inner desire to becoming a lifelong learner. Another implication of underrepresentation of minority students includes the unnecessary dismantling of programs due to budget cuts in today’s trying economic times where school boards and governmental programs are concentrating even harder on the bottom line of operational costs, especially in education.

**The Idea of Resiliency**

Resilience refers to positive adaptation in the face of present or past adversity (Wright & Matsen, 2005). Resilience is about students achieving scholastically despite their circumstances that would otherwise predispose them to not achieving or underachieving in the classroom or place them on the path to not completing their education through a high school diploma. Research would be incomplete if the idea of
resiliency was not explored because of the economic disadvantages and the impact that it places on students' willingness and desire to succeed given the circumstances to which they must circumvent in order to succeed. This includes the lack of resources, availability to needed resources, social stigmatisms, and supportive relationships.

Gonzales (2003) attributed three major components of Resiliency Theory: risk factors, protective factors, and developmental assets. Examples of risk factors include teenage pregnancy, low socioeconomic status, poverty, neglect, and participation in violent activities. Gonzales uses protective factors as examples of items that may assist in abating the aforementioned risk factors and includes items positive influences that come from teachers, family, friends, and community members. Gonzales profiled these supportive relationships as having the following characteristics: caring with high expectations, a presence that produces a sense of belonging, and guidance focused on increasing self-esteem (Burley et al., 2010). It is also noted in the research that these students would also benefit from exposure to gifted studies programs because of their inner desire to succeed, which is something that is not measured on standardized tests.

**Statement of the Problem**

Despite the general consensus that minority and economically disadvantaged children are underrepresented in gifted programs, the problem remains unresolved, a concern that has been well established in the literature in gifted education (Boothe & Stanley, 2004). In attempting to understand the underachievement and corresponding underrepresentation in gifted programs of children from certain groups, we sometimes lose sight of the simple and undeniable fact that such things as poverty hurt all but the
most resilient of children in ways that can deny them their basic rights in our schools and our society (Borland, 2004). Therefore, it becomes crucial to continue research in the area of gifted education as it relates to African-American students, especially those in poverty stricken and economically disadvantaged communities, in order to construct ways of improving the identification process for gifted programs, teacher perception of disadvantaged African Americans, better counter react social stigmatisms of being labeled gifted, and increase the likelihood of success by these students in gifted studies programs.

As gatekeepers to student achievement, teachers serve a principle role in the identification process. Therefore, it becomes a necessity to investigate if there are any biases or limitations to the process in an effort to better serve a severely underrepresented population. In turn, this study develops ways in which teacher training can be better executed and suggest additional ways the gifted identification process can be enhanced so that more African-American students in economically disadvantaged areas can be serviced in gifted studies programs. It is imperative that an investigative study be conducted in order to better accommodate these students, as well as attempt to tip the scale favorably when addressing the issue of disproportionality of African-American students receiving special education services on the higher end of the spectrum.

As a leadership study, there are definitive implications for policy makers, educational leaders, superintendents of schools, and curriculum developers if there are no continued efforts to explore ways to expand gifted programs and include more students of color from low income areas. It is essential to maintain policy makers and changers
abreast of the current conditions of these students as a means to assist with the
improvement of identification tools and possible creation of future instruments to
increase the chance and likelihood of introducing more African-American students into
gifted studies programs. Another implication of this study that is vital includes teacher
training and development. As a result, improved teacher preparedness will lead to not
only a better understanding of giftedness, but raise potentially minority student
involvement and population in gifted studies programs. This study also sought to raise
the consciousness level of this segmentation of students in order to improve the inclusion
of more students of color from low socioeconomic backgrounds into gifted studies
programs.

**Purpose of the Study**

Gifted education provides a space for students to approach curriculum at a pace
that is specifically tailored for this sort of thinker. It incorporates teaching and
instructional strategies that appeal to this specific type of learner and allows them to
explore the world through their “gifts.” Gifted studies programs allow the gifted learner
to think about and demonstrate comprehension on given material differently than what is
normally employed academically in the general education classroom. The purpose of this
study was to examine why African-American students in economically disadvantaged
areas are oftentimes overlooked or go unidentified for the purposes of gifted education
despite the evolution of multiple criteria to the traditional IQ and normed standardized
tests.
Another facet of this research was to also investigate how teachers’ perception impacts the identification of economically disadvantaged African-American students in a metro Atlanta school district. Simultaneously, this study investigated how potentially culture plays a role in how few African-American students in economically disadvantaged communities are identified and serviced by the gifted studies program based upon teachers’ understanding and comprehension of what it means to be gifted.

**Research Questions**

With regard to the statement of the problem, and in accordance with the purpose of the study, the following research questions were formulated to guide this study on the underrepresentation of African-American students in gifted studies programs, and how teacher perception impacts these students.

**RQ1:** What are teachers’ understandings of what it means to be gifted?

**RQ2:** What behaviors/characteristics do teachers believe are exhibited in gifted students?

**RQ3:** What role, if any, do teachers perceive a student’s socioeconomic status plays in a student’s ability to succeed?

**RQ4:** According to experience, what factors do teachers believe contribute to the underrepresentation of low income African-American students in gifted studies programs?

**RQ5:** What role, if any, do teachers believe cultural stigmatisms play in the identification process of potentially gifted students in economically disadvantaged areas?
RQ6: Why are teachers in low income, urban schools less likely to identify African-American students into gifted studies programs?

RQ7: How are gifted studies programs positively impacted in economically disadvantaged areas with the inclusion of multiple criteria identifiers for gifted studies programs?

RQ8: How does the inclusion of differentiated strategies assist and/or improve with classroom observations of potentially gifted African-American students?

RQ9: How does culture and social influences impact participation in gifted studies by African-American student, including ability/desire to participate in said programs?

RQ10: What factors influence teacher choice and identification of potentially gifted students in economically disadvantaged educational facilities?

RQ11: How do classroom opportunities/instructional approach impact the identification of students in low income areas into gifted studies programs?

**Significance of the Study**

While there is a plethora of research and investigation into the underrepresentation of minority students into gifted studies programs, there is very little evidence or research into the study of African-American students in economically disadvantage areas and teacher perception of these students. There is an emerging area of
research dedicated to looking at resilient children, but very little research has gone into how these students maybe positively impacted by exposure to gifted studies programs.

Therefore, researching the "why" and "how" of the underrepresentation of African-American students in economically disadvantaged areas can positively impact the way this segment of students are taught and identified for the purposes of increasing the number of students serviced. The intent is not to create categories or themes but rather to better understand the data in context of the setting or situation (Berg, 2004). With limited research, there are limited possibilities of ways to improve the educational process for these students. Policymakers and other educational leaders consequently can benefit from the results of this study by better understanding the role of teachers, instructional strategies, and teacher perception of this segment of students so that potentially other means of identification may be employed or developed.

The relevance of this study to educational leaders is quintessentially extraordinary as this study was conducted in the major metropolitan area of Atlanta. This study becomes essential for educational leaders as Atlanta’s population, according to the 2010 U. S. Census Bureau, was 54% African American. Taking into consideration those statistics, it becomes evident that this study serves a major, worthwhile purpose to explaining and developing ways to increase students serviced by the gifted studies departments in schools as there is a vast pool of talent available statistically. Furthermore, this study’s significance is solidified by thoroughly examining teachers’ attitude towards students in this area as a principle component in the multiple criteria process for identification of gifted students.
The results of this study will contribute to (a) raising the awareness of teachers and administrators of the many different forms and types of giftedness, (b) deconstruct teacher perception of African-American students in economically disadvantaged schools, (c) identify the implications of continuous underrepresentation of African Americans in gifted studies programs, (d) research the relationship of cultural identity and giftedness, (e) the increase of low income African American students being serviced by gifted studies programs, and (f) the increased, effective use of nontraditional methods as a way of identifying African-American students for consideration into gifted studies that transcend the traditional IQ and norm referenced tests typically administered for identification purposes. The data from this study provide areas for future researchers to consider when investigating similar and aforementioned topics. Findings from this study will also contribute to the creation of teacher lecture series; development of new identification process applicable to this population segment; and potential development of new criteria to be used in the multiple criteria process.

Summary

The current study sought to find reasons for underrepresentation of African-American students in economically disadvantaged areas. It also investigated the impact and implications of teacher perception on the identification process and student behavior when dealing with this target segmentation of students. The study explored the relationship and impact of cultural identity as perceived by current gifted teachers in a metropolitan Atlanta school district. By conducting this study, it was the researcher’s goal to replace stereotypical ideas of gifted students with alternative ways of looking at
student behavior and instructional opportunity. It was also a goal of the researcher to raise the awareness of the impact that teacher perception and attitude have on potentially identifying students for the gifted studies program in the underrepresented population of African-American students in economically disadvantaged areas at the middle school level.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to explore recent research and literature that is applicable to the field of giftedness; teacher perception and identification; and factors that influence the underrepresentation of African-American students in gifted programs. This chapter also examines the different methods employed to identify more students of color in economically disadvantaged communities and school. The literature outline includes a brief historical perspective of gifted programming in urban schools as well as issues leading up to current theories and processes currently in place that deter the likelihood of admittance and participation of African-American students in poverty areas into gifted studies programs. The literature review also takes a look at the impact of teacher perception and gifted identification of these students.

The literature headings to be included in this review include (a) history of urban gifted education, (b) underrepresentation of African-American students in gifted education, (c) intelligence/achievement tests, nonverbal assessments and multiple criteria, (d) questionable existing biases, (e) acting white, (f) teacher perception of giftedness and their role in identification, and (g) the socioeconomic factor.

History of Urban Gifted Education

From the very beginning of the field, individuals labeled as gifted, either for educational research purposes have, to an overwhelmingly degree, been of European
descent and have deviated significantly upward from population-wide socioeconomic norms (Borland, 2004). Cultures embraced the recognition and development of giftedness as a way to determine potential contributors to society—as leaders, even philosopher kings, in Plato’s imaginary world, or guildsmen, or clerics (VanTessal-Baska, 2010). Much of the evolution of gifted education occurred in urban areas because of the breadth of population and diversity in learners that dwelled in the city centers during the early 1900s.

Urban gifted education began in 1918 in Los Angeles with individual ability testing conducted to separate students that learned at a faster rate than others in their classroom. This later led to the beginning of honors classes and other academic classes tailored to appeal to the existing accelerated learner as a means to assisting the students in reaching their full potential with the fruits of their labor being positive contributions to society as forward thinkers. The creation of gifted studies was based upon the hopes that these students would be positive, contributing members to society.

Urban programs often have been more highly evolved than other settings for gifted learners because the critical mass of learners is available to try multiple delivery models and respond to the needs in different ways (VanTessel-Baska, 2010). It is these different applied approaches that gifted education became a staple in curriculum design. Initial research was conducted in New York and Cleveland at the Speyer School and in Cleveland by researchers Hollingworth (1926) and Barbe (1958). The idea of poverty is also no stranger to urban education as many of the inhabitants in many urban cities were mostly those of the working class. In New York City throughout the 20th century, the
majority of students have come from low-income backgrounds, many children of immigrants (VanTessel-Baska 2010). According to VanTessel-Baska, over 60% of the urban population was composed of mostly minorities and various ethnic backgrounds and that even during this time there was early reporting of the underrepresentation of diverse cultural backgrounds in gifted education given the population size of the different ethnicities present in the urban centers. Gold (1965, cited by VanTessel-Baska, 2010) stated in his early findings:

Anxiety in official quarters over problems in the big cities must eventually transcend concern with the culturally deprived alone and come to grips with superior educational opportunity for young people in the culture-rich metropolis . . . The spate of research in the next decade on urban education cannot fail to give attention to problems of educating the gifted in large cities. (p. 445)

Currently, all states in the United States of America have a gifted studies program that operates to academically support the gifted learner.

**Underrepresentation of African Americans in Gifted Education**

The field of gifted education has long sought to identify more students from traditionally underrepresented populations for high ability services (Burney & Beilke, 2008). In 1992, the United States Office of Civil Rights reported that of the 25 million students enrolled in the public school system that African Americans comprised approximately 21%, whites 60%, Hispanic Americans 14, Asian Americans 4%, and Native Americans 1%. Of these 25 million enrolled students, only 1.4% were identified as gifted, with African Americans composing 12.1% of this composition of gifted
students versus 72.5% of identified gifted students as being white, 7% Asian American, 8% Hispanic American, and .5% Native American. In comparison, African Americans are greatly underrepresented by a staggering 41% when populations are proportioned for comparison purposes. In response to these astounding numbers, the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act of 1998 was enacted as a means to assist state and local educational agencies in identifying students from underrepresented populations for high ability and gifted programs.

According to the literature review, there are several reasons attributed to the underrepresentation of African-American students in gifted studies programs. The literature identifies teacher expectations and perception as the primary reason for the wide gap in identification of African-American students in gifted areas. This includes the misconception by teachers of how a gifted learner looks and operates in the classroom, as well as the lack of training and exposure of teachers to gifted education.

Another identified area that contributes to the problem of underrepresentation of African-American students in gifted education is that of the screening and testing process employed by school systems. This includes the use of different types of assessments—the perceived cultural bias contained on the tests, poor student scores on traditional intelligence and/or achievement tests, and the instruments used by school officials to identify and test students into a gifted studies program. Within this topic, there is also disparity in test results between African-American students and Caucasian students with the ultimate implication being the elimination of potential students of color. The third major contributing factor for less African-American students in gifted studies programs is
that of recruitment and the social/cultural constraints and influences associated with academically achieving in the educational process. This social-emotional phenomenon includes the need of students to be socially accepted by their peers, the environmental attitudes towards education, and the idea of “acting white.”

**Intelligence/Achievement Tests, Nonverbal Assessments, and Multiple Criteria**

There are many culturally and linguistically diverse children in our country who may not be considered gifted because they lack the reading, writing, and arithmetic skills typically seen in gifted children and they are identified, in part, by tests of ability that demand school-related knowledge and skills (Ford, 2004). The screening process for entry into a gifted and talented program often relies heavily on intelligence data test data. Intelligence and achievement test data correlate highly and thus are used in gifted and talented programs to assist in identifying able students (Oakland & Rossen 2005).

Percentiles in comparison to national averages are used to derive an estimated academic ability of a student to perform well in the classroom. Typically, students are screened when their test scores are within a top identified percentile on a nationally normed assessment. Often, intelligence scores for those of African-American students tend to be lower than their white counterparts on these types thus decreasing the likelihood of their screening and acceptance into a gifted talented program. Recently, there has been the expansion of screening for gifted and talented programs with the more behavioral approach proposed by Renzulli (2005) and his theory of multiple intelligences.
This has been instrumental in expanding the likelihood of identifying African American students into gifted and talented programs.

The use of national norms for selecting students for gifted and talented programs assumes students' qualities are normally distributed and somewhat equally represented throughout our states and cities (Oakland & Rossen, 2005). The test results generated from these normed assessments present tremendous implications for many different students in classrooms across the nation. In that intelligence test, data tended to be lower for black and Hispanic students. Reliance on them may preclude otherwise qualified students from being selected for gifted and talented programs (Oakland & Rossen 2005). As a result of these test scores and indicators, teachers prepare their instructional strategies in order to address documented academic challenges as denoted by the test scores. In using disaggregated data that is not truly reflective of a student’s potential there is a rise in many other implications for the school, student, and classroom. More specifically, a child’s instruction is highly likely and potentially driven by the results from the test administration. In turn, if the child’s classroom results do not meet a particular benchmark then instruction in response is likely to be slowed and increasingly more irrelevant to the potential gifted learner. In turn, this further decreases the possibility and likelihood for identification because of the inability for the learner to exhibit their talents or gifts.

There is also an increase in the use of nonverbal tests to potentially identify gifted students in low income and socioeconomic areas. The use of tests like the Naglieri Non-Verbal Ability Test is becoming effective in not only finding minority gifted students, but
also is becoming increasingly successful at identifying gifted English as a Second Language Learners. Beyond the types and characteristics of non-verbal tests, an interesting finding is that the 15-point IQ score gap that exists on traditional intelligence tests is not present on non-verbal tests (Saccuzzo, Johnson, & Guertin, 1994). One essential benefit is that non-verbal assessment can provide a useful cross-check for traditional verbal assessments (Ford, 2004). Recent studies continue to demonstrate and imply that the Naglieri tests is more effective in identifying students of all ethnic backgrounds for gifted studies programs than other traditionally used tests based on cognitive ability.

Paradigms of identification for gifted programs often preclude such students from entry due to the use of narrow criteria and high threshold cutoff scores. Instead of relying solely on intelligence and achievement test scores for identification, multiple criteria have been recommended for use (VanTessal-Baska, 2010). The National Association for Gifted Children (cited in Michael-Chadwell, 2010) advocated for the sustained exploration, adaptation, and reevaluation of alternative instruments and practices that grant equal opportunities to all potentially gifted children. Multiple criteria enable teachers to make observations of students in the classroom and denote whether or not there is a perceived strength in the way that a student manipulates and/or responds to the curriculum. There are nine types of behavior that teachers through multiple criteria seek in a student at an exceptional level in order to refer to the gifted studies program testing process. These characteristics include: interests, communication skills, problem solving
ability, humor, reasoning, memory, inquiry, insight, and creativity. The characteristics used in multiple criteria are defined below:

**Interest** refers to the student that has an intense interest in a subject, activity, or interest that is beyond that of their age group. This student pursues this interest with zeal and finds ways to integrate this interest into their normal class assignments. This student, outside of the classroom, also manages to find ways to continue studying or interacting with the topic or area of interest.

**Communication Skills** refers to the strong ability of a student to creatively and effectively express themselves in many different mediums. This does not limit itself to the use of words, but extends itself to the use of symbols, numbers, drawings, or physically. This student is exceptionally clever in how they express themselves and maybe artistic.

**Problem Solving Ability** refers to the exceptional ability of a student to develop creative strategies to solve problems and issues. This student is excellent at designing, adapting, and devising strategies for the purposes of solving problems. This student may attempt to attack problems from a different angle that others of their age group may not necessarily think to attempt, try, or devise.

**Memory** refers to the student behavior in which the student is a wealth of knowledge and remembers random facts about topics and areas of interests. This individual not only remembers the small details in a problem, but can also relate it to past experiences and apply the outcome to the current situation.
Inquiry refers to the characteristic exhibited in a student where there is a deep need for understanding on a topic or area of study. This student likes to generate ideas and typically generates questioning that is not normal for their age group. This student is inquisitive and likes to apply their knowledge to other ideas, problems, and situations.

Insight refers to the ability of the student to master new concepts and make connections. These students are excellent observers and are exceptional at drawing inferences.

Reasoning refers to the student behavior in which a student is extremely logical in approaching problems and thinks in metaphors and analogies. This student looks at areas of study from a rational perspective and enjoys thinking though problems.

Creativity refers to the student’s ability to be inventive and original in their thinking. This student in imaginative and continuously "thinks outside the box" to the average thinker; however, there is validity to how they piece things together. This student produces ideas and thinks through things in a nontraditional manner.

Humor refers to students that have a witty ability to turn complex situations into comical ones. This student is excellent at making relationships between items and then turning them into jokes or moments of comedic relief. In turn, these students are able to express themselves in funny ways that can be harsh, emotionally sensitive, and emotionally insensitive.

The Questionable Existing Biases

While fewer concerns and criticisms target achievement tests, a wealth of controversy surrounds intelligence test (also known as cognitive ability tests), specifically
given the consistently lower performance of black students on intelligence tests compared to white students (Ford, 2004). According to the literature, there is an ongoing debate as to how and why there is such an achievement gap in intelligence test scores in African-American students versus that of white students. Some researchers believe that there is a cultural bias that exists on these nationally normed tests that prevent African Americans and other minorities from scoring impressively well on these tests, namely those from areas of low socioeconomic background. On the other hand, researchers acknowledge the fact that African Americans and other minorities are culturally different and are not necessarily culturally deprived.

There is a difference in what is being measured by intelligence test and achievement tests. For the most part, low achievement test scores are associated with poor educational experiences, lack of motivation, and a host of other factors that tend to be environmental or social rather than inherited or genetic (Ford, 2004). In comparison, most people believe that intelligence tests are more of a measure of how well a person is able to cognitively think or is representative of an individual’s potential. Attempts to develop an accurate definition and measure of “intelligence” have been fraught with difficulty and controversy (Ford, 2004). Thus, some feel the overrepresentation of African American students into special education programs for low cognitive ability versus those who score well enough to be included in gifted studies programs.

The inclusion of culture in standardized tests has also caused controversy in the gifted community as it relates to African Americans and other minorities. Achievement gaps between poor or African-American students and their white, middle class
counterparts continue to dominate educational discourse (Hertzog, 2005). Researchers feel that the presence of culturally biased questions on these tests make it difficult for those of culturally diverse backgrounds to score well enough for consideration into gifted studies programs. As some test developers have attempted to reduce cultural norms from standardized tests, others make different contentions. Ford (2004) contended that:

... tests can be culturally-reduced, that bias can be decreased; still others contend that tests can never be bias free or culturally neutral because they are developed by people, they reflect the culture of the test developer, and absolute fairness to every examinee is impossible to attain, for no other reasons than the fact that tests have imperfect reliability and that validity in any particular context is a matter of degree. (p. VI)

**Acting White**

For decades, there has been ongoing debate on the existence of acting white and its effect on African-American students’ motivation and achievement or performance (Ford & Whiting, 2010). Another contributing factor that is still being explored is that of cultural influence on students and their willingness to be associated with the gifted studies program. Ford and Whiting have conducted numerous studies on this phenomenon and the impact that it has on students wanting to be in a gifted studies program with findings that demonstrating a strong cultural bias towards the program in areas of poverty. For example, researchers have contributed cultural concepts such as “acting white” and “acting black” to the gifted education research literature (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008). Such concepts can be useful in terms of providing cursory
knowledge related to the experiences of high achieving and gifted black students, which, in turn, may help explain why many black students decline participation in advanced programs and courses. Many researchers attribute this cultural variable to the influence of hip hop culture on African-American students where education is not blatantly or heavily regarded (Henfield, Washington, & Owens, 2010) (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Perceived Characteristics by Ethnicity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Being Perceived as Acting White</th>
<th>Characteristics of Being Perceived as Acting Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Being intelligent</td>
<td>➢ Being unintelligent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Speaking Standard English</td>
<td>➢ Speaking non-Standard English or in broken dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Being a high achiever and caring about school</td>
<td>➢ Showing disinterest in school; low achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Having mainly white friends</td>
<td>➢ Being thuggish and have &quot;bad&quot; behaviors and attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Showing a preference for hip-hop culture in dress and music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Researchers have traced this mindset of sorts to the roots of cultural identity as explained by socio-ecologists Fordham and Ogbu (1986) and during the late 1970s and early 1980s ironically during the same time frame of the creation of rap music in the United States and as early as McArdle and Young in 1970. Since economic and
educational disadvantage is visited disproportionately upon racial and ethnic minorities, understanding the nature and effects of minority status is essential to addressing its educational consequences, including underrepresentation in gifted programs (Borland, 2004). To this end, Ogbru (1992) suggests that there is a difference in mindset and value of education in African Americans versus other minorities. Minority students may have to choose between the individualistic focus of high achievement and the collective ethos of their racial community (Burney & Beilke, 2008).

Primarily, he makes this distinction based upon the circumstances in which African Americans came to the United States versus other minorities. Ogbru (1992) in his research discusses that African Americans were forced to assimilate into the European society created by the English and others in America. In comparison, all other immigrant and minority groups willingly assimilated and accepted the culture in Americas because of the terms in which they matriculated into American society. To this end, Ogbru makes a distinction between voluntary minorities, who come to this country by choice to seek economic opportunity or greater political freedom, and involuntary minorities, such as African Americans, who were originally brought to this country against their will, denied assimilation into mainstream, and relegated largely to menial occupations (Borland, 2004).

Ogbru (1992) later discusses what he defines as primary and secondary cultural differences that he believes attributes to the generational failure in African Americans when it comes to seeking academic success versus those of other minority groups. Ogbru maintains that a primary cultural difference refers to how one culture varies from the
predominating culture accepted in general society. Examples of this include the manner in which individuals dress, act, speak, or language used. It is in these initial experiences Ogbu cites that voluntary and involuntary minority children become aware of their differences from whatever is considered mainstream society. Primary cultural differences can cause educational difficulties, lack of fluency in English being a good example, but for voluntary minorities the problems rarely persist because they see primary cultural differences as barriers to overcome to adapt to and assimilate into the mainstream culture and achieve the goals that motivated their immigration in the first place (Borland, 2004).

Furthermore, Borland (2004) explores Ogbu’s (1992) idea of secondary cultural differences that involuntary minorities experience once they are able to move past the primary cultural difference. According to Ogbu, secondary cultural differences arose after the arrival into this country when “members of a given population begin to participate in an institution controlled by members of another population, such as schools controlled by the dominant group” (p. 5). Racial identity and development assumes added significance for gifted and high achieving black students who confront a barrage of stereotypes associated with race and intelligence in an inevitable aspect of their schooling (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008).

In contrast, Ogbu (1002) believes that voluntary minority students perceive these as an obstacle that must be overcome in order to successful assimilate into society. Ogbu asserts that involuntary minorities cling even closer to their identity even more so because of the self-perception of oppression. In turn, for involuntary minorities persists a
cyclic disposition to rebel against the predominant society, thus creating the problem for potentially gifted involuntary-minority students, which Fordham (1988, 1991) refers to as the burden of acting white (Borland, 2004). According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986):

Learning school curriculum and learning to follow the standard academic practices of the school are often equated by the minorities with . . . 'acting white' while simultaneously giving up acting like a minority person. School learning is therefore consciously or unconsciously perceived as a subtractive process: a minority person who learns successfully in school or who follows the standard practices of the school is perceived as becoming acculturated into the white American frame of reference at the expense of the minorities cultural frame of reference and collective welfare. (pp. 182-183)

Academically successful black males and females complain about negative peer pressures because of their high grades, participation in gifted programs, speaking Standard English, and other conditions (Ford & Whiting, 2010). Implications of this perceived cultural betrayal are paramount for the potential and identified African-American student. Many of the participants in this study reported that being black and gifted was something of an anomaly in their schools, and, at one time or another had been told or knew someone who had been accused of “acting white” because they were black and intellectual (Henfield, Washington, & Owens, 2010). In response to these claims, these students have had to defend their “identity card” in order to maintain their relevance and social status amongst peers. Due to the seemingly cultural aversion to school, it is important for these students to realize positive self-image and make positive cultural
associations with gifted education process to prevent the continued underrepresentation of African-American students. Similarly, these results are also cause for future study as the literature speaks of the overrepresentation of African-American males in special education while they are the least likely to be identified or screened for gifted testing.

**Teacher Perception of Giftedness and their Role in Identification**

Teacher nomination remains to be the most widely used tool in identifying students for gifted studies testing and screening. Additionally, they may be a part of a total identification system that often includes standardized achievement tests or intelligence tests (Siegle, Moore, Mann, & Wilson, 2010). In order to successfully refer students to undergo the identification procedure for participation in gifted programs, teachers need a solid understanding of characteristics found in gifted children (Neumeister, Adams, Pierce, Cassady, & Dixon, 2007). In consideration of the vast diversity that is the American public school system today, it is imperative more now than ever that teachers become sensitive to and more aware of cultural norms to students of different ethnic backgrounds than themselves. Teachers can be multicultural agents only if they truly believe that children who are culturally diverse are fully capable to benefit from instruction that is rich with powerful ideas (Elhowris, 2008).

Primarily, this is applicable to students of color that come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and are considered disadvantaged. While it is important for teachers to not lower the standards or expectations, it is essential for the identification of students with these circumstances for teachers to take extra consideration and center their identification on the potential that they see in the student. Views of teachers or people
who compromise the school culture must be explored to eliminate the possibility that the teachers' beliefs or prejudices are contributing to the underachievement of specific populations of students (Hertzog, 2005). In doing so, it is also vital that teachers become aware of what it means to be giftedness and the many different ways that giftedness manifests itself in the classroom and in children. Teacher referral practices have also been cited as contributing to the problem of underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs (Neumeister et al., 2007).

The nomination process has a significant impact on disproportionate representation (Oakland & Rossen, 2005). In the screening or nominating process, teachers most likely make nominations based off of observations in the classroom or on standardized test scores. Although the process used to identify gifted and talented students may differ from state to state, it typically relies on a committee composed of teachers, counselors, and administrators to establish both the process and standards for gifted and talented identification (Oakland & Rossen, 2005). In addition to teacher nomination, the committee may also take into consideration awards from certain competitions, test scores, student work samples, and grades from a student’s transcript. These indicators are then applied to the established criterion that identifies the student according to local procedures as to whether or not the student is gifted. This inclusion of the teacher signals the increase need for support and professionalism in accurately nominating students to the process that demonstrate true potential for identification.

Some of the leading research in teacher perception and implication of unidentified giftedness in African-American students is typically attributed to biases against the
socioeconomic background of the student, lower expectations, and not being able to accurately identify gifted characteristics in students. It is in this failure by teachers that makes it imperative for additional training and understanding of gifted characteristics for the more African-American students to be taken through the identification process for gifted. When not given specific selection criteria, teachers focus on academic achievement, rather than creativity, leadership, or motor skills, when identifying students for gifted programming (Guskin, Peng, & Simon, 1992). Kozol (1999) also found that teacher effectiveness with gifted nominations increased explicitly and very clearly spelled out the traits or characteristics to be used by the nominators.

In the literature review, there is the recurring theory and concept of the “deficient theory.” According to Fraser, Garcia, and Passow (1995), teachers fail to nominate students because of this model due to the teacher’s disbelief in the child being able to handle the work given in a gifted class or possess the academic astuteness needed to be successful. Moreover, teachers may focus on such attitude and behavior problems and therefore overlook these students when nominating for gifted programs (Neumeister et al., 2007).

In a study conducted in the fall of 2003, 27 teachers participating in Project Clustering Learners Unlocks Equity (CLUE) were given a group of students from a gifted cluster. During Project CLUE, the teachers that participated were primarily white females and the students were 58.7% African American, 30% white, 9% Hispanic, 3% multiracial, and less than 1% Native American. Of the 184 students participating in the
project, 57% were on free lunch, 19% on reduced lunch, and 24% receiving either benefit.

Table 2 is a chart created from the project that detailed what teachers perceived to be gifted characteristics based upon their participation in the project:

Table 2

_Teachers' Conceptions of Giftedness (N = 27)_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-motivated to achieve, independent learner in classroom</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning should come faster/more easily in one or more areas</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can work and understand at level above the average level</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning abilities and problem-solving skills</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughtful; sees connections others do not notice</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curious about many things</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different mindset or viewpoint</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive vocabulary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loves to read</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom/noninterested</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loves challenge/competitive</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially immature</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperactive, impulsive</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings from Project CLUE denoted that due to cultural differences, there were a lot of gifted characteristics that went unnoticed in African Americans from economically disadvantaged areas. Few, if any, teachers mentioned gifted characteristics such as oral tradition, movement and verve, communalism, and affective characteristics (Ford, Tyson, & Trotman, 2002). Only 15% of teachers recognized that boredom or noninterest may be common in gifted students, and, with the exception of hyperactivity, teachers did not recognize behavior problems or underachievement as potential outcomes of boredom (Neumeister et al., 2007). In conclusion of their study, Neumeister et al. urges for continued research on how gifted characteristics manifest themselves in minority students from economically disadvantaged populations.

The Socioeconomic Factor

From the beginning, urban settings also have grappled with the poverty issue in respect to gifted education because these settings have always had a large percentage of children coming from poverty backgrounds (VanTassel-Baska, 2010). Lines between races, differences within ethnicities, and shifting populations have made some categorizations increasingly less defining than the common influence of living in poverty (Burney & Beilke, 2008). Research shows that most schools have at least a small population of students living at or below the line of poverty in their populations. The research also denotes that even in these small pockets that there is the potential for high ability students that may not be identified if alternative methods are not in place to assist these students to transcend their economic status.
It has been shown that socioeconomic class has a direct influence on the attitude of a child towards school. Studies show that the higher the socioeconomic class is of the parents, the more positive attitude the child tends to demonstrate towards school. Furthermore, students from lower income families may have limited access to programs outside of school that provide lessons and enrichment opportunities that add to student competence in a learning environment, confidence in ability to learn new things, social interaction skills, and background information that may transfer to an academic setting (Burney & Beilke, 2008).

Economics also play a major role in standardized testing and can affect performance because of a child’s inability to secure the needed items for educational experiences. The focus of a family in a poverty stricken area will be different than that of an affluent family who has adequate access to resources to support the educational experience. As a result, students that are in economically disadvantaged areas do not bring necessarily the same life experiences to a standardized test as a more financially stable student; however, this does and should not infer an intellectual deficiency or inability. Students who had the early advantages outlined previously are in a position to perform better on standardized tests (Burney & Beilke, 2008). High achievement increases the likelihood of attainment of postsecondary education; it is that level of attainment that is associated with increased lifetime earnings. Increased education is what will allow students to escape poverty and its limitations for themselves and future generations (Burney & Beilke, 2008).
CHAPTER III
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study explored reasons and perceptions held by teachers in low socioeconomic urban schools as to why there is an underrepresentation of gifted African-American students in the school systems today and the role that educators play in the identification process. Specifically, this study examined the identification process of gifted students in an urban middle school and the impact, both positive and negative, that this process is having on the underserved population segment of African-American students in this low socioeconomic urban environment. Sections to be discussed in this chapter include (a) the theory of the variables, (b) definitions of the variables, (c) research questions, (d) biases, and (e) limitations of the study.

Theory of the Variables

It is proposed that the teachers in addition to testing procedures have a significant impact on African-American students in the gifted identification process when variables such as teacher perception, teacher expectation, teacher understanding of gifted studies, student behavior, traditional identification procedures, and multiple/alternative identification procedures are investigated. Figure 1 diagrams the independent and dependent variables for this study. This study looks at how the various independent variables have an impact on the dependent variable, gifted identification of economically disadvantaged African American students.
Independent Variables

Authentic Assessment
Classroom Opportunities
Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT)
Differentiated Instruction
Multiple Criteria Procedures
Performance Based Criteria
Student Behavior
Teacher Expectation
Teacher Perception
Teacher Understanding of Gifted Studies
Traditional Identification Procedures

Dependent Variable

Gifted Screening and Service of Economically Disadvantaged African-American Students

Figure 1. Diagram of Variables
Definition of Variables and Other Terms

Dependent Variable

For the purposes of this study, the dependent variable is the identification/screening of economically disadvantaged African-American students into a gifted studies program and is further defined in the following manner:

**African American** refers to students whose dominant ethnic background and origins are that of African and/or Caribbean descent. This definition excludes individuals who are of Hispanic origin.

**Economically Disadvantaged** refers to students that receive free and/or reduced lunch at school or family incomes does not exceed the poverty level as defined by the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. For the purposes of this study, students that also attend a Title I school but do not participate in the free and/or reduced lunch program are also considered to be in an economically disadvantaged community. See Appendix A for specific guidelines and regulations.

**Gifted** refers to the exceptional talent and/or intelligence exhibited by a child in comparison to other children of similar age and experience.

**Gifted Identification** refers to the successful completion of the testing process by a student that indicates that the student is gifted.

**Gifted Studies/Programs** refers to the service or department within a school that uses instructional strategies and curriculum approaches tailored for students that demonstrate the exceptionality of giftedness.
Title I refers to federal monies endowed to schools that have a high enrollment of students from low income families. Monies from Title I are designed to support schools to assist students in meeting state qualifications.

Independent Variables

Authentic Assessment refers to a student's ability to perform at a superior level when dealing with real life application of a lesson or activity in the classroom or competition.

Classroom Opportunities refers to the use of curriculum and ability of students to exhibit different qualities that are sought for gifted pre-qualification for testing.

Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) refers to a state mandated standardized test given to students from grades one to eight that measures students' ability to master grade appropriate state standards. Scores generated from the CRCT are then analyzed to determine how well or ineffectively a school is meeting the state minimum requirements for each grade level.

Differentiated Instruction refers to the use of different instructional strategies employed by teachers that encourages students to use their strengths to demonstrate their understanding of the material covered in class. It can also refer to tiered lessons in which teachers create a lesson that appeals to different levels of proficiency on a topic in order to better appeal to the mastery level of students.

Multiple Criteria Procedures refers to the use of different measures to potentially identify students into a gifted studies program. These alternative identification procedures look at a student's behavior and specifically look for qualities
exhibited by the student at an exceptional level in comparison to other students their age. Characteristics may include a student’s motivation, insight, humor, artistic ability, reasoning, communication skills, problem solving abilities, and interest. These characteristics are furthered explained in the Operations Definitions section of this chapter.

**Performance Based Criteria** refers to the use of a hands-on activity to evaluate a student’s understanding of material. This can include winning a state level competition in a research project, art, dance, and drama performance that substantiates a student’s ability to perform superior to those of the same age and experience.

**Student Behavior** refers to how students act and react in certain situations. For the purposes of this study, there are certain behaviors and characteristics that are monitored for the purposes of alternative gifted testing that teachers must determine if these qualities are exhibited by students at an exceptional level.

**Teacher Expectation** refers to the behavior and academic standard that the educational professional desires to see in their students.

**Teacher Perception** refers to how the teachers interpret and view the community, parents, and students. Perceptions are beliefs that teachers have placed upon their school community and are based upon their observation and interactions with the community, parents, and students as an educational professional.

**Teacher Understanding of Gifted Studies** refers to what teachers have a tendency to think are the behaviors and actions of a gifted student.
Traditional Identification Procedures refers to the common use of normed standardized and intelligence quotient testing materials to determine the academic level of a student. These tests are solely based on mental ability and performance.

Operational Definitions

Urban often used interchangeably as an alternative way to refer to minorities or African Americans in inner city areas.

As a part of the alternative identification process, teachers were asked if certain behaviors are exhibited by students at exceptional levels as possible indicators of giftedness. The use of these behaviors assists teachers in potentially identifying students for consideration into gifted studies. This is completed in a manner that is not based upon academic success or measured by traditional identification methods in an effort to broaden the opportunity for students to be tested for gifted studies that may not exude academic proficiency for one reason or another. For the purpose of this paper, major characteristics are identified and explained below:

Motivation refers to a student’s tenacity and desire to meet, attain, and exceed goals. This student is self-motivated and finds great satisfaction in meeting personal goals and wants to be someone of importance one day.

Interests refer to the student that has an intense interest in a subject, activity, or interest that is beyond that of their age group. This student pursues this interest with zeal and finds ways to integrate this interest into their normal class assignments. This student, outside of the classroom, also manages to find ways to continue studying or interacting with the topic or area of interest.
**Communication Skills** refers to the strong ability of a student to creatively and effectively express themselves in many different mediums. This does not limit itself to the use of words, but extends itself to the use of symbols, numbers, drawings, or physically. This student is exceptionally clever is how they express themselves and maybe artistic.

**Problem Solving Ability** refers to the exceptional ability of a student to develop creative strategies to solve problems and issues. This student is excellent at designing, adapting, and devising strategies for the purposes of solving problems. This student may attempt to attack problems from a different angle that others of their age group may not necessarily think to attempt, try, or devise.

**Memory** refers to the student behavior in which the student is a wealth of knowledge and remembers random facts about topics and areas of interests. This individual not only remembers the small details in a problem, but can also relate it to past experiences and apply the outcome to the current situation.

**Inquiry** refers to the characteristic exhibited in a student where there is a deep need for understanding on a topic or area of study. This student likes to generate ideas and typically generates questioning that is not normal for their age group. This student is inquisitive and likes to apply their knowledge to other ideas, problems, and situations.

**Insight** refers to the ability of the student to master new concepts and make connections. These students are excellent observers and are exceptional at drawing inferences.
Reasoning refers to the student behavior in which a student is extremely logical in approaching problems and thinks in metaphors and analogies. This student looks at areas of study from a rational perspective and enjoys thinking through problems.

Creativity refers to the student’s ability to be inventive and original in their thinking. This student is imaginative and continuously "thinks outside the box" to the average thinker; however, there is validity to how they piece things together. This student produces ideas and thinks through things in a nontraditional manner.

Humor refers to students that have a witty ability to turn complex situations into comical ones. This student is excellent at making relationships between items and then turning them into jokes or moments of comedic relief. In turn, these students are able to express themselves in funny ways that can be harsh, emotionally sensitive, and emotionally insensitive.

Relationship among the Variables

The theoretical framework for this study is nestled in models of resilience and self-efficacy that posit that promising students from low income backgrounds, minority students, and others with special learning needs can benefit from opportunities that build on their personal characteristics and beliefs, as well as their perseverance and motivation and, thus, extend their sense of self-efficacy (VanTessal-Baska, 2009). The underrepresentation of black and Hispanic students in gifted education is meaningful and statistically significant (Ford, 2010). The field of gifted education has long sought to identify more students from traditionally underrepresented populations for high ability services (Burney & Beilke, 2008). Identification into a gifted program is determined by
different variables: student ability as predicted and assessed on normed standardized tests and teacher perception of student behavior and ability. Within these two areas are procedures and ways that can ultimately push a student forward with gifted testing or prevent the student from further testing to indicate giftedness. Primarily according to the research, African-American students in economically disadvantaged areas are less likely to go through the identification process for a myriad of reasons that include teacher apathy, inability to score well on normed standardized tests, misconceptions of giftedness, lack of opportunities in the classroom for students to express themselves in the classroom, and a lack of knowledge and understanding of giftedness by teachers.

Studies conducted by researchers such as Ruby Payne (2003) have also indicated that teacher typically come to the classroom with middle class values, experience, and backgrounds. This places students from low income homes at a disadvantage because they do not fit the mold of what teachers expect in the classroom when identifying potential students for gifted studies programs. Teacher expectation in the classroom can have an impact of student identification when behaviors exhibited in the classroom are out of what is considered the norm based upon a teacher’s prior knowledge and experience. Students from low income families and areas may exhibit these qualities but in a manner that does not meet the teacher’s expectations because of the lack of resources, exposure, and support from the home. In turn, this can be a liability when African-American students from low income homes are being considered for gifted studies programs.
Similar to curriculum being the first line of defense in classroom management, it is also a major component in the prequalification and identification process of students. Qualities and characteristics that are expected and exhibited by the gifted child can only be exuded or displayed when given the opportunity. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers provide the opportunity in their classroom for students to exhibit these characteristics if they are present in a student.

Teachers must become more aware and develop a better understanding of what it means to be gifted. This includes the need for teachers to oftentimes discard their own value systems and experience by synthesizing information given to them by students based on their background and ability. It is imperative that teachers also abandon the stereotypical profile of giftedness in order to better identify potential in students, especially in the identification process. According to the article "Underrepresentation of Culturally Different Students in Gifted Education," Ford (2010) asserts:

It is a belief that their culture—beliefs, values, language, practices, customs, traditions and more—are substandard, abnormal, and unacceptable. When deficit thinking exists educators are unable to focus on the strengths and potential of Hispanic and African-American students; they are blinded, instead, by low expectations and stereotypes. Hence, the low referral rates of black and Hispanic students for gifted education screening and identification. (p. 32)

The referral practices of teachers are also cited as a major problem in the identification of African-American students from economically disadvantaged environments. Based upon the design of most referral programs, teachers play a
significant role in identifying students for gifted studies programs. Most literature cites that teachers fail to recommend deserving students to gifted studies programs for different reasons. Some of the leading reasons include: unfamiliarity with giftedness characteristics and qualities, inability to disassociate student potential with disadvantaged economic circumstance, and student’s perceived attitude toward school. The failure to recommend also includes students that are behavior problems in the classroom and based on teacher perception do not fit the stereotypical profile of a gifted learner because of previous behavior issues.

Testing practices also have a significant impact on the identification of the gifted learner. This is because students must demonstrate high levels of cognitive and mental abilities to be considered gifted. Only tests that are nationally normed are used to identify students because the results are based on the ability of students of similar ages to perform when given similar tasks. Currently, there is an emerging field of tests designed to assist students from special segmentations such as English Language Learners and students from low income area to exhibit high cognitive ability that is not based on cognitive measures typically found on standard intelligence quotient (IQ) tests.

In using traditional standardized tests there is the added debate of what these test represent and should not be used to test students from minority groups. Research denotes that these tests have a tendency to reflect values from middle-class white America and are culturally biased. In turn, students with minority backgrounds, especially low income students, cannot relate to the material presented on these tests; thus, resulting in lower test scores on nationally normed standardized tests. Due to low test scores on normed
standardized tests like the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) that would normally trigger potential testing in low income, urban areas the likelihood for many African-American students strongly relies on teacher referral through alternative criteria for gifted testing and placement. Therefore, there is a supplied need for further study into the critical area of the impact of teacher perception and giftedness in African-American students in economically disadvantaged areas resulting in the underrepresentation of African Americans in gifted studies programs.

Ford (2010) suggests a theory on underrepresentation of gifted minorities fueled by three major paradigms: colorblind ideology, white privilege, and deficit thinking. She believes that the deficiency in minority students like African Americans and Hispanics primarily exists because of deficient thinking. This is based upon the reasoning by teachers that individuals from these ethnic groups are genetically and culturally inferior to their white counterparts. Colorblindness is the practice of intentionally or unintentionally disregarding an individual’s background, instruction, and expectations within the classroom to identify or prevent a student from testing into a gifted studies program. White privilege is unearned benefits that advantage whites while disadvantaging others (Ford, 2010). Ford believes that white privilege is a form of entitlement that customs and cultural beliefs of white Americans predicates that of others thus forming what is considered to be the norm of society.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the responses of teachers at two urban low income middle schools in the state of Georgia. These schools have been identified because of their
failure to meet county expectations that 10% of the student population be identified as gifted. Currently, these schools have a gifted population that accounts for 5.75% and 6.28% of their total schools' population. It is also limited to the nine teachers interviewed, observations made by the researcher at the two middle schools, and data provided by the middle schools when researching the various identification processes. Teacher interviews conducted addressed teacher knowledge of giftedness and its characteristics; personal teacher philosophy and practices in the identification process; and teacher expectations as described by the respondent.

There is also a limitation and/or bias by the researcher for the following reasons:

- One of the schools included in the research study is a place of former employment by the researcher. The researchers did not use teachers with whom there is a personal relationship in order to gather information.

- The researcher is a product of a gifted studies program. The researcher has a background in gifted studies programs that have shaped the greater part of the researcher’s educational background and influences how the researcher views and interprets the data on teacher perception of gifted students.

- The researcher is also African American. Despite being African American, this is listed as a bias because it does have an impact on how an individual views their culture and race as it relates to society. This is also important to denote because of how those being interviewed of differing cultural backgrounds may not be as candid or comfortable with handling questions that are based upon race and on one represented by the researcher.
Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study on the impact of teacher perception on gifted identification in economically disadvantaged African-American students, thus resulting in the underrepresentation of these students in gifted studies programs.

RQ1: What are teachers’ understandings of what it means to be gifted?

RQ2: What behaviors/characteristics do teachers believe are exhibited in gifted students?

RQ3: What role, if any, do teachers perceive a student’s socioeconomic status plays in a student’s ability to succeed?

RQ4: According to experience, what factors do teachers believe contribute to the underrepresentation of low income African-American students in gifted studies programs?

RQ5: What role, if any, do teachers believe cultural stigmatisms play in the identification process of potentially gifted students in economically disadvantaged areas?

RQ6: Why are teachers in low income, urban schools less likely to identify African-American students into gifted studies programs?

RQ7: How are gifted studies programs positively impacted in economically disadvantaged areas with the inclusion of multiple criteria identifiers for gifted studies programs?
RQ8: How does the inclusion of differentiated strategies assist and/or improve with classroom observations of potentially gifted African-American students?

RQ9: How does culture and social influences impact participation in gifted studies by African-American student, including ability/desire to participate in said programs?

RQ10: What factors influence teacher choice and identification of potentially gifted students in economically disadvantaged educational facilities?

RQ11: How do classroom opportunities/instructional approach impact the identification of students in low income areas into gifted studies programs?

Summary

This chapter presented an explanation of the theoretical framework in which this study will be conducted. This chapter also explained the relationship of the independent variables to the dependent variable. Also, this chapter explained the relevant definitions of terms to be used throughout this study. This chapter also outlined the limitations of the study and includes the research questions.
CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Without rigor, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olsen, & Spiers, 2002). The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of teacher perception on the identification of African-American students in economically disadvantage areas and to examine reasons for the underrepresentation of African-American students in gifted studies programs. This chapter contains a description of how this study was conducted in order to further investigate the aforementioned purpose.

Research Design

Historically, qualitative methodologists have described three major purposes for research: to explore, explain, or describe the phenomenon of interest (Marshall & Rossman, 2005). There is a definitive difference in research methodology between the approaches of quantitative and qualitative. While one tends to deal with the analysis of numbers, the other is more descriptive in nature. In this apparently black and white worldview, qualitative studies are most likely exploratory, naturalistic, subjective, inductive, ideographic, and descriptive/interpretive and quantitative studies are most likely confirmatory, controlled, objective, deductive, nomothetic, and predictive/explanatory (Chenail, 2011). Despite numbers having a definitive value and significance in society, qualitative studies delve into the "how" and "why" of a problem. Qualitative
research enables scholars to gather detailed data about the experience of individuals within social contexts in a way that surveys conventionally cannot (Lamont & White, 2005). Qualitative studies allow the research to develop the study as needed versus a more streamlined quantitative study. In qualitative inquiry, initial curiosities for research often come from real-world observations, emerging from the interplay of the researcher’s direct experience, tacit theories, political commitments, interests in practice, and growing scholarly interest (Marshall & Rossman, 2005).

Qualitative inquiry employs a different knowledge claims, strategies of inquiry, and methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). It is for this reason, that this study is modeled as a leadership qualitative study versus that of a leadership quantitative research study question. Qualitative research enabled the researcher to develop and derive an original theory based off of the information collected as well as potentially explore the research question from different, alternative views and perspectives based on feedback given by participants. The data derived from qualitative research studies is also more open-ended and gives the researcher a certain latitude of flexibility as information is collected in the data collection process.

Due to the lack of definitive reasons for the underrepresentation of African-American students in low socioeconomic status schools, this form of research design is best suited to unearth potential reasons for the phenomenon. Although qualitative methods are rich methods for performing such tasks, they are also well suited for analytical aims conventionally considered to reside in the realm of quantitative modes of research, including refining or challenging existing theories and generating and testing
For the purposes of this leadership question, a grounded theory approach was employed to complete the study.

Grounded Theory is a specific methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 for the purpose of building theory from data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Grounded theory can help to forestall the opportunistic use of theories that have dubious fit and working capacity (Glaser & Strauss 1967). A grounded theory research design was best determined to be utilized in order to complete this study. Grounded theory allows the researcher to develop a theory based upon the data collected during the research process. According to Glaser and Strauss, grounded theory enables the author to give his data a more general sociological meaning, as well as account for what the researcher has found.

This process requires different steps to collect data. Two primary characteristics of this design are the constant comparison of data with emerging categories and theoretical sampling of different groups to maximize the similarities and the differences of information (Creswell, 2009). The use of grounded theory allows the researcher a certain amount of flexibility to develop their theory as the data emerges in the research process. Therefore, the grounded theory was used to develop a theory of why teachers in low socioeconomic areas do not recommend more African-American students into gifted studies programs and how their perceptions impact the identification process.

In order to collect data for this study, the researcher conducted individual interviews with teachers at Title I schools on the gifted identification process at the middle school level. The interview questions were developed by the researcher in an effort to ascertain emerging categories as to why teachers are less likely to identify
students; thus, contributing to the underrepresentation of African-American students in gifted studies. According to the initial responses in these initial interviews, the researcher continued to review current literature on the underrepresentation of African Americans in gifted studies. Follow-up questioning based upon those findings occurred in a second set of interviews, if necessary.

The researcher sought to gain access to the documents collected and used during the multiple criteria testing and automatic referral periods of the schools. The researcher used this information to see what types of behaviors and characteristics are notated by teachers and then compared those results with discussion from initial and follow-up interview questioning. The results of these interactions in addition to the literature and observations were used to develop an initial theory as to why there is an underrepresentation of African-American students based upon teacher perception and participation in the gifted identification process.

**Description of the Setting**

The study was conducted in two public middle schools that are identified as Title I schools. All schools that participated in this study were located in the state of Georgia and in the metropolitan area of Atlanta. Teachers that participated in the study were not of a very diverse cultural background due to high employment of African-American teachers at both study schools. Following is a description of each school used in this study on the underrepresentation of African Americans in gifted studies.
School A

School A is a public middle school in the metropolitan area of Atlanta. It has an approximate enrollment of 1,147 students from sixth to eighth grade. The gifted program at this school services approximately sixty-six students and has not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the past five years and is on the Needs Improvement list. Ninety-five percent of the student population is African American, 1.1% Hispanic, .8% Asian, and .3% Caucasian during the 2011-2012 school year. On staff, there are 68 teachers of which 90% of the staff is African American and 100% of the administrators are African American. The student to teacher ratio during the 2011-2012 school year is 11:1. Student gender population for School A is that 50.41% is female and 49.59% male. In the community, the median household income is $31,014 in the city that the school is located. 29.89% of the homes are vacant in the area with approximately 65% of the home rentals are to individuals qualifying for Section 8 or subsidized housing. Educationally, only 18% of the city surrounding the school has a bachelor’s degree and approximately 45% of the population has at least a high school diploma. Approximately 22% of the community surrounding School A has less than a high school diploma.

School B

School B is a public middle school in the metropolitan area of Atlanta. This school has an approximate total enrollment of 1,241 students from grades 6 to 8. The gifted program within this school services approximately 78 gifted students. This school has made AYP for the past three years and is a Distinguished Title I School by the state of Georgia. The school population consists of 97.1% African American, 2% Caucasian,
and 1% Asian. Within the school approximately 91% of the school receives free or reduced lunch; of this percentage 81% are eligible for free lunch and 10% are eligible for reduced lunch. The school’s gender composition includes close to an even 50% male and 50% female distribution. The student to teacher ratio is 12:1. In the community surrounding School B, approximately 30% of the population has a college degree. The median household income is $39,141 in comparison to the state average of $44,644. In the community, approximately 55% of the population is renters with approximately 45% are homeowners.

**Sampling Procedures**

For the purposes of this study, the sampling procedures employed the purposeful sampling method. By using the purposeful sampling method, teachers within the schools described in the previous section had the same opportunity to be chosen to participate in the study if they fulfill the one requirement. The only stipulation within this study was that teachers must have participated in at least one year of multiple criteria gifted identification and more specifically have completed paperwork related to the multiple criteria process for identification in a Title I or economically disadvantaged area. This stipulation was made so that participants have a prior knowledge to draw upon during questioning in individual interviews. Teachers that participated in the study did so of their own volition. A total of nine teachers participated in the research study.

**Working with Human Subjects**

Human subjects that participate in this study were given complete confidentiality and anonymity. These subjects could have requested the findings of this study upon the
completion of this study. In order to confer the message and tone of confidentiality, participating human subjects received a letter detailing the purpose of the study with an explanation of how their identities were withheld during the interview sessions. During the individual interviews, human subjects were assigned a number to denote their participation in the discussion and responses to individual interview questions. For the purposes of this study, responses attributed to each human subject will be referred to as Teacher “X” with their assigned number. In addition; there was no formal record of identity of the respondents or their respective school during the data collection process.

Instrumentation

[An interview] goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views in everyday conversations, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). For the purposes of this study, the researcher developed a list of questions to discuss in a closed interview that were formulated from the research study questions. The initial interviews were conducted in order to get initial information and reactions to questions for the purposes of finding common themes. The second interview was for the purposes of reviewing points brought up in the initial interview for further investigation.

The qualitative interview is also called a non-standardized or unstructured interview. Because there are few unstructured or standardized procedures for conducting these forms of interviews, many of the methodical decisions have to be made on the spot, during the interview (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). According Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess, and Ladany (2005), in the interviewing process it is also suggested to
speak with individuals from the target population as well as examine their own experiences with the phenomenon to develop questions. The interview process followed the seven steps of research interviewing: thematizing an interview project, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting. Based upon the results of this interview, the researcher looked for common themes in the interviewees’ responses. In conjunction with the literature, the researcher then looked at the common responses and recurring themes from the individual interviews for the formulation of questions to be posed during the follow up discussions.

In keeping with the seven steps, to thematize a research interview is to focus on the interviewee’s experience with the theme of the research topic. In doing so, the researcher was allowed to see how the individual thought and interpreted the idea of giftedness. Next, the researcher moved to more semistructured research interview questioning. In this line of questioning, the interviewer’s questions aimed at a cognitive clarification of the subject’s experience of learning (Kvale & Brinkman 2009). The interviewing process incorporated elements of the consensual qualitative research approach. In this approach, interviews were carefully constructed so that participants were able to give spontaneous responses even though the interviewer has preconstructed expected responses. Typically, consensual qualitative researchers have developed detailed, semi structured protocols, which involve a number of scripted questions, and then a list of suggested probes to help interviewees explore their experiences more deeply (Hill et al., 2005).
With permission from the school district that the study was conducted, the researcher was able to review screening process paperwork and documentation completed by teachers within the targeted schools. This information was used to find commonalities in behaviors observed and denoted by teachers in the gifted identification process. There was also additional use of formulating supplementary questioning used in the follow-up interview questioning. Respondents had the opportunity to hypothesize on why certain characteristics are denoted more so than other characteristics or observed behaviors in the targeted population segmentation of economically disadvantage African Americans.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to implement this study, the following steps took place in order to collect data:

1. Kept a record of all activities related to the research;
2. Secured permission from the school district in order to conduct the research at the selected schools;
3. Contacted the principal and the gifted coordinator at each school to inform them of the study and its intended purpose and seek cooperation in completing the study;
4. Applied for Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval to conduct interviews and focus group questioning of teachers;
5. Identified between three and five teachers at each school to participate in the individual interviews and follow up interview and discussions;
6. Secured a discrete location at each school site to conduct the individual interviews and follow up interviews;

7. Provided participants a copy of the questions to be posed during each interview session;

8. Collected samples of alternative criteria selection used from previous identification screening rounds;

9. Analyzed the data for recurring themes from initial individual interviews in order to formulate questioning for follow up interviews;

10. Based upon the responses and identified recurring themes conducted additional research for consideration in the follow up interviews;

11. Analyzed data from all interview sessions, observations during process, documentation, and follow up interviews to include in the final study results.

**Description of the Data Analysis Method**

Validity, in qualitative research, refers to whether the findings of a study are true and certain—"true" in the sense that research findings accurately reflect the situation, and "certain" in the sense that research findings are supported by evidence (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2012). According to the validity measures of qualitative research, the researcher used triangulation in order to develop a theory based upon the responses from interviews, observations, and data collected during the completion of the study. Responses were coded and then furthered analyzed in order to develop a theory. The researcher cited commonalities amongst the participating schools and school levels in order to derive whether or not there was a correlation in the results.
Good research practice obligates the researcher to triangulate, that is, to use multiple methods, data sources, and researchers to enhance the validity of research findings (Mathison 1988). The researcher employed the use of triangulation in order to ensure the validity and certainty of the study. More specifically, the researcher employed the use of data triangulation. Data triangulation refers simply to using several data sources, the obvious example being the inclusion of more than one individual as a source of data (Mathison 1988). As a validity procedure, triangulation is a step taken by researchers employing only the researcher's lens, and it is a systematic process of sorting through the data to find common themes or categories by eliminating overlapping areas (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Triangulation is imperative to the qualitative research study because it provides validity to the study. Triangulation in this study was accomplished by thoroughly observing how teachers conducted class and provide various educational opportunities within the classroom. Observations were also conducted on how teachers responded to the questions. The second component of triangulation was used in the different interviewing processes. During the interview process, it was the researcher's intention to elicit information pertinent to the study and to assist in developing ways in improving the number of economically disadvantaged African-American students into the gifted studies program.

The final component of triangulation is that of data collection. This was done through the random collection of lesson plans, multiple criteria worksheets, and presentation materials used to train teachers on the multiple criteria process. In practice,
triangulation as a strategy provides a rich and complex picture of some social phenomenon being studied, but rarely does it provide a clear path to a singular view of what is the case (Mathison, 1988).

The use of data triangulation assisted the researcher with providing interpretive validity. Interpretive validity refers to accurately portraying the meaning attached by participants to what is being studied by the researcher (Johnson, 1997). This type of validity ensured that the researcher appropriately interprets what participants in the research study are trying to convey in interviews through thoughts, actions, and words. When appropriately completed, interpretive validity ensured that the researcher understood the participants’ perception of the topic so that an accurate account could be made; therefore, falling in line with the sentiment originally expressed during the data collection process. In this way, the qualitative researcher can understand things form the participants’ perspectives and provide a valid account of these perspectives (Johnson, 1997).

In dealing with interviews and human subjects, interpretive validity is imperative when recording and decoding information being given in open forum or through observations. At times, humans do not always express themselves well and do not accurately explain the sentiment intended. In achieving interpretive validity, the researcher employed the process of member checking, also known as the participant feedback strategy.

Member checking was completed in order to ensure that there is no miscommunication between the researcher and the participant. It consists of taking data
and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This is achieved when the researcher shares their interpretation of what the researcher believes the participant shared during their exchange and/or observation. In the research reporting process, interpretive validity is also achieved by using low inference descriptors and quotes that are given verbatim for the reader to imply meaning. When writing the research report, using many low inference descriptors is also helpful so that the reader can experience the participants' actual language, dialect, and personal meanings (Johnson, 1997).

**Summary**

In this chapter, the research methodology was examined and explained as to how the researcher collected and moved forward with the data as it emerged. This chapter also explained in detail how the researcher protected the identities of the teacher participants and schools used to complete the study. This chapter also explained the type of sampling employed during the research process as well as how the researcher used the information in order to develop a theory on how teacher perception impacts the identification of African-American students in economically disadvantaged areas and schools. This chapter also explored how triangulation was attained in order to further ensure the research study's validity. Once the data were gathered as outlined in this chapter and the steps in the research process were completed, the results were discussed in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V
DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to investigate and identify potential reasons why African Americans in economically disadvantaged communities are often overlooked or go unidentified for the purposes of being served in talented and gifted services. According to recent research, African Americans are more likely to be identified for the purposes of special education on the lower, less academic end of the spectrum to receive additional services in public schools rather than being considered for the higher, more intellectual end of the special education spectrum. In this study, an additional facet that was also taken into consideration was that of teacher perception of African-American students in low socioeconomic areas in two metro Atlanta public middle schools and implications, if any, of teachers identifying African-American students for possible placement in the gifted services department of their respective school.

The teachers that participated in this study did so of their own volition and were not compensated for their participation. The teachers responded candidly to the questions posed in the interview sessions and spoke openly with the researcher in varying degrees. The interviews were conducted in a semistructured interview which allowed the researcher to ask additional questions if necessary. The researcher exercised professional care to ensure that the participants were kept anonymous during their participation in the
study. Current literature was used to guide the study, its questions, data collection, and observations in order to optimize results.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher conducted interviews with teachers in two middle schools in a metro Atlanta area. These two middle schools are considered Title I educational facilities and considered to be located in economically disadvantaged areas. The researcher also looked at data accumulated by the gifted department chairperson on African-American students that were referred for gifted testing through the school district’s automatic referral and multiple criteria processes. In addition to this research, the researcher also conducted random classroom observations of the teachers.

In this chapter, there is a summary of the results as presented to the researcher based upon observations and basic statistical computation where necessary. In the proceeding tables, some information for the purposes of organization are used to better detail information provided or observed by the researcher. The data will be used to configure if there is any impact of teacher perception on student deification for gifted and talented services as well as to determine if there are ways to improve the identification process for African-American students in economically disadvantaged schools.

**Descriptive Data of Respondents**

Table 3 demonstrates that there were more female participants than male and more specifically African American female participants outnumbered all other participating categories.
Table 3

Percentage of Respondents by Gender and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Other/Multi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows the participants' years of teacher experience. The table demonstrates that most of the teachers interviewed have over 10 years of teaching experience.

Table 4

Years of Teaching Experience Represented in Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 5 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10 Years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 15 Years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 20 Years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+ Years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>00.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 demonstrates that all participants have advanced degrees with most of them possessing a specialist's degree in education.
Table 5

*Highest Level of Education by Participant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Education Level by Participant</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Degree/ABD</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate Degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 demonstrates that more students qualified for gifted testing through multiple criteria than the automatic referral process.

Table 6

*Students Screened for Gifted Studies Testing by Criteria 2010-2011*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gifted Testing by Criteria</th>
<th>Automatic Referral</th>
<th>Multiple Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Gathering Information

In August, 2012, the researcher acquired permission from the school district to complete the research study. Once permission was given, the researcher sent out an email to the principals of the identified schools for participation in the study. Both principals agreed to participation in accordance to the permission given from the school
district. Furthermore, both administrators were given additional information on the study and what it would entail. Once both principals were given additional information, it was agreed upon between the researcher and the principals that once the findings were official that an additional presentation be completed for their administrative staff. One of the principals invited the researcher to a faculty meeting to present the information to the faculty for the purposes of soliciting information. The principal for the remaining school allowed the researcher to send a generic email to the staff with contact information if teachers were interested in participating in the research study.

Initial response from both schools was terse with very few parties interested in participating. However, the researcher was able to recruit through professional contacts to solicit the needed number of participants for the research study. These individuals were then given additional information via the permission slip which the researcher reviewed with each participant. The researcher also held individual conferences with potential participants in an effort to protect the identity of the participants. In some instances, telephone conferences or email correspondence was used to make contact with the potential candidates.

At this juncture, participants were asked whether or not they would like to continue with the research on whether or not they would follow through with participation on the research dates as well as the classroom observations. From the 10 positive respondents, 9 provided formal consent to participate in the study. The participant that refrained did so for personal reasons and did not wish to proceed forward
with the research study. The researched preceded with the interview process and classroom observations.

Teacher participants were not told specifically what class would be observed, but rather were given a general idea of when the researcher would be present to make classroom observations. An additional conference time was set up with the gifted department chairpersons at each school to review data on the students identified for gifted testing through the automatic referral and multiple criteria process. The researcher used the research questions in a modified fashion in order to conduct the interview and elicit the needed information for the research studies. It is also stipulated that interviews did not have the same set of questions as the researcher posed follow-up questions to some questions for further clarification, examples, or for better understanding of the response.

Once the interviews were completed, participants were also contacted by the researcher to ensure the integrity of their interview was captured through the analysis process and that the sentiment expressed or perceived to be expressed was indeed the sentiment or opinion intended by the participant for the purposes of the research conducted. Table 7 further delineates demonstrates the number of times the researcher observed participants and the total amount of time spent in the classrooms by the researcher.
This chapter includes a summary of ideas expressed through the interview process, classroom observations, and data collected by the researcher. This chapter is split into the major themes of the research conducted by the researcher for the purposes of further explaining the major themes to be discussed for dissertation and conclusion findings. Throughout the summary, teacher participants are referred to by the number identified during the interview process. Following are the research questions as determined for the purposes of completing the dissertation research process.

RQ1: What are teachers’ understandings of what it means to be gifted?
RQ2: What behaviors do teachers believe are exhibited in gifted students?

RQ3: What role, if any, do teachers perceive a student’s socioeconomic status plays in a student’s ability to succeed?

RQ4: According to experience, what factors do teachers believe contribute to the underrepresentation of low income African American students in gifted studies programs?

RQ5: What role, if any, do teachers believe cultural stigmatisms play in the identification process of potentially gifted students in economically disadvantaged areas?

RQ6: Why are teachers in low income, urban schools less likely to identify African-American students into gifted studies programs?

RQ7: How are gifted studies programs positively impacted in economically disadvantaged areas with the inclusion of multiple criteria identifiers for gifted studies programs?

RQ8: How does the inclusion of differentiated strategies assist and/or improve with classroom observations of potentially gifted African-American students?

RQ9: How does culture and social influences impact participation in gifted studies by African-American student, including ability/desire to participate in said programs?

RQ10: What factors influence teacher choice and identification of potentially gifted students in economically disadvantaged educational facilities?
RQ11: How do classroom opportunities/instructional approach impact the identification of students in low income areas into gifted studies programs?

School Description

School A

School A is located in an urban area near a major interstate in the Atlanta area. The school is not located not too far from the interstate and is accessible via public transportation. The school is located about a half mile off a major highway once one exits from the major interstate. Traveling down the very few miles to the school, one will notice that a lot of independently owned businesses exist in the area with primary transportation being walking, bicycles, public transportation, and in few instances taxis.

The immediate area around the school is a mixture of old homes that have been in the community for over 20 years and new construction that occurred in the area approximately seven to eight years ago. There are also plenty of apartment complexes located in the area, but all are dated with no new construction to date of additional attached, multifamily units. Many of the newer constructed homes have bank owned signs in front of them or have become section 8 rental property. It is also interesting to note that there are more pawn shops on the major highway to the school than are banking institutions. Many of the brick and mortar buildings that once housed these financial institutions have for sale signs in the front and are no longer in business.

Recently, the highway leading to the school began experiencing new construction in the area, but has since been temporarily halted. The recent economic renewal of
businesses on the highway has begun with the creation of two new strip malls with one primarily anchored by a Wal-Mart. Despite the anchor of Wal-Mart, many chained businesses have failed and were eventually closed by corporate offices of the national retail chains, such as Payless Shoe Source and Champ’s Sporting Goods. The second strip mall is still under construction, but it has not been a consistent construction with many extended halts. The creation of new businesses has also been slow with very few retailing units occupying retail space in the newer strip mall of the two. The initial strip mall anchored by Wal-Mart also has unoccupied retail space remaining from the closures of the aforementioned stores.

As mentioned by Teacher 5, parents in the area are on public assistance and rely on local businesses for employment. Despite the establishment of a new shopping area, not many parents have been positively impacted because the employment remains to be minimum wage type work and that remaining, more established businesses located in the immediate vicinity of the school continues to be fast food establishments or other lower end shopping stores like Dollar General, Dollar Tree or Family Dollar that offer part time work at minimum wages with few opportunities for full time work.

It was also noted by Teacher 5 that because many of the parents are employed by jobs that require shift work that the middle school and its feeder schools must be creative in the recruitment efforts and the manner in which the schools reach out to the community for conferences, Open Houses, Parent Teacher Conference Night, and/or PTA meetings. Typically, parents attend when either there is a student production or free food is provided by the school. And despite these offerings, parent involvement is still low
with paid teacher participation in the PTA still outnumbering the number of paid parent
PTA memberships.

When one enters the school, it is noted that the school is dated as it was converted
from an old high school to a middle school in the nineties. There is discussion of a new
building to be erected, but construction has not begun. The lighting in the school is low
due to older fixtures and despite the new paint job received by the school; the walls still
show their age. A new wing has been added to the school for the purposes of science
labs, but due to overpopulation and administrator discretion it has been turned into the
eighth grade hall in order to be considered conducive for the traffic flow of the school
and its students.

Inside the classrooms, many boast a plethora of instructional material on the wall.
An observer will also note a tremendous amount of positive, inspirational posters
throughout the building and classrooms. On many walk-throughs in the building, the
researcher noted that students are encouraged to display manners, polite behaviors, and to
be respectful of all individuals. Many of the posters reinforce the need for hard work and
encourage students to not focus on where they are now, but where they could be if they
pay attention and succeed in school. The trophy case located in the main hallway of the
school is filled primarily with trophies awarded to the music department with very few
accolades for scholastic achievements in the trophy case.

Technology in the school is present, but not all classrooms have promethium
boards in them. The focus has been for this school due to state standardized testing has
been on improving math. Therefore, math teachers were given priority on classroom
placement with access to the promethium boards in their classrooms. On average, classrooms have two to three computers in them for student use. Teachers are issued a laptop through the school district for use. The exception to the computer use is on the science wing, which has been designated as the eighth grade wing for the current school year, has on average allows teachers and students access to on average five computers. The school also has a computer lab that teachers can sign up and use for whole class instruction or when additional computers/technology are needed beyond what is accessible or present in the classroom.

School B

School B is located in a suburban area that is somewhat near a major interstate. The school is not accessible by public transportation and is located in an older neighborhood. Many of the students that attend School B are products of former students that attended School B when they were in middle school and still live in the area, close to family. In recent years, the area has witnessed a large influx of family and new construction of homes in the area, but School B’s districting has remained the same to include the same older, more established homes with some new construction in the area. Within five miles of the school, there has been the construction of three major strip mall areas with many local and national chains that anchor each of the strip malls. Many of these retail businesses have multiplied locations or have expanded their business due to the economic growth in the area.

Despite plunging housing market values in the area, the retail businesses are doing well and there has been recent addition of hotels in the area to service local
businesses and others that are traveling through or in the Atlanta area on business or leisure. The school is located in a wooded area that is a bit remote from the business section that is expanding on previously wooded lots of land in the area in comparison to School A. The more expensive construction that caused a major increase in revenue and traffic prompted the school district to construct a new middle school in the area. The districting of the new middle school primarily took the more expensive construction away from the school, and left School B with mostly lower cost, new construction in the area and the older homes and neighborhoods in their school district. While School B remains to be an older school, it is well maintained internally and externally with recent remodeling within the past few years.

Inside many of the classrooms, there is ample student seating and a myriad of posters promoting instructional material. It is evident that some of the classrooms have had walls added in later to divide large spaces in order to accommodate for the rising need of additional classrooms. Many of the hallways aptly display a great deal of student work or various curriculum based projects that students have completed. The science rooms are occupied with science teachers with evidence to support lab work posted on the outside of the classrooms, as well as on the inside. These observations were made during walk through by the observers during visits to the school.

Throughout the building and in the classrooms there is plenty of access to computer space with classrooms averaging about four to five stations in each classroom. Many of the computers are spaced around the classroom for easy student access. Most of the classrooms have access to promethium boards without regard or special emphasis on
the discipline that a teacher teaches. Of the participating teachers, approximately 60% of the teachers used technology in their classrooms during the researcher’s visits to School B. Teachers primarily used the promethium board in order to engage students and conduct lessons.

RQ1: What are teachers’ understandings of what it means to be gifted?

Many of the educators interviewed were able to identify key components of what it means to be gifted. Most of the teachers adequately identified that fact that these students are very smart, competitive, and are excellent self-starters when it comes to their work. During the interview process, many of the educators were able to give standard responses as to what it means to be gifted. Many of them listed that students are highly intelligent and are self-motivated as redundant themes throughout the interviews. It was some of the more experienced teachers or teachers that have previously taught gifted education that came closest to identifying characteristics and behaviors that are normally observed or considered to be products of potentially being gifted.

When asked during the interview, Teacher 8 made the comment that “being gifted means having the ability to understand and see concepts and processes differently than most people” (personal communication, September 18, 2012). This is a crucial understanding of what it means to be gifted because gifted learners do not process material the same way that the average child does, thus the need for them to have their own strategies when teaching to challenge their way of seeing the world. In the interviews, there were only four teachers that mentioned the fact that they see things
differently from the other students. This was also a predominant characteristic for considering gifted students by their actions and behaviors.

Many of the teachers in their responses also tended to look for the student that was seemingly perfect in order to be gifted, which is also a large misconception. This could have an immediate impact on how other potentially gifted students are overlooked because all of the teachers asked are looking for the same type of student or very similar behaviors. There was only one teacher that mentioned being artistic as a sign of creativity which is one of the areas in which students are assessed when they are going through the gifted screening process to determine eligibility.

When teachers look for the similar qualities, then students that do not fit into that paradigm may not be identified because teachers are looking for all gifted students to exhibit similar qualities. Very often gifted students may not be the most participatory students in class but are thinking about the presentation of materials in a different manner than others. That is why it is imperative with teachers like Teacher 3 who have “conversations with them (the student) through their paper” in order to side step other issues students face when confronted with the potential of being gifted that will be discussed later in this chapter. Stepping outside of the box and looking at how students attack work in the classroom is important.

In some of the conversations, it was mentioned how students can sometimes be behavior problems per interviews with several teachers. As mentioned in interviews with Teachers 3 and 5. Teacher 5 spoke at length about a young man who could not be tested for gifted because of his outbursts and walkouts of the classroom. While the potential of
this young man exists as exhibited in the demonstrated pity for his lack of focus in the
interview with Teacher 5, it is also perceived as another lost candidate for the gifted
studies at the school. Since it will be difficult to determine this young man’s ability for
giftedness due to the increased absence from school due to disciplinary referrals,
educators, parents, and the young man himself may be inadequately placed.

RQ2: What behaviors/characteristics do teachers believe are exhibited in gifted
students?

Table 8 shows a compiled list of the behaviors teachers believe are exhibited by
gifted students and the frequency of its mentioning by the teachers interviewed for the
purposes of this study.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging or Competitive</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completes Assignments</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedic/Funny</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determined/Strong Willed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature for their age</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Motivated/Self-Starter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Work Ethic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The purpose of this characteristic chart is to dictate what characters and behaviors teachers associate with the behavior of gifted students. It is important to point out, that of the nine characteristics as mentioned by the teachers interviewed; only two are on the actual instrument for the multiple criteria instrument used in the school district for this research study. The teachers through experience or assumption of what giftedness should look like based upon what they would expect to see in the students during the class. If only two of the nine characteristics and/or behaviors mentioned by teachers as behaviors or characteristics of potentially gifted students, then the opportunity for future discussions is needed. If teachers only know less than 40% of the characteristics, then there are multitudes of ways in which this can be analyzed. One way is that the instrument is not reliable and needs to be adjusted to accommodate this particular segmentation. Another analysis is teachers do not have true grasp or understanding of what giftedness looks like in the classroom which would indicate the need for additional professional development.

As mentioned by a few teachers, there are opportunities for students to exhibit the behaviors that are listed on the multiple criteria instrument that teachers are to complete in order to have a student screened for gifted testing. As defined in Chapter II, the major characteristics that are identified and used on the multiple criteria instrument are that of motivation, interests, and communication skills, problem solving ability, memory, inquiry, insight, reasoning, creativity, and humor. From the list compiled through interviews, only humor, creativity, and motivation are closely aligned to the characteristics sought by the teachers for the purposes of completing the multiple criteria checklist.
This becomes imperative if teachers are envisioning what type of student for the purposes of gifted studies, when in actuality other behaviors and characteristics are more aligned with what teachers should see in students. There was only one of a student that displayed the possibility of being gifted despite potentially exhibiting these characteristics and behaviors in a negative way. The troubled young man from Teacher 5’s account was the only example given that implied that these behaviors can be exhibited but in a negative manner.

For instance, if a student is able to make a joke that is highly inappropriate subject wise, but is still entertaining and on topic, that student could be exhibiting the characteristics that are considered to be gifted. Most of the teachers that listed characteristics and behaviors had a tendency to look more towards the idealistic side of characteristics and behaviors for a gifted student in an almost altruistic manner. Many began to sound as though they are describing the perfect student and not so much one with superior mental ability to those of their own age. It is very important that the other end of the spectrum of these behaviors is also considered because in some instance the child may simply need guidance.

As the researcher reviewed some of the checklists, it became apparent that many student could have additional check marks if teachers took into consideration the negative behaviors warranted by these students. This would not only increase the number of students screened for the purposes of gifted studies, but may also encourage students to maybe fine tune their talents and gifts in a more positive manner.
During the classroom observations, there was a young man that was trying to rationalize his perspective of how the bridge that once connected Alaska and Russia disappeared. While he did use elements of the lesson, he was able to bring a comedic side to the discussion. However, he was reprimanded by the teacher who did not see the humor of the situation and thought it extremely rude on his part.

Despite being reprimanded, the young man tried to demonstrate his sincerity on the subject by continuing the discussion at his table, but he was not really able to do so because the teacher threatened him with a write up for disturbing the class. Clearly, the behavior was borderline rude, but the creativity and determination of the explanation had much comedic merit. And while this was not his first time giving a creative spin in this history class, his inappropriateness undoubtedly struck a nerve. While this may not be a definitive sign of giftedness, one must consider how this child if given an assignment may react differently if his talent were put to positive use and maybe even increase the retention of the other students in the case due to his obvious impeccable timing and style of funny.

This can be paralleled to a similar experience in a classroom observation during an actual gifted class when the teacher was reviewing journal entries for the day. During the class, students were building vocabulary and in doing so incorporating the use of the words through different prompts. When asked what students did in their leisure time, one young man intentionally said he runs outside naked. While this was to illicit a reaction from the students and maybe to enrage the teacher, the young man creatively used the vocabulary word of the day and enhanced it with using more complex words to explain
his lack of clothing to enjoy his relaxation time. When the other students pieced together what the young man said an eruption of laughter ensued. Instead of initially reprimanding the young man, the gifted teacher commended him for expanding his vocabulary on his own, but reminded him that it was not appropriate for school before she moved on quickly to the next student.

RQ3: What role, if any, do teachers perceive a student’s socioeconomic status plays in a student’s ability to succeed?

For many of the teachers interviewed, questions to gather data elicited instant responses. Many saw the use of poverty as a crutch. According to Teacher 4 who said “I see the whole poverty thing as an excuse... Instead I would rather my students see poverty as a motivating factor for them to get out of their dire situations” (personal communication September 18, 2012). This was in response to subsequent questioning to whether or not poverty significantly impacted a student’s success or failure in the classroom.

For others like Teacher 6, who felt socioeconomic status really controlled more of what the student was exposed to, meaning the activities that they participated in. This could also be considered crucial because lack of exposure could prevent a student from being able to respond to questioning on a standardized test that is used for the purposes of determining eligibility for the gifted studies program. Teacher 6 also went onto mention that schools are limited in what they can expose children therefore; implying that parents must also share in the responsibility of exposing their children to different stimuli in
order to be according to Teacher 6, “a more well-rounded individual” (personal communication, September 18, 2012).

Later in the interview, Teacher 6 mentioned that because these students are surrounded by students with similar stories that it may even lead some of these students to an altered reality of their financial situation. According to Teacher 6, “I wonder if some of them really have a grasp of the financial situation that they are in comparison to other kids on the other side of town.” Teacher 6 later went onto imply that they have normed poverty and that is just how things are and that they do not necessarily know another way.

Similarly, Teacher 12 explains how socioeconomics play a significant role in a child’s foundation to coming to school. Teacher 12 explains how students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be exposed and are coming to school ready to learn because of the higher ability. This versus the lower income family is primarily focused on survival; therefore, making education a secondary factor to what the family needs and can afford to buy in order to survive. The researcher remembers the sincerity in Teacher 12’s voice as this opinion was relayed and that it was a personal issue that resonated deeply with this individual.

RQ4: According to experience, what factors do teachers believe contribute to the underrepresentation of low income African-American students in gifted studies programs?

During the interviewing process, one of the most resounding factors that teachers cited as a factor for the underrepresentation of low income African-American students
into gifted studies programs was their friends. Table 9 shows teachers' perceptions of the main reasons they felt disadvantaged African-Americans are underrepresented in the gifted population.

Table 9

Factors Contributing to the Underrepresentation of African Americans in Gifted Studies Program as Viewed by Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher #</th>
<th>Contributing Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Friends/Peers; Lack of knowledge of the gifted program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge of the gifted program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Friends/Peers; Parents; Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Friends/Peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Societal messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Friends/Peers; Standardized tests; Lack of exposure; Weak language skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lack of exposure; Friends/Peers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In reviewing the data from the interviews, friend and peers are definitely major contributing factors in the underrepresentation of African Americans in economically disadvantaged areas. Out of the nine teacher interviews conducted, six cited friends or peers as a reason for the low participation rate. Another leading, contributing factor was that of parents' not having knowledge of the program or how to assist students with gaining entry into the program. A third major contributing factor according to the interviews would be that of lack of exposure.
The main contributing factor according to the teachers that were interviewed cited that friends and peers have a strong impact on whether or not students are willing to even participate in the gifted studies program. According to Teacher 3, “the sun rises and sets” (personal communications, September 19, 2012) with their friends opinions and that students give a lot of power or are very conscious of what their peers think of them. This is done to the point where by the same teacher a student actually declined participation in the program so that she was not separated from her friends.

Being made to look different was another subtheme within the overarching theme of friends/peers as a contributing factor to the underrepresentation of African Americans in gifted studies programs. That seemed to be a large concern of students by teachers that removing them from their friend base was more important than their own education. Teacher 6 attributed much of the underrepresentation to the chastisement students make towards other students for answering questions in class: “The students don’t see that as being cool or socially acceptable, to be smart. It’s not a priority. If they don’t hear it from their friends, then it almost doesn’t even matter to them” (personal communication, September 18, 2012). Essentially, this summarized a lot of the sentiment echoed by many other teachers who cited friends/peers as an underlying theme. Many times teachers became very animated about the importance that students place in the social acceptance at the middle school age and anything that may make a child look different in, especially in the arena of education, was not necessarily positive with the mainstream ideology.
Another influence that friends and peers have in this realm of research according to Teacher 10 is the effect peers have on students' mentality. Students must be resilient in many instances to look beyond the disparaging comments oftentimes made by other students in order to get their education and have the capacity to be a part of the gifted community within these economically disadvantaged schools. Even when faced with the reality that every person is not your friend, not all students are able to grasp that lesson just yet according to Teacher 10. Some students understand that not all of their peers have their best interest in mind, while unfortunately; there are those that do not comprehend the bigger message in Teacher 10’s words.

Teacher 12 did not make friends the top contributing factor, but did denote it as the second major one for the purposes of this study. Teacher 12 focuses on the more materialistic influence that friends and peers can have on students. Teacher 12 also speaks on how students are apprehensive or do not desire to be separated from their friends echoing Teacher 3’s story of the young lady that declined participation in the gifted department due to the lack of friends in the program.

However, these results should not be surprises as many of the teachers interviewed mentioned the desire to succeed in school by the average student is not high. Despite their varying reasons or assertion as to why personal student drive is so low that would further back up the claim that students are not supportive of an academic program at a higher level than that of general education.

The desire for knowledge was also noted during many of the classroom observations where students in some instances seem disinterested in the material or the
class. For example, upon observing Teacher 4’s classroom it was noted that many of the students that sat in the outer corners of the classroom were students that were not engaged in the activity. This despite the fact that the teacher integrated an engaging short film and developed small work stations to work with the different types of biomes. The students sitting on the outer corners were constantly reprimanded and redirected towards the activity. At one point, these students even began talking across the classroom to one another during the small group time.

As the remaining students worked on their biome activity, they became amused at points by the distracting students but never encouraged them to stop their behavior. In the small groups, the researcher also noticed that there was an increased willingness of the students to discuss their findings versus when the focus shifted to whole class discussion when they would become shy or act as though they purposely did not know what they were to accomplish in their smaller groups. Eventually, the Teacher 4 removed a distracting student to another classroom for ten minute time out. Upon the completion of the class, Teacher 4 became perplexed as he reviewed student products and saw the accurate completion of the activity by a few but their refusal to openly discuss in class was disappointing as Teacher 4 shared their work with the researcher.

RQ5: What role, if any, do teachers believe cultural stigmatisms play in the identification process of potentially gifted students in economically disadvantaged areas?

According to the teachers that were interviewed, most of the teachers felt that culture played a major role in the screening process for potentially gifted students in
economically disadvantaged areas and the images that students aspire to on television.

"As African Americans we tend to glorify the bad guy," Teacher 3 lamented during their interview. Teacher 3 went on to explain when asked about the cultural effect of African Americans on the identification process to say that in the African American culture "We give more respect to the drug dealer than the preacher sometimes" (personal communication, September 19, 2012).

During an interview with Teacher 6, the comment was made that "They are too busy trying to live up to some unknown standard that is not even realistic for a lot of them" (personal communication, September 18, 2012). When questioned more about the "unknown standard," Teacher 6 spoke about how students see the final result of hard work and not necessarily understand or realize the hard work that went into making the rap videos and music that blares out lyrics that they aspire to make their own reality. Teacher 6 closed on the topic with the statement that "Being "the boss" is more than being in front of the camera in front of a rented house and a leased luxury automobile."

Teacher 5 remarked, "In terms of the culture, the only thing that I can about the culture is that when they get home that it is no longer about academics" (personal communication, September 19, 2012). Teacher 5 spoke to the importance of the home life and conversations that transpire there as having more influence than any evidence of culture. Teacher 5 cited that home life of students is more impactful than culture and once again mentioning that students' peers are also larger influences on them than what could be considered as actual culture. It is repeated that social problems and influences are more of an issue than African American culture.
In the interview with the one of two non-African Americans that participated in this study, an emphasis was once again placed on the influence that peers have on one another in economically disadvantaged areas. The teacher commented that the students were more concerned with what one another had to say than their schoolwork. And despite the teacher encouraging students with potential, it is perceived that these students care more about what others have to say about them. According to the other non-African American teacher that participated in this study, there is also an emphasis on image that strongly affects students’ performance in the classroom.

During the classroom observations, the researcher was able to see how culture impacts students in the classroom. During a visit during a mentoring session, the researcher arrived in time to hear students discussing their future plans after a visit from the counselors to different homerooms. As the homeroom teacher tried to proceed with the conversation, students were not paying much attention to the teacher and were more focused on who could give the more comical response.

“I am going to be a pimp,” said Student A with the class erupting into laughter and then others joining in on how their cars and women would look, one trying to top the other. After the teacher was able to gain control of the class, the students immediately went to talking about various rappers and what was portrayed in their videos mentioning that what they wanted from the video and how the various models would look on their arms. Eventually the teacher gave up on continuing the conversation and began taking roll as the students’ conversations continued to chase street dreams of grandeur.
RQ6: Why are teachers in low income, urban schools less likely to identify African-American students into gifted studies programs?

High stakes testing was a definite dimension as to why many teachers in low income, urban schools were less like to identify potential African-Americans students into the gifted studies programs. Many teachers mentioned that because of the increased need in these schools for test scores to reach a certain quota or average score, many teachers want to keep these students in their classroom as a way of reaching these standardized testing goals for the purposes in some instances maintaining their jobs.

Despite the legislative changes that rid teachers and administrators of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), many teachers still reported the need to have high test scores. When teachers have students that know the curriculum and will likely score high on the standardized tests, many teachers noted the reluctance for other teachers to release these students because of what high stakes testing consequences can mean for many teachers. Teacher 3 admits to knowing other teachers that hold students back from the screening process out of fear. "They want to hold back those smart kids in their classroom and they are like, "why do I need to give them my best students," laments Teacher 3 during the interview. Teacher 3 also continued to speak about how not recommending these students is hurtful and cause a whole other set of issues when that student is missed for gifted testing:

Because if that child sits there in that regular education classroom and they are not being challenged the way that they need to then they are going to start being a
behavior problem or they are just going to stop doing. (personal communication, September 19, 2012)

In comparison to one another, School A had a much lower teacher participation rate in the multiple criteria/teacher recommendation process for gifted testing. When teachers from School A were confronted with the questioned reality of why, if not most, of the teachers at this school failed to complete the multiple criteria or CISS worksheets, many gave differing responses as to why a lot of teachers did not participate in the multiple criteria or teacher recommendation process. In School A, only 42% of teachers turned in their paperwork for consideration, with most of these being Exceptional Education teachers versus approximately 60% at School B. Participants from School A offered a myriad of excuses, many cited other overwhelming paperwork that needed to be completed, teacher empathy, and some also hypothesized that the lack of participation stemmed from teachers not believing that any of their students would be potential candidates for the school's gifted studies programs.

"I think when the teachers sees it that it is such a rarity that they probably want to keep the kid in the class just to help the other struggling kids or something" (personal communication, September 18, 2012). This is just one of many reasons cited by Teacher 10 as to why teachers in low income, urban areas are less likely to participate in the identification process. This is also coupled with the fact, according to Teacher 10, that students also arrive at school with the talent to be considered for the gifted program, but not necessarily has the academic readiness to prove one's self as worthy of being in the
gifted studies program. In the classrooms, Teacher 10 stipulates that, “We are so busy trying to teach the fundamentals no one has time to teach the harder stuff.”

Teacher 6 had a different perspective on the poor participation in the CISS process by teachers at their school. Once reminded of what the CISS process was by the researcher, Teacher 6 attributed the poor participation to prioritized workloads and forgetfulness. Teacher 6 in the interview remembered conducting their own informal poll of who completed the multiple criteria paperwork for gifted identification and found that many did not get the worksheets turned in on time because of other reports that had to be completed for the school’s administration. Teacher 6 also attributed the poor participation at their school in the multiple criteria and teacher recommendation process more to teachers “having better intentions, but when you have a lot of students it can get a little hectic.”

When many of the interviewed teachers were asked about low expectations as cited in the literature review, some remarked that teachers many not knowingly know that they have lowered expectations of students in these economically disadvantaged communities. Many teachers blamed students’ inability to perform and that many of these students are basically trying to do the minimum in order to pass and proceed to the next grade level. Teacher 6 commented on students’ will to succeed as very low and that “they want attention from their peers, not from their teachers.”

When speaking about teachers and identification during an interview with Teacher 4, a different perspective was placed on the former findings. Teacher 4 felt that the likelihood was not necessarily lessened, but that the job itself of identifying potential
African-American students is a bit harder because of other focuses within the schools described as fires by Teacher 4. Teacher 4’s response focused more on improving the condition in which students come to school and the reinforcement of the importance of education at home, not just from educators at school. Teacher 4 explained explicitly that:

> If we could somehow improve the readiness of a lot of these students to excel then we would be so much better off than where we are now, but there also needs to be reinforcement from home that school is important. Teachers cannot be the only ones or ways that tell these kids that. (personal communication, September 18, 2012)

RQ7: How are gifted studies programs positively impacted in economically disadvantaged areas with the inclusion of multiple criteria identifiers for gifted studies programs?

According to the research conducted by the researcher, the inclusion of multiple criteria identifiers for gifted studies programs has an overwhelmingly positive effect on economically disadvantaged areas. In School A, during the 2012-2013 school year, only nine students qualified for gifted testing through the automatic referral process that relies on students scoring in what is considered to be the school district’s top 10% on the CRCT. In School B, during the 2012-2013 school year, only six children met the requirements to be considered through automatic referral.

Through the use of multiple criteria identifiers, these numbers increase dramatically for both schools as more students were considered through the CISS process. Due to CISS being conducted during the spring, the researcher had to use
statistical data from the end of 2011-2012 for the purposes of this study. In the spring of 2012, School A had 55 students to participate in the screening process for the gifted studies program. However at School B, over 200 students were screened using the multiple criteria identifiers, or CISS.

In the interview with Teacher 5 it was mentioned the need for the CISS process to be conducted twice a year so that students can be placed more accurately with their academic needs. Considering the tremendous increase, especially at School B, that was experienced through the multiple criteria identifiers process there is evidence that more students are considered through this process than through the automatic referral. In addition to this comment, many other teachers in the interviewing process also concurred there is a substantiated need for additional advanced level courses in their schools for even more students to be considered for the gifted studies program.

RQ8: How does the inclusion of differentiated strategies assist and/or improve with classroom observations of potentially gifted African-American students?

Research based upon this was inconclusive due to the variety of answers given by teachers. Two of the teachers interviewed said that it has helped them to potentially identify students for gifted studies program. The majority of teachers said that the use of differentiated instruction in conjunction with classroom behavior, grades, and observances has helped them to identify potential African American students for the gifted studies program. The remaining teachers mentioned that they did not use it because of the low level of students within their classrooms. Therefore, in relation to this
RQ9: How does culture and social influences impact participation in gifted studies by African-American students, including ability/desire to participate in said programs?

Based upon the responses given by teachers, there is a significant impact from social influences on participation in gifted studies by African-American students. This impact as cited by teachers stems primarily from students’ peers. Peers have a large impact on whether or not students go through with the screening process. Many cited that many students do not wish to be separated from their friends to participate in the program or want to be identified as gifted because it will ostracize them from the larger societal group. Teacher 10 is quoted as saying, “They get their social cues of what is acceptable or not acceptable from the television, no one is thinking for themselves anymore” (personal communication, September 18, 2012).

Once again, the story of the young lady that turned down participation in the gifted studies program speaks volumes to the impact and influence that peers have students’ decision to participate in gifted studies programs. When the researcher was able to observe the young lady in class, it was evident that she understood the material and needed a challenge, but due to the on level class and many other behavior issues occurring in the class this was not extended to her. Instead of moving forward with the curriculum during class, the young lady remained in her clique of friends and talked
about happenings in the school. It would have been the desire of this researcher to speak more at length with this young lady about her decision to not participate in the gifted studies program had the study been designed differently.

Interestingly during the interview with Teacher 10, the example of the hip-hop artist Lil Wayne was used as someone that students seek to emulate. The researcher then informed Teacher 10 of the irony of his selection in the hip hop community. The irony of the selected artist is that Lil Wayne actually participated in a gifted studies program during his elementary years in New Orleans, a fact that most individuals do not know. Teacher 10 with the new information commented that this new information would be used forward in hopes of changing the mindset of students who resist participating in the gifted studies program.

Another cultural and social impact is the images that students see on the television. Many of the teachers interviewed mentioned that images and lifestyles that African-American students see on the television have a negative impact because of its promotion of a lifestyle that does not include being viewed as smart or different from the crowd. When students feed into these images that are on their television screen they are to proscribe to a lifestyle that is not only potentially unhealthy, but does not appear to require intellect in order to get ahead in the traditional sense of studying and working hard in the classroom.

Teacher 12 chose to focus on the difference in culture between African Americans and Caucasians. In Teacher 12's opinion, Caucasian families extol the virtues of education more so than what is seen in African-American homes. This, in Teacher 12's
opinion, is done through the level of exposure Caucasian children are given in contrast to those of African Americans. Teacher 12 said, "Unlike Caucasian parents who begin in kindergarten training their kids on how to think and look at the world. That's basically getting them ready to take standardized tests or the gifted tests because they want them to think differently" (personal communications, September 18, 2012).

RQ10: What factors influence teacher choice and identification of potentially gifted students in economically disadvantaged educational facilities?

In the interviews, the overwhelming response was that grades are a primary factor that influences teachers to recommending students to gifted studies in economically disadvantaged schools. Many were concerned with the ability of the students to complete work in the on level classes before recommending them to take a gifted, advanced level course. According to Teacher 6, "It's a rarity to see a kid around here with all the components: academically sound, socially appropriate, and just a good all-around kid" (personal communication, September 18, 2012).

Many of the teachers interviewed also commented on the influence of a child's behavior in their class. Most felt that it was as important a factor as academic ability exhibited in the classroom. Teacher 6 also explained that "Being in gifted is a privilege and with that comes a need for a higher maturity level." Therefore, good behavior is linked into the possibility of being recommended based upon the perceived need for a more mature child to be serviced in the gifted services. Many teachers also contended that because of the number of behavior problems that teachers struggle against daily that
it becomes an added component in students’ prerequisite for recommendation to gifted studies.

Teacher 10’s attitude towards behavior as a component was different from all the other responses received from teachers interviewed on this research question. Vehemently, Teacher 10 asserted that when it came to behavior that it did not matter to them whether or not the child was well behaved, all that was important to Teacher 10 was the child’s work and high test scores at the end of the year on the state standardized test. The intensity of Teacher 10’s sentiments was stressed in expressed as Teacher 10 clapped for emphasis during their response. Teacher 10 is quoted as having said that, “I don’t care if you cussed me out the day before, just have my work. I need two things from you: my work and high test scores. That’s it” (personal communication, September 18, 2012).

Another predominate factor discussed in interviews was that of student image to teachers. In interviews with Teachers 3, 7, and 12 there was mention and discussion of image by students that also impacts teachers’ decision to recommend a child for testing into the gifted studies program. For instance, Teacher 12 mentioned in their interview that, “If the kids come in well dressed and groomed then that might actually heighten their chances of getting in to the gifted program by teacher recommendation” (personal communication, September 18, 2012). This is similar to the reasoning for looping student behavior as a factor into whether or not a teacher recommends a child for gifted services. A different perspective on the same topic of student image is given by Teacher 3 who states that:
So, when you have that child who is pretty decent student and has a family that is clearly involved in their education, I think teachers are more likely to recommend that child then the one that is a behavior issue because he is bored. (personal communication, September 19, 2012)

Beyond the more consistent responses of grades and student image given by the interviewed teachers on factors that influence gifted recommendation of students included: class participation, parental involvement, and student’s quickness in completion of assignments. Class participation was mentioned in that teachers look for students who constantly raise their hand in class and are able to contribute to the class discussion frequently.

The parental involvement piece was introduced by Teacher 6 with the clarifying comment that stated, “If the parent is the type to stay in your face about assignments and projects then I think that motivates teachers a little bit more to recommend the child. (personal communication, September 18, 2012)

Therefore, according to Teacher 6, the squeaky wheel does get the oil if parents are omnipresent in their child’s life. Teacher 6 believes that parents that are above average with participation in their child’s life are more likely to have their child tested for possible entry into the gifted program in these two low income middle schools.

RQ11: How do classroom opportunities/instructional approach impact the identification of students in low income areas into gifted studies programs?
Classroom opportunities and instructional approaches have a direct impact on students in low income areas in several different ways. This includes how students are prepared for the administration of state standardized tests; their ability to score well on those tests, students' ability to score well on tests administered for the purposes of admission into gifted studies programs, and student interest in the classroom. Instructional approaches are also important because the approach ultimately decides how a student demonstrates their understanding of the material covered in class.

During the interview process, teachers conceded that there is use of differentiated instruction in their classroom. Not all teachers admitted to using differentiated instructional strategies on a regular basis within their classes, and instead used whole class instructional methods for students. It is hypothesized by the researcher that the inclusion of differentiated instruction would assist teachers with identifying potential students for the gifted program because it would allow teachers to see different talents of their students as well as make class more engaging.

Of the teachers that said that they used differentiated instruction on a more regular basis than others, these teachers did say that they were able to better identify students potentially for gifted studies testing. Teacher 3 in their interview said that using differentiated instructional strategies in their classroom assisted the teacher with deciphering between who is just really hard workers in their classroom versus those that have higher mental abilities. Teacher 3 said, “I try to throw something in there to see how they are manipulating the information in their head” (personal communication, September 19, 2012).
In a different interview, Teacher 5 said that through the use of differentiated instruction that the teacher was able to identify a lot of students that maybe the teacher would not have because of their hidden talents. Teacher 5 is quoted as saying:

I see why certain group members are in certain groups because they have these hidden talents. For example, I have a lot of singers. So I have discovered a lot of hidden talents and it is during these activities that these hidden talents and gifts come out. (personal communication, September 19, 2012)

Differentiated instruction assisted Teacher 5 with unearthing talents within the classroom that maybe would not have come out in traditional instruction or with the use of normal instructional strategies.

When dealing with the engagement piece of differentiated instruction, this became evident during the classroom observations made by the researcher. Below are two accounts of classroom observations made by the researcher that served as polar opposite experiences while completing classroom observations for the purposes of this research topic and question. It was noticed by the researcher the extreme engagement level difference between the classroom that used differentiated instruction versus the one that did not and relied on traditional, whole class instruction. The researcher also ascertained the class averages for the two classes. In Teacher 5’s classroom, the overall class average was that of 84 at the time of the classroom observation. In Teacher 9’s classroom, the overall class average was that of 78 at the time of the classroom observation.
**Teacher 5**

The researcher was in place when the class of Teacher 5 entered the classroom. The students filed into the classroom quietly and immediately began working on the warm up activity that was posted in the front of the board. The students had all of the needed materials in the classroom, but in the event that they did not there was an area created by the teacher with extra supplies for students to borrow during the course of the class. The students were engaged with the journal entry that was on the board that asked for students to draw upon their prior experience as it explored the theme of friendship and conflict.

While the students were working on their journal entry for the day, Teacher 5 took attendance and made several announcements to the students about what was coming up for the week. There was a project area that students could refresh their memory on due dates and a pin board where the teacher could visually see who completed assignments for the long range project and who had not. The instructional material across the room was bright and colorful with student work near the instructional text that was being reinforced with the instructional material.

It appeared as though students waited on different cues to know when and what to transition to throughout the 45 minute class. During the class, students worked in small groups on different parts of speech. Teacher 5 later informed me that she used disaggregated data in order to determine which students were weakest in grammar and each class period that spent approximately five to ten minutes reinforcing grammar skills at their level of understanding with different activities.
Teacher 5 then moved the students to whole group instruction as they reviewed a story from homework, with the focus being on the elements of plot. Students used a graphic organizer in order to decipher the rising and falling action as well as the conflict. In smaller groups, students were assigned a particular focus and then a tiered activity was put in place at every station for students to relate the lecture to the story. Teacher 5 then integrated the morning’s journal entry into the lesson of conflict and used it as a way to transition to the evening work to be completed at home on finding resolution.

Throughout the class period, very few students were off task or unengaged in the lesson. The teacher also provided the opportunity for students to express themselves in different ways on their journal activity. Some students preferred to draw over writing traditional paragraphs to depict the conflict in their friendship. Regardless of the outcome, Teacher 5 was able to use the artifacts to support the overall lesson. The only time during the lesson did Teacher 5 have to reprimand the students was when a group became too involved over their small group activity and began to verbal argue with one another. However, the verbal altercation was minor and academically based in topic and nature.

Teacher 9

As the researcher entered the classroom, it was noticed that all students in the classroom were African American. On the dry erase board there was an Essential Question for the day and then a warm up activity. Upon entry, Teacher 9 was wrapping up the warm up activity for the day and transitioning into the main lesson for the day. Most of the students had pencils and notebooks in front of them, but a large majority of
them did not have their math books. Students that did not have pencils and paper were
left to barter with other students in exchange for candy or other high commodity items.
On Teacher 9’s board was a variety of math work, but upon closer inspection there was a
high repetition of the same names with varying degrees of success ranging from 85 to
100 on the academic scale on different math worksheets and problems.

In the classroom of Teacher 9, a math lesson was being conducted by the teacher.
Teacher 9 was lecturing to the classroom on integers. Students present in the class were
somewhat involved in the lesson with a few intrigued in the lesson. Teacher 9 was using
a very traditional method of delivering the instruction with the only use of technology
being the use of a promethium board to display the problems that the class was working
on together. There was a group of students sitting in the back of the class playing a game
on a cell phone which the teacher promptly confiscated and reprimanded the students for
using. Despite taking the device, the students continued to find other items to entertain
themselves with instead of paying attention to the teacher.

Once the teacher completed the mini lesson for the day, students were given
worksheets to complete for the remainder of the class. Some students worked in groups
and gossiped about a fight that occurred earlier while others simply allowed the
worksheet to sit in front of them. Teacher 9 monitored the classroom by walking around
and trying to encourage the students to work that were not, but to no avail as they
continued to play around with one another and talk about one another. The teacher
moved the classroom to silence as the conversation began to get out of hand the volume
rose, but students that did not begin working on the worksheet simple sat in silence and
did not attempt to try the material. There was one student that finished the work ahead of
the other students and was then sent to the computer to work on additional math skills.
This student remained at the computer for the remaining fifteen minutes of class doing
simplistic drill work.

Analysis of Classroom Observation

The engagement level plays an integral part in the educational process. Therefore, it is important that teachers engage their students and use effective
instructional practices to enhance the learning environment. In the case of Teacher 9, a
missed opportunity existed for the one student that completed their assignment before the
others. In the event that Teacher 9 had extension work for the student that allowed them
to either explore the skill being taught at a higher level or moved on in the curriculum,
the teacher is stunting the student’s educational growth. This missed opportunity could
translate into lower test scores in the long run. This would not be due to the fact that the
student did not necessarily know the skill, but because the student was not able to explore
other skills after mastering the current ones.

Differentiated instruction in the case of Teacher 9 may have helped with the
students that were not paying attention or decided to find other ways to distract their
learning. Not only would the use of differentiated instruction improved their
mathematical skills, but it would also give them work that is appropriate to their skill
level. In turn, the students’ mathematical skills would have a better opportunity of
improving versus the students sitting and be unproductive. Increased use of this strategy
for Teacher 9 may result in longer scholastic retention of the information as well when students are also able to apply the use of integers to real world applications.

In the case of Teacher 5, the effective use of differentiated instruction was used in several different ways that resulted in better classroom management and student engagement. The teacher was able to address learning gaps experienced by students when the students were working in groups and through informal observations. The ability for students to respond to the journal prompt also allowed struggling writers to participate in the assignment using their strengths. In turn, Teacher 5 was able to encourage the students that chose a more artistic route to transform their picture into words; thus removing the initial reluctance to write by the student.

The overall class averages in the two classrooms could be attributed to the increased use of differentiated instruction for different reasons. One reason maybe that students are working on assignments at their academic level while still being exposed to the information. Another explanation for the increased class average difference between Teacher 5 and Teacher 9 could be the level of engagement by the students in the activity. The engagement piece is critical as it encourages students to utilize their newly acquired skills to real world application with the use of grammar skills in their journal and evening assignment.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed findings based on interviews, data collection, and classroom observations. The researcher applied the findings to the
research questions asked in order to ascertain if there is a relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the research study.
CHAPTER VI
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate and identify potential reasons why African Americans in economically disadvantaged communities are often overlooked or go unidentified for the purposes of being served in talented and gifted services. With regards to this study, the researcher sought to ascertain whether or not there is a correlation between the dependent variable, screening/identification of economically disadvantaged students, and the independent variables: curriculum, traditional identifiers, and teacher recommendation in the multiple/alternative criteria process. For the purposes of this study, the researcher collected information through interviews, data collection/review, and classroom observations.

According to recent research, African Americans are more likely to be identified for the purposes of special education on the lower, less academic end of the spectrum to receive additional services in public schools rather than being considered for the higher, more intellectual end of the special education spectrum. In this study, an additional facet that was also taken into consideration was that of teacher perception of students in low socioeconomic areas in a metro Atlanta school system and implications, if any, of teachers identifying African-American students for possible placement in the gifted services department of their respective school.
Prior to conducting the study, the researcher designed the research study and additional research in preparation for the research study. In Chapter II, an extensive literature review was conducted on factors that impact the possibility of African-American students in economically disadvantaged areas potential identification into gifted studies programs. Factors, as cited by the literature, include lower teacher expectations, student failure to score high on normed standardized tests, misconceptions of a gifted learner, and lack of instructional opportunity to express talents/gifts. In Chapter III, the researcher also described and defined the independent and dependent variables in relation to their usage during the research process. Chapter IV focuses on the research design and instrumentation to be used throughout the research process. In this chapter, the researcher also explains the type of sampling to be employed in the study and how the use of triangulation will ensure the research study’s validity.

Chapter VI provides further analysis of findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for policymakers, educational leaders, educators, and others involved in the educational process. This research study on the underrepresentation of African Americans in economically disadvantaged areas in gifted studies programs was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What are teachers’ understandings of what it means to be gifted?

RQ2: What behaviors/characteristics do teachers believe are exhibited in gifted students?

RQ3: What role, if any, do teachers perceive a student’s socioeconomic status plays in a student’s ability to succeed?
RQ4: According to experience, what factors do teachers believe contribute to the underrepresentation of low income African-American students in gifted studies programs?

RQ5: What role, if any, do teachers believe cultural stigmatisms play in the identification process of potentially gifted students in economically disadvantaged areas?

RQ6: Why are teachers in low income, urban schools less likely to identify African-American students into gifted studies programs?

RQ7: How are gifted studies programs positively impacted in economically disadvantaged areas with the inclusion of multiple criteria identifiers for gifted studies programs?

RQ8: How does the inclusion of differentiated strategies assist and/or improve with classroom observations of potentially gifted African-American students?

RQ9: How does culture and social influences impact participation in gifted studies by African-American student, including ability/desire to participate in said programs?

RQ10: What factors influence teacher choice and identification of potentially gifted students in economically disadvantaged educational facilities?

RQ11: How do classroom opportunities/instructional approach impact the identification of students in low income areas into gifted studies programs?
The population utilized in this study consisted of teachers employed full time with a public school system located within the metropolitan Atlanta area. Purposive sampling was used in the research study due to the necessity of teachers having participated in the multiple/alternative criteria nominating process for gifted studies. Information gathered from teachers that participated in the interview process was used to answer the guiding research questions for the study. Lesson plans, multiple/alternative (CISS) worksheets, and standardized test scores were also gathered in order to determine screening eligibility and other statistical information to be used by the researcher. In addition to these pieces of information, the researcher also spent time in participating teachers' classrooms making classroom observations.

**Findings**

- Peers/Friends according to teachers play a major role that was not previously discussed or found in the literature or findings in the research.

- Characteristics listed by teachers used to identify potentially gifted students are not characteristics used in the multiple/alternative criteria checklist.

- High stakes testing environments also contribute to teachers' lack of student recommendation to the gifted studies program.

- Alternative/multiple criteria method is more effective at screening potential African Americans in economically disadvantaged areas than traditional methods.

- Cultural and social influences are major factors in the screening process of African-American students in the gifted studies program.
• The use of differentiated instruction can assist teachers with potentially identifying students for gifted students. However, some teachers do not use it regularly in the classroom.

**Implications**

The continuation of underserved African-American students in the public school system has many implications for educational leaders. Despite the implications that educational leaders face when these students continue through the educational process unidentified; the biggest loser remains the actual student. Essentially when a child, regardless of race, slips through the educational cracks and is not correctly identified, then the entire educational process has failed the student in assisting them to reach their highest potential. Given the data unearthed in this research study, educational leaders must be charged with ensuring that students, especially African-American students, are given the opportunity to not only be adequately placed academically, but are given opportunities that will enable them to display their talents and gifts in the classroom.

In many ways, ensuring and encouraging the proper placement of students in appropriate academic programs can also assist with curtailing behavioral issues faced by teachers in the classroom two fold. When a child is appropriately placed in a gifted studies program, a new realm of possibilities are opened as the child is challenged and encouraged to use their scholastic and other talents. In turn, this also decreases the class size for other students in general education so that teachers can give additional attention to the students that remain. As the gifted population increases, potentially so will student
interest and desire to be a part of the program. In turn, this will result in additional monies for the school.

The professional implications of this study also suggest the need for teacher training in the area of gifted strategies as well as the ideology of what it means to be gifted. If teachers are truly the gatekeepers to the educational process, then it is imperative that they are aware of the diverse profiles of learners within their classroom. Failure to provide these instructional opportunities to students will further lead to the underrepresentation of African Americans in economically disadvantaged areas to potentially be screened for the purposes of entering gifted studies programs. Another potential positive with the institution of gifted strategies in the classroom is the raised standards by teachers of what students should know, be able to do, and understand.

Teachers must find ways to motivate students to participate and be considered for gifted studies programs that are more effective. It also means that administrators and other educators need to find ways to eliminate negative influences on students' academic choices and appropriately place these individuals according to their academic needs.

If teachers value characteristics and behaviors that are not considered in the screening process, then fewer students will be accurately included in the identification process. When teachers rely solely on their personal beliefs, then there are potential students eliminated from consideration who should otherwise be a part of the identification process. Teachers are keeping students in their classrooms that are not appropriately placed academically. When teachers keep students from reaching their potential out of fear of maintaining their employment, then teachers are not fulfilling their
professional code to do what is in the best of the child. Furthermore, there is the implication that these teachers are keeping students from being challenged and reaching their full academic potential.

According to the data conducted, alternative criteria opens more doors to gifted programs than traditional methods that primarily rely on standardized test scores. The major implication of this is that the CISS process only occurs once a year, in the spring. If teachers notice needed behaviors then students remain in on level classes until the testing. Once testing is completed, most often students do not begin entry into the gifted program until the next school year.

It is hard to overcome cultural and social influences in a child’s life because it is typically how the child views themselves in relation to the world. As a long standing war, school must overcome what television and other external images portray to students what is deemed to be success at the detriment of society.

The use of differentiated instruction, when used effectively, can assist teachers with discovering student talents that were previously unnoticed or unknown. However, based upon observations and data collection by the researcher there are very few opportunities in the classrooms observed of a lot of differentiation done by teachers in the classroom. If this strategy is not used, then students are not able to display other talents that traditional, whole class instruction does not require in producing reflection of knowledge. At the same time, this strategy has proven to assist all students regardless of their academic ability to understanding material presented in class. Therefore, it is a loss for all when this strategy is not employed at all or ineffectively in the classroom.
Recommendations

Based upon the findings in this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations for the improvement of screening African-American students in economically disadvantaged areas. These recommendations are tailored for not only the building level administrator, but also for central office administrators and institutions of higher education that prepare both teachers and future educational leaders.

The first recommendation for the school district and central office administration is the use of mental abilities test for all students in the school. This will not only ensure that students are placed appropriately, but would also serve as an initial indicator of potential giftedness in students. In school districts that employ this option presently, many institute the use of a nationally normed test so that when students score within the parameters of what is considered to be gifted it is also used for eligibility purposes. The use of technology makes this a feasible recommendation that not only streamlines the assessment portion with instantaneous results, but requires minimum intrusion on the instructional practices of the school.

Through the use of a mental abilities test, school administrators can also better assess the need for advanced classes and within what subject areas based upon the results. This will further strengthen the ability of a child to successful compete for eligibility into gifted with proper exposure to rigor in the classroom. It will also enable teachers in on level classes the opportunity for potentially smaller classes as these students are appropriately placed. Furthermore, this practice will minimize the influence of peers on
potential students with proper documentation demonstrating the student’s ability to excel in the classroom.

A second recommendation is for central office administrators is a more concentrated focus on training of teachers in the screening process for gifted studies with special emphasis in schools in economically disadvantaged areas. District-wide leaders should consider making multiple criteria training apart of teacher induction programs that new teachers to the school district participate in annually. This becomes an excellent opportunity for teachers to become acclimated with the school district’s commitment to appropriately servicing their students as well as increasing the responsibility and awareness of teachers of behaviors and characteristics of gifted students.

Building level administrators must also continue the training at the school site through the increased use and involvement of the school’s gifted department. This may include increased interaction between the gifted department and other teachers through teacher training of instructional strategies, multiple criteria training, and how testing works. Gifted teachers are resources that can easily be used to raise the standard and rigor in the classroom. Strategies employed by gifted teachers may be used in general education classrooms for the purposes of raising the expectation level by teachers in their students with proper guidance and execution. These training sessions may also include a focus on how gifted characteristics sought in the screening process may at times manifest negatively in the classroom if a child is not being properly challenged.

Building level administrators must all reiterate the importance of the multiple criteria process in economically disadvantaged areas through word and action. It is
imperative that school administrators remind teachers of their obligation to participate in
the nomination process and that it is a part of their professional duties. Simultaneously,
building level administrators must partner with the gifted department and follow through
with appropriate consequences when educators fail to complete the proper paperwork.

Institutions of higher education must also play a part in assisting with the increase
of African Americans in economically disadvantaged areas by properly future teachers
and educational leaders for the school and classroom. It is necessary that educational
leaders become familiar with their special populations and assess how these populations
play integral roles in the whole operation of the school. During preparation classes,
leaders must be as informed about these special population segmentations as the teachers
that stand before the classrooms. Teacher preparation classes should also delve deeper
into the implications both legally and professionally that incomplete paperwork and
apathy can have on a student’s academic career.

During the interview process, many teachers mentioned the need for additional
advanced sections in various courses and will serve as the third recommendation. The
addition of advanced sections to course offerings through the partnership of central office
and school level officials to creatively budget for the addition of at least one advanced
section by content area every school year. The creation of these advanced courses will
not only assist with the screening and qualification process for gifted students, but will
provide an academic arena for students who scored high on standardized tests but did not
qualify for gifted. The addition of these classes will not only promote academic
achievement, but will also serve as a gateway to higher classroom expectations, exposure to advanced curriculum, and potentially higher state standardized test scores.

The fourth recommendation for this school district would be to consider increasing the number of times the multiple criteria process is conducted in a school year. In lieu of conducting the CISS process once a year, district level administrators should consider screening every semester. In practicing the multiple criteria process every semester, students are screened more often and have the ability to increase behavior identification over the course of the year. The impact of this practice at the school level could streamline the testing for the gifted coordinator in schools like those of the study school because so few are tested through the automatic referral process versus the tremendous number of recommendations through the CISS process. This practice may also increase teacher awareness of behaviors as students are constantly monitored and evaluated for the purposes of the screening.

The fifth recommendation based upon findings in this study is the use of the school to positively initiate a cultural shift, change the minds of the students. Schools must combat negative images in the media, music, social media, and other forms of stimuli that feed off of negative imagery in the African-American community. More importantly, the school must work harder with parents and encourage the use of positive imagery at home and in the school. School administrators must use mentoring programs as an excellent addition to not only at risk students, but to students excelling in the classroom. This will not only expose students to different forms of success, but give students the opportunity to contemplate and consider various other career options.
Schools must employ the use of mentoring programs that students would want to be a part of and that tie the need for success in the classroom to success in life.

At the central office level, the employment of mentoring programs that are district wide also assists with the employment of programming efforts at the school effort. There are many varied ways that school districts can seek funding to support such initiatives. These mentoring clubs could also provide a means of bridging the gap between school and community positively. School district wide programming also reinforces the school district’s commitment to educating the entire child by replacing negative stereotypes with positive influences and role models.

In economically disadvantaged classrooms, it is imperative that differentiated instructional strategies be employed in order to unearth student talents and gifts. This is especially important because multiple criteria, or the CISS process, rely heavily on behaviors observed in the classroom. Therefore, the sixth recommendation to be made is to increase the employment of differentiated instructional strategies in the classroom. School leaders can monitor this use through professional development and training as well as monitoring lesson plans for the use of these strategies. Educational leaders may also look for the use of these strategies during formal and informal observations.

Once again, during teacher induction programming sponsored by the school district can be conducted during new teacher orientation that services both novice and experienced teachers. Teachers throughout the school year can benefit from additional training through the use of small learning communities as well as through professional development programming. Future educational leaders in higher education should also
be made to study the impact that instructional strategies have on student engagement and achievement for the purposes of improving academic and scholastic endeavors by students. Increasingly in schools today, curriculum is becoming the first line of defense as seen by the new teacher evaluation instrument, Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES).

Failure by the teacher to fully utilize these strategies will result in the inability of the teacher to observe the needed behaviors sought by the multiple/alternative criteria process. Additional and continued professional development needs to be completed to assist teachers with the employment of this strategy in the classroom for the purposes of benefiting all students with the added benefit of potentially enabling student identification for gifted studies program enrollment.

An additional recommendation made by this researcher is the needed increased use of technology by students in the classroom as well as the need to add use of technology to the multiple criteria checklist. Technology controls a vast majority of everyday functions, and there is an increased need for students to be technologically savvy. District leaders within the study school district must consider the technological component as its use only has increased since the creation of the internet. The development and modernization of current computer classes could lead to increased student engagement as well as the acquirement of a new skill set and career choice introduction by district leaders and school level officials.

Today's students can demonstrate a superior ability through the manipulation of various software programming and application that far exceeds the normal capability of
other students. It also serves as an additional platform for creativity and human ingenuity as students more and more today push the technological envelope to new developments and conceptions. The increased use of technology in the classroom may lead to the adaptation of additional curricular classes that could enable students to demonstrate their mastery and superior skill in an entirely new way. This is even more imperative that exposure occurs in economically disadvantaged schools and areas as the needed resources, ability, access, and prior knowledge may not exist in the home.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Based upon the results garnered in this research study, the researcher believes that there are several opportunities for additional research to be conducted on this subject for subsequent research completion on the topic. A suggested quantitative research study that could be conducted as a result of this research study would be for other researchers to look at why African-American students perform better on nonverbal tests versus verbal and quantitative sections of achievement tests.

It is also suggested that a mixed methods study be completed on African Americans in economically disadvantaged areas and the effectiveness of current screening procedures in place. This is suggested because of the need to look exclusively at the actual instruments used to determine eligibility of this segmentation into the gifted studies program. This will enable educators, policy makers, and other educational leaders the opportunity to determine what methods are most effective at placing African-American students in the gifted studies programs.
Additional qualitative research is recommended in this area that delves into how African-American students in economically disadvantaged areas view gifted studies programs and factors that impact their participation in the program. As cited in this research study, this is an important area to consider as social and cultural influences play significant roles in whether or not students have a desire to be a part of gifted studies programming.

Conclusions

Similar to art imitating life, research imitated reality in this research study for the researcher. The findings as outlined in the previous section were not complete surprises to the researcher, but the evolution of a new theme that is peer influence in the African-American community became an interesting subtheme to the overall research study. The influence of peers was not widely recognized as an impacting factor in the literature as a barrier to African Americans in economically disadvantaged communities being underrepresented in the gifted studies programs in the two study middle schools. The researcher found it very surprising that it has such an impact to the point that students have either declined participation in screening process for program altogether.

The lack of teacher interest and participation in the research study could also be construed as an extension of the teacher empathy mentioned in the literature review. The lasting impact of teacher empathy makes a profound statement on the educational process of a child. If a teacher does not believe in a child’s ability, then the expectation of the teacher is lowered not only for that one child, but potentially for an entire classroom. When there is a lack of rigor introduced into a classroom, then the level of expectation by
both the student and teacher are lowered considerably. This is also mirrored in the failure by many teachers at one school in the completion and return of the multiple criteria worksheets needed to determine whether or not a student is eligible for gifted testing.

The results of whether or not culture and social influences play a significant role on a student’s education were not surprising to the researcher. Culture plays a significant role in a person’s identity and a part of that identity is the natural need to feel a part of a bigger picture or idea. Therefore, if certain images in a community are idolized more so than others, then should be expected that the student mirrors those images and aspires to mimic similar behaviors. According to the interviews, teachers perceive these images for the large part to be negative influences on student’s behavior while stunting some of their growth academically. Therefore, there is further underrepresentation in the gifted studies program by African-American students in economically disadvantaged schools because it is not a socially acceptable action by peers and would be respected images in the community.

In order to combat these images, it is concluded for the need for a stronger bond between the home and school, mainly the teachers. Parents and teachers must demonstrate a higher level of investment and expectation in students in this target segmentation for the purposes of improving their lives later on in life. In place of the negative images that many of these students aspire to be like, the reconstruction of positive images must replace the aforementioned. Others have completed studies on how mentoring programs improve self-image of students in low income areas.
In the process, teachers’ failure to use differentiated instruction is also an impact on student achievement on standardized tests as well as other achievement tests. For some students, the removal of rigor in the classroom has also extended the empathy by teacher to the level of instruction received in the classroom. It is concluded that the lessened use of differentiated instruction in the classroom, there is also a decrease in the number of African-American students screened for gifted studies placement. This type of instruction is important because it enables students to demonstrate behavioral characteristics that are not normally displayed with the use of traditional instructional strategies.

This also translates to the level of engagement and academic success experienced by students in the classroom when speaking in terms of instructional strategies. When classroom averages were compared, the classroom with the higher average had students that were more engaged with that teacher using differentiated instructional strategy. Engagement in academics becomes paramount when dealing with gifted screening because the comprehension component ultimately determines ability to test and leads to eventual eligibility for entry into gifted programs. Low scores on state standardized tests like the CRCT only make it more problematic when an initial piece criterion for screening is a required score within the top 10% for the school district.

It is also concluded that most teachers had a misconception of what it means to be gifted. Therefore, without a true understanding of what it means to be gifted, teachers are not truly able to identify characteristics and behaviors of potentially gifted students. Teachers that were more effective at recommending students for gifted testing relied
primarily on their experience with teaching gifted students and their ability to see the characteristics demonstrated through the use of either differentiated instruction or gifted instructional strategies. In comparison to those that had little to no experience with gifted students, the exposure to gifted students proved beneficial to those with prior experience or knowledge. This can also be said when teachers were able to identify the negative manifestation of these behaviors in the classrooms.

**Limitations of the Study**

During the process of the research study, limitations occurred that potentially impacted the outcome of this study. One of the limitations of the study would be the sample size of participants that took place in the study. In the event that the researcher yielded a higher sample size, then potentially the outcome of the study may have been different or with more varied response to questions posed in the interview process.

An additional limitation to the study would be school turnover. In one of the study schools, the entire gifted department was new and not as familiar with the school’s data versus the other school with a more veteran population. In the event that this study school had similar length of exposure to the school and community then it is possible that additional feedback would have been possible from participating members. While it was easy to locate files, the gifted chairperson was not able to speak fluently on particular children beyond what was on paper.

The lack of teacher participation in the research study could also be interpreted as a limitation to the study and potentially viewed as empathy as exampled in the failure to complete worksheets by teachers. As cited in the literature, teacher empathy in low
income areas has a large impact on the identification of potential students for the gifted programs because some teachers do not feel that the talent exists in their classrooms.

A potential limitation to the study would be the stipulation that many of the participants shared the same culture of the segmentation of population being researched in the study. In the educator pool of the participating study schools, the educator population ranged approximately between 80% to 90% African American. Depending on perspective, this may have given respondents a somewhat biased view and response when asked if culture prohibited students from participating in the gifted studies program.

**Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher summarized the information and findings from the research study. The researcher also based upon the literature and findings made recommendations for the leading causes found and cited to be reasons for the underrepresentation of African-American students in economically disadvantaged areas. The researcher also outlined additional areas of study for other researchers to consider completing in order to gain a better understanding of this problem in the public school system and African-American community. In addition to the findings and recommendations, the researcher also outlined additional implications for educational leaders to consider as it relates to this topic of study.
## APPENDIX A

**Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines 2011-2012**

### INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSEHOLD SIZE</th>
<th>REDUCED PRICE MEALS - 150%</th>
<th>FREE MEALS - 130%</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TWICE PER MONTH, EVERY TWO WEEKS</td>
<td>ANNUAL, MONTHLY, WEEKLY</td>
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<td>TWICE PER MONTH, EVERY TWO WEEKS</td>
<td>ANNUAL, MONTHLY, WEEKLY</td>
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### 43 CONTIGUOUS STATES, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, GUAM, AND TERRITORIES

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<th>Household Size</th>
<th>Reduced Price Meals - 150%</th>
<th>Free Meals - 130%</th>
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For each add’/ member, add

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<th>ALASKA</th>
<th>ANNUAL, MONTHLY, WEEKLY</th>
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For each add’/ member, add

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APPENDIX B

Characteristics Instrument for Screening Students (CISS)

Record student names in any of the 10 boxes when the student demonstrates superior/exceptional ability(ies) noted in the characteristic category. Refer to description of each characteristic. This form is to be kept on file in the school. Students will be screened with this form once a year.

Teacher Name: ___________ Grade/Class: ___________ School: ___________ Date: ___________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOTIVATION</th>
<th>INTERESTS</th>
<th>COMMUNICATION</th>
<th>PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITY</th>
<th>MEMORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidences an intense desire to achieve</td>
<td>Intense (unusual interests) Activities, avocations, objects, etc. have special worth or significance</td>
<td>Highly expressive and effective use of words, numbers, or symbols</td>
<td>Effective, inventive strategies for recognizing and solving problems</td>
<td>Large storehouse of information Innate ability to retain and retrieve information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strives to satisfy a need or attain set goals</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT MAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>be persistent in pursuing/completing self-selected tasks</td>
<td>demonstrate unusual or advanced interests in a topic or activity</td>
<td>demonstrate unusual ability to communicate (verbally, physically, artistically, symbolically)</td>
<td>devise or adapt a systematic strategy for solving problems or change the strategy if it is not working</td>
<td>need only 1-2 repetitions for mastery</td>
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<tr>
<td>be a self-starter</td>
<td>be beyond age-group</td>
<td>use particularly clever examples, illustrations or elaborations</td>
<td>create a new design, invent</td>
<td>have a wealth of information</td>
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<tr>
<td>be an enthusiastic learner</td>
<td>pursue an activity unceasingly</td>
<td>understand what questions to ask to solve the problem</td>
<td>pay attention to details</td>
<td>manipulate information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aspire to be somebody/do something</td>
<td>demonstrate perseverance in pursuit of an interest</td>
<td>understand information correctly</td>
<td>remember experiences from the past (e.g., &quot;When I was one...&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INQUIRY</th>
<th>INSIGHT</th>
<th>REASONING</th>
<th>CREATIVITY</th>
<th>HUMOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions, experiments, explores</td>
<td>Quickly grasps new concepts and makes connections</td>
<td>Logical approaches to figuring out solutions</td>
<td>Inventiveness Problem-solving through non-traditional patterns of thinking</td>
<td>Conveys and picks up on humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks in-depth knowledge, understanding, or information</td>
<td>Sudden discovery of the correct solution following incorrect attempts</td>
<td>Forward-looking, goal oriented thought.</td>
<td>Ability to synthesize key ideas or problems in complex situations in humorous ways</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INQUIRY</th>
<th>INSIGHT</th>
<th>REASONING</th>
<th>CREATIVITY</th>
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<td>Student may</td>
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<td>• ask unusual questions for age</td>
<td>• demonstrate exceptional ability to draw inferences</td>
<td>• make generalizations</td>
<td>• show ingenuity in using everyday materials</td>
<td>• exhibit keen sense of humor—gentle or hostile</td>
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<td>• play around with ideas</td>
<td>• appear to be a good guesser</td>
<td>• use metaphors and analogies</td>
<td>• exhibit wild, seemingly silly ideas</td>
<td>• see relationships and create jokes or puns</td>
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<tr>
<td>• demonstrate extensive exploratory behaviors</td>
<td>• be keen observer</td>
<td>• think things through logically</td>
<td>• produces ideas fluently/flexibly</td>
<td>• extreme sense of fairness</td>
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<td>• possess capacity for seeing unusual and diverse relationships</td>
<td>• think critically</td>
<td>• be curious</td>
<td>• sensitive to feelings of others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• integrate ideas and disciplines</td>
<td>• be an excellent planner</td>
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<td>• use inappropriate humor (class clown)</td>
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Appendix B (continued)
## APPENDIX C

### Form - CISS List of Students

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APPENDIX D
Teacher Interviews

Teacher 3

Researcher: Thank you for participating. I am speaking now with Teacher Three. If you would, paint a picture of the average child at this school. What are their habits or behaviors like?

Teacher 3: From the time that they come off of the bus, typically you would see very few students with book bags or books. They will come into the cafeteria where it is very loud. Maybe that is because of the excitement of seeing their friends, so they are very social. And typically I would say that since we are a special ed center, we have the gambit of one end to the other end of special education students here. You will see just about anything. We have a great representation of the world.

Researcher: How do children tend to stand out here at this school? What are some things that they do that make them sort of special or different from the other students?

Teacher 3: I think the norm has allowed them to stand out in a negative way. You know the louder you are, the more out of the ordinary for society I would say makes you stand out around here.

Researcher: That is what kids around here tend to gravitate towards? The kids who have the over the top hairstyles and fashion? Their clothing?

Teacher 3: Yes, their clothing. Or even their attitude. Now I’m not saying it is always a good attitude. The ones who are trying to do right often times are the ones who get picked one.

Researcher: Is peer pressure here a major factor?

Teacher 3: Yes. I would say yes.

Researcher: How?
Teacher 3: I would say within the past couple of years I would say that we have seen a rise in gang activity in our community. And it is starting to spill over in the schools. So you will see some of the paraphernalia, like the rags or whatever. We know what it is so we as teacher try to avoid it and talk to them about what is appropriate for school and making the right choices.

Researcher: Do you think these talks by teachers have had a successful impact?

Teacher 3: Well, I feel like if administration would get in it and not just on the teacher end, then I think it would be more successful.

Researcher: Thinking about the students that you have serviced at this school, how would you describe the average student’s will or desire to succeed?

Teacher 3: I have been here for a while, so I have seen a great decrease in that. Honestly, I have. Every year it gets worse. I don’t want to sound negative.

Researcher: No, no. This is your opinion. So-

Teacher 3: The will is not there and it always starts at home. You know? It is a three piece. You have home, you have administrators. Actually, it is four. You have the teachers and then there are the students. And if everyone is not working together then there is a problem.

Researcher: What are or are there any factors that you would pinpoint that maybe prevent from students from succeeding? Like, home issues or lack of interest. Maybe parents’ previous experience with education?

Teacher 3: I just think that a lot of kids, most of them come with baggage. They just do not know how to deal with baggage. Like when you come into work, this is your job and you have to drop it at the door and be professional student here. And do what is expected so that you can move beyond where you are.

Researcher: What kind of baggage do they come with?

Teacher 3: You know whatever goes on in the community. Whether or not they have food, clean clothing. Do I have materials? Do I have my homework? Do I know the material that I am required to know in class, a lot of things? It only takes one bad teacher to really kind of put a kid behind and it is not really the teacher. It is a lot of things. If you do not have the support all the way around then it is hard.
Appendix D (continued)

Researcher: Do you see poverty having an impact on student success here or their failures?

Teacher 3: Yes, I do. I see it as a crutch because when I grew up, I grew up in this same community. And I went to this same school and I went to class in this same classroom. And my parents were very supportive and that makes a difference. If you do not have that, then you know.

Researcher: Wow! And you went to this school?

Teacher 3: Yes, I went here when it was first opened. I was an eighth grader in 1985. We named the school; we came up with the mascot, and the colors.

Researcher: So, you have really seen the changes in this community through whatever shifts or changes that have occurred? Have you seen any shifts or changes in the community?

Teacher 3: Yes, I have. This would typically be a middle class neighborhood, you know, working class people. And they were very much involved in their kids’ lives. When we would have PTA meetings, they were very involved in PTA activities. Now, the PTA are the teachers who are made to come and fill the room. There are no parents. That’s the difference.

Researcher: Wow! And do you think—Or what would you credit for that decrease in parental involvement in the school?

Teacher 3: Honestly, because they hated school when they were there. It stems from that. People tend to feel the way they did when they were in school. They show it to their kids and their kids take on that same attitude and then nobody is going to benefit from it. No one is going to benefit from it because their attitude has to change. What happened back in the day is then, they need to come in and see what is going on with your kid and not just pointing the finger. Because when you point one there are some pointing back at you.

Researcher: What is your experience working with gifted students?

Teacher 3: For the past I want to say ten years, I have had a section or two of gifted students.

Researcher: Because you have tremendous experience in both regular ed and gifted classes, when you think of your on level classes, what characteristics or
behaviors do you see that sort of pop out that sets that this kid may have some potential or talent beyond what you see in others in the on level classroom?

Teacher 3: They think differently. When you have discussions in class, their thinking is quite different from the rest. Their thinking is not so surface level, it is quite deep. You can see it in their face that they are thinking about what you are asking. So, their answers are always of more quality.

Researcher: When you are seeing this, how do you basically benefit or capitalize on it?

Teacher 3: What do I do? Well, you know, I told you before they shun the kids who want to do better. So, I wouldn’t want to put a highlight on them, a shining light on them. What I would do is have a conversation with them through their paper. You know, when I am grading them. I always leave every student a note: things that I notice that are great, things that I notice that I want them to work on, and then I always tell them that I see something special in you so it is a personal thing.

Researcher: Reflecting back on your experience, what factors do you believe contribute to the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted studies programs?

Teacher 3: Their friends. Too many of them let the sun rise and set on their friends’ opinion. When they are in middle school, it’s all about their peers. What did so and so say about this one or whatever? I had a really smart girl turn down being in gifted because none of her friends were in the classes. Her mom said it was her choice. I was dumbfounded, but I have to go with whatever they say. I don’t get it.

Researcher: She turned down entry into gifted?

Teacher 3: Yep.

Researcher: Are there any other factors that you would attribute to less African Americans, especially economically disadvantaged ones into gifted?

Teacher 3: I mean, no. It’s rare when kids make it in around here and when they do and turn it down; it feels like a slap in the face. These kids are primarily worried about what their friends will say or think. Them not having money doesn’t mean anything because their friends don’t have any either. They
Appendix D (continued)

worry about insignificant things instead of getting their work done. I see it in the classroom all of the time. If I had to name one more, then it would be ignorance on the parents’ part. Most of them don’t know much about the program and they don’t hear much about it in the neighborhood so it doesn’t affect them.

Researcher: Do you see a different reaction when their child is going through the screening process?

Teacher 3: Yeah. The parents will be real proud if their child is nominated and real mad if their child doesn’t make it. Most of the time though, if a child makes it in, then the parent is going to support that child participating in the program.

Researcher: Do you see African American culture sort of playing a role in holding kids back from participating in gifted studies programs?

Teacher 3: Yes. As African-Americans we tend to glorify the bad guy. In our neighborhoods, especially our lower income neighborhoods, we give more respect to the drug dealer than the preacher sometimes. That is because it is the drug dealer has the money, the women, the car with rims, whatever. And that is what we splatter in front of these kids on the television, so that is what they think they want. We don’t see anyone bragging about being smart, but they will about their car. Too materialistic.

Researcher: How do teachers fit into this equation of screening gifts for gifted programs?

I mean, a lot of the teachers hold back students. They want to hold back those smart kids in their classroom and they are like, “why do I need to give them my best students”. But they are hurting the kids. Because if that child sits there in that regular ed classroom and they are not being challenged the way that they need to then they are going to start being a behavior problem or they are just going to stop doing.

Researcher: Shut down.

Teacher 3: Yes, shut down.

Researcher: When you are dealing with the screening process, as a teacher, what behaviors or lessons do you reflect on to help you ascertain a child should
Appendix D (continued)

be considered for testing? Or do you allow the cards to fall where they may?

Teacher 3: Ok. Right now I am trying to think of the characteristics of the gifted kid. Are they funny and appropriately funny? Or? Just those quirky things that a gifted child would do that I can identify in that child. I can just see it. They are just different.

Researcher: So you attribute your finer tuning of screening kids to your previous experience and your own personal exposure to gifted strategies?

Teacher 3: Definitely, I think my previous experience helps me see it differently than some of the teachers who have never dealt with the gifted child before.

Researcher: What about your colleagues? Do you think they take it seriously?

Teacher 3: No, because we very rarely get them back. When we have the CISS process, we very rarely get that paperwork back. They are supposed to list kids and check off characteristics that they see. Very rarely do we get it back. We have to catch them through testing, which is not always fair to the kids.

Researcher: What factors do you think influence teacher choice for recommending a child for gifted services?

Teacher 3: I think grades and what teachers see in the classroom. I would hope that is what they are using. When you see a child that clearly needs more advanced work then that should be a motivating factor to recommend that child. I think some teachers look at the parents, the family. Like, if the family seems to be well put together and the child comes across relatively smart. Teachers play into images too.

Researcher: How so? How do teachers play into images?

Teacher 3: In a school like this, I think kids who clearly have support come across as different and in a classroom they tend to just be different because of how foolish at times some of the other kids are acting. So, when you have that child who is pretty decent student and has a family that is clearly involved in their education, I think teachers are more likely to recommend that child then the one that is a behavior issue because he is bored.
Appendix D (continued)

Researcher: So in low income schools, you think image plays a part in a child’s recommendation?

Teacher 3: I think so. I think it’s because it is so normal to see the kids who are not exerting a lot of effort in their work and then when you come across one that is, I would hope, but teachers should try pushing them forward. And that’s in addition to that behavior problem too. I’d rather see teachers have everybody tested then just a few.

Researcher: Why do you say that?

Teacher 3: Because they may actually be doing very well and may not have the support. Testing comes at the end of the school year and we already miss them if we wait until the end of the school year. When all along you have seen those attributes, but all along you have ignored them or the child goes unserviced.

Researcher: So it is almost like you have a sitting duck? You almost have to wait for the process to begin and then maybe through that process or by the time they go through the different steps the school year is over? Then they are moving on and they may or may not make it into the program.

Teacher 3: Now that is if the teacher is going to recommend them. Now the other way is through testing and testing is the only way that we’ve screened kids.

Researcher: So, testing is a barrier and then teacher attitude towards the identification process? One of the things that literature tells me is that because these are African American students in low income areas that many teachers do not feel that these kids are capable of even being able to do the work. Or they feel as though they don’t even see those characteristics in those kids, but you are seeing it more on the other end. The teachers see it but are not willing to do anything about it.

Teacher 3: They want to keep the star students to themselves. They feel like their scores will look better if I keep this child. It’s not about the child; it’s about that teacher’s scores.

Researcher: One more question, when we are thinking about the African American students here, do you see how culture impacts their academic decisions?
Appendix D (continued)

Teacher 3: Yes. It’s not cool, like I said, to get off the bus with a book bag. So it’s not socially cool for you to have those things. If you do then you are talked about. If you are speaking with some intellect then you are shunned, so you have a lot of gifted kids around here who will act hood or ghetto when they leave their gifted classrooms just to fit in. But when you are in the program, that is the norm. The other kids don’t care about that other stuff.

Researcher: Have you see some kids sort of shift their attitude? Maybe they were one way because of the mass but then once they are in that program their eyes are opened so to speak?

Teacher 3: They have those abilities and they share it with you through paper, but maybe they don’t want to share it class. But you have to as a teacher as a teacher you have to acknowledge and turn it around and make it a good thing.

Researcher: What are some ways that you would like to see gifted screening sort of change so that more economically disadvantaged African American students are able to potentially get in or at least exposed to more gifted strategies?

Teacher 3: They need to have more advanced classes taught by qualified teachers. Bottom line.

Researcher: Do you use differentiated instruction?

Teacher 3: I sure do.

Researcher: How?

Teacher 3: I use it in a lot of my on level classes because I have so many different levels of students. Some are really low; some are where they are supposed to be; and then some understand the material well. So I use it to accommodate for the different academic levels in my class.

Researcher: Has using the strategy helped you in finding someone for gifted testing?

Teacher 3: I would have to say yes. Mainly because the ones that are in the higher grouping, I try to throw something in there to see how they are manipulating the information in their head. I am looking for them to have a different way of thinking. It helps me to see who are just my hard workers and who could be possibly a little bit more.
Appendix D (continued)

Researcher: When you say a little bit more, you mean gifted, right?

Teacher 3: Yes. Even though the assignment is harder, I want to see if you are going to rise to the occasion or complain. If you rise then I keep throwing more challenging work your way, if you complain then I try to encourage those students to do more.

Researcher: Do the ones that complain eventually rise to your expectations?

Teacher 3: Most of the time they do because they know I don’t accept excuses.

Researcher: So you have higher expectations for those students?

Teacher 3: I try to because I want them to do more than whatever average is considered. I feel like if you are really putting your best forward, then you should have someone to make you do even more.

Researcher: Thank you! This will conclude our recording and interview with Teacher 3.

Teacher 3: You’re welcome.

Teacher 4

Researcher: Thank you for participating. For the purposes of protecting your identity, I may refer to you as Teacher 4. We will begin with our first question: If you could, please paint a picture of the average child at this school. What are their behaviors/habits in the classroom?

Teacher 4: The average student that I teach can be characterized as socially immature. Most of my students are extremely intelligent, but their lack of social maturity holds them back academically. A lot of them also come from what I would say are broken homes. There is not a solid family structure or support for a lot of these kids.

Researcher: Do you think peer pressure a major factor here at your school?

Teacher 4: Yes, peer pressure is a major factor. I have witnessed students that are new to the school quickly digressing to the behavior and academic behaviors displayed by many of the more popular students. Meaning, the popular students are the ones who want to fight or take on this mentality like a street person.
Appendix D (continued)

Researcher: In your opinion, what role does socioeconomic status play in a child’s education? Do you think it makes a difference?

Teacher 4: Very little. After teaching at two inner-city schools, I am of the belief that we often times use socioeconomic status as an excuse for adults to lower the standards for our children. Appropriate behavior and study skills are not exclusive to middle and upper class families.

Researcher: Interesting. Ok. Next question: thinking about the students that you have serviced at this school, how would you describe the average students’ will to succeed?

Teacher 4: I believe that all of my students want to succeed, but many are unwilling to do what is necessary to succeed. There is a perception that things in life will be given freely and not earned.

Researcher: Wow. What factors do you believe contribute to this lack of/need to succeed?

Teacher 4: I think that adults are to blame for this. In regards to school work, we have lowered our standards so far that students expect easy assignments and good grades that were not earned. I feel like we no longer teach good work ethic.

Researcher: Ok. At this school, what do you see as potential limitations to students’ success?

Teacher 4: At this school in particular, I think that allowing persistently disruptive students back into the classroom is hurting all students’ potential. Teachers spend too much time addressing recurring behaviors and while doing so, 95% of my students sit patiently waiting to learn. This school puts up with too many behavior related issues. We will never be able to compare ourselves globally if we do not clean up our schools. A general education classroom is not always the appropriate place for students that have extra needs.

Researcher: I can understand that. My next question is: do you believe poverty makes a significant impact on a student’s success or failure? How so?

Teacher 4: I see the whole poverty thing as an excuse. I understand how it prevents some students from having what they need to be successful. Instead I would rather my students see poverty as a motivating factor for them to get out of their dire situations.
Appendix D (continued)

Researcher: What is your understanding of what it means to be gifted?

Teacher 4: A stellar student that knows things and has seen things before. It might be in how they look at the material presented to them. I think that’s why money is not really a predominating factor. If you are smart, then you are just smart. It is up to us as teachers to nurture those gifts.

Researcher: Ok. What characteristics/behaviors do you believe a gifted student possesses?

Teacher 4: It looks a lot of different ways really. I think it looks like the student that is in the corner drawing and trying to express his feelings through art. I think it is that that child that is constantly raising his hand and wants to be noticed. I think it is mostly though that child that really gets into what’s going on in the classroom by just exhibiting the traditional marks of an excellent, just at a higher level.

Researcher: Ok. In your opinion, are there other arenas within this school that allow you to see potential giftedness in a student?

Teacher 4: Honestly, no. I am so concerned with what I see going on in my own classroom that I really do not get a chance to see what else is going on in the school unless there is an announcement or a faculty meeting. Sorry.

Researcher: No, that’s ok. I am merely looking for your opinions or perceptions. We will move on. What behaviors do teachers believe are exhibited in gifted students?

Teacher 4: I think they are looking constantly for the child that is excelling academically in the classroom. I do not think we really look for it in other ways or have really been trained to think about how some of these kids are internalizing a lot of the information.

Researcher: Tell me what you know about gifted testing or how students are screened for gifted identification.

Teacher 4: Not a lot. I know that we can make recommendations, but what happens after that I cannot say that I am very familiar.

Researcher: What about gifted strategies or differentiated instruction?

Teacher 4: I am not really familiar with a lot of gifted strategies. Gosh, I feel dumb or something. Now, differentiated instruction I know a lot about from a lot of the trainings in the school. Sometimes it is hard because of the whole
behavior issue to implement those strategies, but I know that they can work.

Researcher: What support, if any, have you ever received from a gifted teacher since being here at your school?

Teacher 4: I have partnered with the gifted science teacher on some things. I like some of the things that I see happening in his class, but I do have to water it down for my kids. They don’t always have the skill set needed to fully carry out the lesson like maybe in a gifted class.

Researcher: Do you think the students can do the work the same as what is occurring in the gifted class?

Teacher 4: I think some of them can, a small minority. But the vast majority no. They are not invested enough in some instances to think for themselves. That is where that whole academic immaturity comes into play and hinders a lot of them. I would love to do more of what is considered gifted, but I am too busy trying to get them the fundamentals and move on to the next big idea. Understand?

Researcher: I do. Because their skill set coming in the door is limited, it is hard for you to try teaching at a high level. Do you think maybe you could try raising the standards for some of the kids?

Teacher 4: I have tried that and miserable failed. After a while you get tired of hearing the kids complain that the work is too hard. I try to make it interesting, but it’s hard to get some of them motivated about learning. And the ones that I do engage, I still have to work with them just as hard because their foundation is not as strong or no one really ever pushed them. It’s like a delicate balancing act. If you push to hard then you will turn a lot of them off. If you don’t push enough then you will turn a lot of them away. They won’t respect the class as much.

Researcher: According to your experience, what factors do you believe contribute to the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted studies programs?

Teacher 4: never really thought about. I did not know that there was really a problem. I know our gifted population is rather small, but I did not know that it was an issue. If I had to put it off on anything then I would say the lack of knowledge about the program, like I did not know that there was an issue because I never really thought of it in that context of there being a quota or something.
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Researcher: Some would see it that way when approximately 10% of your total population should be identified as gifted, and this school is running less than that.

Teacher 4: Wow. I guess maybe at this school it is because some of the kids just don’t aspire to be in the gifted program.

Researcher: What makes you say that?

Teacher 4: I don’t know. It’s not something that is just a major topic. I talk to students about being in it, like in a class, but most of them shrug me off.

Researcher: Why do you think they shrug you off?

Teacher 4: Probably because they see it as more intense school and what many of them are doing right now is probably hard enough.

Researcher: Do you think these students can do the work in a gifted studies class?

Teacher 4: Some of them, maybe a very select few. I don’t know. Motivating these kids is hard enough. When it comes to school work and doing harder work, it just seems futile.

Researcher: Wow. What role, if any, in your opinion do you think culture plays in finding African American students for gifted programs?

Teacher 4: Being white at this school causes me to see things differently at times, I think. I see a lot of potential in these kids but they are more concerned with what the other kids are saying or thinking about them. I see a lot of wasted talent. I try to push and get them to see beyond their peers, but for a lot that is all that really matters right now to them.

Researcher: At this school, what factors do you think bar or prevent students from being considered for gifted studies?

Teacher 4: I think the lack of advanced classes. More of these kids need opportunity to see and feel what it is like to be in a thriving community. There have been some kids that I have recommended into the program who did not necessarily get in, but were placed in advanced classes with the gifted kids and they flourished. A lot of them I don’t even recognize anymore because they have really done well for themselves in that environment and with those teachers.
Appendix D (continued)

Researcher: What factors do you think influence teacher choice and recommendations for gifted studies?

Teacher 4: Teachers around here look for the kids that are sitting at the top of their grade books. I think that is what is important to them. Many probably think that if you can pass their class then you can do the gifted work if they actually complete the recommendation process.

Researcher: Is that the only thing that you think influences their choices?

Teacher 4: That’s what is important to a lot of people, the grades. Then there is the child’s behavior and whether or not they are good kids.

Researcher: Behavior seems to be a popular selection. Why do you think that is?

Teacher 4: Maybe because so many of these kids do not show it a lot and when you see it, it’s so rare. Teachers deal with a lot of things throughout the day and it becomes overwhelming. When you get that child that comes in and does their work, it is a nice change of pace.

Researcher: How is that gifted environment different than what you were providing in the classroom?

Teacher 4: I don’t know. But I think maybe because everyone over there is smart and that whole peer pressure thing plays itself out. I’m hoping that it is because they do not want to be on the low end of the totem pole with the other kids. Some of those gifted kids can be vicious too. I had one in my class at the beginning of the year until his schedule was changed and talk about a sharp tongue. He sort of looked down at the other kids and made it known. They talked about him, but would partner up with him in a heartbeat if we were doing an activity.

Researcher: Wow

Teacher 4: I know, right.

Researcher: Do you even think the students here want to participate in gifted studies?

Teacher 4: To an extent. But it’s like that old saying, “You don’t miss what you never had”. And I think a lot of the kids’ self-image is that they are not good enough or smart enough to be in those classes when they take into account who is in there. Most of the gifted students are leaders in other arenas around here like Student Council, but the average kid here would rather be on the basketball or cheerleading squad than Student Council.
Appendix D (continued)

Researcher: Are there social influences that you think prevent students from being eligible or having a desire to participate in gifted studies?

Teacher 4: The ones that these kids place on themselves. I had to stop one kid from calling another one ‘white boy’ because he gave a good answer. As a white man, I was concerned because why does having to be intelligent have to be associated or affiliated with being white. There are smart African Americans, there are smart Indians, there are smart Asians. So when I asked the kid and really affronted him about it. It was like the kid had not processed that I was white or something. And then I had to ask are you saying that to be mean and the kid just shrugged. I had never seen anything like it.

Researcher: That’s compelling. I mean, like that is really interesting. It is almost like they took a positive thing and turned it into negative and put down a race at the same time.

Teacher 4: Exactly. So I really didn’t want to go there with the student and say the wrong thing. I don’t think he really understood the gravity of his words that day. He just wanted to be negative and that’s what he came up with, I guess.

Researcher: As a teacher, would you say that culture impacts a students’ behavior?

Teacher 4: Of course. I think it is more that it makes it what is socially acceptable and dictates or raises the likelihood of certain behavior for some kids.

Researcher: I can understand. So you think culture sort of determines what a child may do or how they may react?

Teacher 4: Yes, exactly.

Researcher: You mentioned the use of differentiated instruction. How often do you use it in your classroom?

Teacher 4: I try to use it as much as possible because I am trying to make the students more responsible for their learning. It can be challenging, but I do use it often.

Researcher: Has it helped you to look at a student differently or maybe consider them for the gifted and talented classes?

Teacher 4: Now that I do not know. I do not think consciously it has really made me change my opinion of a student. I think if the student is bright, then
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regardless of what I am doing it is going to come through. I think, I guess because I am so focused on other things that I never really took time to analyze if the instructional strategy would do that. I will have to look at that though the next time we do D.I. That’s an interesting correlation though.

Researcher: It’s a curiosity for me. I have gotten mixed reviews on it. When I reviewed the CISS forms, I noticed that you were one of very few that returned it. What is that?

Teacher 4: I don’t know. I thought it was something we all had to do. It took me a minute, but I got it in. I didn’t know the response level was so low.

Researcher: Yes, most of the 6th grade teachers turned it in, but very few seventh graders did and virtually none of the eighth grade teachers completed forms.

Teacher 4: Really? Hmph. Could you tell my boss that? No really. I guess it is because there is so much going on right here and it probably fell off.

Researcher: Do you think it is because they don’t care or think the kids cannot do the work or something?

Teacher 4: Not caring would seem to strong. I think it is more the workload can get pretty intense around here and it becomes hard to keep up with all that is going on in addition to staying on task.

Researcher: Is there any way that you would change the gifted identification process?

Teacher 4: I would like to see teachers in general education more educated on the process. I know there are behaviors that we are looking for, but it has to take more than that to get them in the program. I think that a lot of these kids need guidance or motivation. I also would love to see the addition of more advanced classes because we have a lot of kids that if removed from their element would probably do a lot better than what they are right now. We have a lot of negative behavior that needs to be curbed before anything else can occur.

Researcher: What factors influence your choice when identifying potentially gifted students in low income areas like this?

Teacher 4: I guess I am looking for that kid that is looking and wanting that way out. I see a lot of kids that just need a better educational surrounding then being around kids who are ok with being regular or below average. When
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I see kids like that I try to find other opportunities for them to look for their personal interests. Are all of them smart? No, but some of them are really hard workers and that makes up for their lack of superior intellect if you will. I mean, some of the kids want a better life for themselves and are not as swayed by what they see walking in these halls, but I think I look for kids who could potentially profit from being around other kids who care about their education. And with the lack of advanced classes and reduction in our gifted program this year, a lot of kids who had that opportunity are back where they started. Personally, I do not think it is fair, but I do not control the budget.

Researcher: Could you explain more please.

Teacher 4: Last year we had a staff of four gifted teachers and now this year we are down to just three due to budget cuts. So that decreased the opportunity for kids who were in advanced sections to continue getting that exposure to the gifted department because of the influx of new kids once Choice was stopped. So with all the kids that have to be serviced because they are identified as gifted, it leaves a lot of kids out and some of them are reverting back to negative behaviors.

Researcher: So why weren’t additional advanced classes offered elsewhere in the school?

Teacher 4: I am not quite sure, but it really placed a lot of kids at a disadvantage that did really well in the classes and really changed their attitude towards school. For a school like this, sometimes you want to take the good kids and place them around others that have the same mindset as them at times. I would rather those kids be there with the gifted teachers than sit with kids who don’t want to sit still or want to curse every five seconds to get attention from the others.

Researcher: Wow. That’s an interesting angle.

Teacher 4: I know. The budget has things financially tight for everyone, but with the removal of just one teacher we have placed a lot of kids at jeopardy and may have regressed even more because now they are back with their buddies who do not necessarily have the same mental capabilities as they do in the classroom.

Researcher: Budget cuts are something else. Wow! What role, if any, do teachers believe cultural stigmatisms play in the identification process of potentially gifted students in economically disadvantaged areas?
Appendix D (continued)

Teacher 4: For me, being different I think it is hard because I feel like at times I am overcoming a language barrier. So many of the kids speak in incorrect English and when I do it makes me some sort of way stand out that much more. I think in this school too many of these kids want to be something because of what they think the lifestyle is when it really is not. And in a lot of instances maybe they are not really equipped to becoming. The whole rap thing is perplexing to me because when I tell them that it is poetry, a lot of them look at me as though I were crazy or just insulted them. I try to encourage them to not focus so much on being the front guy, but there are other ways to doing well. It clicks for some, but others are just convinced that no matter what that is what they want to do with their life. I think a lot of teachers see these things as barriers, but no one wants to be a dream killer and I think we allow some of these kids to dream too long.

Researcher: Why are teachers in low income, urban schools less likely to identify African American students into gifted studies programs?

Teacher 4: I do not think that there is a lessened likelihood of identification; maybe it is just difficult because of all the other fires teachers are putting out. If you have one solid, really good student then you are doing well. But these kids come to school with so many issues and you want the best for them, but at times that becomes difficult as well. If we could somehow improve the readiness of a lot of these students to excel then we would be so much better off than where we are now, but there also needs to be reinforcement from home that school is important. Teachers cannot be the only ones or way that tell these kids that.

Teacher 5

Researcher: I am now speaking with Teacher 5. Thank you for participating. If you would in your own words, paint a picture of the students at this school. What are their habits and behaviors?

Teacher 5: Most children around here are very playful. Some are focused. Others socialization is very big for them here. School and academics are not. On average, and we as teachers are everything to them. The teachers, the administrators are their everything to them. It’s almost like coming home to their real home a lot of times. Food wise, advice wise, so sometimes academics come last.

Researcher: If a child is going to stand out at this school typically how are they going to be different from the rest of the crowd?
Appendix D (continued)

Teacher 5: A lot of times when we get to know students, it is sad, but the ones that really stand out are the troublemakers. Not the ones who are getting a lot of awards outside of school, or are A and B students or are volunteering. But it would be the ones who are getting in trouble or always very playful or always in the hall.

Researcher: Do you see peer pressure as being a major factor here?

Teacher 5: I have seen peer pressure is a major factor definitely last year. We have had a lot of cases where they would listen to their peers a whole lot more than their parents in some cases. This year I have seen where the kids are more apt to report bullying. The parents are more involved with the bullying and if anything they report it much faster. A lot of time we as teachers may not know a whole lot of incidents that are happening on the hall because it is not happening in the classroom.

Researcher: Wow. Speaking about this particular school, what role do you see socioeconomic status playing in student’s education?

Teacher 5: I always say that environment is a major factor. I have seen some kids leave here and adapt to another environment. Environment is extremely important. The kids will adapt to whatever the environment offers. Some kids have come here from private school, and depending upon what type of private school. Depending upon what type of private school, this school maybe more advanced or way behind where they left off at their old school. We have seen where kids have left here, gone somewhere else, adapted to that environment, and done well. So whatever, the environment is that is what that child is going to be.

Researcher: So, how would you describe the environment here at this school?

Teacher 5: This is not a bad environment. I think the kids adapt to what we offer. If they are high expectations, then that is what they adapt to. If the expectations are mediocre or low, then that’s what they adapt to. They will meet the needs or the expectations.

Researcher: Very well put. Thinking about the children that you have serviced at this school, how would you describe their will or desire to succeed?

Teacher 5: I think all of the students have a will to succeed. I really have not encountered too many kids who do not have a will to succeed. I have seen
where some have given up a little bit more and not had as much motivation because they are frustrated. I have seen where everyone wants to be successful, everyone wants to be praised, everyone wants to be rubbed on the back and pushed. Pretty much you have to watch and see what you can pull out of them to motivate them to want to do better. But I have not seen where a lot of kids just want to give up.

Researcher: So, you would not say that the kids are not academically minded?

Teacher 5: No, no.

Researcher: Do you feel like poverty at this particular school has a significant impact on students' academically?

Teacher 5: Academically, I can say that I have seen where poverty may have played a factor. I say that because I can think of a particular student from last year that was very helpful, very smart, and the way that she articulated herself was just not great. So we worked with her. So every time she would speak, out of turn, we would correct that, and then she would say “Oh, I’m sorry.” I noticed that when I met the mother, the mother would speak just like the daughter. So I saw where it came from. So, once I started correcting her, and working with her, she would then go home she would work with her mother. And when I met mom we kind of talked about it and how the daughter would correct her. I think that a lot of times the kids only get what the parents have to offer, but in some cases whatever they get here they will take it back home. So, I think poverty has a lot to do with what they get at home in the way of social skills and behavior.

Researcher: What is your understanding of what it means to be gifted?

Teacher 5: My understanding for gifted is thinking outside of the box in the regular class setting. Mostly working at least one or two levels ahead, especially as it relates to reading or being able to express themselves verbally, maturity. Able to maintain themselves. For me, gifted has always been where I see where they are a level or two ahead of the others.

Researcher: What characteristics do you typically attribute to a child being potentially gifted?

Teacher 5: What I have seen with the students that come to my mind is that they are self-motivated, very competitive, perfectionist. They definitely one to be
successful. One student in particular she is gifted, she didn’t want to be, but she is.

Researcher: Why is that?

Teacher 5: She wanted to stay with her friends. I spoke to her mom about it. By the time the mom had gotten the notice it was too late. She always finished her work first in all of her classes here. She would wait or we would have to give her more work and in turn she would finish that as well.

Researcher: So she did not want to be seen as gifted because she would then be separated from her friends?

Teacher 5: Right, she did not want to be away from her friends.

Researcher: And why was it too late?

Teacher 5: I don’t remember exactly the reason, but the testing was going on during a certain window and she didn’t get her slip signed in time. And even today she is in advanced classes and I spoke with her teachers to really watch her because she has potential. They’ve noticed that she is always finished her work too. We have another young man, I think he is gifted, but it is his behavior that prevented home being placed there.

Researcher: How is his behavior preventing him from being tested?

Teacher 5: It has been very negative. In class, he cannot sit still and he will have many outbursts in class. If he gets frustrated, he will just get up and walk out of class. He would do a to things, but one thing I saw about him was that when you gave him some work he never wanted to feel like his work was not turned in. He always wanted to compete with the other young lady I mentioned earlier. Those two would compete. Right before he got in trouble last year, he ended up being a social science fair winner. And he worked hard on it because he said his dad was a smoker and that he wanted to be able to tell his dad the effects that the smoking was having on his body. He really wanted to learn more about tobacco and how it started. He really wanted to share it with his class.

Researcher: So, his behavior was being linked to his academics? And so whoever is in control of placement is holding off on him because of behavior?
Appendix D (continued)

Teacher 5: I don’t think they are holding off. I think what has happened is that people notice him, but he too doesn’t want others to see that side of him, especially the boys on the football team. They are not holding off it’s just what has happened to him is that he has been in trouble and has missed a lot of school. So upon his absences he has missed work, so when he returns he will need to make up work, he’ll have to stay on task. So, that part of his behavior has prevented him.

Researcher: How has his work been, even once he comes back?

Teacher 5: His work is pretty much inconsistently done. He may do it, he may not. The capability though is definitely there.

Researcher: So he was lacking that structure that school provided him in a sense?

Teacher 5: Yes. If he wanted to come in to school and do his work, then he could come in and do his work. If he felt like doing his work, then he could do it. If he didn’t feel like doing his work, then he might just get up and walk out of the class. He may end up getting suspended. He just had a whole lot of other things going on with him.

Researcher: Have you all ever considered just placing him temporarily in an advanced class?

Teacher 5: I think they did.

Researcher: How did that turn out?

Teacher 5: He was the same behavior. If he chooses to do the work, then he did it. If he didn’t then he walked out. That caused him to receive zeros or F’s.

Researcher: Where do you think he got his attitude towards the work?

Teacher 5: I’m not exactly sure because it really depended on whatever his mood was for that day.

Researcher: That’s perplexing. Let’s refocus. According to your experience, why would you say or what factors would you attribute to the underrepresentation of African Americans in gifted studies?

Teacher 5: Let me think. I want to say their peers. A lot of these kids put a lot of value in what their friends are doing. If their friends are not in the program
then they are not going to show a lot of interest. Then I would have to say to some extent teachers, especially in communities like this one, because we don’t have a lot of overzealous parents that are going to get in your face and knock down your door about getting into gifted. Most of them are more concerned with paying their bills; finding a job; and keeping a roof over their head. So, I guess, I would have to say parents too because they are not seeking out gifted for their kids. I feel like named everybody.

Researcher: So of the three factors you named: friends, teachers, and parents. How would you rank them?

Teacher 5: In that order. Because people don’t understand how important their friends are around this age. Then I’d say parents, then teachers.

Researcher: What behaviors do you believe your colleagues as indicators of giftedness in this particular school?

Teacher 5: I think about the same thing that I see. We will see a student who is quick to finish and it is done accurately. We will see completeness. They are self-motivated and they are articulate. They are high achievers and they are positive in helping their peers achieve as well.

Researcher: What factors do you think influence teachers and their recommendation to the gifted studies program? Like, what influences your recommendations?

Teacher 5: Grades. Grades are really important. The student should be doing well in their on level class in order to be considered for gifted because that is supposed to be more advanced material, right? So, if the child has good grades then I will recommend them.

Researcher: So grades influence you? Anything else, like, I have heard the child’s looks or behavior or attitude?

Teacher 5: Their looks? That’s ridiculous. No, I just keep it simple and if I think the child will benefit from participation then I will recommend them. Most teachers probably consider the child who is always finished with their work first or comes in with really well constructed projects.

Researcher: Ok. Have you ever yourself taught a gifted class?

Teacher 5: No.
Appendix D (continued)

Researcher: What information or training have you received from the gifted department here?

Teacher 5: No. Nothing. We don’t have necessarily what we call gifted class anymore. One thing I liked about the gifted class is that they are more independent. And they are able to function on that level and some of these kids cannot function on an independent level. We have not received a whole lot from the gifted area.

Researcher: So, when you are going through the CISS process, the multiple criteria process, when you are looking at the different domains, what activities or projects do you do that sort of helps you to potentially identify students for screening?

Teacher 5: I think a lot of ways I collect information is when we present or have to do presentations. As we are preparing, I am watching to see who are the leaders in the group. I am watching to see how well they are working on the work, how dedicated they are, and what feedback they are giving their partners. I am also paying attention to their actions outside of the classroom. How are they interacting with others? How do they interact with their peers? Their level of maturity. Are they mature or not. I know that they are kids and I know that they are going to be playful at times, but at the same time are they still achieving outside of the classroom by getting involved in other activities, clubs. All of that is a factor for the CISS form.

Researcher: Do you use differentiated instruction?

Teacher 5: We do.

Researcher: What are some examples?

Teacher 5: A lot of times I like to carrousel where they are going to different groups and doing different activities. In the larger group setting, where each one has a responsibility and they have to present at the end. When I say present, they have to for example make an oral presentation where they are pretending to be another character or they are from another country. They have to provide feedback on what they learned according to the skill.

Researcher: Have these differentiated instructional strategies ever help you take into consideration a student for the gifted identification process?
Teacher 5: Yes! I try to include an activity for all the levels. I try to see how the students are responding to the different types of activities. That way I can process why they are in certain groups. I will just say it; I see why certain group members are in certain groups because they have these hidden talents. For example, I have a lot of singers. So I have discovered a lot of hidden talents and it is during these activities that these hidden talents and gifts come out.

Researcher: Thinking about the students, and looking for your opinion as a teacher, do you see cultural factors playing a role in the African American students’ level of participation in the gifted studies program?

Teacher 5: In terms of the culture, the only thing that I can say about the culture is that when they get home that it is no longer about academics. It is on something else. So, I don’t really see where it plays a huge factor, except where they bring the mentality to the school. I think socially is the main problems. I think that it is one here because while we are a big school, we do not have a lot of kids in the gifted and talented program. We have very few according to the population of the school. Socially, I think is one reason why a lot of students do not want to be identified as gifted. They prefer to stay in that main setting and not be labeled as a TAG student. Socially their peers are very meaningful for them. There needs to be more research on getting more African American students in gifted because a lot of them do not really realize what they are missing.

Researcher: Wow! I saw that when I reviewed your data. Do you think your colleagues take it seriously? Do you feel like students are properly identified?

Teacher 5: I think so. I think it really should not take as long as it does to get to the CISS process. Because a lot of time we are waiting on the CISS process in order to give the TAG teachers this information because we really want to get these kids where they need to be.

Researcher: That is something that I heard a lot. Well, I will conclude taping at this point. Thank you!
Teacher 6

Researcher: For the purposes of this interview, I will be referring to you as Teacher 6 if or when necessary. I am going to begin with the first question: Paint a picture of the average child at this school. What are their behaviors/habits in the classroom?

Teacher 6: On average the students, other than being extremely talkative, are fairly well behaved. The classroom habits as relates to learning are affected because of the excessive amounts of sidebar conversations. A lot of these kids are coming from single parent homes to with limited education too.

Researcher: That is interesting. How do children tend to stand out at this school?

Teacher 6: Students tend to stand out in their extracurricular activities. This is the case because these are things that they are very excited about doing. Not too many of them get the opportunity to show off their academic ability except maybe at Honor’s Day or something.

Researcher: What made you say that area, extracurricular, first?

Teacher 6: Academics does not seem to be on the forefront of students minds. And on the morning announcements that is what gets mentioned much more often than academic things. I don’t even know if we have any academic competitions to be honest with you.

Researcher: Do you think peer pressure is a major factor?

Teacher 6: Peer pressure is a major factor at the school. Students seem to feel the need to belong in some way. A lot of the students, because they want to belong, are displaying negative behaviors in order to feel like they fit in with other students. They seem to think that if they misbehave that their peers view them as being "cool".

Researcher: Wow. That is something. In your opinion, what role does socioeconomic status play in a child's education?

Teacher 6: I think socioeconomic status plays an integral role in children's education. Exposure or having the ability to provide the basic necessities to children helps mold them into more well-rounded individuals. Teachers and the schools can only go so far in their attempt to provide diverse opportunities for students.
Appendix D (continued)

Researcher: Thinking about the students that you have serviced or taught at this school, how would you describe the average students' will to succeed?

Teacher 6: On average, I think that our students will to succeed is very low. They don't get it to me. It seems like some of them don't want to get it. Like they could care less. If they have a will to succeed, it is not in the classroom. They want that attention from their peers, not from their teachers.

Researcher: Ok. What factors do you believe contribute to this lack of desire or will to succeed?

Teacher 6: A lot of our student's parents' mentalities are not conducive to ensuring that their children are intellectually prepared for life. They blame teachers for any academic deficiencies that their children have rather than acting as a partner with the teacher to elicit change in their children. Teachers can be miracle workers, but we can't do it by ourselves.

Researcher: So you do not feel like there is a true partnership between you, as a teacher, and the home?

Teacher 6: No! Absolutely not. If I call home the parent is more likely to question me and try to find fault with what I have done than focus on the negative behavior being exhibited by the child. It's unbelievable at times!

Researcher: At this school, what do you see as potential limitations to students' success?

Teacher 6: The lack of parental involvement is a huge issue at our school. In the school environment, the lack of technological resources in every classroom limits the degree to which instruction can be delivered. A lot more could be done to entice these kids, but we simply do not have the resource in most cases.

Researcher: Do you believe poverty makes a significant impact on a student's success or failure?

Teacher 6: Not in all cases. Students make the final decision about the direction of their lives. Some make the choice to continue the cycle of poverty by not utilizing the educational opportunities that they are given; while others
choose to take control of their own futures by working hard and defying the odds and becoming successful adults.

Researcher: What about at your school? Do you see poverty playing a major role in these students’ lives?

Teacher 6: Student always have a choice. And I think a lot of these students here choose otherwise because they do not know or see any better. So many of their stories are a like that I wonder if some of them really have a grasp of the financial situation that they are in comparison to other kids on the other side of town. I mean, it’s like they have internalized some things are just their ‘norm’ in a way. It’s different.

Researcher: Do you see poverty making a difference in the classroom? Do you have any examples?

Teacher 6: It does to a certain degree. Students whose parents don’t have the financial means to provide the most basic school supplies struggle because they have to ask for supplies from others often which causes other students and even teacher to question their academic fortitude. I see it what these kids have been exposed to. They have been a lot of places like Six Flags or White Waters. Those places don’t have a lot of educational value directly, and many of these kids have not really travelled outside of metro Atlanta or have seen how the other side lives except for what they see on television.

Researcher: What is your understanding of what it means to be gifted?

Teacher 6: It is my opinion that a gifted student is a well-rounded students. Those that are strong academically, creative, artistic, and possess the ability to display higher order thinking skills.

Researcher: What are some of the behaviors that you expect from a gifted student?

Constantly has their hand up and adding to the discussion in class. This student is also very mature and may not really have the sense of humor like those of their age group. I just sort of see them as having this extra sense of self because they are so mature. Also, very determined to accomplish a goal, I do not really envision them as being slackers.
Appendix D (continued)

Researcher: What role, if any, do you think culture plays in placing economically disadvantaged students in gifted studies programs?

Teacher 6: For a lot of these kids, it messes them up. They are too busy trying to live up to some unknown standard that is not even realistic for a lot of them. It seems to me that they get a lot of their ideology from other wayward peers or even worse, television.

Researcher: What do you mean by unknown standard?

Teacher 6: Maybe I should say that they want those images that they see in like the rap videos. They want to be “the boss”. They want all of the materialistic things they see on the television without any recognition of the hard work that it takes to get there because all they hear about or know is the outcome. In their minds, I sell some drugs; make an album or two; get some women in a video; and buy some absurdly expensive car. Never mind the countless hours writing the song, meeting about the song, or time in the studio making and producing the song. Let’s not even talk about the effort to get a record label or contract. They just see the end result. Being “the boss” is more than being in front of the camera in front of a rented house and a leased luxury automobile.

Researcher: Well said, Teacher 6. I know a lot about that branding in the music industry and it is not an easy road.

Teacher 6: If I could get these kids to put that kind of grind in their work, they’d all be Level 3 by the end of the school year!

Researcher: Ok! Right! Let’s move on to the next question. What factors do you think bar or prevent African American students from being considered for gifted studies at this school?

Teacher 6: It’s the students’ fault in many cases because some simply are ambivalent to the educational process. They don’t care.

Researcher: What factors do you think influence teacher recommendations in this school?

Teacher 6: Who the parents are and how the child behaves.

Researcher: Please explain.
If the parent is the type to stay in your face about assignments and projects then I think that motivates teachers a little bit more to recommend the child. And when I say the child’s behavior, I am referring to is the child involved in clubs and activities around school and does well in the class. I already see some kids in my room now that I am going to recommend because they are honest to God good kids.

So, if a kid is considered to be “good” and does their work then you are more likely to recommend them to gifted studies?

Probably. It’s a rarity to see a kid around here with all the components: academically sound, socially appropriate, and just a good all-around kid.

Doesn’t that sound like what we want from the average child?

It does, but when you are not dealing with average children your results are going to be different.

What about the kid with behavior problems but does his or her work?

I guess at that point there are probably other things that I will look at, like is this kid doing well on the checkpoints testing or clearly has a grasp of the material that is very mature for their age.

So basically, behavior can exclude a kid from even the recommendation process here?

I guess so. Being in gifted is a privilege and with that comes a need for a higher maturity level.

All right. Next question: do you use differentiated instruction in your classroom?

Yes, I try to.

Has it ever helped you to potentially identify a student for the gifted and talented program?

I never really thought about it in those terms, so I will have to say I do not know. It has helped me to discover talents that I did not know students had, like the ability to draw or sing. Something like that, but I’ve never really thought about it in terms like that.
Appendix D (continued)

Are there any factors you feel that contribute to their being an underrepresentation of African American students in gifted studies?

Teacher 6: The students don’t see that as being cool or socially acceptable, to be smart. It’s not a priority. If they don’t hear it from their friends, then it almost doesn’t even matter to them.

Researcher: So, would you say that it is not acceptable by their peers or socially acceptable? I’m trying to make a clear delineation.

Teacher 6: I would say that it is their friends and in saying that I think it is just not socially acceptable. Their friends or the kids in their classrooms.

Researcher: So friends are a reason why a lot of African American kids are not in gifted studies programs?

Teacher 6: Yes, I think that in communities like this one, it is ok to not know something. Kids tease the ones that always has their hands up in class. And then you see it get to the point where a lot of times that child doesn’t have really any other friends besides maybe the one or two other kids that are on point with their work.

Researcher: So in a low income area you believe that these kids think it is ok to basically be dumb?

Teacher 6: Yes.

Researcher: Wow. Ok. Do you believe the students here even want to participate in the gifted studies?

Teacher 6: I have seen some that I thought were gifted, but they weren’t taking the right kind of class or something. It didn’t seem fair, but I also think a lot of the teachers have to raise their expectation level too. Sometimes the teachers get caught up in the mentality of the kids and we lose focus by not pushing the ones that are pushable and can do better but choose otherwise.

Researcher: Great point. What factors then do you think prevent teachers from recommending students to the gifted studies program?
Appendix D (continued)

Teacher 6: Like I said, a lot of the teachers take on the if you don’t care, then I don’t care in a lot of instances. And then some of these teachers are so out of touch with some of these kids’ realisties that they overlook certain things

Researcher: Certain things like what?

Teacher 6: Getting tripped on the small things. If a child doesn’t have something, then get it for them if you truly believe in the child. What is it going to cost you? I’d rather spend $25 on school supplies than high blood pressure medication stressing myself out over a ten cent pencil any day of the week. And some teachers just want to come in, do their job, and move on to what is going on in their lives. Some still do a good job, but the good doesn’t always outweigh the bad.

Researcher: Do you think a lot of teachers did not participate in the CISS process?

Teacher 6: The what process?

Researcher: The CISS process is the multiple criteria process where teachers can make recommendations for the gifted department.

Teacher 6: Oh, ok. I know what that is. I filled it out last year, but when I went around to some of my other colleagues it was challenging because they thought that it was more for the academic teachers than our department. But there is a lot of paperwork teachers have to do and maybe it slipped many of their minds. I can’t really speak for why others did something or did not do it. I would like to think they have better intentions, but when you have a lot of students it can get a little hectic. I know it can.

Researcher: What factors do you think influence teacher choice and identification of potentially gifted students?

Teacher 6: Wow. I don’t know. I think maybe the grades in the class for a student. If a student seems to just be knocking things out of the box then that might make that teacher more inclined to recommend them.

Researcher: Do you think the teachers have low expectations or don’t care? Or like, they don’t think the kids cannot do the work or something?

Teacher 6: It is more common for you to hear a teacher complain about the kids who are not doing their work or are not getting the work that needs to be done than about how some kid is whizzing through the material. I think they
care, but when you have so many that need the basics, the fundamentals, that becomes your focus.

Researcher: So you don’t think an exceptional child will stand out?

Teacher 6: I think they will stand out, but it all depends on the teacher. They know that child can do so it is almost like they do not worry about the student. That child will probably be put to work helping other students.

Researcher: How would you change the identification process for potentially gifted students?

Teacher 6: If I knew I would tell you. I know that the admittance standards are high as they need to be. I am speaking as someone who has gone through the process with their own child. And if he had not been admitted I would be concerned because I see what goes on in a lot of classrooms with potential kids. But I am not sure if I agree with the testing because a lot of these kids could probably do the work, but a test serves as a barrier or their class load prevents them from being considered. It’s not fair, but it seems like there are more things to keep them out then to get them in. I think in some of these kids we would see a big difference in their attitude towards school if someone challenged them or they were around other kids who want more out of life.

Researcher: Well, I thank you for responses. And I am going to conclude recording at this point.

Teacher 8

Researcher: Paint a picture of the average child at this school. What are their behaviors/habits in the classroom?

Teacher 8: The average student at this school is of African American descent, coming from a low to moderate socioeconomic background. Many of the students come from single parent homes with multiple siblings. As a result of their backgrounds, several students at the school are distracted when in school. They often lack focus and fail to do assignments. The community has a high transient population; therefore, student achievement is low in some areas due to a lack of consistency in academics. These stressors are also manifested in students' acting out behavior.

Researcher: How do children tend to stand out at this school?
Appendix D (continued)

Teacher 8: Generally, the students who stand out at McNair are those who are talented in various areas including the arts or athletics. However, several students are also recognized positively for their test scores and GPAs.

Researcher: Why did you pick that arena?

Teacher 8: Rather than focus on the negative, I try to give credit to those students who excel in academics as well as other areas in school.

Researcher: With that being said, is peer pressure a major factor here at your school? How so?

Teacher 8: I don't think peer pressure has as much of an impact on students as does societal and cultural pressures.

Researcher: When you say societal and cultural pressures, what do you mean? Can you be clearer or give me examples?

Teacher 8: Yes. In the African American community, there are some behaviors that are rewarded or given attention that really should not. For instance, a boy is considered to be a man if he exhibits behaviors like fighting or getting in trouble at school. Most of these kids look to those kids for social cues or how they should manipulate the system. I think most of these kids are good kids but if no one at your home is doing anything with their life, then where is your motivation, you know what I am saying? I mean, these kids rather be a thug and think gun play is cool than getting an education and being able to provide for their family. And I see it with the boys the most. Most of them rather give into what society says they should be like then seek their own self within themselves. These girls can be fast and participating in sexual activity before they are even mature enough to handle the repercussions for their actions.

Researcher: Do you think this impacts a child’s education here?

Teacher 8: Definitely because these kids do not value education in a lot of respects. They think that they can just go out into the world and do the same silly antics that they do in the classroom and everything is going to be ok. They haven’t really processed that a lot of the issues that they are facing at home are because of poor decisions their parents made. And instead of their parents talking to them, discussing with them their poor choices these
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kids just continue to go down the same path like its an epidemic or something.

Researcher: What would you say is their attitude towards the gifted program?

Teacher 8: Really the real troublemakers around those kids alone because they are in a completely different league. Some of the kids I would say have a curiosity but because they know their friends don’t have a desire to be a part of the program than they really don’t fully realize their own potential. The ones that come from a strong family unit or mom understands that this is her child’s ticket out of a rough neighborhood will knock the doors down to get their kid in, but for the most part it’s like those kids are in a whole other world than what is going on most of the general education classrooms.

Researcher: In your opinion, what role does socioeconomic status play in a child's education?

Teacher 8: I find that low socioeconomic status usually comes with increased stressed and/or lack of parent involvement. Therefore, students coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds usually don't do the best in school. On the other hand, when families have less to worry about financially, they can give attention to other essential aspects of life, including education.

Researcher: Thinking about the students that you have serviced at this school, how would you describe the average students' will to succeed?

Teacher 8: I believe that at least 80-85% of students at this school have a strong desire to succeed. However, their motives vary. Many of those students are determined to succeed because they seek material the things that come with wealth. They desire material things they see in the media, and they seek the money and fame to purchase those items that are sometimes associated with success.

Researcher: What factors do you believe contribute to this desire to succeed for the kids here? I mean, do you see them putting education and success together?

Teacher 8: Some of them do because some of them have processed what is going on in their home and are tired of having to go without. Putting education and
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success together, I don't think in all cases they have. It's still a work in process so to speak.

Researcher: At this school, what do you see as potential limitations to students' success?

Teacher 8: Poor parental involvement and motives by the students. Some of these kids are already out there on the streets quote on, quote off making money. Illegally no doubt, but in their minds they have succeeded by just having a few dollars in their pocket.

Researcher: Do you believe poverty makes a significant impact on a student's success or failure? How so?

Teacher 8: I think it makes a significant impact because when students come in without basic needs or are worried about where they are going to sleep at night, then they are not thinking about anything you are saying in front of the classroom. Now some are determined to not let their home life interfere with their school life, but very few have reached that level of maturity. I think that poverty trips some kids up in life. Some learn how to get up; dust themselves off; and keep on going. Others get stuck on the ground.

Researcher: Does poverty make a difference in the classroom? How so?

Teacher 8: Students are sometimes affected by a lack of resources and become discouraged. This is manifested in their grades and lack of academic achievement. However, some students use their impoverished backgrounds as motivation.

Researcher: What is your understanding of what it means to be gifted?

Teacher 8: Being gifted means having the ability to understand and see concepts and processes differently than most people. As a result of having a different than normal perception, gifted people are more prone to explore and take risks without the fear of failing at whatever they are trying.

Researcher: What characteristics/behaviors do you believe a gifted student possesses?

Teacher 8: Just a determination that sort of makes them stick out from the rest. I think a really strong work ethic. I know mental ability plays a role in all of it, but sometimes I think they just see things differently or interpret things
differently. I also think they are a little more mature than the other students.

Researcher: What does this look like in the classroom to you?

Teacher 8: In the classroom, maybe that kid that is always going above and beyond the classwork or finished early in comparison to the other kids. But I also think about some of my lazy kids who can put things together, but won’t write a lick of it down on a piece of paper. I think they are geniuses in a way because they don’t study and I know they don’t study but can ace a test!

Researcher: What behaviors do you think teachers here believe are exhibited in gifted students?

Teacher 8: The same thing. I think they look for the kids who are always doing their work or are very conscientious about their work.

Researcher: Do you know anything about gifted testing? Or how students get into the gifted program?

Teacher 8: I just know that kids are tested. Now what tests they take, I don’t know. Getting into gifted I think they look at the CRCT scores and teacher recommendations.

Researcher: What about gifted strategies?

Teacher 8: I know they exist and I have tried a couple of them, but it was a little difficult for the group that I tried it out with. I think it sort of takes some adjusting to for the kids. I liked it as a professional because I didn’t feel like I was spoon feeding the kids, but most of them wanted to sit back and go into cruise control.

Researcher: Did you see or notice any kids kind of respond to the strategy when you did try it? Like maybe someone you would recommend when you had the chance?

Teacher 8: Not really. Most of them were like “Don’t try that again”. I think if maybe I had a better understanding of the strategy that may have helped. But no, I didn’t really see anyone like really into it like that. Maybe it was me.
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Researcher: What about the identification process? Are you familiar with anything dealing with that?

Teacher 8: I'm not really familiar with it. In the Spring we complete a checklist on student behavior but besides that we really do not have any other input. I mean, I have asked my gifted chair about how to get kids in and I was told that I had to wait for the spring for teacher recommendations. It's rare that I see kids moved to gifted from general education.

Researcher: I noticed at your school quite a few teachers did not complete the checklist, why is that?

Teacher 8: That doesn't surprise me, for real. Some of these teachers don't care because it doesn't impact them directly. Don't get me wrong we have some teachers that care, but we also have a lot that do not care. No one wants to see their good kids go to someone else. And then I think that a lot of the students that would be considered for gifted are typically the kids that the teachers have bonded with or are doing well in their class and the teacher doesn't want to see them go anywhere. I mean, it's messed up, but it's the truth.

Researcher: What about what's best for the child?

Teacher 8: I know it sounds unprofessional, but there are no penalties for not filling out the checklist. And so people see it as unnecessary paperwork. And we have enough of that going on without adding onto the pile for something most of the teachers probably do not feel will really happen for most of these kids. Now if there are some kids that might be good potential, I think they are recommended but to do it for every child seems cumbersome sometimes.

Researcher: Do you think the teachers feel as though the kids can handle the work?

Teacher 8: Around here? Maybe. That's hard to say because I see a lot of kids that can probably handle the work but will never get pass the tests that they administer. I have some students who right now would probably do well or need to get out of the environment that is in general education just to spread their wings, but I seriously doubt that many of them could do well enough on the tests to gain admittance if that makes sense.
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Researcher: What support, if any, have you received from the gifted program here at your school?

Teacher 8: A little here and there. And that’s just in passing or when we are made to sit down in curriculum meetings. I think they are stretched thin enough with teaching all of the extra sections that it is sort of hard to get a hold of them in general.

Researcher: According to your experience, what factors do you believe contribute to the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted studies programs?

Teacher 8: I would have to go back to the societal pressures and what society makes them think they want to be, a rapper, a ball player. I think too many of our kids, African Americans, are focused on the materialistic things like money, cars, and a big house. The kids are not going after things because that is what they want to do but because of what they think it will bring them.

Researcher: Would your opinion change if I narrowed the focus to economically disadvantaged African American students?

Teacher 8: I think it happens more so with poor African Americans. From my experience, they tend to be the ones who want the designer labels the most because they want to prove that they are just as cool or hip or whatever as the next kid. Unfortunately, being smart for many just doesn’t fit into that equation. Many of the kids here are trapped in the illusion of wealth.

Researcher: Ok. Explain.

Teacher 8: What’s the ball player’s name that’s going through the divorce? Got his number as the last name.

Researcher: Ochocinco.

Teacher 8: Yes, Ochocinco.ChadOchocinco.

Researcher: I had to think there for a second.

Teacher 8: Yes, him. Well, look at how he is going through foreclosure and all this other stuff. These kids don’t hear about that or process how this made basically has squandered millions of dollars and has kids all over the
place. They see the same type of lifestyle aspiration in their own homes but don’t even realize that it’s happening. Unfortunately, they don’t hear about or know the African American doctors and lawyers and what not that are doing just as well as these ball players, if not better. They take what they see on television as the gospel. So, therefore; education is not of value or importance to them.

Researcher: Ok. Thank you for bringing that full circle. What role, if any, in your opinion do you think culture plays in finding African American students for gifted programs?

Teacher 8: It plays a huge one because what will really get them a lot of the places that they want to be, like education and a good work ethic, they see as being white or homosexual. I hear kids calling each other all kinds of derogatory names because a kid made a good grade on a quiz or test. Crazy, right? These kids think that hype of being a thug is really the ticket. You would be surprised at how many of these kids probably have more respect for one of their family members who has been to jail than one that at least completed high school. So it trickles down into what we see in the classroom.

Researcher: Speaking of the classroom, do you use differentiated instruction in your classroom?

Teacher 8: Yes, most of the time.

Researcher: Do you think it has ever helped you to nominate a student for gifted studies

Teacher 8: In conjunction with other things, yes.

Researcher: Other things like-

Teacher 8: Probably behavior that I see in the classroom. Does the child do their work? Does the child participate? How well does the child complete their assignments? I think all of that has to go together.

Researcher: But, would say that differentiated instruction may have opened up a possibility in a student that you did not necessarily see before?

Teacher 8: It may have. I can’t say for sure if I have to say just that one thing.
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Researcher: All right. At this school, what factors do you think bar or prevent students from being considered for gifted studies? Anything in particular?

Teacher 8: Each other. Like crabs in a bucket. Most of them are too scared to really step outside of what is becoming their norm of not achieving or should I say underachieving. And the ones that are willing have to have a strong back because they are going to catch it from some of the other kids. Now I think at the same time some of these kids once they are in the program probably do well and find a new group of friends, but that transition can be kind of rough. And I have seen some silly parents take their kids out of the gifted program because they are tired of them coming home and complaining about not seeing all of their friends. To me, it’s crazy, I know I could not have done that as a young one, but these parents dialogue with these kids like they are one of them, like an adult.

Researcher: What factors do you believe influence teacher’s recommendations?

Teacher 8: Without a doubt, behavior in the classroom! That’s important. That is who comes to mind when they are going through the recommendation process. And then who does well on their assignments and classwork. Maybe if the teacher remembers that the child won an award for like the Social Studies Fair or something.

Researcher: Basically, then it is behavior then grades and then any scholastic awards?

Teacher 8: That’s hard though with the academic awards because we only do an awards ceremony once a semester, I think. I can’t remember. I know there’s a big one at the end of the year and only the kids that are receiving an award are able to participate.

Researcher: Do you think the students here want to participate in gifted studies?

Teacher 8: To a degree maybe, but for a lot it’s not on the top of their list of things to do at school.

Researcher: Does this make it harder, makes no difference, or makes it easier to identify potentially gifted African American students? Especially economically disadvantaged African American students?

Teacher 8: In some mays I think it is harder because I believe a lot of the test that we administer and call standardized are biased. I think they don’t take everyone’s culture or experience level into account on the tests. It’s almost like you don’t think other cultures have their own way of thinking or can
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be creative. I think there are a lot of brothers and sisters right here in
Atlanta that are creative or inventive when I see how some of them hustle
for a dollar or two. I mean even the things that are selling can be
downright creative and you can’t tell me that at some point that they did
not show potential to somebody’s teacher.

Researcher: As a teacher, would you say that culture impacts a students’ behavior?
How so?

Teacher 8: Of course I do. That where these kids learn what’s acceptable or not.
Whatever they see others like them is their culture. So it has a strong
impact on the decisions that they make. In this community, too many of
the kids are focused on the right here, right now money and not looking at
it from a longer term perspective. But then that’s probably what they hear
at home and parents may not even plan out as far as say others.

Researcher: Who are you referring to when you say others?

Teacher 8: Maybe those in a middle class or wealthier family.

Researcher: Ok, thanks. Look and thinking about your classroom. How often do you
use differentiated instruction in your classroom?

Teacher 8: I use it probably about once a week. It all depends on how my curriculum
mapping is going and where I need to be.

Researcher: Outside of differentiated instruction, how else do students explore their
personal interests in your class?

Teacher 8: Hmmmm. I don’t know, maybe through conversations with the kids. But
that’s about it. I mean we have to focus on the curriculum now more than
ever with Common Core that it becomes hard to integrate different
subjects or really allow students to explore their own personal interests at
times.

Researcher: Has differentiated instruction ever assisted you in considering a child for
gifted studies?

Teacher 8: I think it helped me once when I had kids responding to a journal entry
and this one girl drew this elaborate drawing. I mean it was beautiful. And
when she got up and I told her to explain the picture, her whole
explanation was like nothing that I had ever heard before. When I asked
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her why she didn’t write what she said down, but she was like that she sees things in pictures and better explains things that way than through words. It was more comfortable for her, I guess. But that is rare. However, I can see how it could help because children express themselves differently.

Researcher: Well, thank you for all of your input. I am going to end the recording now.

Teacher 10

Researcher: I am going to begin recording now and I will refer to you when necessary as Teacher 10, ok. That is just to protect your identity in the recording process. Paint a picture of the average child at this school. What are their behaviors/habits in the classroom?

Teacher 10: Man, that is easy! Ok. The average child at McNair is a low socioeconomic student who has the capability to compete with high socioeconomic students academically, but the slight majority chooses to follow an image of negativity portrayed by an entertainer. Their behavior can be considered respectful, but at times disrespectful depending on who you are ethnically and culturally. The majority of our students are lazy by any stretch of the imagination. Those students will use any excuse to get out the classroom or began their work after prompted by a teacher multiple times.

Researcher: How do children tend to stand out at this school?

Teacher 10: Most of our students are African-American, so they tend to standout with their peers by wearing what they consider expensive clothing and shoes and/or with behavior that has been witnessed in their home environment or neighborhood. African-Americans are an image based ethnic group so most of our people feel more comfortable with wearing clothing and/or shoes that are not of cheap American price while owning, for some, reliable transportation, housing, food, etc. are secondary issues. Grades are important to some students at the end of the semester because it signifies if they have a chance to be promoted or retained in that particular grade level. In my personal opinion, most students who stand out at here are because of grades have a parental structure at their household who does not allow for failure and has severe consequence if such a thing happened.
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Researcher: Why did you pick that arena?

Teacher 10: That’s who I hear from. Parents that want straight A’s and that’s not a lot of them. Most of them just want their kid to go on to the next grade without caring about what the kid knows because that is what they know, grades. That’s the bottom line.

Researcher: Is peer pressure a major factor? How so?

Teacher 10: Peer pressure is factor because some students try to impress others by behaving negatively. We usually have one or two students in a class who feel pressured to impress their peers because they would not be as popular if they did not perform their service. Usually this type attention usually fazes out as time goes along. Students also feel pressed to fight other students by their friends. Their associates will give information or statements to encourage that person to fight someone else and dare not a student look weak in front of their friends.

Researcher: In your opinion, what role does socioeconomic status play in a child’s education?

Teacher 10: It plays a significant one. Mainly because if parents don’t know what to expose their kid to, then the kid comes in at a disadvantage. Most of the parents in this are just trying to survive and do not know how to support the education that their kid is receiving by taking them to different places or encouraging them to use the skills that they are learning in school. I think the role comes primarily from the parent more so than the issue playing out at school.

Researcher: Thinking about the students that you have serviced at this school, how would you describe the average students’ will to succeed?

Teacher 10: First, you have to define what success is to these kids. Some of these kids do not even know how to reach or plan for goals. For most of them that’s having the latest clothes or designer things that are typically fake anyway. Many of them do not understand how education plays a significant role in their future. They just see these ignorant rappers on television and that’s all they know or think success is. They don’t think about what the judges on the judge shows had to go through to get where they are on t.v., just what the latest rapper thinks is important.
Researcher: What factors do you believe contribute to this lack of/need to succeed?

Teacher 10: Whatever they see on television is what is important to them around here. You don’t see rappers rapping about staying in school or getting advanced degrees. They see gold chains, gold teeth, and a car with rims as success, not thinking about how they are going to pay their bills or where their next meal is going to come from because many of them are on public assistance.

Researcher: At this school, what do you see as potential limitations to students’ success?

Teacher 10: The mentality of the community mainly. Because many of these students will listen to their homeboys on the street and see them doing nothing and think it is ok. It’s almost like the more you struggle the better you look to others.

Researcher: Do you believe poverty makes a significant impact on a student’s success or failure? How so?

Teacher 10: You would think it does, but when you are surrounded by others that are going through many of the same things that you are, then it becomes your normal. It’s normal for them to go without or not have enough money to get things so in their mind that’s how everybody kind of lives.

Researcher: Does poverty make a difference in the classroom? How so?

Teacher 10: Yes, because from my standpoint I see the road many of these kids are going down and are doing nothing about it. They think that just having a job is fine but don’t know how to think or look at the bigger picture. Many of them come in with handicaps like not being ready to learn or it being instilled in them that learning is important. Parents are so busy trying to make ends meet that building a future for their kids takes a backseat. I have some parents that are doing better than others, but are focusing so much on what they can give a child materialistically then how the child is growing up academically and mentally.

Researcher: What is your understanding of what it means to be gifted?

Teacher 10: You are basically smarter than the average bear. You can answer all of the questions in class and pick up on things fairly easy. I just think they are
the smart kids who do all of their work and in my classroom that’s hard to see or find in some of these jokers. I think the potential is there, but so many of them are wrapped up in the wrong things. Some of these kids that are dealing drugs are real smart, but they choose to use their talents for bad and not the right things. I don’t know sometimes.

Researcher: What characteristics or behaviors do you believe a gifted student possesses?

Teacher 10: Hmph. Just a kid that does all of their work and wants to do something with themselves. I see so many kids that are fine doing what everybody else does that it almost is hard to see if any of them are actually gifted. Do they have potential? Of course! Do I ever see it? Nope!

Researcher: What does this look like in the classroom to you?

Teacher 10: It’s the kid that will probably rive a teacher crazy. He does all of his work early and wants to do even more work sometimes. I think it is the kid that has his head up first and knows the answer before the other kids figure out what is even going on in the classroom.

Researcher: In your opinion, are there other arenas within this school that allow you to see potential giftedness in a student?

Teacher 10: Not really. I mean, if the kid is good at sports or something then maybe there. But academically speaking, there are not really a lot of academic extracurricular activities that support kids who really want to learn. It seems like there is more of a focus on the kids who do not want to learn or who have a problem with learning.

Researcher: What behaviors do teachers believe are exhibited in gifted students?

Teacher 10: Around here, that probably refers to the kid who completes their projects on time and does their work in the classroom. Not too many teachers around here probably see that so when they do that want to latch on to the kid.

Researcher: Do you think they would refer them for gifted testing when they could make recommendations?

Teacher 10: Probably not because they want those kids in their classroom to help out their test scores. It’s like staking claim on something that was never really
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yours or something that you really contributed to but yet you want to take all of the credit for getting the kid there some kind of way.

Researcher: Tell me what you know about gifted testing. What do you know about the process?

Teacher10: To be honest with you, not a lot. I just wait to see who is going to be tested and sometimes I laugh at the names that appear because I may have had them and think to myself what were some of these teachers thinking.

Researcher: So do you know any of the ways that a child can be recommended for testing?

Teacher 10: Nope. I just know they give me a checklist.

Researcher: Have you ever completed the checklist?

Teacher 10: I think so. But I rarely see any of the behaviors in the class so I might put something down and that’s it.

Researcher: What about gifted strategies?

Teacher 10: No clue. Right now the focus is on the Common Core training and no one really has time to take in more information because the Common Core is so much right now and it’s occupying everybody’s time, you know.

Researcher: What support, if any, have you received from the gifted program here at your school?

Teacher 10: None really. Every now and then I might conference with the gifted math teacher to see what she is doing, but I have never really received any guidance from the department. I don’t think we have ever really collaborated because the math skills of most of my kids are so low, you know. Then at the beginning of the year some of the students who had really high CRCT scores are pulled and placed in the Advanced math class. But outside of that not really anything from the gifted department in the way of training besides how to fill out that checklist.

Researcher: According to your experience, what factors do you believe contribute to the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted studies programs?
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Teacher 10: Probably the kids' mentality. They don’t want to associate with anything that is going to make them look smart or different from the other kids. I hear too many times it makes them look gay. They think that if the other kids see them as being smart or something then they won’t be able to hang out with their friends anymore. I tell them if they won’t hang out with you because of class then that really wasn’t your friend to begin with. Sometimes they get it, sometimes they don’t.

Researcher: So do you attribute it the way they think or to their friends?

Teacher 10: What their friends think of them.

Researcher: Anything else? Any other factors that you would say causes less African Americans to participate in gifted studies programs?

Teacher 10: Maybe the tests that they give. I have seen some really good kids get tested and not make it. I don’t know much about the scores or anything, but I have a theory. Well, I’m not going to go into all of that.

Researcher: No, please. This is what my study is all about. What you, the teacher, perceive to be the problem with less African Americans being in gifted studies.

Teacher 10: My theory is: the tests ask questions that these kids don’t know anything about. A lot of times these kids have not been exposed or know about the things that are on the test. I say that because I have had kids bomb the CRCT and when I see what domains they mess up in, I know they know the material. I get them to do the problem and they can do it, get them on the test and they fail.

Researcher: Is it the lingo or the actual material?

Teacher 10: I think it is how the tests are worded. You see- in class I speak so that the kids can understand because I am trying to get the material across to them. Even when we go over practice tests I still have to break the language down for them to see what the question is asking.

Researcher: But you can’t do that on the test, so why not teach like that?

Teacher 10: Then the kids won’t get anything.

Researcher: Would you say that you have low expectations then?
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Teacher 10: No, no. I'm just being realistic. If I'm talking to a German person, then I am going to speak to German. I am not going to speak French and hope that they understand.

Researcher: Ok. Let's refocus then.

Teacher 10: I mean. I do come back and use the language don't get me wrong, but their language skills aren't always where I need them to be.

Researcher: Ok. Let's talk most specifically about African American students in low income areas. Would you say their contributing factors are the same or different?

Teacher 10: For the most part the same, but there is bigger dependency on their friends. They tend to do things in packs and they are not really into things that make them different. Then it depends on what the parents want for them. Most of the times the gifted program is not even on the parent's radar unless the kid was like all A's in elementary school. Man, most of these parents are not even really aware of the program.

Researcher: You're saying that the parents do not know that the gifted program exists?

Teacher 10: Ok. They know it's there but it's not a conscious choice or something they come up in here seeking for their kid. Let me say, I mean. I say that to say that the parents do not have an understanding of how to get their kids into the program. Most of them will sit back and wait for the program to come to them, if it ever does, rather than them being proactive about getting their kids in.

Researcher: Has the school ever tried raise awareness about the program or how kids get in or something?

Teacher 10: Not to that I know of. I don't think so. Naw'll.

Researcher: What role, if any, in your opinion do you think culture plays in finding African Americna students for gifted programs?

Teacher 10: A severe social disapproval that goes against cultural norms. When I speak correct, standardized English my students say that I am speaking White, you know, or I am trying to sound like a white boy. But I tell them this is how society expects them to speak and they don't get it. I think it is because they do not hear it at home or in the streets. It's not considered
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cool to speak correctly when you can or to have a diverse vocabulary to many of these kids, you know. It’s easier for them to cuss you out then to expand their vocabulary or have a desire to expand it.

Researcher: At this school, what factors do you think bar or prevent students from being considered for gifted studies?

Teacher 10: Probably the students because they do not want to show their true mental ability in many instances. I have this one smart girl who can break down almost any math problem that I throw her way, but because she doesn’t want to seem intelligent in front of her girls, she’d rather come off as a dummy or pretend like she doesn’t get it. Then when I try to challenge her she backs down and says that it is too hard. No motivation or desire.

Researcher: What do you think, then, influences teacher recommendation at this school?

Teacher 10: When I am looking at my students, I am looking at their grades. That’s it. I don’t care how you act, I need you to be on point with your assignments. If you are not, then there’s no way I am going to recommend you for anything.

Researcher: So, you don’t care about behavior?

Teacher 10: Nope. I don’t care if you cussed me out the day before, just have my work. I need two things from you: my work and high test scores. That’s it.

Researcher: What about your colleagues?

Teacher 10: I’d say the same thing, but then they care about the whole behavior thing. I don’t. Prove to me that you know the work and I will recommend you. Come through on those test scores and I will take the gifted test for you. No, I’m kidding. But I want my work.

Researcher: Do you think the students here want to participate in gifted studies? Why or why not?

Teacher 10: Some of them do, but the vast majority porbably not. Mainly because it would mean them being separated from their friends. That is what is important to them right now, their friends. These kids want to hang out all day with their friends and think that magically at the end of the semester they will have an ‘A’. The gifted department here does not always get a lot
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of recognition so in many instances the kids do not even see what they are missing unless they know someone taking gifted classes. If they do see someone taking classes then they form their opinion based on that individual in the class. Some of those kids have to have thick skin to deal with the characters around here because they will tease them for being in gifted and call them gay.

Researcher: When they say gay, is that a euphemism or another way of saying what?

Teacher 10: Probably what we used to call "acting white." If you do your work then you are gay. I guess gay is the new hot word for them because anything that another child is doing that is not considered to be cool is labeled as gay.

Researcher: Are there social influences that you think prevent students from being eligible or having a desire to participate in gifted studies?

Teacher 10: What these kids see on television is really important to them, you know. They get their social cues of what is acceptable or not acceptable from the television, no one is thinking for themselves anymore. I would like to see more of these kids think for themselves and not wait for Lil Wayne to come out with a new mixtape.

Researcher: Why are teachers in low income, urban schools less likely to identify African American students into gifted studies programs?

Teacher 10: Probably because these students do not look like what they think gifted students should look like. I think it is also because it is so rare that they see these talents in the students. It’s almost like some of these students are just going along with the program and don’t want to stand out too much. I think when the teacher sees it that it is such a rarity that they probably want to keep the kid in the class just to help the other struggling kids or something, you know. I also think that too many of these kids are not coming to school prepared to learn but probably have the talent. It’s just that too much is going on in a lot of these kids’ worlds for them to really show how smart they are in many instances. We are so busy trying to teach the fundamentals no one has time to teach the harder stuff. We are thinking about that test at the end of the year and how these kids need to pass it or it could mean our jobs, you know. No one is going to ask you
what’s going on with these kids at home, they want to see results on this test at the end of the year. That’s the focus.

Researcher: Do you think the teachers have low expectations or don’t care?

Teacher 10: No. I wouldn’t say that they don’t care, I just think these kids come with so much baggage that it is hard to determine whether or not these kids have talent in some instances. Low expectations? I think some teachers do, you know. I don’t think they realize that they do but at times in a school like this, you are just trying to survive and keep your head above water. You are so limited because many of these kids just will not perform for you and you can bend over backwards but getting them to show that they get the work can be hard enough and then try to teach at a higher level is almost ridiculous to even fathom doing in some of these classrooms.

Researcher: I noticed that some teachers did not even complete the checklist, why is that?

Teacher 10: Probably because they didn’t have time or because they think none of their kids would qualify. And it’s more paperwork on top of the paperwork that they already have to complete that it makes it that more challenging. Man! I think I looked at it and just went along with whatever my team said just to get it checked off, you know. It’s probably a disservice to the kids, but you try to do the best that you can.

Researcher: Did you know Lil Wayne was in a gifted program?

Teacher 10: Are you serious? That I would have never guessed.

Researcher: Yep. Lil Wayne was in gifted in New Orleans.

Teacher 10: Well, look at him now.

Researcher: How often do you use differentiated instruction in your classroom? Can you explain one lesson in which you used differentiated instruction?

Teacher 10: I really do not use it because most of the times my kids are low in my on level classes so I spend a lot of time working on the basics and building them up versus trying to get place them based on ability.
Appendix D (continued)

Researcher:  Outside of differentiated instruction, how else do students explore their personal interests in your class? What displaying talents outside of academics?

Teacher 10: Maybe once a semester I give them a project but I determine the topic. I don’t think math really lends itself to personal exploration of topics like maybe a language arts or social studies class does.

Researcher: Has differentiated instruction assisted you in considering a child for gifted studies? How so?

Teacher 10: I really haven’t used it so I can’t say that it has helped.

Teacher 12

Researcher: Today I am interviewing Teacher 12. I want to ask you some questions on my dissertation. If you would just respond as best you can and speaking from your own experience and opinion. My first question: Paint a picture of the average child at this school. What are their behaviors or their habits in the classroom?

Teacher 12: Many of them come from a single family home. Most of them are black and are very smart streetwise. And are in a search for knowledge.

Researcher: How do children tend to stand out at this school?

Teacher 12: If they are an athlete then they are a part of the more popular crowd. Academically challenge may stand out. For those kids who are above average usually stay within themselves.

Researcher: Why did you pick the arena of sports first?

Teacher 12: Because that is where the popular students usually come from at this school. And that is where all the drama is.

Researcher: Is peer pressure a major factor here?

Teacher 12: Not with the kids in the gifted program. The kids outside of the program, it is a major factor.

Researcher: In your opinion, what role does socioeconomics play in a child’s education?
Appendix D (continued)

Teacher 12: I believe it plays a large part because of the exposure and what the child is bringing to school. If the child is coming to school with a lot of background history then he or she tends to pick up on things are being taught. When that child is not coming to school with no background or foundation then you have to feed that foundation so that you can give them the knowledge to use it. Let’s face it; students that come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are going to come with that foundation 9.5 times out of ten versus students that are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The lower the socioeconomic background the less likely that child is probably coming to school ready to learn. It is not the child’s fault, but it just goes to show how they are a product of their environment. The ability to expose is higher in a higher economic background household I think. Whereas in a lower one, parents, the mom, whomever, are primarily concerned with survival and education fits in where it can.

Researcher: Speaking about the kids at this school that you serve, how would you describe the average child’s desire or will to succeed?

Teacher 12: They are limited because of what they have been exposed to. They only know their immediate reality or surroundings. So, they want to succeed but when you ask the average child what do they want to do, then they tell you they want to be professional ball players instead of a lawyer. But they need to be exposed to other avenues, such as an air traffic controller. What do they know about that? The different types of engineers. What do they know about that? Uh, the different types of doctors. There are many fields out there now that they need to explore, that they have no knowledge of because they simply don’t come from families that know themselves what to expose their children to.

Researcher: At this school. What do you see as potential limitations to student success?

Teacher 12: Limitations. Again, I am going back to the lack of exposure and teachers have to have high expectations. Just because these kids are in a low income area does not mean that you lower your expectations of the kids. They want to learn too. Sometimes I think we do that, lower our expectations because we don’t expect these kids to do as well as kids from higher socioeconomic communities.

Researcher: Do you think poverty makes plays a significant role on student’s success or failure in the classroom?
Appendix D (continued)

Teacher 12: It should not, but again it goes back to what that child brings to the classroom. Poverty itself does not limit a child, but the child’s mindset does. If we continue to tell them they are smart, then they will succeed. But we can’t use poverty as an excuse for them not to succeed.

Researcher: What is your understanding of what it means to be gifted?

Teacher 12: Gifted means that you are above the rest, that you are motivated, intelligent. You are willing to do that extra assignment that you are willing to stand against the crowd and make your own decisions. Self-motivated.

Researcher: What characteristics or behaviors do you believe a gifted student will demonstrate in the classroom?


Researcher: What does giftedness look like outside of the classroom?

Teacher 12: I would expect a gifted student to continue asking questions, seeking answers to questions. High level thinking skills, going above and beyond what the teacher asks them to on a continuous basis. I would expect him to go far beyond what I am asking for or looking for in the classroom.

Researcher: In your opinion, are there other arenas here at the school that will allow you to see special gifts or talents?

Teacher 12: I would say in P.E. when physical talent comes out. In music, when they are playing an instrument. But I think we need to do a better job of identifying students who are not as forthcoming with their intellectual talents. We need different forums for these students to display their knowledge. We need different avenues for our intellectual students to display their talents. Students could have an IQ of 140, but may not have a way to demonstrate this if they are not a good test taker.

Researcher: Tell me what you know about gifted testing.

Teacher 12: Well, I know they have to an IQ test and score extremely high on some standardized test. Which is not a good indicator because a lot of our kids do not test well and it is not because they do not have any intelligence, it is mainly because they do not have good test taking skills that many of the other kids have. I think we need to look at the whole child.
Appendix D (continued)

Researcher: When you say other kids, to whom are you referring?

Teacher 12: Children are non-African American.

Researcher: Ok. What do you know about gifted strategies?

Teacher 12: Gifted teaching strategies? All I know is, the teacher plays a major role in making sure that the lesson are planned on a higher order thinking level and that she is actually challenging the students on their level. She or he are preparing lessons that will be of interest to students and make them want to know more about a given subject and to motivate them to do more in the classroom by going beyond what is expected.

Researcher: What do you know about the gifted identification process?

Teacher 12: I know that it is a long process. I know that, I do not think it is a fair process all of the time. Again, because most of them have to score high on a standardized test, and I am not sure if standardized tests are fair to African American children because of the questions that are being asked on them.

Researcher: What about how teachers participate in the multiple criteria process? What is your understanding of that?

Teacher 12: I know that teachers have a survey that they fill out but even when a teacher has identified a student from his or her observations that this person has a special or unique talent that, uh, that child is not necessarily placed in a gifted class just from that teacher’s observation. There has to be other paperwork to go along with that. I think that sometimes teachers have a better idea or who should and should not be tested, but then that’s not fair to students who are considered behavior problems. It’s my personal opinion some of those kids that get in trouble are the main ones that need to be tested because they are bored with the work, but teachers treat gifted as if it is a privilege and not a right.

Researcher: What support, if any, have you ever received from the gifted department at your school?

Teacher 12: Well, usually we receive some support. I don’t think the gifted teachers are used effectively at this school. Sometimes I think the gifted teachers can better teach other teachers on how to improve rigor in their
classrooms, but too many teachers are fine with status quo and average classrooms. I would like to see more of an interaction with all the teachers in exchanging teaching strategies and lesson plans. And hearing their different ways of teaching. I believe that would improve a lot around here. Gifted teachers should not be in a department by themselves and never having to interact with other teachers.

Researcher: According to your experience, and I am just going to give you what the literature says, that African Americans in low income areas are more likely to be tested for special education on the lower end instead of the higher end, if you could name any factor that contributes to this underrepresentation, what factors would you identify and why?

Teacher 12: Not having a computer at home, not getting outside of their community and actually knowing what is out there in the world. Atlanta is the capital of Georgia, but many of these students do not know what the capital looks like. You go in some low income areas and ask what does the capital look like and many of them cannot tell you. It's a matter of students knowing who they are, what they want to be. Most of these kids also want to be with their friends and are not thinking about the choices that they are making today will affect them later down the road.

Researcher: What role, if any, do you think culture plays in placing economically disadvantaged students in gifted studies programs?

Teacher 12: It plays a big role because a lot of our parents are not aware of the gifted program or what to shoot for on tests in order to get their child placed in gifted. If the parents have not been exposed to it, then many of them do not even know that is something that they want for their kids. Unlike Caucasian parents who begin in kindergarten training their kids on how to think and look at the world. That's basically getting them ready to take standardized tests or the gifted tests because they want them to think differently. Too many of our kids are worried about right now because there is so much going on in their world that they have not even developed the skills to think long range. They are concerned with the now, not five years from now.

Researcher: What factors do you think bar or prevent students from being considered for gifted studies at this school?
Appendix D (continued)

Teacher 12: Parents and administration not pushing for a more equalized system of testing students to allow more African Americans into the gifted program.

Researcher: I am going to slightly shift the subject for a second. Do you use differentiated instruction in your classroom?

Teacher 12: Yes, I do.

Researcher: In your opinion or experience, has it ever helped or assisted you with nominating a child for gifted studies?

Teacher 12: Hmmm. I think it has because it enables kids to respond to the curriculum in different ways. It's like when you have a really strong lesson and the students really respond well, that's how I see differentiated instruction. When they respond using their strengths, then I get some pretty good products back. I think differentiated instruction in addition to other things has given me insight into kids and whether or not they might make it into the gifted program.

Researcher: So it is a combination of differentiated instruction and what else for you based upon your experience?

Teacher 12: I would say that and probably my observation in the class as well as student work. I think it is a combination of things.

Researcher: Do you believe the students here even want to participate in the gifted studies?

Teacher 12: Sure they want to. They just don't know it. We have to help them see the advantages. When they see the gifted kids going places, they want to go but just won't admit it. Instead they tease them about dressing white because the boys will wear a tie and the girls have on dresses. I don't understand it, but that's this generation I guess, everybody wants their pants hanging off of their butts.

Researcher: What factors prevent teachers from recommending students to the gifted studies program?

Teacher 12: I think it's because of the CRCT at the end of the year. If you see that you have some bright students, some teachers think it's ok to keep them in their classroom because it will make them look good at the end of the year. I don't think it's right, but it's done. Then some teachers do it for ego
purposes. Basically, because they can count on that student or group of students to get whatever they are teaching regardless of how bad the actual lesson is while the rest of the class is staring off into space. Like I said before, some teachers see it as a privilege to be in the gifted program and will prevent Bobby from testing because he is always acting up in class.

Researcher: What factors influence teacher choice and identification of potentially gifted students?

Teacher 12: Um, it may sound crazy but the way a kid looks. If the kids come in well dressed and groomed then that might actually heighten their chances of getting in to the gifted program by teacher recommendation. Sometimes I think teachers give certain kids like that special privileges. Maybe it means to them someone at home cares and they are trying to push them on, but there are a lot of kids that get overlooked around here because they don’t fit a certain profile so to speak.

Researcher: And what profile is that?

Teacher 12: Dressing with designer labels or always having their hand up. I think there are more here than we realize, but we are doing something wrong to find these kids.

Researcher: I noticed that some teachers did not even complete the checklist, why is that?

Teacher 12: I don’t know. I completed mine and turned it in. Most of the teachers around here take it as a joke because they rarely see anyone actually make it. Mainly, it is something else many of us have to do but probably do not have the time.

Researcher: Do you think the teachers have low expectations or don’t care?

Teacher 12: That’s a loaded question. I think they care but sometimes the intentions do not always match the actions. Most of the teachers around here have so much going on that it gets a backseat to whatever is pressing. As far as low expectations, I think some of the teachers think they are teaching at a higher level but really are not. Most of them believe in the kids but still think that they are limited because of the lack of support from home and that makes a difference. When a child is not supported on all fronts then it becomes even harder to push them to the next level.
Appendix D (continued)

Researcher: I noticed that some teachers did not even complete the checklist, why is that?

Teacher 12: Probably because of workload. Most of our planning periods are held up in meetings and when you get extra paperwork on top of what needs to be done in your classroom you probably forget. And some of them probably don’t think the kids would qualify anyway and just do not turn in on purpose.

Researcher: One last question, how would you change the identification process for potentially gifted students?

Teacher 12: I don’t know. I know the current system is not working. I have a lot of kids that are really hard workers and do well on their class assignments but get to the test and bomb out. I recommended a really sharp student last year, but she didn’t make it and I felt bad because the girl interpreted it as her being dumb. I spoke to the chair and it came down to her scores were not high enough on some test she took. I think I was a little let down too, like maybe I played with the child’s head or something. I think we also need more true advanced classes. For some of these kids, we have to raise the bar in order for them to meet it and separate them from some of these knuckleheads. That would be great because I think for some of these kids with time and raised standards they would knock those gifted tests out!

Researcher: Thank you for your input!
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