

NARRATIVE EXPLORATION OF TEACHER EXPERIENCES
IN CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE GIFTED EDUCATION

A DISSERTATION IN
Curriculum and Instruction
and
Educational Leadership, Policy and Foundations

Presented to the Faculty of the University
of Missouri-Kansas City in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by
JESSICA LYNNE LAFOLLETTE

B.S., Emporia State University, 2001
M.S., Emporia State University, 2003

Kansas City, Missouri

2019

© 2019

JESSICA LYNNE LAFOLLETTE

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

NARRATIVE EXPLORATION OF TEACHER EXPERIENCES
IN CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE GIFTED EDUCATION

Jessica Lynne LaFollette, Candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree

University of Missouri – Kansas City, 2019

ABSTRACT

This narrative inquiry provides a contextualized understanding of teacher experiences complementing the extensive quantitative literature available regarding the underrepresentation of diverse students in gifted education programs. This research explores the experiential stories of gifted education professionals who work in urban classrooms with culturally diverse students in two neighboring Midwestern states. The complex experiences of urban gifted education professionals are examined in order to discover the "secret stories" of these classrooms, and to understand how social justice and equity factors may be accounted for in statewide policy or in the enacted curriculum for gifted learners.

Informed by theories of curriculum as experience, culturally responsive pedagogy, and the process of storying in education, this research uncovers the lived experiences of teachers in the unique contexts of diverse and urban gifted education. It examines the impact of statewide gifted education policy at the classroom level, describing innovative identification and curriculum strategies that promote the academic and emotional well-being of gifted students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. Four teachers in two

neighboring states relate their experiences by acting as “co-researchers” and their stories are analyzed according to the process of narrative inquiry.

Cover stories from multiple in-depth interviews and select classroom stories from observations revealed four major narrative themes including (a) “Identifying Culturally Diverse Students;” (b) “Relationships and Motivating Students;” (c) “Negotiating Space and Time – Shifting Classroom Landscapes;” and (d) “Creative and Challenging Curriculum.” The stories and strategies described in this dissertation offer perspective for educators seeking to understand how to develop curriculum for culturally diverse gifted students. These narratives describe specific and practical ways that skilled gifted professionals have been able to make a difference for students who are often viewed from a deficit perspective, offering counter-narratives that celebrate and build upon strengths.

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education have examined a dissertation titled “Narrative Exploration of Teacher Experiences in Culturally Responsive Gifted Education,” presented by Jessica L. LaFollette, candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Candace Schlein, Ph.D., Committee Chair
Division of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies

Dianne Smith, Ph.D., Professor Emerita
Division of Educational Leadership, Policy and Foundations

Carolyn Barber, Ph.D.
Division of Counseling and Educational Psychology

Loyce Caruthers, Ph.D.
Division of Educational Leadership, Policy and Foundations

Raol Taft, Ph.D.
Division of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	x
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Researcher Positioning and Personal Research Significance	2
Theoretical Framework	8
Literature Review	14
Methodology	17
Limitations, Validity, and Ethical Considerations	21
Chapter Summary	27
Overview of Dissertation	28
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	29
Curriculum as Experience	29
Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Pedagogy in Gifted Education	35
Stories and Storying	41
Summary of the Chapter	51
3. LITERATURE REVIEW	53
Defining and Identifying Giftedness in a Diverse Society	54
Traditional Curriculum and Programming for Gifted Students	69
Documented Systemic Inequalities within Traditional Gifted Programming	74
Culturally Responsive Curriculum	80

Conclusion	85
4. METHODOLOGY	88
Rationale for Qualitative Research	89
Researcher Positioning.....	93
Study Design.....	94
Limitations and Ethical Considerations	105
Significance of the Study	108
Conclusion	109
5. DATA ANALYSIS: UNCOVERING SACRED STORIES OF CONTEXT AND POLICY	111
Researcher Positioning.....	113
Co-Researchers and Their Stories to Live By.....	128
Sacred Stories of Gifted Education.....	143
Chapter Summary	167
6. DATA ANALYSIS: SHEDDING LIGHT ON GIFTED EDUCATION EXPERIENCES WITH DIVERSE AND URBAN STUDENTS	168
Common Narrative Themes and Secret Stories of Classroom Practice	168
Reflexive and Resonating Experiences.....	213
Chapter Summary	216
7. STORIED MEANINGS AND IMPLICATIONS.....	218
Three Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Analysis.....	218
Comprehensive Analysis Connecting Narratives to Policy and Practice.....	234

Chapter Summary	246
8. CONCLUSION.....	247
Educational Significance for Research, Policy and Practice	247
Impact of Narrative Findings for Educational Equity.....	250
Limitations, Validity and Ethical Considerations	253
Emerging Themes and Enduring Questions	256
Conclusion	260
EPILOGUE.....	262
Appendix	
A. Consent for Participation in a Research Study	264
B. Interview 1: Biographical Experiences in Education.....	269
C. Interview 2: Teaching Experiences and Curriculum	271
D. Interview 3:Member-check and Follow-up	273
E. Calendar of Interviews and Observations Fall 2018.....	275
F. Armstrong Gifted Matrix	276
G. Armstrong Elementary Gifted Problem Solving Rubric.....	277
REFERENCES	281
VITA.....	303

TABLES

Table	Page
1. Comparing Definitions of Giftedness	63
2. Representation of Ethnic Subgroups in 2016-17 Gifted Programs in State A.....	77
3. Representation of Ethnic Subgroups in 2014-15 Gifted Programs in State B.....	77
4. Demographic Comparisons of Armstrong and Benton Districts	144

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must begin by expressing my deepest appreciation for the hard work and unwavering support of my committee chair and mentor, Dr. Candace Schlein. She helped me grow as a teacher, writer and thinker throughout the five years I spent at UMKC. She also inspired my interest in narrative inquiry and guided me through challenging texts and methods. I am also grateful to my entire committee for their input and wisdom. Dr. Dianne Smith introduced me to several critical authors and challenged me to confront the discrimination I saw in my field. Dr. Carolyn Barber encouraged me to reflect critically on my own definition of giftedness. The tireless work of Dr. Loyce Caruthers introduced me to the joys and trials of qualitative research. I am also grateful to Dr. Raol Taft for his insight on questioning state policy and the role it plays in the experiences of gifted professionals.

The board members of the State A Association for the Gifted, Talented, and Creative have contributed so much to my thinking and growth as a professional in the past six years. Dr. Sheri Stewart and Dr. Connie Phelps encouraged me to pursue a doctoral degree and provided hours of support, discussing ideas and strategies for improving the education of diverse gifted learners in State A. Lindsay Black is another board member, close friend and fellow champion of urban gifted learners. She offered support and ideas on our many long car rides to and from board meetings.

In State B, I am thankful to Dr. Brandi Klepper, whose ideas always challenged me to consider the social and emotional aspects of gifted curriculum. Dr. Kris Wiley offered support and encouragement during many informal meetings at national conferences. I am also grateful to Mr. David Welch and the entire Gifted Education Advisory Board from State

B. Their important work addressing underrepresentation through policy began at the same time as this research and continues to inspire me to persist in State A.

I could not have accomplished this writing without the frequent validation and encouragement of my colleagues and administrators from “Armstrong Public Schools”. I am grateful to Dr. Michelle Colvin for supporting this project, and to Michelle Clary who has recognized my passion for gifted students for several years. Mr. Steve Mercer and the entire staff of Piper Middle School encouraged me to apply to graduate school, asked often about my research, and filled me in when I had to miss meetings to conduct observations elsewhere. At “Benton Public Schools”, I am thankful for the support and inspiration of Dr. Jermaine Wilson, especially for his work with gifted African American males in urban public education.

Finally, I am so deeply grateful to the four talented women who shared their stories and classrooms to make this dissertation possible. They are truly rock star teachers who love their students and their communities. Though I cannot name them, the stories in this work affirm their impact on my teaching and thinking about what it means to be a gifted education professional.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. My husband, Brett LaFollette has been my constant and unwavering supporter for the twenty years of our marriage and especially for these last five years of graduate school. He believed in me and encouraged me through every academic challenge. He also took over many household responsibilities so I could focus on writing. He is a gifted thinker and designer, but frequently put his own career priorities on hold to help me accomplish my goals. I also dedicate this work to my four beautiful daughters, Lillian, Olivia, Juliet and Amelia. Their special notes, hugs, and prayers gave me confidence and joy when I felt the stress of research pulling me apart. Finally, I dedicate this to my wonderful parents, Bill and Julie Brame, who believe in the value of diverse public education and whose prayers and wisdom continue to guide me through the challenges of balancing motherhood, teaching, and research.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Culturally diverse students are underrepresented in and underserved by traditional gifted education programs, making successful multicultural gifted curriculum extremely rare (Ford, 2013). Services for all gifted students vary widely in both quantity and quality with additional variation in levels of teacher accountability for designing and implementing curriculum (National Association for Gifted Children, 2015). The primary focus of this research is the level of teacher accountability and what it might mean for the curricular experiences of diverse students. This narrative inquiry provides a contextualized understanding of teacher experiences complementing the extensive quantitative literature available regarding the underrepresentation of diverse students in gifted education programs (Ford, 2011; Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Tomlinson et al., 2004).

The purpose of this narrative inquiry research is thus to explore the experiential stories of gifted education professionals who work in urban classrooms with culturally diverse students in two neighboring Midwestern states. The goals of this research are to explore the complex experiences of urban gifted education professionals, to discover the "secret stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of these classrooms, and to understand how social justice and equity factors may be accounted for in statewide policy or in the enacted curriculum for gifted learners.

As teachers relate their experiences regarding curriculum development in a diverse urban classroom, they construct personal meaning for their work that is not easily quantifiable or transferrable to a different context (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). However, by better understanding the stories of these individual professionals, other educators may

reflect on their practices and improve services for future classrooms of culturally diverse gifted learners. The narrative inquiry tradition utilized in this research is the process of exploring complex experiences through stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013; Kim, 2016; Patton, 2015). This methodology is justified because teacher experiences with this unique population are necessarily complex, and the art of creating individualized multicultural gifted curriculum might not be well understood through other research means.

It is important to note the employed definitions of several terms that are central to this inquiry. For the purposes of this research, *gifted* is defined according to the federal definition from the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015):

Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities (p. 393).

Culturally diverse is an education term used by the U.S. Department of Education to identify students who may speak a variety of languages and come from diverse social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. *Gifted education professionals* (or *gifted facilitators*) further refers to teachers who have completed specialized graduate-level training and certification to provide services to identified gifted students. These teachers may or may not have additional training to meet the needs of culturally diverse students.

Researcher Positioning and Personal Research Significance

As a student and teacher, I have had many deeply personal experiences in the field of urban gifted education. My experiences continue to motivate me to pursue positive changes for these students as a researcher. My beliefs and values about learning are strongly connected to these experiences and provide a distinctive lens through which my work as a researcher is filtered. In this subsection, I will share three brief stories, which I hope may

shed light on three of the complex assumptions I bring to my research. The italicized portions of story-telling in the following paragraphs include thick, rich description (Geertz, 1975), allowing the reader a glimpse into my most influential memories of urban public education. They also offer a preview of my own “secret stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Gifted Education Programs are Consequential and Necessary

My own definition of the term “gifted” is inclusive and need-based – similar to the federal definition cited above. (In the literature review chapter, I will explore some competing definitions of this term, and discuss the implications of these shades of meaning for students.) I firmly believe there are bright students of all backgrounds in K-12 classrooms who desperately need different types of learning experiences than their typical peers. In my experience, giftedness is really just a mismatch between a student’s high ability and the curriculum available. However, this basic definition fails to capture all the emotions and tensions that are part of attaching this label to a young developing mind. These are the difficult and complicated educational decisions that narrative research can portray more vividly. The paragraphs below offer the first stories of this dissertation, my own early experiences with the label gifted.

Many educators do not realize that elementary gifted students spend most of their school day practicing patience. They are waiting for others to finish the worksheet, waiting for the group to read aloud a book they read two years ago, waiting for the teacher to find something else for them to do. In elementary school, I was often that waiting student.

*"Jessica B., I can see that you're finished, would you like to clean the overhead?
Jessica, could you grade this stack of papers? Oh, Jessica, wouldn't you like to teach some
English words to our new friend? Jessica B., please stop fidgeting, stop drawing on your*

desk, stop talking to your neighbor, stop raising your hand and give others a chance. Jessica, put that book away, reading time will be later."

Eventually I would learn to be a patient waiter but my coping strategies were not always positive. I bit my lips and my nails, picked away small bits of skin from my fingers, shredded papers inside my desk, and hid books in my lap while pretending to concentrate on the class work I had already finished. Teachers like to say gifted students "will be fine". The truth is that we are not fine; we just get better at pretending.

In second grade, my school presented a bussing solution for the Jessica problem. After one long but interesting morning of block puzzles and vocabulary games with a stranger, I began to ride the short bus alone, twice a week for one hour, to a different school where a tiny group of older kids met in a makeshift classroom on the unused stage in the multipurpose room. In this strange place was the most amazing teacher I had ever encountered. Beneath the smell of old school lunch and dusty curtains, she gave us math problems I did not know how to answer, books I had never heard of, and taught us to read a world map, write poetry, and dissect frogs. Now that I finally had something interesting to wait for, the rest of my school days became infinitely more bearable. I wish I could say all my nervous habits disappeared. They did not. Eventually, I did manage to keep my hand down and my voice quiet by focusing on what might happen in my next "TAG" class. Occasionally my teachers even permitted me to read upper level books in my regular classrooms. By the time I was in fourth grade, our group had grown large enough that we were allowed to meet at our own school in a basement storage closet. We were a small but diverse cluster of eager and excitable nine-year olds (there were two African-American kids and three White kids)

and it was in that wonderful closet – twice a week for an hour – that I really began to love learning.

Integrated Schools and Classrooms Promote Cultural Understanding

My public school education is a product of several experimental efforts at court-ordered desegregation in a large urban school district. In the 1980's my district had a complex bussing strategy which meant that in elementary school many of my young friends did not live in my neighborhood and came from very different cultural backgrounds. In this integrated school, I had many excellent teachers, some who looked and talked like my family, and others who looked and spoke very differently. I was quite comfortable in this diverse setting because it was all I knew.

In the early nineties, I began my longest but happiest bus journey to a magnet high school downtown. The opportunities here felt unbelievable. The students were just as diverse and so was the faculty, but we all shared a common passion for academics. Some teachers even remembered with pride the days when this building was the high-achieving all-Black high school. Some of the same students who used to terrify me in middle school blossomed into friends in this rigorous and nurturing environment. Over time in this setting, I found myself connecting with a culturally diverse group of people whom I admired because they shared my goal to become a first generation college graduate. Eventually I would come back to this same urban magnet school as a first-year teacher, eager to inspire that joy of learning in other young minds.

Culturally Diverse Students Are Often Missing From Gifted Classrooms

After teaching gifted education in my home district for several years, I took a part time position within the same county, but in a more affluent suburban district. I began to

notice that the cultural backgrounds of my gifted students did not accurately mirror the various cultures in the student body. I also noticed the conspicuous absence of teachers of color. This was, and still is, extremely disturbing to me because I know from personal experience as a student and teacher in a racially diverse gifted program, that there should be an equal percentage of bright and talented students of color in the population. I was very concerned about why these students were not referred for participation in gifted programming, but so many were referred for special education.

Stepping through the door of my new suburban gifted classroom was a thrilling experience. Everything was so new and smelled so clean. Dry erase boards lined two walls, while another held a large window with a view of a grassy meadow. The fourth wall was actually a well-disguised partition dividing my space from the special education room next door. There were new tables and chairs, computers, and books already waiting for my students. In my previous hundred-year old, inner-city school, I taught gifted students in a small closet that once stored science equipment. It shared a wall with all the smells and sounds of the boys' bathroom. That room had space for about four students and myself, but we usually crowded in at least six. In my new classroom, I felt a sense of comfort and satisfaction begin to settle in my mind as I imagined teaching here. It was the feeling of affluence and privilege. Money... this place had plenty of resources and knew how to use them.

On the first day of school, I watched the hallways fill with excited pre-teens. It did not take long to notice that there were not as many different skin tones and hairstyles here as there were at my previous school. Even so, there were many African American young men and women opening lockers and chatting along with the others, some as nervous as I was to

start the new school year. I smiled at a few anxious faces as they slipped into my classroom. When the bell finally rang, I turned to greet my first class in the spotless and well-appointed room. As I double-checked my roster of gifted students, and counted the faces in front of me, I began to silently ponder a question that would plague my thoughts for a decade in this building, "But where are all the Black kids?"

I would ask this question repeatedly to administrators and counselors, school psychologists and yearly to each team of all-White general education colleagues. No one could give me a satisfactory answer. People agreed there might be a problem, but they were not really willing to do anything about it. Most often, I got a response that implied the speaker was actually colorblind and I should just concentrate on "treating every student the same". When I realized this was getting nowhere, I began to research. I wanted to find out why my former gifted program had so many high achieving, gifted African American and Hispanic students, and this program had almost none. Dozens of articles and textbooks later, I finally began to understand. The frustratingly Eurocentric curriculum, deficit-minded teachers, and biased cognitive assessments pointed me to the awful truth. They were not in my new classroom, because they were on the other side of the wall.

As a White teacher and researcher, I now have a unique chance to work toward change in an inequitable system and to provide challenging learning opportunities to as many students as possible regardless of their cultural background. One of my favorite quotes from researcher Ford (2011) states, "The less we know about others, the more we make up. The more we know about others, the less we make up". It is my responsibility and privilege to continue to learn about the differences in backgrounds of culturally diverse students to help all those who need gifted education services.

Theoretical Framework

In the introductory section of this chapter, I outlined my topic and its social, educational, and personal/professional significance. In this section, I highlight theoretical concepts that inform this research. I will explore each of the theories introduced here in much greater depth in Chapter 2. The first theory that informs this work is my understanding of curriculum as a shared experience between teachers and students. Next, I describe the recent theoretical work of specialists in culturally responsive curriculum including how these practices fit into gifted education curriculum theory. Finally, the methodological basis of this narrative inquiry research is found in the work on stories and storying in education. The heart of my research lies in the intersection of these three aspects of education theory and research.

Curriculum as Student Experience

Curriculum incorporates much more than a written document. In fact, some curriculum theorists understand it as the combined experiences of students and teachers interacting with each other in a particular setting over time (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Since gifted education typically does not follow a written list of standardized objectives, my personal teaching philosophy and set of experiences align best with this broad and empowering definition. In Dewey's seminal work on experience and education (1938/1998) he explained the idea that all effective curriculum must begin with an understanding of experience. "Anything which can be called a study, whether arithmetic, history, geography, or one of the natural sciences, must be derived from materials which at the outset fall within the scope of ordinary experience" (pp. 86-87).

It is critical for education professionals who work with bright diverse learners to develop curriculum that begins with the knowledge and experiences that students bring to the

gifted classroom. Then they can expand them into a deeper and richer understanding of the world. In a separate, earlier writing (1897/2004) Dewey insisted that, “The only true education comes through the stimulation of the child’s powers...the child’s own instincts and powers furnish the material and give the starting-point for all education” (p. 33).

Taking Dewey at his word, curriculum planning for gifted students should not begin with grade-level standards, frequently tested concepts, or even a published curriculum written for gifted learners. It must begin with a clear understanding of the child’s own unique strengths, experiences and interests. Hansen, Anderson, Frank and Nieuwejaar (2008) further explained the pedagogical implications of these theories, “For Dewey, educators should strive to engage students’ minds rather than just their capacities for absorption” (p. 451).

Gifted education professionals must start their curriculum where the traditional curriculum ends, engaging the bright minds in their care beyond grade-level expectations and into the long shadow of each learner’s unique potentiality. Hansen and his colleagues (2008) summarized the most important aspects of progressive curriculum theory. They proposed that these visionary writers and educators “envision education as both a transforming social institution and as a dynamic individual experience that can liberate persons to realize their various gifts and callings” (p. 449). Schubert (2008) defined “the experienced curriculum” (p. 408) as distinct from both the intended and the taught curriculum. The “experienced curriculum expands attention to thoughts, meanings, and feelings of students as they encounter it” (Schubert, 2008, p. 409).

Curriculum as Teacher Experience

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) moved forward in an understanding of curriculum as experience. They audaciously proposed, “A curriculum can become one’s life course of

action. It can mean the paths we have followed and the paths we intend to follow” (p. 1). Pinar (2004) offered another way to understand teacher experiences as part of the curriculum through the concept of “currere” (p. 35), the self-reflexive autobiographical study of one’s own educational experiences for the intended purpose of analyzing and synthesizing them into a more coherent whole. “Stated simply, currere seeks to understand the contribution academic studies make to one’s understanding of his or her life” (p. 36). Educators practicing currere understand that each of their own experiences as students and teachers combine to create a new and different understanding of the world.

In his research on making curriculum, Westbury (2008) presented an interesting theoretical alternative to the widely embraced Tyler Rationale (1949/2013) for curriculum development. He notes that practitioners, who receive curriculum and curricular reform directives, must interpret these “in the light of their situated presuppositions and understandings. The same text can be read and understood in very different ways” (p. 50). Educational hierarchies often place classroom teachers at the bottom with the least amount of power to affect curricular reform or change, while Westbury seemed to understand that teachers – and their experiences – really matter.

“Curriculum is something experienced in situations” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 6). Both teachers and learners are present in the situation of a classroom, each bringing their own sets of stories, beliefs, and experiences. When researchers set out to make meaning of the process of school they must begin by recognizing the impact of their previous experiences. “Where we have been and where we are going interact to make meaning of the situations in which we find ourselves” (p. 9). Throughout their prolific writing on the subject,

these authors maintained that teachers' personal and practical experiences will necessarily become part of the curriculum as it is enacted in the classroom and experienced by students.

Culturally Responsive Curriculum in Gifted Education

There are a few different ways to understand the issue of underrepresentation in gifted education and several theories explaining how educators should respond to it. Ford (2010) attributed the disparity of culturally diverse students in gifted and talented programs to four categorical barriers:

(a) lack of teacher referral, (b) students' differential performance on traditional intelligence and/or achievement tests, (c) stagnant and outdated policies and procedures for labeling and placement, and (d) social-emotional concerns and eventual decisions of their Black and Hispanic students and their primary caregivers about gifted education participation. (p. 32)

Ford contended that these roadblocks are embedded in larger social justice problems, related to curriculum and pedagogical practices that are discriminatory.

One of these discriminatory practices is the lack of teacher referrals for students of color. This issue has its roots in the larger and more systemic obstacle of "deficit thinking" which causes teachers to implicitly lower curricular expectations for students of color and English language learners (Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Perry, Hilliard, & Steele, 2003).

Valenzuela (1999/2013) offered another way to understand this situation. After studying immigrant children and youth in schools, she came to view their education as "subtractive" (p. 292). These students were required to give up their language and prior academic success to assimilate into the American schools, starting over at the bottom of every academic measure.

Ogbu (2003) described “low-effort syndrome” in his in-depth study of diverse students in Shaker Heights, a high-achieving suburban school district that was struggling to close its racial achievement gap. The research found that Black students, specifically “were not highly engaged in their schoolwork and homework” (p. 18). This is both a symptom and cause of the underrepresentation phenomenon. Students who are not highly engaged with curriculum would not be likely to demonstrate academic talent in classrooms, even when they possessed very high cognitive ability. Over the years, teachers would present these students with less and less challenging material, and they would continue to underperform. This cycle of inappropriate curriculum and low motivation ultimately damages students’ chances at participation in AP and college level classes in high school. Other scholarly work on gifted African American students documents similar patterns (Ford, 2010; Perry, Hilliard & Steele, 2003).

Culturally responsive pedagogical practices (Gay, 2010) are one successful way to reverse deficit thinking, subtractive schooling, and low-effort syndrome. These strategies raise expectations for diverse students (Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009) while simultaneously providing caring (Valenzuela, 1999/2013) and support. This type of pedagogy challenges the notion that culturally diverse students are automatically “at-risk” for low school achievement. Instead, it views each student as possessing “funds of knowledge” which may be different from those of the dominant culture but are not inferior (Moll & González, 2004). Culturally responsive educators learn to build on these strengths, engaging students in meaningful and culturally responsive academic activities.

Theorists in the field of gifted education have developed a theoretical framework for teachers of diverse gifted learners who want to ensure that their curriculum is both high level

and multicultural. The Ford-Harris Matrix (Ford, 2011; Ford & Harris, 2000; Scott, 2014) merges two well-established hierarchical curriculum models into a framework designed to support the needs of culturally diverse gifted students. This matrix plots the four multicultural education approaches of Banks and Banks (2004) against the six levels of critical thinking identified in Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy. In the next chapter, I will explore this curriculum matrix in-depth.

Stories and Storying in Education

The knowledge and pedagogical ability of teachers is the most important factor for student success across subject areas and age groups (Hattie, 2003; Marzano, 2003). Narrative inquiry researchers have studied practicing teachers (especially in multicultural contexts) and have come to describe teachers' unique set of skills as "personal practical knowledge" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). These researchers described personal practical knowledge as "not something objective and independent of the teacher to be learned and transmitted but, rather, is the sum total of the teacher's experiences" (Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997).

These narrative researchers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) also defined three specific types of stories that are told about classroom activities. "Sacred stories" are the official version of classroom events as presented in formal curriculum documents and published school communication. Sacred stories are the ideal to which teachers and students strive. "Cover stories" are told by teachers to explain events that happen in the classroom. Teachers may tell cover stories to colleagues, parents, or even researchers. "Secret stories" reveal the real happenings of the classroom. Usually only the teacher and students are privy to these secret stories. As a narrative inquirer and participant observer within gifted education

classrooms, it is my goal to witness some of these secret stories and to analyze what they may reveal about teachers' personal practical knowledge and the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy for diverse gifted learners.

The previous paragraphs have introduced three groups of theories that inform this research including curriculum as experience, culturally responsive gifted education, and theories on stories and storying in education. Beyond theoretical work, it is also important to examine seminal and current empirical studies that support this research and provide a backdrop of evidence for the need to explore these issues further. This body of literature will be thoroughly examined in Chapter 3. The following section will begin to examine both quantitative and qualitative research relevant to my study.

Literature Review

Gifted education scholars have been sounding the alarm about the underrepresentation of diverse gifted students for decades (Ford, 2011, 1998; Ford & Grantham, 2003; Harris & Ford, 1999). This issue has become one of the most widely discussed topics in the field of gifted education (Bakken et al., 2014; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). According to Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008), African American students were underrepresented in gifted programs by 50% and Latinx students by 40%, while White and Asian students were significantly overrepresented. This research further reported that African American, Latinx, and Native American students seldom enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) classes. In both gifted and AP programs, “the underrepresentation is at least 50%—well beyond statistical chance and above [Office of Civil Rights’] 20% discrepancy formula stipulation” (p. 290). In the most recent report from the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2015) inclusion of underrepresented students in gifted education rated highest in need for attention by state directors of gifted education.

Though many scholars and educators have been working tirelessly to address concerns about underrepresentation, a connected issue that has not been as thoroughly explored is that of appropriate curriculum to address the needs of culturally diverse gifted students who *are* participating in gifted education programs. Peters and Engerrand (2016) asserted that the academic disparity continues to "exist because of systematic inequality of educational opportunity" (p. 161), and they further noted that even when identification disparities are mitigated, programmatic concerns remain and they explored whether it is possible for educators to focus on both equity and excellence. Tomlinson, Ford, Reis, Briggs, and Strickland (2004) reviewed several of the best multicultural gifted programs in the United States, noting the significant challenges these programs face and the considerable difficulty in finding them. This case study research presented a detailed account of exemplary gifted education programs "emphasizing the aspects of the program that best respond to diverse student populations" (p. iv).

The impact of underrepresentation is evident in the lack of appropriately challenging curriculum provided to culturally diverse gifted students. Ford (2011) reported on the many studies she and others have conducted to understand the perspectives of African American and other underrepresented-gifted students about their school experiences. In a 2008 study, Ford and colleagues sampled approximately 200 Black gifted and high-achieving students to discuss their curricular experiences. Students' comments to researchers "revealed their displeasure with and disinterest in the traditional, mono-cultural, Eurocentric, color-blind curriculum offered in their schools, AP classes, and/or gifted programs" (p. 142). These bright students knew when their curriculum was superficial, irrelevant, and lacked an appropriate level of challenge.

Numerous other scholars have reported on the impact of "deficit thinking" that can cause teachers to lower curricular expectations for students of color and English language learners (Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Perry, Hilliard, & Steele, 2003). When a teacher's deficit thinking encounters high cognitive ability in students of color, the result is an even greater injustice and loss of achievement potential that can make these students justifiably angry and disillusioned with the process of formal education. According to Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, "to doubt the worth of minority students' achievement when they succeed is really only to present another face of the prejudice that would deny them a chance to even try" (2013, p. 25). These under-challenged and frustrated young people are more likely to drop out of high school and/or turn to other activities that provide more stimulation and personal challenge (Ford, 2011).

Another phenomenon of concern to educators is the likelihood of culturally diverse gifted students internalizing this deficit perspective themselves. Research by Fordham and Ogbu (1986) and other current scholars (Ford, Harris, Tyson & Trotman, 2001; Steele, 2011; Suskind, 2010) reflected this as a reality for some bright students of color who purposefully underachieve because they feel pressure to avoid "acting white" and may succumb to stereotype threat which significantly depresses their test scores on measures of academic achievement. They may intentionally avoid gifted education or other challenging academic activities. This deplorable waste of academic talent in the fastest growing segment of the nation's school-age population is a serious drain on the future of the United States. Gallagher (1964) stated,

Failure to help the gifted child is a societal tragedy, the extent of which is difficult to measure but which is surely great. How can we measure the sonata unwritten, the curative drug undiscovered, the absence of political insight? They are the difference between what we are and what we could be as a society (p. 9).

The conceptual basis or cause of underrepresentation lies in systemic inequalities of educational opportunity for culturally diverse students present in American gifted education. This complex and persistent issue can be understood as a result of two major contributing factors. First, teachers are underprepared in both multicultural education and gifted education. Due to deficit thinking, they may not even know these students exist, let alone have adequate training to meet their academic and cultural needs (Ford, 2011; Ford et al., 2001; Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Tomlinson, et al., 2004). Second, gifted education policies, resources, curriculum, and programming options vary so widely that little accountability for their proper implementation exists (Kettler, Russell & Peryear, 2015; McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012; NAGC, 2015; Zirkel, 2005). When these students are ignored, under-challenged, or even blatantly discriminated against by exclusion from testing or participation in gifted programs there is almost no legal recourse for parents and other advocates. However, legal action was recently taken against a school district in Illinois that was found guilty of intentional discrimination against gifted Latinx students (Ford, 2014) and forced to completely revolutionize their gifted education policies of identification and placement. This recent precedent may force many more districts to closely examine their gifted programs for potential discrimination. When school districts and teachers learn how to reject deficit thinking and instead set high expectations for their diverse gifted students using culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum (Gay, 2010), a real possibility might exist to close the perpetual achievement gap in American education.

Methodology

This qualitative study makes use of the narrative inquiry research tradition (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016). Qualitative methods enable me to examine in-depth the

complexity of teachers' experiences with curriculum development for multicultural gifted students. Narrative inquiry in particular offers a unique experiential lens to further understand the complicated balance of designing appropriately challenging curriculum for students who may often be viewed from a deficit paradigm based solely on their ethnic or linguistic background.

Research Questions

There are two central questions guiding this research and the first central question is supported by two sub-questions.

1) What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with culturally diverse urban gifted students?

1a) What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with culturally responsive pedagogy in gifted education programs?

1b) What are gifted education professionals' experiences with individualizing curriculum for culturally diverse students?

2) What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with state-level policy directives pertaining to culturally diverse students?

This research thus specifically addresses teacher accountability for providing culturally responsive curriculum for diverse gifted students in urban classrooms. The purpose of this narrative inquiry research is to explore the complex experiential stories of gifted education professionals, to discover the "secret stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) of these classrooms, and to understand how social justice and equity factors may be accounted for in statewide policies, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) development, or in the enacted curriculum for gifted learners.

Selection of Participants/Co-Researchers

For this study, the sampling frame contains public elementary, middle, and high schools representing 57 different school districts located within the same nine-county bi-state metropolitan region. Schools beyond the boundaries of this nine-county region, private schools, and schools that offer no services for gifted students are outside the sampling frame for this study.

I began by using publicly available data to identify a pool of potential participants. I decided to call my participants “co-researchers” to honor their voices and unique contributions to the study. In order to select research co-researchers representing the most information-rich cases, I contacted two urban districts with high concentrations of students from traditionally underrepresented cultural groups. Then I selected four gifted education professionals serving culturally diverse populations who were willing to participate in the narrative study. In order to compare teachers' experiences of widely varying state policies in gifted education, two professionals taught in State B and two taught in State A. This sampling strategy is identified as "comparison-focused sampling" according to Patton's (2015) list of purposeful qualitative sampling techniques.

Data Collection

I conducted three 60-minute digitally-recorded interviews with each co-researcher. A qualitative interview is described by Creswell (2013) as open-ended and semi-structured to allow participants to fully describe their experiences. The first interview focused on the co-researcher's biography (Kim, 2016) to begin developing trust and rapport between the gifted professional and myself. The second interview concentrated on the co-researcher's teaching philosophy to understand her personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as

it is enacted in the multicultural gifted curriculum. While conducting these interviews, I also recorded my own answers to the interview questions in a journal to compare stories from my experiences teaching culturally diverse gifted students.

I also scheduled two classroom observations with each co-researcher. The purpose of these observations was to provide a more complete description of the context for the teachers' experiences. Creswell defined qualitative observations as "the act of noting a phenomenon in the field setting through the five senses of the observer" (2013, p. 166). Each classroom observation was one class period in duration. Each observation focused on the same group of students to provide the most complete narrative possible regarding the multicultural curriculum as the teachers developed it with a particular group of students. During the two observations, my role was mainly "observer as participant" (Creswell, 2013). Classroom observation data was collected in the form of field notes and field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as well as classroom artifacts and visual data for context-building (Kim, 2016). These visual data were collected to clarify or illuminate curricular stories. They included photocopies of student handouts and classroom visual aids, but did not include photos of students, teachers, or other people. The third 60-minute in-depth interview took place after the classroom observations and preliminary data analysis to allow participants to confirm or clarify narrative observations.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using methods of narrative inquiry as described by Kim (2016) as well as Clandinin and Connelly (2000). Specifically, I analyzed interview transcriptions, classroom observation field notes, and other collected artifacts to identify common narrative themes that arise within the data and integrate them narratively into a

collection of classroom stories that effectively compare and contrast the unique experiences of each co-researcher through the use of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and a socio-cultural approach (Grbich, 2013). Researcher positioning and analysis of potential bias were also an important component of my narrative inquiry data analysis.

Limitations, Validity, and Ethical Considerations

Qualitative methodologists have disagreed for decades about how to measure and report standards of validation and evaluation (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). One thing most agree on, however, is that qualitative researchers must carefully consider each of these issues and find a theoretically sound way to manage them during research design, data collection, and data analysis. This section will outline the limitations and delimitations of the narrative inquiry, explain how I ensured validity and credibility of the findings, as well as define the ethical considerations that need to be addressed.

Limitations

This research examines the experiences of gifted education professionals who work with culturally diverse students. As a narrative inquiry study, it has some limitations that are common to many other types of qualitative research. Rossman and Rallis (2003) reminded researchers that no study is perfect and that all qualitative findings should be considered tentative and conditional “given the extraordinary complexity of the social world we want to learn more about” (p. 135). The conditionality of the conclusions based on a small number of participants is the first limitation of this study. The research investigates the in-depth and complex narrative experiences of four individual teachers as they attempt to design and implement multicultural curriculum with gifted students.

The second potential limitation of this study is another one common to all qualitative inquiry and involves the imperfect nature of interviews and observations as analytical tools (deMarrais, 2004). Co-researchers may not have accurately described all experiences and the researcher could observe only a portion of the classroom interactions. These limitations were ameliorated by using multiple interviews combined with in-class observations.

The third possible limitation of this study is potential researcher bias. Narrative researchers interpret stories told by participants and may develop strong personal relationships with participants over the extensive time period of the study. In fact, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) reminded researchers that developing a trusting relationship with participants is key and that it is important to “keep the relational at the heart of what we are considering” (p. 175). The researcher’s interest in and subsequent questioning about particular topics could cause participants to examine them more closely (Chan & Schlein, 2012; 2017), which is sometimes understood as an act of resonance (Conle, 1996; Schlein, 2010). Participant responses may cause the researcher to change long-held assumptions, which is known as reflexivity (Kim, 2016; Patton, 2015). A qualitative researcher must be mindful of how his/her own assumptions can affect the findings of a research study. In order to limit researcher bias, Patton (2015) recommended that a qualitative inquirer should “be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and economic origins of one’s own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews” (p. 70). I have incorporated here clear descriptions of my relevant experiences and assumptions to position my findings and help the reader understand my perspective and voice. I also recorded my responses to the interview questions and analyzed my own stories.

Delimitations

I have designed this study as an exploration of teacher experiences in a multicultural gifted classroom. Therefore, it does not directly address the stories and experiences of the multicultural gifted students themselves, nor does it extend beyond the walls of a unique and specific classroom environment. In many schools, where gifted education programming is not officially provided, classroom teachers may be enacting similar multicultural curriculum for their bright and high-achieving students, but these classrooms are outside the scope of this particular study. Likewise, many general education professionals (especially in the social sciences) may be designing and implementing multicultural curriculum for all students, but this study does not address the experiences of these teachers.

Validity Through Crystallization

Validity is a complex but important issue for qualitative researchers. Many methodologists point to different terms such as credibility, authenticity, transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as they understand validity to be a more positivist term. Eisner (1991) urged researchers to pursue a convergence of multiple types of evidence that build credibility and confidence. Specific to narrative inquiry, Reissman described narrative findings as “situated truth” noting that “the validity of a project should be assessed from within the situated perspective and traditions that frame it” (2008, p. 185). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) wrote that narratives should have authenticity as well as an explanatory and invitational quality. They noted that researchers should not try to force this language of narrative criteria into language that was created for a different, more quantitative type of research. They also noted the importance of “researcher wakefulness” (p. 181), requiring that

all narrative inquirers must remain alert to the potential ramifications of design decisions and interpretation.

In this narrative study, I primarily address validity concerns by examining participant experiences from multiple angles. I conduct analysis of narratives told by participants during interviews, observations and notes from classroom experiences, and analysis of documents, which may confirm or elaborate on interview and observational findings. This process is known as “crystallization” (Ellingson, 2009) and replaces the more positivist concept of triangulation. Patton explains that the most effective way to utilize crystallization is to “be absolutely clear about what you did (and did not do) in producing your manuscript” (2015, p. 690). Though other researchers may not agree with all my findings, thorough description and rationale for design choices will make it difficult for this work to be dismissed as careless or random.

This study incorporates several additional methods to ensure credibility of the findings. The first is member-checking, which is also known as participant validation (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I incorporate this process into the third and final in-depth interview, where co-researchers were asked to examine preliminary data analysis to confirm, correct, or elaborate on the narrative findings.

Secondly, I spent time conducting observations in the field. Clandinin and Connelly described the observation process as “walking into the midst of stories” (2000, p. 63). The experiences and narratives I have attempted to understand took place in a context that was not bound by the limited times of scheduled interviews and classroom observations. As a narrative inquirer, it was important to spend consistent in the field, but also to understand that

no amount of time would ever tell the complete story because it has begun before the researcher arrived and will continue after the researcher departs.

A third credibility consideration I incorporate is rich, thick description. According to Geertz (1973), qualitative analysis should be guided by detailed descriptions of setting, interactions, and patterns that become evident during data collection. This thick description makes it possible for readers to understand how I arrived at the narrative interpretations, which constitute the findings of my study. In a seminal discussion of qualitative methods, Lincoln and Guba (1985) contended that since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of validity is sufficient to establish the reliability. Patton (2015) also stated that reliability is a consequence of the validity in a qualitative study. Validity and reliability can only be judged by the readers when the researcher presents a thorough and thick description of the participants' experiences as well as the design and methods decisions that occur throughout the research process.

The final step in ensuring credibility of the narrative findings was to clarify my own positions and biases as a researcher from the beginning. Creswell (2013) noted that qualitative researchers should "comment on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that will likely shape the interpretation". I have included several sections on my personal assumptions and beliefs into the theoretical framework section of this chapter and plan to continue addressing how they may shape potential research findings, while attempting to remain open to the likelihood that participants' experiences, beliefs, and assumptions may be quite different from my own.

Ethical Considerations

The research has a relatively low amount of ethical risk compared to the benefits it provides. The co-researchers are simply reporting about their experiences teaching gifted education in the schools they work in. They are the most knowledgeable sources of this information. Co-researchers were asked to select their own pseudonyms, which were used as a substitute for their individual names. Fictitious school labels were substituted for school names in all written reporting. All co-researchers were also given informed consent letters and the option to refuse or discontinue participation at any time.

The Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) provided a description of the standard requirements for any researchers who conduct studies with human participants. These include respect of persons, beneficence, and justice. The consent letter provided to participants (see Appendix A) clearly explains the purpose of the study and all benefits and risks involved. After I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) courses, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of my university was responsible for verifying that all ethical concerns regarding the protection of human participants were satisfied in this research.

This study uses a purposive comparison-focused sampling design, which does not allow participation from every possible school within the sampling frame. This could present an ethical concern related to equity of representation. However, the justification for comparison-focused sampling is well supported in qualitative methodology (Patton, 2015). It allows the researcher to select subjects based on particular characteristics that may contribute to the variables being studied (Mertens, 2014; Patton, 2015). For this reason, schools with no

gifted programs are left out of the study. On the other hand, the comparison-focused sample does include schools whose populations are historically underrepresented in gifted education research (schools with a large diverse population and schools with a large proportion of students from lower socio-economic statuses) because these schools do have some type of gifted program.

During the qualitative analysis of the research, there is a potential for the researcher's personal bias to affect the outcomes of the narrative interpretation process. The qualitative procedures to ensure credibility described above (such as crystallization, member-checks, thick description, and researcher positioning) are accepted ways to lessen the effects of researcher personal bias.

Chapter Summary

This narrative inquiry research explores the experiential stories of gifted education professionals who work in urban classrooms with culturally diverse students. Within this chapter, I have introduced the phenomenon of underrepresentation and its impacts on the curricular experiences of culturally diverse students. I have also outlined my own personal beliefs and assumptions as well as the theories that support this specific type of research. Finally, the methodology of the study was introduced with a description of potential limitations and ethical considerations. When educators and researchers are better able to understand how social justice and equity factors are accounted for in statewide policy or in the enacted curriculum for gifted learners, this may point the way to an end to underrepresentation.

Overview of Dissertation

This dissertation includes eight total chapters. Following this introduction, the reader will find a theoretical framework chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to explore thoroughly, the foundational theoretical understandings that were introduced in chapter one. Three groups of theories will be highlighted including the understanding of curriculum as experience, culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy, and finally stories and storying in education.

In Chapter 3, the reader will find a review of current literature related to underrepresentation in gifted education, culturally responsive curriculum, and the complex process of defining and identifying giftedness. This review focuses specifically on qualitative inquiries whenever possible to provide a backdrop of recent and relevant work in the field of gifted education. The methodology of the research is described in Chapter 4. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the qualitative procedures used for sampling, data collection, and analysis. The narrative data analysis begins in Chapter 5. I introduce the context of the narratives through researcher positioning, describing the co-researchers and uncovering the sacred stories of gifted education policy in both states. In Chapter 6, I continue to analyze the stories of each co-researcher's experience by examining four narrative themes that answer the primary research question. In these narratives, I highlight the potential secret classroom stories of individual teachers and their students. Chapter 7 considers the meaning of each co-researcher's experience according to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework and discusses the implications and significance of this narrative inquiry. Finally, Chapter 8 presents a summary of the findings and describes their connections to current research, policy and practice.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the theoretical framework that provides a foundation for the research. I explore here three groups of theories supporting this research. The first and primary line of theory is the understanding of curriculum as experience. Next, I will explore the theoretical work on culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy. Specifically, I will investigate how these practices fit into gifted education curriculum theory. Finally, the narrative inquiry key to unlocking the mysteries of teacher experiences can be found in the research on stories and storying in education. I outline below how the heart of my research lies in the intersection of these three aspects of education theory and research.

Curriculum as Experience

For many educators, standards and tests define the curriculum (Sleeter & Carmona, 2017). Some may also understand curriculum perhaps as a course syllabus, a list of books, or even as the teacher-edition of a textbook (Walker & Soltis, 2009). In this section, I assert that curriculum can be understood as the combined experiences of students and teachers interacting with each other in a particular setting over time (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). First, I will explore how curriculum theorists understand student experiences with curriculum. Then I will describe how teacher experiences are also understood to be part of the curriculum.

Curriculum as Student Experience

Early in the 20th century, Bobbitt (1918/2013) described curriculum as a “series of experiences” (p. 13). He proposed that, “The curriculum of the schools will aim at those objectives that are not sufficiently attained as a result of the general undirected experience”

(p. 14). Subsequently, progressive curriculum scholars examined the types of experiences that were leading to the most beneficial outcomes for different types of learners.

In Dewey's seminal work on experience and education (1938/1998) he explained the idea that all effective curriculum must begin with an understanding of experience.

Specifically, he noted that all studies must begin with ordinary experiences. After establishing this starting point for curriculum, Dewey directed educators to select learning activities that ensure the development of these ordinary experiences into a deeper and more complex form (p. 87).

It is critical, especially for education professionals who work with diverse learners who have been identified as gifted, to develop curriculum that begins with the knowledge and experiences that students bring to the classroom, then expand them into a deeper and richer understanding of the world. In a separate, earlier writing (1897/2004) Dewey insisted that, "The only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers...the child's own instincts and powers furnish the material and give the starting-point for all education" (p. 33). Connelly and Clandinin (1996) extended this idea when they proposed that, "curriculum can become one's life course of action. It can mean the paths we have followed and the paths we intend to follow" (p. 1).

For many scholarly readers, familiar with progressive curriculum theories, these ideas may not seem groundbreaking (Hayes, 2006). However, when practitioners apply them to gifted children, especially those from diverse cultural backgrounds, the implications might be quite revolutionary (Ford & Grantham, 2003). If Dewey (1897/2004) can be taken at his word, curriculum planning for gifted students should not begin with grade-level standards, frequently tested concepts, or even a published curriculum written for gifted learners. It

should begin with a clear understanding of the child's own unique strengths, experiences, and interests. Hansen, Anderson, Frank, and Nieuwejaar (2008) further explained the pedagogical implications of these theories, "For Dewey, educators should strive to engage students' minds rather than just their capacities for absorption" (p. 451). For bright learners, who absorb new information more quickly and easily than their typical peers, their effortless capacity for long-term absorption might be the only ability a general education teacher can attempt to occupy. Gifted education professionals must start their curriculum where the traditional curriculum ends, engaging the bright minds in their care beyond grade-level expectations and into the long shadow of each learner's unique potentiality.

By contrast, the work of Tyler (1949/2013) began a focus in curriculum theory that has influenced over half a century of curriculum design away from the individual needs of each child. The Tyler Rationale asks curriculum planners to consider the purposes, experiences, organization, and assessment of educational objectives. Though Tyler clearly emphasized the need to consider student experiences, his work has continually been used to develop curriculum based on standardized behavioral objectives for all students (Null, 2008; Sleeter & Carmona, 2017). This type of one-size-fits-all approach may be both practical and efficient for curriculum writers and policy-makers, but often ignores the demonstrated needs of unique learners such as those from underrepresented cultures or those with specific academic gifts.

Schubert (2008) defined the experienced curriculum as distinct from both the intended and the taught curriculum. The intended curriculum fits the most widely accepted educational understandings about standards, accountability, and clear measurable learning goals. Meanwhile the taught curriculum (uncovered when teachers share their stories) is less

precise and more context-sensitive. Furthermore, the “experienced curriculum expands attention to thoughts, meanings, and feelings of students as they encounter it” (p. 409). In a synthesis of writings by progressive authors, Hansen et al. (2008) summarized the most important aspects of curriculum as experience. They proposed that these visionary writers and educators “envision education as both a transforming social institution and as a dynamic individual experience that can liberate persons to realize their various gifts and callings” (p. 449).

This transformative power of curriculum as experience is not limited to students only. Teachers also experience the curriculum alongside their learners. Schubert and Ayers (1994) described the experiences of teachers with the curriculum as they worked to improve their practice. The following subsection will explore how curriculum can also be understood as teacher experience.

Curriculum as Teacher Experience

As theorists explore the idea of curriculum as experience, inevitably they must consider the impact of teachers on the student experience of curriculum. Teachers’ planning, preparation, and daily decisions regarding curriculum have direct effects on the way curriculum is experienced by the students in their charge (Hattie, 2003). As teachers experience the curriculum alongside the students, they may make hundreds of daily adjustments based on their own knowledge of the curriculum and students’ needs. This autonomy and professional decision-making capacity of teachers has been highlighted by scholars for decades, even as standardization of curriculum has increased (Apple, 1986, 2008; Eisner, 1967; Sleeter & Carmona, 2017). Clandinin and Connelly (1992) maintained “the teacher is an integral part of the curriculum constructed and enacted in the classrooms”

(p. 363) and that “an account of teachers’ and students’ lives over time *is the curriculum*” (p. 365, emphasis added).

Pinar (2004) offered another way to understand teacher experiences as part of the curriculum with the abstract concept of “currere” (p. 35), a verb from the same Latin root as curriculum, which means to run the course. For Pinar, currere is the self-reflexive autobiographical study of one’s own educational experiences for the intended purpose of analyzing and synthesizing them into a more coherent whole. “Stated simply, currere seeks to understand the contribution academic studies make to one’s understanding of his or her life” (p. 36). Educators practicing currere understand that each of their own experiences as students and teachers combine to create a new and different understanding of the world. Through this “complicated conversation with oneself” (p. 35) even the most experienced teachers can continue to hone their pedagogical skills year after year.

Westbury (2008) further presented a research-based alternative to the widely embraced Tyler Rationale (1949/2013) for curriculum development. He noted that practitioners, who receive curriculum and curricular reform directives, must interpret these “in the light of their situated presuppositions and understandings. The same text can be read and understood in very different ways” (p. 50). Educational hierarchies often place classroom teachers at the bottom with the least amount of power to affect curricular reform or change, while Westbury seemed to understand that teachers – and their experiences – really matter.

Also approaching traditional curriculum development from a critical perspective, Apple (1986/2013) wrote about the role of class and gender related to teachers’ own ability to control the content and activities in their classroom. Due to the increasing standardization of curriculum and the intensive production of curricular resources designed to be “teacher-

proof” (p. 170) administrators, academics, and curriculum developers (predominantly upper-class males) increasingly viewed professional teachers (predominantly middle-class females) as mere technicians. Teachers resisted this intensifying control in subtle ways by exercising their own autonomy within classrooms. As well, Apple (2008) concluded that both students and teachers actively “receive, mediate, reinterpret, and sometimes reject the curriculum” (p. 27). Freire (1970/2013) further advocated a similar concept by writing that effective curriculum was more like a dialogue where students and teachers acted together as “co-investigators” (p. 163), each bringing valuable prior knowledge and experiences to the discussion.

Again, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) offered the idea that “curriculum is something experienced in situations” (p. 6). Both teachers and learners are present in the situation of a classroom, each bringing their own sets of stories, beliefs, and experiences to the table. When researchers set out to make meaning through the process of school, they must begin by recognizing the impact of their previous experiences. “Where we have been and where we are going interact to make meaning of the situations in which we find ourselves” (p. 9). Throughout their prolific writing on the subject, these authors maintained that teachers’ personal and practical experiences would necessarily become part of the curriculum as it is enacted in the classroom and experienced by students. Therefore, my own personal experiences as a student and a teacher in urban gifted programs influence my practice as a teacher and my interpretations as a researcher.

This section has highlighted over a century of scholarly work that explains curriculum as both student and teacher experience. These theories support my research because they describe curriculum as much more than a set of standards, textbook, or pacing guide. This

broader, more complex understanding of curriculum as experience requires researchers to examine the realities of daily classroom interactions and consider how individuals create meaning in a school setting. This overarching theoretical lens is essentially the basis for each of the next two sections. First, I will begin to examine how culturally responsive curriculum theories are relevant to interpreting teacher and student experiences in the gifted education classroom. Then the final section will explore the value of stories as an analytical tool for illuminating these experiences.

Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Pedagogy in Gifted Education

Gifted education is a broad curricular concept that encompasses many different types of educational programming intended to appropriately challenge students with some type of high ability (Rimm & Davis, 2004). There is no federal mandate for these programs, so services for gifted students vary widely in both quantity and quality with additional variation in levels of teacher accountability for designing and implementing curriculum (Kettler, Russell & Peryear, 2015; McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012; NAGC, 2015; Zirkel, 2005). This section will briefly introduce the current theoretical understanding of how culturally diverse students are often left out of traditional gifted programs, then focus on the culturally responsive curriculum theory that provides a vehicle for reversing this persistent problem. Finally, this section will highlight theoretically proposed ways that gifted education professionals can support diverse students through culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy.

Giftedness and Curricular Underrepresentation

For the purposes of this dissertation, I define giftedness according to the federal definition from the recent Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. Many states and districts follow this federal definition.

Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.” [Title VII, Part A, Definition 27. (2015)]

Though the above definition implies that all students who demonstrate high ability are considered “gifted,” certain groups of students have been excluded from these programs for decades due to systemic patterns of bias and discrimination (Ford, 2010). African American students, Latinx students, speakers of languages other than English, and students from low-income families are drastically underrepresented in gifted education programs across the nation (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Harris & Ford, 1999). This continues to be one of the leading concerns in the field of gifted education (Peters & Engerrand, 2016). I will consider the empirical studies of this phenomenon more thoroughly in the following chapter, while this section now focuses on theoretical explanations for underrepresentation and how culturally responsive pedagogy offers a way for teachers and students to overcome the hurdles of discrimination that restrict access to traditional gifted programming.

Barriers for Diverse Students

Ford (2010) attributed the disparity of culturally diverse students in gifted and talented programs to four categorical barriers:

(a) lack of teacher referral, (b) students’ differential performance on traditional intelligence and/or achievement tests, (c) stagnant and outdated policies and procedures for labeling and placement, and (d) social-emotional concerns and

eventual decisions of their Black and Hispanic students and their primary caregivers about gifted education participation. (p. 32)

Ford contended that these roadblocks are embedded in larger social justice problems, related to curriculum and pedagogical practices that are discriminatory. A connected problem is that of appropriate curriculum to address the needs of culturally diverse gifted students who *are* participating in gifted education programs (Scott, 2014).

In addition, the impact of "deficit thinking" has been noted as causing teachers to lower curricular expectations for students of color and English language learners (Banks & Banks, 2004; Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Perry, Hilliard, & Steele, 2003). Deficit thinking can be defined as a misinterpretation of cultural differences that causes educators to presume a lack of ability in diverse students (Ford et al., 2001). When this deficit thinking encounters high ability in students of color, the result is an even greater injustice and loss of achievement potential that can make these students understandably indignant and disillusioned with the process of formal education. This type of deficit thinking can even occur within gifted programs, which are designed to focus on strengths. These under-challenged and stymied students are more likely to turn to other activities outside the classroom that provide more stimulation and personal challenge (Ford, 2011).

Valenzuela (1999/2013) offered another way to understand this problem. After studying immigrant children and youth in schools, she came to view their education as "subtractive" (p. 292). They entered the American education system with a culture and language that was misunderstood at best, but more often disparaged by teachers and school leaders. In order to assimilate successfully, they were required to shed their language, traditions, prior academic successes and even the correct pronunciation of their names. Only after this subtraction, could the immigrant students begin at the very bottom of the classroom

hierarchy in the ESL or special education programs. Valenzuela wrote that “time-honored practices make it virtually impossible for ESL youth to make a vertical move from the ESL to the honors track” (p. 295) even for those who attended a prestigious *secundaria* (a selective academic middle school) in Mexico.

Using Curriculum to Break Down Barriers

Culturally responsive pedagogical practices (Gay, 2010) are one successful way to reverse deficit thinking and subtractive schooling. These strategies raise expectations for diverse students (Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009) while simultaneously providing caring and support (Valenzuela, 1999/2013). This type of pedagogy challenges the notion that culturally diverse students are automatically "at-risk" for low school achievement. Instead, it views each student as possessing "funds of knowledge," which may be different from those of the dominant culture but are not inferior (Moll & González, 2004). Culturally responsive educators learn to build on these strengths, engaging students in meaningful and culturally responsive academic activities. Many scholars (Ford, 2011; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Brown, 2008; Tomlinson et al., 2004) asserted that this type of challenging curriculum that is both multicultural and oriented toward social justice can actually benefit all students and not just those who are gifted or from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Often, the responsibility for creating and implementing this type of multicultural curriculum falls to individual teachers, who may or may not have appropriate training to do so (Howard, 2016). Teachers working in urban schools with a diverse population of students “are faced with the challenges of acknowledging in a positive way, diverse cultures, but many are doing so without a professional knowledge-base, or the personal experience of having themselves lived school contexts of this kind” (Chan, 2006/2013, p. 311).

Evaluating Gifted Multicultural Curriculum

Banks and Banks (2004) described their model of multicultural education as comprised of four approaches: *contributions*, *additive*, *transformational*, and *social action*. When teachers use the contributions approach, the traditional curriculum is supplemented with learning about holidays and heroes of various cultural groups during brief isolated activities. The additive approach is taken when teachers “add” to the standard curriculum through the study of an additional book, special project, or unit while the underlying structure of the curriculum remains unchanged. In both the contributions and the additive approaches, diverse groups continue to be viewed as separate, and they are never fully explored or understood. Most teachers who claim to be implementing multicultural curriculum are really doing so at one of these two most basic levels (Banks & Banks, 2004).

The next level of the Banks and Banks (2004) model is the transformational approach. This type of curriculum is actually transformed to reflect the perspectives of various cultural groups and requires students to analyze content from these perspectives. Banks and Banks’s final level is the social action approach, which incorporates direct examination of social problems and challenges students to take actions that begin to resolve these problems.

Additionally, Bloom’s (1956) Taxonomy is ubiquitous in education and has well-known names for the increasingly complex levels of thinking required for academic tasks: *knowledge*, *comprehension*, *application*, *analysis*, *synthesis*, and *evaluation*. “When used correctly, Bloom’s Taxonomy allows teachers to use a variety of activities related to the same academic content and assess students’ ability to complete assignments using various levels of critical thinking and problem-solving” (Scott, 2014, p. 164).

The Ford-Harris Matrix (Ford, 2011; Ford & Harris, 2000; Scott, 2014) merges two well-established hierarchical curriculum models into a framework designed to support the needs of culturally diverse gifted students. This matrix plots the four multicultural education approaches of Banks and Banks (2004) against the six levels of critical thinking identified in Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy. Ford and Harris (2000) explained that the goals of multicultural education and gifted education are complimentary and can be combined by educators in ways that provide an optimal curricular experience for all students. Like other scholars, they contended, "students of any age and from any racial group can benefit from multicultural education" and likewise that "all students can think at higher levels and in more sophisticated ways" (p. 7). The resulting Ford-Harris Matrix is comprised of 24 cells based on the six levels of Bloom by the four levels of Banks and Banks. This matrix is one example of how elegantly the theories of culturally responsive curriculum fit together with theories from gifted education. Teachers who understand the importance of developing appropriately challenging curriculum can also create valid multicultural educational experiences by sharpening this focus on student needs.

Kliebard (1995) wrote that "Curriculum in any time and place becomes the site of a battleground where the fight is over whose values and beliefs will achieve the legitimation and the respect that acceptance into the national discourse provides" (p. 250-251). Urban gifted education professionals, responsible for enacting curriculum with particular groups of students, have the opportunity to seek out challenging activities for gifted students, while simultaneously incorporating lessons that legitimize and respect their students' cultural values. This is not an easy task, but using the Ford-Harris Matrix is one way to make it possible. Individual teachers in diverse classrooms struggle daily with this perennial

curriculum dilemma, especially when they are still working to gain a deeper understanding of their students' cultural backgrounds. The teachers' classroom stories of success, defeat, and especially perseverance with a difficult challenge can inspire other educators to make positive changes for even more students.

This section has described the present theoretical understanding of culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy in gifted education. It specifically addressed the possible causes and effects of underrepresentation as well as strategies to recruit and empower culturally diverse gifted students. Culturally responsive curriculum theories can be directly applied in gifted education to benefit all students (Ford, 2011). Teachers of diverse gifted learners may apply these theories in different ways depending on their unique personal knowledge and experiences with different cultures, pedagogical styles, and curriculum content. The purpose of this research is to explore these complex experiences through teacher and classroom stories.

Stories and Storying

The knowledge and pedagogical ability of teachers has been proven to be the most important factor for student success across subject areas and age groups (Hattie, 2003). As Clandinin and Connelly (1992) argued: "the teacher is an integral part of the curriculum constructed and enacted in classrooms" (p. 363). Effective urban teachers are responsible for influencing powerful curricular change. Stories of these inspiring educators and their students provide a glimpse of what is possible in diverse educational environments (Carger, 1996; Kozol, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Phillion, 2002). Unfortunately, these types of narratives are missing from the literature on professionals in

gifted education. The final section of this chapter will focus on the theoretical reasons why these teacher narratives can be so powerful and consequential.

Jackson's seminal text *Life in Classrooms* (1968) began to highlight the power of teacher stories for understanding the peculiar context of schooling. This researcher collected stories of teaching by observing in elementary classrooms. With Jackson's work, researchers started to understand the "hidden" aspects of curriculum such as crowds, praise, and power that were not apparent in other studies of student performance variables, demographics, or even teacher attitude surveys. The stories that researchers during this period were beginning to tell about classroom life were written with the teacher's experience as the starting point for understanding.

Rowland (1984) invited teachers to begin sharing classroom experiences, interpretations, and educational values through story, "with the confidence that we have something to say that is significant and that our experience is valid" (p. 159). Kim (2016) further explained, "Narrative educational researchers purport to bring the lived experiences of teacher and students to the forefront as a way to reshape the views on education" (p. 19). These stories can challenge the dominant stories of standardization, because they reveal universal themes even as they describe the particularities of individual experience (Carger, 1996; Corwin, 2001).

Bruner (1991) laid out 10 features of narrative, which helped psychologists understand why its influence is so powerful and pervasive for human beings across time and culture. Coles (1989) introduced readers to the power of stories and narrative to transform educational environments by sharing his own stories as a student, teacher, medical intern, and researcher. He reminds researchers to consider the "immediacy that a story can possess, as it

connects so persuasively with human experience” (p. 205). One way that stories have helped shape understanding of teacher experiences with curriculum is through the concept of personal practical knowledge.

Narrative inquirers describe teachers’ unique set of pedagogical skills as "personal practical knowledge" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). This is "not something objective and independent of the teacher to be learned and transmitted but, rather, is the sum total of the teacher's experiences" (Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997). “Personal knowledge” (Lampert, 1985) is unique to each individual human being. “Practical knowledge” (Elbaz, 1981) is wisdom gained through practice or experience. As frequently described in literature on teachers, professional educators are called on to make many countless small and large decisions daily regarding their curriculum and students. Over time, they learn from those decisions and incorporate this knowledge into their practice in new ways. This type of knowledge “is a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions for the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25).

Personal practical knowledge is not a course to be taken in pre-service teacher training. It is also practically impossible to quantify into standards for teacher evaluations – though some have tried (Marzano, 2003). It is individual, unique, and context-sensitive. The specialized combination of pedagogical skills, personal experiences, and content knowledge that make one teacher excel in a certain classroom environment do not necessarily transfer to other teachers, classrooms, or schools, even within the same community. This is why quantitative studies of general teacher effectiveness are very difficult to apply back to individual teachers in real classroom spaces. This particularistic and context-dependent phenomenon of “great teaching” is a human capability that defies categorization and

numerical value, yet it is easy to recognize when experienced (Winters, 2012). Stories of these remarkable individuals can take readers inside the experience of another's classroom world and reveal some of the reality of life in schools.

Greene highlighted the significance of seeing schools small and seeing big (1995). When researchers see schools and the people in them as small, they are examining events from a detached perspective, concerned with patterns and trends. Seeing small is "primarily a technical view" (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 162). This type of research is most often conducted on the problem of underrepresentation in gifted programs (Kettler et al., 2015; NAGC, 2015; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Seeing big, however, means to "see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening" (Greene, 1995, p. 10). When researchers see teachers and students as big, they can better understand how individual experiences lead to conflicts, solutions, and decisions that are magnified in the broader systemic patterns. Greene explains, "The vision that sees things big brings us in close contact with details and with particularities that cannot be reduced to statistics or even to the measurable" (1995, p. 10). Clandinin et al. (2006) described how researchers can "shift their lenses between seeing small and seeing big" (p. 164) to first consider the statistical patterns evident in prior research and then inquire about the stories of real people who are represented in these numbers. This research is one attempt to shift the lens of gifted education research in underrepresentation from seeing small to seeing big.

Types of Stories

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) defined three specific types of stories that are told about classroom activities, sacred stories, cover stories, and secret stories. "Sacred stories" are the official version of classroom events as presented in formal curriculum documents and

published school communication. Sacred stories are socially accepted as the ideal to which teachers and students strive. In the United States, the current educational environment demands that these sacred stories ubiquitously reference state and national standards, as well as measures of accountability for meeting these standards (Sleeter & Carmona, 2017). In the sacred narrative of standardization, teachers are considered deliverers of curriculum and not active participants in its creation (Apple, 1986/2013).

Most gifted education professionals are not bound so tightly to narratives of state and national standards because in this field accountability does not come in the guise of a standardized end-of-year test. Sacred stories in gifted education, take a different form. In the gifted classroom the sacred story requires “differentiation” (Tomlinson et al., 2003), “acceleration” (Rogers, 2004), and “independent study” (Rimm & Davis, 2004) to name a few nationally recognized practices. In some states, gifted education sacred stories are enshrined in state policy documents and regulations. In others, they may only surface at a yearly conference when gifted educators attend professional development together. Though these types of sacred stories may differ from general education, they are no less powerful.

"Cover stories" (Crites, 1979; Olson & Craig, 2005) are told by people to explain events in a socially acceptable way, especially when these events did not turn out exactly as one might have hoped. Cover stories may be told to colleagues, parents, or even researchers. These types of stories generally highlight the best events of daily classroom life, and usually reference the sacred, socially acceptable story in some way.

Weekly teacher and school newsletters, blogs, and many forms of educational journalism can be classified as “cover stories”. Students can also tell cover stories about events in their classrooms. Each type of cover story is curated with a sharp eye for self-

preservation. Details that reveal inherent tensions between students and teachers are frequently left out of cover stories (Clandinin et al., 2006), though these moments are often pivotal for understanding the true curriculum experience. Olson and Craig (2005) offered a concise explanation, “Cover stories, we believe, are constructed when incommensurable gaps or conflicts between individually and socially constructed narratives emerge” (p. 162). When teachers tell a cover story to a colleague or administrator it is a way to reconcile what actually happened with what they wish had happened. This telling involves a form of self-deception (Crites, 1979) that over time can contribute to stress, feelings of inauthenticity, alienation, teacher isolation, and systematic denial of what is truly known (Olson & Craig, 2005, p. 177). But most often, “Cover stories enable teachers whose teacher stories are marginalized by whatever the current story of school is to continue to practice and to sustain their teacher stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 25).

Unfortunately, cover stories are usually the type of stories gifted education professionals must tell. Colleagues in general education, administrators, and even friends outside of school often cannot understand how and why a gifted classroom operates as it does. The daily challenge of keeping up with a group of brilliant (but often unmotivated) young minds is an enigma to those who have not experienced it. Compounding the problem, people do not usually like to talk about a group from which they feel excluded. Like most teachers, gifted facilitators tell cover stories to find a socially acceptable way of relating to others about their work with students. They tell cover stories to protect themselves from more complex and difficult versions of the truth (Crites, 1979).

"Secret stories" reveal the real happenings of the classroom. Usually only the teacher and students are privy to these secret stories.

Classrooms are, for the most part, safe places, generally free from scrutiny, where teachers are free to live stories of practice. These lived stories are essentially secret ones. Furthermore, when these secret lived stories are told, they are, for the most part, told to other teachers in other secret places. (Clandinin and Connelly 1996, p. 25)

Secret teacher stories reveal uncertainty and tensions between their hopes and the complex reality of daily classroom experience (Clandinin et al., 2006). Particularly in a multicultural landscape (Phillion, 2002), secret stories can help teachers better understand the complicated variables interacting to create a curriculum for culturally diverse students. As a narrative inquirer and participant observer within gifted education classrooms, it is my goal to witness some of these secret stories and to analyze what they may reveal about teachers' personal practical knowledge and the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy for diverse gifted learners. Elbaz-Luwisch (2007) wrote that, “one of the tasks of narrative inquiry is to enable teachers’ secret stories to be heard” (p. 364).

Stories to Live By

As teachers find safe places to share their secret stories, they begin to benefit from the act of storying. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) realized that as teachers were telling stories of their classroom, their pedagogy, and their relationships with students, they were really talking about their own identity. These researchers described these broader identity narratives as “stories to live by” (p. 4). Clandinin et al. (2006) explained, “Stories to live by are multiple, fluid, and shifting...stories to live by offer possibilities for change through retelling and reliving” (p. 9).

Children also develop an identity and compose stories to live by that may or may not be in alignment with teachers’ stories. Narrative inquiry researchers have focused on these moments of tension and describe them as either competing stories or conflicting stories.

“Competing stories are understood as teachers’ stories that live in dynamic but positive tension with the plotlines of the dominant stories of school” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 8). These competing stories allow both teachers, students, and the broader school narrative to change and grow as new experiences occur and various types of school dilemmas are resolved. Conflicting stories, on the other hand, “are understood as teachers’ stories that collide with the dominant stories of school...teachers are unable to sustain them” (p. 8). Instead of telling these conflicting stories, professionals will often tell cover stories. Children experiencing conflicting stories may also tell cover stories or will continue to experience tension as their story to live by collides with the dominant teacher or school narrative. Narrative inquiry researchers want to “understand how children’s stories to live by were shaped and reshaped, storied and re-storied, through their interactions with teachers’ and administrators’ stories to live by” (p. 15).

In this research project, I am interested in the stories and experiences of teachers who work with culturally diverse gifted students. These students (and their stories to live by) do not fit the dominant narrative of school because their abilities far exceed those of their typical peers. In any gifted education program, there are multiple daily examples of tension between general education teachers and bright students. These tensions are compounded by the cultural differences that exist between many diverse urban gifted students and their mostly white teachers. The complex narratives that emerge from these places of tension will be analyzed according to theories explored in the following section.

The Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space

One of the most abstract elements of conducting narrative inquiry is beginning to think of narrative analysis within the “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” (Clandinin

& Connelly, 2000). It will be introduced here and explored again in Chapter 4 – Methodology. This analytical process allows researchers to explore the context and meaning of experiences beyond the present time and location of the telling. Each dimension measures along a continuum and together they situate stories uniquely in time, place, and relationship.

The first narrative dimension is the concept of time or *temporality*. Clandinin and Connelly wrote that, “temporality is a central feature... When we see an event, we think of it not as a thing happening at that moment but as an expression of something happening over time” (2000, p. 29). They went on to explain, “Any event, or thing has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied future” (2000, p. 29). When discussing Coles’ (1989) analysis of stories, they also clarified the essential chronological nature of narrative, “Stories are temporal, and it is through the media of time and space that people, things, and events reflect, and are seen to reflect, one another” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, p. 391). Narrative inquiry researchers in classrooms must be aware that each story they witness has a past that they were not present to observe, a present occurring in the moment, and a future that is yet to be played out. Interviews with participants, classroom observations, and careful notes can reveal only part of the greater continuing story being experienced in the life of each teacher and student.

The second dimension to consider is context or *situation*. This concept “attends to the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 51). It also refers to the culture of a particular setting. Of course, narratives must have a setting, and education research is often located in a classroom setting, but this concept of place, which is also known as a narrative landscape, helps researchers to consider how situations outside of the typical classroom setting might impact the stories

researchers hear and tell. Like time, situation lies along a metaphorical continuum from personal space or culture (home and family settings) to the shared classroom space, and to the out of classroom spaces within the larger school or community. While attempting to understand the personal practical knowledge of teachers, it is potentially illuminating to consider each of these types of situations, and how stories fit along the continuum of context (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). Narrative inquirers have incorporated the concept of culture into the understanding of landscape. This variable is significant in the research because in diverse urban classrooms, students' and teachers' stories may reference specific cultural ways of understanding. Teachers (and students) may experience something in the personal situation of home, which influences their stories in the classroom and out of classroom spaces. The reverse is also true, naturally, and the location of participants has an important bearing on their interpretation of each story they tell.

Finally, the third dimension is relationship or *interaction*. This aspect helps researchers examine the social context of stories as they are lived and told. The interaction continuum ranges from personal to social and is described as looking inward or looking outward. When storytellers look inward, they are examining their own internal conditions like "feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). For example, many education professionals describe feelings of frustration and self-doubt when lessons or activities do not go as planned. "Should I have done this lesson differently?" This is not a social criticism; its direction is inward and reflective. The opposite direction on the continuum of interaction is social or outward toward the environment and the existential conditions of life. For example, when a teacher observes, "The kids were pretty worked up after that assembly yesterday," her storytelling emphasis is outward.

Each of these three dimensions of narrative inquiry space is connected to Dewey's theories of experience (1938/1998), but Clandinin and Connelly emphasized his work as an "imaginative touchstone" (2000, p. 50). It is also important to understand that all of these elements of narrative inquiry analysis come together to make a "whole" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 24) within the ultimate story as it is told.

One final metaphor reveals why the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space helps researchers make sense of classroom experiences with teachers. Sometimes it is useful to imagine that researchers walk alongside participants in a metaphorical parade (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 16; Geertz, 1995), of which they can only experience and document a small part. The parade has begun before researchers arrive, and will continue on to new places after they are gone. Different performers in the parade interact with one another and with researchers, during the course of the study, but no one can presume to understand the full parade, in all its complexity, from the limited viewpoint of a temporary marcher.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has explored three aspects of curriculum theory that support the research. First, I described my understanding of curriculum as experience based on both foundational progressive curriculum theories and interpretations that are more recent from critical curriculum scholars. Next, I examined theoretical work of specialists in culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy, specifically investigating how these practices fit into gifted education curriculum theory based on the work of Ford (2010; 2013) and others. Finally, I explored theories on stories and storying in education. This research lies at the intersection of these three aspects of education theory.

In my own journey as a narrative inquirer, I joined the narrative parade with groups of urban gifted students and their teachers. Guided by theories of curriculum as experience, I learned as much as I could about culturally responsive classrooms and how students and teachers work together to make meaning of their experiences. The stories I heard and share through my research will provide a richer, contextual understanding of bright urban students and their teachers. The next chapter will provide a review of the published literature related to curriculum and pedagogy for diverse urban learners. This research will establish the broader picture and provide the background story for the narrative results of my study.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Published empirical research can be understood as a “sacred story” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) for narrative inquirers and practicing teachers. It informs the decisions of policy-makers at the local, state, and federal level. These sacred research stories might also define a traditional path for emerging scholars to follow as they begin their own discoveries. As I explored the “cover stories” and “secret stories” that describe the experiences of gifted education professionals, a firm knowledge of these sacred research stories guided my understanding. The ultimate purpose of this narrative inquiry was to go beyond this broad understanding of education statistics and policy analysis to understand the more specific and context-sensitive experiences of teachers in gifted classrooms. As described in previous chapters, this is understood as shifting the research lens between seeing teachers as small and seeing big (Clandinin et al., 2006). In this chapter, I will introduce the reader to several sacred stories in educational research to provide a background for the particular experiences and secret stories lived and told by gifted education professionals working with culturally diverse students.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the body of established literature that supports this narrative inquiry. Four important types of sacred stories will be explored specifically as they relate to gifted education. First, I will discuss the complex process of defining and identifying giftedness in varying contexts. Next, I will briefly describe traditional curriculum and programming for gifted students and the research that supports these practices. Furthermore, I will explain seminal and current work documenting systemic inequalities inherent in traditional programming for gifted students. Finally, this review will

describe the relatively recent applications of culturally responsive curriculum strategies and their impact on bright and high achieving students.

Gifted education research heavily favors quantitative work (Coleman, Guo, & Dabbs, 2007). Whenever possible, selected studies in this chapter highlight qualitative work, and specifically, include inquiries of teachers who work with gifted students. These research stories serve to provide a backdrop of recent studies, shedding light on this dissertation inquiry.

Defining and Identifying Giftedness in a Diverse Society

The term *gifted* is one of the most misunderstood and controversial words in the modern lexicon of education (Subotnik et al., 2011). The way that educators define this term is significant because of the various implications for the students in their care (McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012). Both official and implicit definitions become part of the “sacred story” of gifted education as it is enacted in each local context. The following pages will explore the various officially accepted definitions of giftedness and the repercussions these assorted interpretations have for diverse students in U.S. schools. Specifically, I will consider the differences in official policy definitions and the way they are implicitly enacted in State A and State B. These distinct definitions make gifted education available to different types of students depending solely on the geographic location of their home (Kettler et al., 2015). Finally, I examine understandings of giftedness proposed by current researchers in the field of multicultural education and investigate the inherent differences between students and programming under these more inclusive definitions.

Official Definitions of Giftedness

In the United States, there is currently no federal mandate to serve or meet gifted students' needs in any way. However, there is a federal designation acknowledging that these students exist in U.S. classrooms (ESSA, 2015). I utilize this definition in my research, because it is widely recognized and has the most official curricular authority across different states in the current U.S. standardized educational environment. The federal Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, defines gifted and talented students as:

Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities. [Title VII, Part A, Definition 27. (2015)]

Many states and districts purport to follow this federal definition (NAGC, 2015), which requires that potentially gifted students demonstrate this ability in two separate but equally important ways. They must “give evidence of high achievement capability” (ESSA, 2015) as well as “need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school”. The first part of the definition is broad and inclusive, allowing for talents in different disciplines to be acknowledged and without specifying exactly how high the achievement must be. It also allows this achievement to be in “capability” only, not necessarily in current levels of accomplishment. The second part of the federal definition is also broad, but is often interpreted in a more exclusive way (McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012). Determining which students “need services” can be a very subjective judgement call (Ford, 2011), and in a later section I will examine how this type of determination can be affected by implicit biases of teachers, administrators, and policy makers.

Before considering any specific state definitions, it is important to recognize that there are other definitions presented by national groups and researchers that recognize distinctions from the federal policy above. First, the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC, 2010) has published an official position statement defining gifted students:

Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports).

The position statement delineates the implications of this definition and the importance of applying it carefully (NAGC, 2010). The definition includes both aptitude and competence. Aptitude refers to exceptional ability to reason and learn (this cognitive ability is typically measured using an IQ test). Competence includes a specific percent score cutoff for documented achievement. The NAGC definition allows for aptitude OR competence and does not include a “need for services” like the ESSA (2015) policy described above.

Gifted definition in State A. Students who are identified as gifted in State A have several protections, including a statewide mandate for individualized services that is very similar to students with learning disabilities or other special education needs (SADE, 2012). In fact, State A is one of the few states that requires an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each gifted student. According to law in State A, *gifted* means “performing or demonstrating the potential for performing at significantly higher levels of accomplishment in one or more academic fields due to intellectual ability, when compared to others of similar age, experience, and environment” (State A State Definition. K.A.R. 91-40-1(cc)). This shorter definition includes the familiar and broadly defined “ability” criteria, but adds something else not addressed in either of the national definitions. State A expressly provides

for comparison to similar peers. It is common practice for cognitive ability assessments to consider age (in months) as part of the scoring considerations. However, similar “experience and environment” leaves another open-ended subjective judgement for individual school decision-makers to contemplate. This part of the definition should be very important to those educators concerned with equity of opportunity in a diverse body of students. I will return to this concept of comparing similar peers in a later section.

The brief statewide definition from State A (SADE, 2012) also includes a relevant footnote for interpretation here,

Note: There is not a uniform standard across [State A] districts for determining the criteria that are used to determine if a child meets the definition of gifted. However, each district is required to have local Policies, Practices and Procedures in place that describes how the district gifted services are determined and delivered. The process and criteria used to determine eligibility to receive individualized gifted services through Special Education needs to support a two-pronged test to determine if: (1) the child meet the definition of gifted; and (2) if the child needs Special Education services to address the unique needs that result from the child’s giftedness to ensure access to and progress of the child in the general education curriculum (State A State Definition. K.A.R. 91-40-1(cc))

The language of this footnote reprises two significant challenges discussed earlier. The first is the wide variety of identification criteria and services in gifted education (Kettler et al., 2015; McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012; Zirkel, 2005). The second is the problem of determining who “needs Special Education services” to progress in the “general education curriculum”.

After analyzing the wording of this official definition, it is crucial to investigate its practical implications more thoroughly. This investigation is interested not only in exact language, but also in how this language is interpreted by schools across the state. State A does not maintain any publicly available database of records regarding gifted identification

criteria in local school districts, inter-locals, and special education cooperatives. A recent statewide survey of gifted education professionals (KGTC, 2014) reveals a wide range of identification instruments and criteria utilized by teachers, school psychologists, and gifted facilitators, to determine whether individual students meet the definition of gifted. Ninety percent of respondents indicated that their district used a cognitive ability test, 87 percent used an achievement test, 21 percent used a creativity assessment, and 38 percent used some other type of instrument or process. These various criteria, sprinkled across the state, managed to identify 14,108 gifted students K-12 this same school year according to the State A Department of Education (SADE, 2017). The number of K-12 students attending State A schools in 2013-2014 was 492,301 (SADE, 2017). This means 2.86 percent of State A Students were identified as gifted in 2013-14.

A further limitation on gifted education services is worth considering here. Because gifted services are provided through special education in State A, many of the same complex legal requirements of federal IDEA law are also applied to gifted students by State A law (SADE, 2012). In practical terms, this means teachers, school administrators, school psychologists, and gifted facilitators have a massive amount of legal documentation and paperwork that is required for each gifted student. This paperwork could become a double-edged sword for students. It protects their rights to an appropriate education and allows parents of identified students many more rights. However, it also means teachers and others are less likely to pursue identification of a student whom they are not sure will qualify, because the administrative obligations just require too much work. It is far easier to say that a student does not clearly demonstrate a “need” for services in order to progress in the general curriculum.

Gifted definition in State B. The neighboring state of State B also provides an explicit definition of gifted students,

In [State B], “gifted children” mean those who exhibit precocious development of mental capacity and learning potential as determined by competent professional evaluation to the extent that continued educational growth and stimulation could best be served by an academic environment beyond that offered through a standard grade level curriculum. (SBDESE, 2017a)

This definition uses the phrase “mental capacity and learning potential” in place of the word “ability” as defined in State A, but it provides a qualification that this capacity must be measured by a competent professional evaluation. The third portion of this definition suggests that students’ capacity (or potential) must be so great that it “could best be served” with a curriculum that is beyond the standard grade level. This last phrase is consistent with State A’s emphasis on “need for services”. It allows individual districts and school personnel the flexibility to outline the parameters of their own gifted identification process. This again, makes the definition somewhat subjective in terms of practical interpretation.

There is a greater implicit problem in State B’s interpretation of this definition. According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2017a), districts “may establish programs for gifted children when a sufficient number of children in the district are determined to be gifted and their development requires programs or services beyond the level of those ordinarily provided in regular public school programs”. This statement hints at the difficult truth of serving gifted students in State B. There is no statewide mandate to identify or serve gifted students. Districts may or may not choose to do so. If they do determine there are a “sufficient number of children” and establish a state approved program, some funding is provided from the state. However, this funding is not specifically delineated in a line item and could be used for any other general education

curriculum and programming. Without a statewide mandate or funding, the large majority of districts across the state provide no gifted services at all (SBDESE, 2017c). This is the greatest concern for advocates of gifted education in State B and is consistently reflected in the annual reports of the Gifted Advisory Council (SBDESE, 2017c).

Nevertheless, the large urban and suburban districts that *do* have active gifted education programs generally implement these services in a very organized and effective way, according to clear guidelines for programming from the state (SBDESE, 2017b). For example, state approved gifted programs in State B “must provide a minimum of one hundred and fifty (150) minutes per week of direct instructional time in which the identified gifted students work exclusively with the certified teacher of gifted” (p. 4). There are also required minimum and maximum class sizes and many other specifications for all state approved gifted programs. None of these clear guidelines is offered in State A gifted education statewide policy.

In another detailed policy document from State B (SBDESE, 2016), there are multiple recommendations for how state approved programs should handle the challenging problem of underrepresentation. These research-based suggestions provide clear and valuable steps, should districts choose to utilize them. In a later section, I will return to a more thorough analysis of these recommendations, but here it must be noted, that State B has offered help for districts to interpret the general definition of giftedness above, in a more equitable way for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Definitions from multicultural gifted education literature. Theorists and researchers have offered alternatives to the dominant narrative in gifted education. These multicultural gifted education scholars have invited educators to consider definitions that are

more inclusive and equitable. In this section, I will highlight a few of these for comparison with the above official definitions.

Harris and Ford (1999) employed a national definition that is no longer actively used, which ends with an unmistakable call for equity,

Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared to others of their age, experience, or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, 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. 26)

Each phrase of this definition repeats the concepts previously discussed in state policies. Only the final sentence presents a statement about equity that is not present in the state policies. Though there is a recent focus on equity in the field of gifted education (Peters & Engerrand, 2016), this statement is no longer included in the federal definition (ESSA, 2015). According to a 2015 study of state definitions of giftedness, only eight states continued to mention anything about cultural or linguistic diversity within their official definitions (NAGC, 2015). Harris and Ford (1999) noted that along with the definition of giftedness, the United States Department of Education at one time provided official recommendations including improving access and “increasing opportunities for students of color and low SES populations” (p. 41).

A second definition that is considered more inclusive is Sternberg’s (1985) Triarchic Theory of Intelligence, which proposed that intelligence, is not static or measurable by a single score (such as cognitive ability/IQ). Sternberg first characterized “componential learners” who are analytical and abstract thinkers. These learners tended to do well academically and on standardized tests. A second type of intelligence was revealed in

“experiential learners” who valued creativity and often disliked rules. Third, the “contextual learners” understood how to adapt easily to their environment. They were socially intelligent and practical, but these types of skills could not be measured by standardized tests like IQ. Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008) acknowledged this definition as more “culturally sensitive” because it was “flexible and dynamic” recognizing that “giftedness is a sociocultural construct that manifests itself in many ways and means different things to different cultural and linguistic groups” (p. 299). This combination of factors has also been validated in international studies of intelligence (Sternberg, Castejón, Prieto, Hautamäki, & Grigorenko, 2001).

Finally, I consider a definition that goes beyond a broad general statement about ability and looks at other characteristics of gifted learners. Frasier (1997) promoted the concept of gathering both quantitative and qualitative data about a student’s strengths from a variety of sources. Using the Frasier Talent Assessment Profile (Frasier, 1994) is one method to compile all this data and interpret it. Frasier identified attributes of gifted learners by conducting an extensive qualitative review of literature on students from different cultural and economic backgrounds (Frasier et al., 1995). The common attributes identified across categorical groups include the following: “communication skills, imagination/creativity, humor, inquiry, insight, interests, memory, motivation, problem-solving, and reasoning” (p. 6). This type of definition, including a culturally normed profile of characteristics, (Frasier, 1994) continues to be recommended in publications regarding identification of diverse gifted students (Ford, 2011, 2013; Johnsen, 2011).

Comparing Definitions

Each of the definitions above contain phrases that describe characteristics of giftedness. To gain a broader understanding of how the term gifted is understood by educators, I have created a chart (Table 1) to unpack some of the phrases and compare the various aspects of each definition above.

Table 1

Comparing Definitions of Giftedness

Aspect of Giftedness	ESSA 2015 Federal	NAGC 2010	State A 2017	State B 2017	USDE 1993 Federal	Sternberg 1985	Frasier 1994
Ability/ Capability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Multiple Domains	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Need Services	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Comp. to similar peers			✓				✓
Culturally Sensitive					✓		✓

As Table 1 clearly demonstrates, no one definition includes all aspects of giftedness and the only characteristic shared by all definitions is a reference to some type of high intellectual ability or capability. This is perhaps the reason why a high IQ is so universally understood as synonymous with giftedness. However, none of the official definitions reviewed above reference intellectual ability only. This means that a definition or

identification procedure that is based solely on a cognitive score is inherently missing some other important aspects of giftedness that should be considered.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the above chart is that if states wish to identify gifted students in a more culturally inclusive way, they need to consider adding to their current definitions. A clear gap in the official definitions of both State A and State B is a reference to the multiple domains where giftedness may manifest. A second missing component is an acknowledgement of culturally sensitive characteristics. The National Association for Gifted Children has called for a “paradigm shift” in defining giftedness to incorporate these additional more inclusive criteria in the 21st century (NAGC, 2010).

This exploration of definitions sheds additional light on the underrepresentation statistics highlighted earlier in this dissertation. The mostly White and Asian students who are currently receiving gifted services in State A and State B (and across the nation) have been identified based mainly on characteristics related to test scores. The official state definitions implicitly give preference to these groups of students because until recently, districts were allowed to use cognitive and achievement scores only. African American and Latinx students face significant barriers to participation when this type of identification model is in place (Ford, Grantham & Whiting, 2008; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). The students who are identified in State A and State B also tend to fit the typical gifted profile of “high-achieving” gifted students. Several lists of characteristics comparing high-achievers to other types of gifted learners can be found throughout the gifted education literature (e.g. Rimm & Davis, 2004; Johnson, 2011; NAGC, 2017).

Nearly all of the characteristics in these lists are subjective judgements and these judgements are necessarily based in the cultural values and experiences of the teacher and

school personnel who complete the referral checklists (Ford et al., 2008). When students speak a non-standard version of English, it is difficult for teachers to see how they are “able to master grade-level work easily” or how they might be displaying a “high level of critical thinking” or a “high level of abstract thinking”. Teachers may focus on spelling or grammar errors and miss the depth of insight in written or oral products (Delpit, 2012; Ford, 2011). Additionally, lists like these are steeped in Euro-centric cultural values and norms (Howard, 2016). For example, students who show a “high intensity” and a “highly developed sense of humor” look very different from one culture to the next. These value-laden judgements are a nearly impossible “test” for many culturally different students to pass (Ford, 2011). Fortunately, recent research has presented new methods of identification that reduce cultural bias and increase equitable outcomes for all students.

Defining Giftedness for a Multicultural Context

Tomlinson, Ford, Reis, Briggs, and Strickland (2004) reviewed several of the best multicultural gifted programs in the United States noting culturally responsive identification methods. Adams and Chandler (2013) recently extended this work by examining programs that are specifically designed to serve gifted students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. These methods will be explored in specific examples in the following paragraphs.

In the past 10 years, some states and local districts (Card & Giuliano, 2015; King, Kozleski, & Lansdowne, 2009) have established official policies to address the identification concerns described above. These new guidelines are based on empirical research in the field of multicultural gifted education. They offer clear steps for districts choosing to pursue processes that are more equitable. For the purposes of this research, and as one example of a

larger national trend, I will examine here the recently published recommendations document from State B.

Recommendations in State B. In 2016, State B released a new gifted policy document (SBDESE, 2016) that has been distributed widely. However, at the time of this writing, most districts are still in the knowledge-gathering or planning stages of implementation. A few larger districts have been identifying and serving culturally and linguistically diverse students for several years and already follow many of these guidelines because they best meet the needs of the majority populations of their district. Many other Midwestern states offer comparable guidance on finding and serving traditionally underrepresented students, so this document is an example of a wider trend in state policy (SBDESE, 2016, p. 10). The recommendations in State B include suggestions for culturally responsive identification strategies as well as multicultural programming, which were examined in the previous chapter.

Three significant research-based changes from traditional identification practices will be explored here. First, the document recommends moving away from practices that rely only on a single test score and move toward collecting a “body of evidence,” (SBDESE, 2016, p. 4) including both quantitative and qualitative measures. This is supported by decades of voluminous research in gifted identification (e.g. Frasier, 1994; Harris & Ford, 1999; McBee, 2006; Peters & Engerrand, 2016); however, it requires change to the widely accepted traditional practice of utilizing cognitive assessment as the primary tool for gifted placement. The nature of expanding this widely held concept was discussed extensively in the sections above analyzing varying official definitions of giftedness. Peters and Engerrand (2016) supported the use of multiple criteria for gifted placement based on their

comprehensive analysis of cognitive, achievement, and other types of assessments by race, SES, and gender. They concluded that efforts directed toward reducing bias in any one type of measure would continue to perpetuate inequity because each of these measures is closely linked to another salient factor Opportunity to Learn (OTL). They proposed that the best methods for identifying high potential students would compare them not to age-based peers, but it would instead compare them to others with similar levels of OTL.

A second research-based recommendation is to implement “universal screening” (SBDESE, 2016, p. 3). The authors explained that universal screening means, “the systematic assessment of all students within a grade level for identifying students with exceptional ability or potential, especially students from traditionally underrepresented populations” (p. 3). Universal screening is also an empirically supported practice (Card & Guiliano, 2015) that eliminates the substantial problem of under-referral for gifted programming due to deficit-thinking and lower teacher expectations for culturally different students. These authors examined the implementation of universal screening practices for gifted education in one large urban district in California. They found that “with no change in the standards for gifted eligibility, the screening program led to large increases in the fractions of economically disadvantaged students and minorities placed in gifted programs” (p. 2).

In another frequently cited study, McBee (2006) examined a statewide dataset containing demographic information, gifted nomination status, and gifted identification status for all elementary school students in the state of Georgia. Using quantitative procedures of propensity score matching his analysis suggested that inequalities in nomination were the primary source of the underrepresentation of culturally diverse and low-income students in gifted programs. Specifically this author found that “Asian and White students were much

more likely to be nominated than Black or Hispanic students” (p. 103). Universal screening reduces a reliance on teacher nominations, thereby improving equality of access for all students.

The final recommendation from State B is to consider using “local norms” (SBDESE, 2016, p. 4) to establish criteria for participation in gifted programming (Jordan, Bain, McCallum & Mee Bell, 2012). One example is to use “the minimum score of the top 5 percent of students within the district, rather than in the top 5 percent in the nation” (SBDESE, 2016, p. 4). These local norms of cognitive ability would only be available if the process for universal screening is already in place. Local norms were explored in the study above (Jordan et al., 2012). Teachers were trained to use a behavior rating scale that was based on characteristics of gifted learners and re-normed for local groups. Results indicated that, “use of multidimensional scales that minimize language and relies on local norms may be useful for identifying gifted students in traditionally underrepresented groups” (p. 241).

Each of the studies referenced in this section reiterate the need for continued exploration of these strategies to better understand their effectiveness. The largely quantitative procedures described above show researchers a big picture of what is happening with improved identification procedures across the nation and a gradual move toward equity. Qualitative research can reveal the unique contextual experiences of teachers, students, and administrators who are attempting to implement these recommendations in complex fluctuating educational environments. Narrative inquiry specifically can uncover some of the difficult personal stories and beliefs that may keep these practices from being effectively implemented in unique local contexts. However, without firm requirements or monitoring it is likely that many districts will continue established practices that may exclude and

discriminate against culturally and linguistically diverse students (McBee et al., 2012). During the course of this narrative inquiry research, I discovered how these recommendations have been applied in one school district in State B and examined identification and programming strategies in State A where no such recommendations exist. This narrative inquiry also went beyond identification practices to explore curriculum and programming strategies. The following section explores the sacred stories of curriculum for gifted learners.

Traditional Curriculum and Programming for Gifted Students

Gifted education professionals are frequently responsible for carrying out gifted identifications and placement as well as delivering curriculum to the students they identify (Rimm & Davis, 2004). In practice, this curriculum varies widely across the nation (Kettler, et al., 2015; NAGC, 2015). In this section I will outline three of the most commonly used research-based curricular strategies for gifted students: differentiation, acceleration, and enrichment. All of these three strategies are frequently incorporated into formal gifted education programs (Karnes & Bean, 2014; NAGC, 2015; Rimm & Davis, 2004). In the next section, I will explore how traditional gifted curriculum can be transformed to include culturally responsive practices appropriate for a diverse group of advanced learners. The first strategy to be explored here is curriculum differentiation.

Differentiation

Tomlinson describes differentiation as “a refinement of, not a substitute for, high-quality curriculum and instruction” (2000, p. 7). It is not a recipe or instructional strategy, but a philosophy, based on the idea that students are innately different. They differ in their abilities, interests, motivation, and readiness for academic content. Therefore, their

schoolwork should be different. Differentiation can occur in three possible realms: the content of the curriculum, the processes by which students learn the content and the products students complete to demonstrate mastery (Powers, 2008). Sometimes differentiation is lumped together in a negative context with rigid programs like academic tracking or streaming. It is dissimilar from these approaches in that its use is intended to be flexible, dynamic, and responsive to individual needs within each subject while acknowledging that these needs may change as the school year progresses. Differentiation is frequently provided for gifted education students in general education settings, but gifted education professionals also may differentiate within their own classes to address differing levels of need even among identified students (Powers, 2008).

The first step in differentiation is some type of pre-assessment, then planning of instructional activities based on the results of these pre-assessments. Teachers also effectively differentiate by involving students in the process of curriculum development. This provides choices in process and product as well as flexible requirements (Coil, 2007).

One sacred research story of differentiation involves using the Schoolwide Enrichment Model for Reading to provide appropriate reading instruction to elementary school students (Reis, McCoach, Little, Muller & Kaniskan, 2011). Treatment and control conditions were randomly assigned to 63 classrooms across elementary schools in both rural and urban settings representing multiple geographic locations across the United States. They found that an enrichment reading approach, with differentiated instruction and less whole group instruction, was as effective or more effective than a traditional whole group basal approach. They were able to eliminate five hours per week of group reading instruction and replace it with three key activities: independent reading of appropriately challenging self-

selected material, short – five minute – daily conferences with the teacher allowing for individualized instruction, and optional enrichment literacy activities tailored to student interests. This approach not only improved fluency and comprehension for advanced students, it also proved to effectively raise scores in comprehension for struggling students and those from high-poverty rural and highly-diverse urban schools. As described in a separate publication (Reis & Fogarty, 2006), the benefits of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model for Reading have extended beyond test score improvements. Positive attitudes toward reading in the urban school districts drastically improved after students were exposed to appropriately challenging material of high interest to them (p. 35).

Acceleration

Acceleration can be simply defined as “moving faster through academic content, which typically includes offering standard curriculum to students at a younger-than-usual age or lower-than-usual grade level” (Rimm & Davis, 2004, p. 105). Some practical examples of acceleration include early admission to kindergarten, grade-skipping, curriculum compacting, subject acceleration, test-out, concurrent enrollment, and early admission to college. Rogers (2004) evaluated the effects of acceleration and concluded that no form of acceleration led to decreases in any area of performance – academic, social, or emotional. She also found that there appeared to be generally positive academic effects for most forms of acceleration. More recently, Steenbergen-Hu, Makel, and Olszewski-Kubilius (2016) conducted rigorous meta-analyses, which synthesized a century of research on the effects of ability grouping and acceleration. Among many significant findings, this study reported that acceleration appeared to have a “positive, moderate, and statistically significant impact on students’ academic achievement” (p. 849).

The benefits of acceleration are documented in rigorous research (Rogers, 2004): however, many schools are reluctant to implement these practices. Teachers and principals give varied reasons for their objections (e.g. social immaturity, deprivation of childhood experiences, stress and burnout, parents of excluded children will become angry) (Rimm & Davis, 2004). These reasons are not substantiated by research, but even so, there are educators who seem to worry more about social adjustment than academic success, and these concerns are often validated by anxious parents. Since acceleration can be such a complex curricular modification, most gifted services fall into the enrichment category.

Enrichment

This is by far the most frequently implemented type of programming for gifted students (Rimm & Davis, 2004). “Enrichment refers to richer and more varied educational experiences, a curriculum that is modified to provide greater depth and breadth than is generally provided” (p. 105). Some examples of enrichment curriculum include independent study projects, learning centers, field trips, Saturday or summer programs, mentorships, and academic competitions. Renzulli and Reis (1997) developed the “Schoolwide Enrichment Model” (SEM) wherein schools separate enrichment activities into Type I, Type II, and Type III activities. Type I enrichment activities are short presentations provided to all children in the school. Type II activities are exploratory projects giving students time to understand a new topic or process. Type III enrichments are for motivated students who want to work on longer in-depth research and skill building in a specific academic area. This enrichment curriculum model is supported by decades of research. For example, Olenchak and Renzulli (1989) examined the effectiveness of a yearlong application of the SEM in 11 schools. Qualitative data analysis revealed positive changes in student and teacher attitudes. They

found that in schools that implemented SEM, student creative products were numerous and exceeded the norm of typical student creative output. Numerous studies finding support for using SEM curriculum was also summarized by Reis and Renzulli (2003).

A second widely adopted enrichment program is the “Autonomous Learner Model” (Betts & Kercher, 1999). In this gifted programming strategy, the goal is “to provide learners with many different options to enable them to become independent, self-directed learners” (p. 5). There are three dimensions for development including enrichment, seminar, and in-depth study. The dimensions progress from teacher-directed to student-directed and from large to small groups, then eventually to individual long-term research projects. More recently, Uresti, Goertz, and Bernal (2002) described the successful results of using the Autonomous Learner Model with diverse early elementary students, while Yarahmadzahi and Bazleh (2012) explained how this enrichment model was used successfully with Iranian students.

Decades of deliberation exists regarding the relative merits of acceleration, enrichment, and differentiation as curricular strategies for gifted students (e.g. Feldhusen, 1989; Kulik & Kulik, 1992; Rimm & Davis, 2004). In practice each are often utilized in flexible and overlapping ways by individual gifted professionals working to meet the specific needs of identified students. Some recently published qualitative work has explored the experiences of these teachers working with mostly White and middle-class gifted students. Isaacson and Fisher (2007) highlighted various characteristics of gifted learners through classroom secret stories of gifted education professionals and parents in Montana. Their stories reveal the importance of social/emotional support that caring teachers provide for students who often feel misunderstood in general education classes. Coleman (2014) used phenomenological analysis to understand the experiences of one teacher, “Alex,” and his

varying emotions while teaching gifted students in a special summer enrichment program. He found that teaching emotions were often positive and connected to Alex's professional practical knowledge.

When gifted programs purposefully pursue curriculum that will meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners, gifted education begins to move beyond a discussion of programming strategies to a more constructive analysis of individual student needs and experiences (Ford, 2011). The following section will describe the research stories of professionals working to uncover flaws in traditional curricular strategies that systematically discriminate against high potential learners from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Documented Systemic Inequalities within Traditional Gifted Programming

As previously described in chapters one and two of this dissertation, culturally diverse students are drastically underrepresented in and underserved by traditional gifted education programs (Ford, 2013). This means that many of the effective curricular strategies described above are never made available to bright students in the fastest growing population segment in American schools. In this section, I will describe some prominent research stories within the field that have documented this continuing disparity and its effects on educational outcomes. The first set of sacred stories is primarily quantitative and looks at underrepresentation through a wide lens using national and state data. Secondly, I will introduce important qualitative work that examines more localized contexts and the experiences of students and teachers who have dealt with this discrimination personally.

Findings from Quantitative Studies

Ford (1998) analyzed data from the U. S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) examining the representation of culturally diverse students in gifted programs from 1978 to 1992.

In 1992, African American students represented 21.1% of the school population but 12% of gifted education—an underrepresentation of 41%. Further, Hispanic American students were underrepresented by 42%, and American Indians were underrepresented by 50%. Conversely, Asian American students were overrepresented by 43% and White students were overrepresented by 17% (p. 6).

Ford's early work in this publication and others (1994; Ford, Grantham, & Harris, 1996; Ford & Webb, 1995) became a clarion call to the field of gifted education, which had long overlooked the discriminatory effects of identification practices.

In the 21st century, Ford (2004; 2011; 2013) continued to document ongoing underrepresentation of African American, Hispanic, and Native American gifted students. For example, Ford, Grantham, & Whiting (2008) again published data from OCR indicating that in 2002 African American, Latinx, and Native American students continued to be poorly represented in gifted education programs while White and Asian American students were overrepresented. For each of the first three groups of students, “underrepresentation is at least 50%—well beyond statistical chance and above OCR's 20% discrepancy formula stipulation” (p. 290).

McBee, Shaunessy, and Matthews (2012) investigated the effects of statewide policies designed to reduce underrepresentation. They used propensity score matching to examine policies and data from 42 districts across the state of Florida where there is a statewide mandate for gifted education. They searched for examples of the way local policies affected the representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in gifted

programming. They found evidence of continuing underrepresentation of traditionally marginalized groups in gifted education, even in districts with policies specifically designed to ameliorate disproportional representation. However, the presence of such a policy did reduce the degree of underrepresentation.

Peters and Engerrand (2016) focused their research on group disparities present when using traditional academic and cognitive assessments, finding again that “on average, students from Native American, African American, Latinx, and low-income families receive lower observed scores on tests of academic achievement and ability than do their Caucasian, Asian, and higher income peers” (p. 159). When these tests were used as the sole identification instrument for determining eligibility for gifted education programming, they acted as a significant barrier to participation for students from these groups. These authors suggested that differences may stem from a variable called “Opportunity to Learn” (OTL) and that the most effective ways to improve equity include the use of “group-specific norms, especially when applied in tandem with local norms and universal screening” (p. 169). These strategies are supported by other current research (Card & Giuliano, 2015; Jordan, Bain, McCallum, & Mee Bell, 2012) and will be explored more thoroughly in the next sections.

Local quantitative analysis. For the purposes of this dissertation, the author has compiled quantitative data from the two neighboring states where the inquiry was conducted. This analysis was completed to determine if the national underrepresentation described above persisted within the geographic context of the study. Tables 2 and 3 below include the most recent demographic data publicly available at the time of this writing.

Based on this data, it is clear that racial disparities continue to exist in the identification of African American, Hispanic, and White students in both State A and State

B. The first two groups of students are unmistakably underrepresented by at least 40 percent, while White and Asian students are overrepresented in gifted programs. The level of underrepresentation for African American and Hispanic students is slightly more pronounced in State A.

Table 2

Representation of Ethnic Subgroups in 2016-17 Gifted Programs in State A

	Black	Hispanic	White	Asian	Am Indian	Multi
Enrolled %	6.68	19.2	65.3	3.03	0.89	4.98
Gifted %	2.19	7.22	78.2	6.98	0.52	4.79

Source: SADE Data Central 2016-17

Table 3

Representation of Ethnic Subgroups in 2014-15 Gifted Programs in State B

	Black	Hispanic	White	All Others
Enrolled %	15.1	5.4	74.1	5.4
Gifted %	8.6	3.4	79.0	9.0

All Others Includes Asian, American Indian, Pacific Islander, and Multiple Ethnicities (SBDESE, 2017c)

The statistics in each of these reports are important to consider, but they do not tell the whole story of systemic inequality present in gifted education programs. It is also crucial to look more closely at the way these numbers impact individual students' lives and their academic opportunities. Qualitative research can provide this essential window into the complicated world of gifted education.

Findings from Qualitative Research

Ford (1995) conducted a study of underachievement among gifted African American students, interviewing over 150 students about curriculum factors that negatively or positively affect their achievement. The published study was a multiple regression analysis, but during the research, Ford also collected hundreds of stories from students about their experiences and perceptions. A few of these were included in the original article, but many were later published in a separate book (2011). Themes that emerged from these interviews demonstrated that students most often provided “negative viewpoints” on their curriculum (p. 106). They noted a “lack of mirrors for racially and culturally different groups” within their curriculum (p. 106). A particularly problematic finding was that students reported “superficial learning experiences” often during Black History Month, when teachers frequently focused on the same few historical heroes such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Harriet Tubman, rather than connecting past and present with more current figures and events (p. 108). This lack of personal connection to the curriculum can contribute to underachievement (Ford, 2010) which is a factor limiting referrals for placement in gifted programming.

Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison (2006) conducted focus group interviews with high-performing culturally diverse students who eventually dropped out of high school, many of whom found school irrelevant. For students who said they had high GPAs and were motivated, their biggest problem was feeling bored and that the curriculum was “not interesting” (p. iii). Two-thirds of these students reported that they would have “worked harder if more was demanded of them” (p. iii). This qualitative research story reveals a

persistent problem faced by culturally diverse students; their curriculum is not challenging enough, or personally engaging enough to stimulate their talents and ability.

Other important qualitative contributions focus on retention of diverse students in gifted programs. Grantham (2004) conducted a case study of one African American male high school student to examine reasons he continued to participate in gifted programming. He found that the student's perceptions of social and external factors contributed to his desire to achieve. Specifically this student had developed positive relationships with teachers and peers in the gifted program. He was outspoken and enjoyed the opportunity to educate his mostly White peers stating, "It's really weird the things that they [White students] don't know about Black people, so I try to tell them certain things" (p. 210). Grantham's study uncovers the unique perspective of a student and brings insight into positive aspects of gifted programming for students from diverse backgrounds.

Additional qualitative studies have focused on the perceptions of culturally diverse gifted students related to underrepresentation (e.g. Nguyen, 2012; Shaunnessy, et al, 2007; Walker & Pearsall, 2012). However, the experiences and perceptions of their teachers is much less frequently documented in either quantitative or qualitative work. This dissertation is focused on the experiences of gifted education professionals who work with culturally diverse students, and a few recent studies have begun to highlight the beliefs and insights of this particular group.

Teacher perceptions can have a significant impact on underrepresentation through the referral process for gifted student identification (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Frasier, Garcia, & Passow, 1995; Harris, Plucker, Rapp, & Martinez, 2009; McBee, 2006). One qualitative researcher (Allen, 2017) was interested in how these teacher perceptions influence

their decisions to refer or not refer students for testing and placement in gifted education programs. Based on Allen's interviews and qualitative analysis, three themes emerged as teacher's perceived influences on gifted referrals, "the impact of the 'language barrier', the over-emphasis on testing, and the need for collaboration and professional development" (p. 81). Allen also identified teachers' desire to learn more about the needs of culturally diverse gifted students after completing their interviews.

Moreover, Swanson (2016) interviewed the principal investigators at program sites as well as 14 gifted education professionals to gain insight into the most effective components of programming over time. Using grounded theory methodology, she discovered that "powerful curriculum and instruction can transform teaching and teachers" (p. 172). In the interviews, teachers described, "shifting from a deficit view of students to a strength view of students" (p. 182). Swanson furthermore determined that the degree of teacher impact was tied to the level of supports found in the school/district. This study is one example of using teacher and researcher voices together to better understand what type of curriculum and programming works well for culturally diverse gifted students. The final section of this chapter will explore this type of curriculum more specifically.

Culturally Responsive Curriculum

The culture of schools and classrooms often mirrors the dominant White middle-class culture in the United States (Howard, 2016). When students of color arrive in classrooms with a different set of cultural values and expectations, this mismatch can bring about misunderstandings and miscommunications that reinforce a deficit perspective that teachers may hold about these students (Delpit, 2006). As previously explored in Chapter 2, culturally responsive pedagogical practices (Gay, 2010) are one successful way to reverse deficit

thinking and improve educational outcomes for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. In this section, I will highlight “sacred stories” of both quantitative and qualitative research that have applied these theories to develop appropriate curriculum for diverse students.

In a seminal qualitative work, Ladson-Billings (1994) investigated the teaching styles of eight exemplary teachers of diverse students. She defined several key characteristics of the classroom environment that were realized by the culturally relevant/responsive teachers. Ladson-Billings emphasized that these teachers were caring role models, they were very knowledgeable about their subject matter, and they repeatedly emphasized that students also possessed knowledge and capability to reach their high expectations. They provided scaffolding when students needed it, but kept the focus on extending the learners’ thinking beyond the starting point in every single lesson (pp. 123-125).

More recently, Ware (2006) used qualitative methods to explore the effects of “warm demander pedagogy” (p. 427) by conducting multiple in-depth interviews and observations with two experienced African American teachers. These teachers shared their beliefs and insights about how the cultural background and instructional practices of teachers can influence student academic outcomes. Ware found that both teachers were successful with students because they demonstrated characteristics of warm demanders (Irvine & Frasier, 1998), including three specific aspects of their teaching identity, “authority figures... caregivers...and pedagogues” (Ware, 2006, p. 436).

Many research stories confirm the reports cited above; there is great potential in utilizing culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy. However, “quantitative measurement indicators of the effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching interventions are scarce” (Debnam, Pas, Bottiani, Cash, & Bradshaw, 2015, p. 533). Most available

quantitative research on culturally responsive teaching practices has relied exclusively on self-reports (e.g. Griner & Stewart, 2013). This can be problematic due to the social desirability of reporting inflated frequency of utilizing culturally responsive practices and over-estimation of cultural proficiency (Constantine & Ladany, 2000). Debnam and colleagues (2015) compared classroom observations with teachers' self-reports of culturally responsive techniques finding that teachers self-reported higher rates of utilizing culturally responsive strategies than were actually documented by researchers during observations.

Culturally Responsive Curriculum in Gifted Education

The use of multicultural or culturally responsive curriculum in gifted education has been recommended since the 1990's and the voices of its advocates have grown stronger throughout the years (Ford, 2013; Ford, Grantham, & Harris, 1996; Ford, Howard, Harris, & Tyson, 2000). The Ford-Harris Matrix introduced in chapter two (Ford, 2011; Ford & Harris, 2000; Scott, 2014) merges two well-established hierarchical curriculum models into a framework designed to support the needs of culturally diverse gifted students. Several studies have been conducted to test the application of this matrix in gifted education curriculum. Jones and Hébert (2012) created a curricular framework for a high school level U.S. history class that focused on the complex and challenging topic of immigration. This research story came from a qualitative perspective, reporting on the case study of one high school social studies teacher implementing this curriculum in her urban general education classroom that included many culturally and linguistically diverse gifted learners. The authors identified seven effective curricular strategies for engaging culturally and linguistically diverse gifted students after citing their own interest in applying the Ford-Harris matrix to curriculum development. They provide a discussion of scholarly literature supporting each strategy as

well as specific examples for lessons around the immigration experience in U. S. history. The seven strategies outlined by Jones and Hébert (2012) are discussions, infusions of multicultural literature and poetry, role-playing, examining primary documents, ethnographic research, photojournalism, and service learning. Though all these strategies could potentially involve both high levels of Bloom's and more sophisticated approaches to multicultural education, the authors apparently organized their examples of the strategies from less complex to most complex in both required teacher preparation as well as required student activities.

A second application of strategies from the Ford-Harris Matrix can be seen in a quantitative analysis conducted by Pedersen and Kitano (2006) comparing pre- and post-test scores of elementary students on a survey of multicultural goals. The authors used a developmental approach to design and implement a multicultural literature unit for diverse elementary gifted students, and then tested its effectiveness using a survey of multicultural skills and attitudes addressed in the unit. They found an increase in the post-test scores that was not statistically significant, but it still reflected student growth. An additional finding was that scores of the culturally and linguistically diverse students increased over twice as much as the scores of White students.

Other researchers (Briggs, Reis & Sullivan, 2008; Hébert & Reis, 1999; Pierce et al., 2006; Tomlinson et al., 2004) have conducted studies of gifted education programs working to meet the needs of culturally diverse students and have found certain general program processes beneficial. Briggs, Reis and Sullivan (2008) suggested five categories that contributed to success of culturally and linguistically diverse students in gifted education. These categories are 1) modified identification procedures, 2) program support systems, such

as front-loading, 3) selecting curriculum/instructional designs that enable diverse students to succeed, 4) building parent/home connections, and 5) using program evaluation practices designed to highlight avenues to students' success.

Multicultural mentoring is another aspect of culturally responsive teaching that has been tested with diverse gifted students. Hébert and Reis (1999) used ethnography and case study over three years to investigate the culture of gifted students in a diverse, urban school district. They identified specific factors that students attributed to their academic success including supportive adults, family support, and interactions with high-achieving peers.

Grantham (2004) proposed that mentoring is an important aspect of retention for diverse gifted students who have been identified for participation in gifted programming. Freeman (1999) published a longitudinal qualitative study consisting of annual interviews with 21 high-achieving underrepresented students over four years of higher education. She found that students credited mentors for providing a sense of encouragement and support throughout their post-secondary education. These mentors helped increase the students' academic and career aspirations. Ecker-Lyster and Niileksela (2017) affirmed the importance of mentoring and additionally focused on multicultural education and non-cognitive skill development as curricular strategies to support the retention of culturally diverse students in gifted programs.

Culturally responsive programming strategies and curriculum are an important component of successful gifted education, but they are necessarily the product of how each individual state, district, and teacher defines the concept of "gifted." In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I introduced my own conception of the term and offered secret stories about its personal meaning to me as a student, teacher, and researcher. In the first section of this

literature review, I examined the implications of contrasting official and research based definitions of giftedness. The repercussions of each definition on program characteristics should be considered especially with respect to research on culturally diverse learners.

Conclusion

This literature review chapter has introduced the reader to several sacred stories in educational research to provide a background for the particular experiences and secret stories lived and told by gifted education professionals working with culturally diverse students. First, I offered a discussion of the complex process of defining and identifying giftedness in varying contexts. Then, I briefly described traditional curriculum and programming for gifted students and the research that supports these practices. Next, I explained seminal and current work documenting systemic inequalities inherent in traditional programming for gifted students. In both of these sections, when possible, particular emphasis was placed on qualitative studies. Finally, this review concluded with a description of the relatively recent applications of culturally responsive curriculum strategies in both general and gifted education highlighting their impact on bright and high achieving students.

These empirical studies have provided an illuminated backdrop of recent research “sacred stories”. However, they are only the beginning of my research journey. In the following chapter, I describe the methodology of my narrative research, including a justification for each design decision. The foundation of research in this literature review supports and informs the approaches I chose to utilize in sampling, data collection, and analysis. The goals of this research are to understand the complex experiences of gifted education professionals as they work with diverse students. Each teacher story that I have collected must be understood in the context of this prior research. Moreover, my narrative

inquiry must also pay close attention to the storytellers' own personal and contextual interpretations.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Gifted students from culturally diverse backgrounds are underrepresented in and underserved by traditional gifted education programs (Ford, 1998, 2010; Ford, Grantham & Whiting, 2008; Peters & Engerrand, 2016), making successful multicultural gifted curriculum an uncommon experience for diverse gifted students (Ford, 2011, 2015; Tomlinson et al., 2004). Services for all gifted students vary widely in both quantity and quality, with additional variation in levels of teacher accountability for designing and implementing curriculum (Kettler, Russell & Puryear, 2015; NAGC, 2015; Shaunessy, 2003; Zirkel, 2005). Teacher accountability and its impact on curriculum development for diverse students is the primary focus of this research. In this chapter, I introduce the methodology for conducting this narrative inquiry about teacher experiences with curriculum for diverse gifted students.

The purpose of this narrative inquiry research is to explore the experiential stories of gifted education professionals who work in urban classrooms with culturally diverse students within State A and State B. The goals of this research are to explore the complex experiences of urban gifted education professionals, to discover the “cover stories” and/or the “secret stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) of their classrooms in the context of two different state policy environments, and to understand how social justice and equity factors may be accounted for in the enacted curriculum for culturally diverse gifted learners.

There are two central questions guiding this research and the first central question is supported by two sub-questions.

- 1) What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with culturally diverse urban gifted students?

- 1a) What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with culturally responsive pedagogy in gifted education programs?
 - 1b) What are gifted education professionals' experiences with individualizing curriculum for culturally diverse students?
- 2) What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with state-level policy directives pertaining to culturally diverse students?

In addition to these research questions, it was important for me as a researcher, to remain open to the possibility of answering more questions or exploring more issues as they were raised by the participants. This design flexibility is one of the “hallmarks of qualitative methods” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 135).

This chapter contains a thorough description of the methods I used in this research. Beginning with an overview and rationale for qualitative research in general, I also describe the theoretical tradition of narrative inquiry. Next, I outline my role as researcher and issues of reflexivity. Primarily, this chapter focuses on the methodological design of the inquiry, including the sources of data, the organization strategies for managing this data, and the analytical processes. Finally, I identify the limitations and ethical considerations inherent in this type of qualitative research, including strategies to address credibility and rigor. In order to fully appreciate the strategies I employed in the research, it is first important to examine the reasons I have chosen to utilize qualitative methods. These qualitative design choices address the complex problem of developing curriculum for culturally diverse urban gifted students.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Experience is a particular focus of narrative inquiry, a type of qualitative research, “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4). Qualitative methods such as narrative inquiry are uniquely suited to address complex multicultural issues because they investigate the people’s experiences directly (Creswell, 2013; Kim, 2015; Patton, 2015). Clandinin et al. (2006) commenting on work by Greene (1995) further acknowledged that qualitative research makes it possible for educators, educational researchers, and teacher educators to move back and forth between seeing classroom stories up close and personal and then seeing students and building-level issues through statistical models. This qualitative perspective can be understood as moving between seeing classrooms as big and small. The up-close qualitative lens of narrative inquiry exposes the complicated context of teacher experiences, which can help policy makers better understand the unique situations behind the wide-angle reports of graduation rates, and test scores. These shifting lenses provide multiple viewpoints into the experiences of teachers and students (Greene, 1995).

Schubert (2008) proposed that “different types of curriculum inquiry are more suited to certain types of curricular questions” (p. 399). Empirical-analytic inquiry such as standardized testing and statistical modeling are appropriate for some research questions. However, when the questions surround the complex experiences of individuals situated in unique contexts such as gifted education, qualitative methods can reveal much more. Qualitative researchers work “in the field” and “value the messiness of the lived world” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 8), where individual experiences in context are studied in depth.

This contrasts with the traditional quantitative positivist paradigm, which emphasizes the processes of randomization and standardization. These procedures necessarily remove context and the peculiarities of individual experience.

In this research, I discovered the personal meaning of specific experiences related to gifted programming for teachers of talented students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Lincoln and Guba (2003) described this type of knowledge search as part of the naturalistic paradigm which “is not interested in pursuing some single “truth,” but rather in uncovering the various constructions held by individuals and often shared among the members of socially, culturally, familiarly, or professionally similar groups in some social context” (p. 227).

According to Lincoln and Guba (2003) “all social research has some agenda” (p. 232) and researchers must carefully consider the question of “whose reality gets presented?” (p. 233).

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) further described the qualitative researcher as a “bricoleur” (p. 5) who may define, interpret, and extend understanding using a pieced together set of representations that are uniquely suited to the specifics of a complex situation. Ultimately, this type of research is a pragmatic choice because the “bricoleur” realizes that to convey the full meaning of experiences and situations, objective statistics and numerical analysis may not be enough. Narrative inquiry is the primary methodological tool that I have selected to most truthfully portray the complex experiences of urban gifted professionals.

Rationale for Narrative Inquiry

Narrative researchers Connelly and Clandinin explained the skills and unique experiential knowledge of education professionals as “teachers’ personal practical knowledge” (1988, p. 25). In this research, “teachers’ stories” and “stories of teachers”

(Clandinin et al., 2006) shed light on some of the complex and interconnected attributes of teachers' personal practical knowledge. "Teachers' stories" are the narratives that individual professionals tell to describe their classroom experiences. These are often relayed to narrative inquirers during qualitative interviews and observations. "Stories of teachers" are told about teachers from the perspective of students, administrators, and researchers who observe and interact with these professionals in the context of school. "Personal practical knowledge" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) was described in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. It is an important concept defining the ability and experiences of individual teachers. It is the specialized combination of pedagogical skills, personal experiences, and content knowledge. According to Connelly and Clandinin, personal practical knowledge, "is a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions for the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation" (1988, p. 25).

Additionally, the selection of narrative methodology facilitates the critical stance of the research into best practices for traditionally underrepresented and underserved students. Narrative inquiry offers a unique experiential lens to understand the complicated balance of designing appropriately challenging curriculum for students who may often be viewed from a deficit paradigm based solely on their ethnic or linguistic background (Ford, 2011; Perry, et al., 2003). Narrative researchers situate these individual experiences in time and place by attending to stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Stories are expressions of lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Particularly in a multicultural classroom, context and interpretation of each teacher story is essential to understanding the meaning of the curricular decisions teachers make every day (Phillion, 2002). Narrative inquiry offers a procedure for examining these complicated contextual variables (Clandinin, et al., 2006).

This narrative inquiry focuses on collecting “stories of experience” as the primary source of data (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Other narrative researchers explained that these stories provide structure for teachers to understand their own interactions with students in the classroom at a deeper level. “Narrative inquiry is concerned with the production, interpretation and representation of storied accounts of lived experience” (Thorp & Shacklock, 2005, p. 156). Czarniawska (1997) asserted that it is precisely the stories that people tell which constitute the empirical material of qualitative study and that researchers must begin to consider interviewees as narrators with stories to tell.

As previously discussed in chapter two, Clandinin and Connelly (1996) described the different types of stories that teachers tell and classified them into three categories. First, the “sacred stories” are the official stated positions of school policy, curricular standards, and even communication to stakeholders such as boards of education, state directors, etc. In contrast, there are the slightly more realistic “cover stories” that teachers tell other professionals, parents, administrators, or even researchers. These cover stories highlight the daily lessons and classroom activities but are necessarily curated by the teacher to protect the classroom environment from potentially harmful judgement or intense scrutiny. Finally, the most closely guarded and mysterious “secret stories” are the real and true experiences of the teacher and students inside the classroom. These stories are only told in “safe” communities of trusted fellow professionals but reveal the more detailed and difficult day-to-day interactions between teachers and students. It is these secret curriculum stories that I uncovered utilizing narrative inquiry methods including interviews and classroom observation as a trusted fellow professional working collaboratively with teachers.

Apple (2008) asserted that the current culture of accountability in education must involve more than number-counting, “We do damage to the history of giving accounts by reducing it simply to number-counting” (p. 30). Education policy makers and curriculum developers need to hear the voices and stories of those working on the front lines of urban gifted education. Without these stories, it is impossible to fully understand the statistics of underrepresentation cited throughout this dissertation and grasp at the knotty roots of such a complex problem. Greene explained that, “We cannot truly understand the walls immigrants and minorities face. But we can attend to some of the voices, some of the stories” (1988, pp. 88-89). Indeed, “stories are one sure way to touch the heart and change the world” (Langellier, 2003, p. 452).

Researcher Positioning

I have spent many years teaching diverse gifted students in urban and suburban schools. My experiences in this context are what inspired me to conduct this research in order to highlight the most effective practices of my colleagues working with culturally diverse gifted students. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I explored a few of my own secret stories to help the reader understand my background and beliefs as a White educator and researcher in a diverse community. However, my primary purpose in this study is not to examine my own experiences, but to focus on gathering data and accurately interpreting meaning from the experiences of my co-researchers (Creswell, 2013). This is why it was important for me to address potential personal biases and expectations by carefully documenting my own thoughts and feelings throughout the research process, separating these from the stories and experiences of the participants. During the data collection phase of this study, I continued to use researcher memos and journaling to record my personal thoughts

and experiences independently from the data collection and interpretation. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described this as researcher “wakefulness” because the scholar and observer must remain awake to the possibility of bias and misinterpretation. Creswell (2013) explained this as “reflexivity in which the writer is conscious of the biases, values and experiences that he or she brings” (p. 216).

During the course of the study, I spent several hours over several weeks immersed in the field, and I my role within the classrooms evolved slightly as trust and rapport developed between myself and the teachers and students I observe. During the initial observations, my role was mainly “observer as participant” (Creswell, 2013, p. 167). In this role, I observed and took notes on the classroom activities from a distance without direct involvement. By the end of the study in my second observation, and following multiple interviews, my role shifted to become more of a “participant as observer” (p. 166), where I participated in the classroom activities gaining an insider view. In the next section, I describe this progression through the data collection and analysis process.

Study Design

This section outlines my specific plan for the study. It begins with a thorough description of the setting and sampling procedures. Then I explain each source of narrative data including interviews, observations and documents. Finally, I describe the steps for the narrative data analysis.

Bi-State Urban Setting

This research was conducted in two similar urban public school districts in a large bi-state metropolitan area in the Midwestern United States. To protect the privacy of students and teachers, I have given pseudonyms to the two districts on either side of the state line

dividing this city. Armstrong Public Schools is the pseudonym for the district in State A. Benton Public Schools is the pseudonym for the district in State B. Both cities have a complicated history related to educational policy and housing discrimination (Gotham, 2014). During the 1960s and 1970s, urban school districts on both sides of the state line faced court decisions requiring desegregation of existing public schools. As school attendance boundaries were redrawn multiple times, real estate developers used racially motivated tactics known as “block-busting” in combination with racially restrictive “covenants” in new suburbs to relocate hundreds of mostly White families across district boundaries and from one side of the state line to the other (p. 98). These developers generated tremendous profits while effectively creating racial and cultural boundaries that have persisted and remain a current source of tension for public school district leaders. “To many white residents, in [the Benton district] and elsewhere, good neighborhoods mean good schools, and they believe the degree of racial homogeneity determines the quality of both” (p. 164).

Gifted education policies also differ dramatically in each of the two states and districts. State B does not mandate services for gifted students statewide, so there are some districts and buildings without any gifted programming available. These schools were not considered for participation in this study. State A does have a statewide mandate for gifted services, however these are provided through the processes of special education. These statewide policy differences were examined closely in Chapter 3.

Sampling of Participants/Co-Researchers

Publicly available data was used to identify a pool of potential participants, called co-researchers from here on. In order to select a representative sample, a letter introducing the study was sent to district leaders and then to the gifted education professionals in each

district. Four gifted education teachers serving culturally diverse populations were willing to participate in the narrative study. Two volunteers are teachers in the Armstrong district in State A and two teach in the Benton district in State B.

All four volunteer co-researchers are itinerant teachers, meaning they teach gifted students in four or more different schools within the same district. They each have six or more years of experience working in urban school districts with culturally diverse students. They have similar class sizes and time to meet with students. Gifted education services vary widely, even in a small geographic area (Kettler, Russell & Puryear, 2015; NAGC, 2015), so this comparison-focused sample was a challenge to obtain. For this study, the race and cultural background of the teacher is analyzed as it relates to his/her educational biography, but was not a criterion for sampling. All four co-researchers are female, but represent multiple races and cultural backgrounds. In the next chapter, considerable detail about each co-researcher is provided in narrative form.

Data Sources

Narrative researchers may utilize many different approaches to data collection. I collected qualitative data from three different types of sources: interviews, observations, and documents. The following paragraphs describe the strategies for collecting each type of information and the purpose each served in the final narrative analysis.

Interviews. Interviews are a key component of qualitative research. In fact, most studies “rely quite extensively on in-depth interviewing” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 142). They can be described simply as conversations with a purpose, and according to deMarrais (2004) they are used when researchers seek detailed information about experiences. When describing the importance of interviews, Patton (2015) explained “an

interview, when done well, takes us inside another person's life and worldview. The result can help us make sense of the diversity of human experience" (p. 426).

Narrative researchers take the interview process a step further, in an understanding that interviews can transform participants into narrators who construct and relate the meaning of their experiences in a unique way. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested that interviews are one way of eliciting narratives of experience, as participants construct their own realities. Chase (2008) explained that "to think of an interviewee as a narrator is to make a conceptual shift away from the idea that interviewees have answers to researchers' questions and toward the idea that interviewees are narrators with their own stories to tell" (p. 70). Narrative researchers then relate these stories as they are told, relived, and re-told.

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) describe cover stories as one way that teachers might express their personal practical knowledge, especially in response to interview questions (2000). They may also adjust their narratives to meet the expectations of the particular audience for the story. These cover stories should be carefully analyzed and understood as interpretations from the perspective of the teacher-narrator and represent subjective, personally constructed truths about experiences as a teacher. As teachers find and develop trust with other professionals, they may begin to share "secret stories" instead of cover stories, especially within "knowledge communities" (Craig, 2004; Olson & Craig, 2005) where they feel secure. These story types become a useful construct for organizing narratives during data analysis.

In this research, I conducted three 60-minute digitally recorded interviews with each co-researcher. A qualitative interview is described by Creswell (2013) as open-ended and semi-structured to allow participants to describe their experiences fully. I also recorded my

thoughts and feelings before and after each interview to offer researcher-positioning narratives.

I used an interview guide for each interview based on my research questions (deMarrais, 2004; Patton, 2015) and the unique purpose of each interview. The guides served to create a semi-structured interview format while allowing me to adapt the interview to each co-researcher, injecting follow-up questions and probes as needed. The guide was provided to the co-researchers about three days before each interview to allow the teachers some time to consider the questions thoughtfully. This also helped them feel more comfortable answering the questions and offered time to think about which stories they wished to recount.

The questions contained in the interview guides are all open-ended and focused on the co-researchers' experiences working with culturally diverse gifted students. The broadest and most general questions begin the interview, such as "What are your experiences in a typical day?" Following advice from Patton (2015) I reserve the more complex and challenging questions until the second half of the interviews, for example "What are your thoughts about using culturally responsive teaching methods in gifted education?" See Appendices B - D for the interview guides for each interview.

The first interview focused on the co-researcher's biography (Kim, 2015) to begin developing trust and rapport between the co-researcher and myself. This biographical interview included questions about the co-researcher's earliest memories of school, decisions to begin teaching, and experiences in a culturally diverse school. Telling stories about the past allowed the relationship between each teacher and myself to begin developing (Kim, 2015). It also provided helpful background narratives to understand each co-researcher's

personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). See Appendix B for the first interview guide.

The second interview concentrated on the co-researcher's teaching philosophy to really begin to understand her "personal practical knowledge" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988, p.25) as it is enacted in the multicultural gifted curriculum. This interview began with questions about daily classroom activities and responsibilities. It also offered each co-researcher an opportunity to describe his or her thoughts about individualizing curriculum, about culturally responsive teaching, and about the effects of state policy. See Appendix C for the second interview guide.

The third 60-minute in-depth interview took place after the classroom observations and preliminary data analysis to allow each co-researcher to confirm or clarify narrative inquiry themes and data. This interview served as a member-check, and as a time to address any additional questions that had arisen during the observations and preliminary data analysis. A full transcription of the two previous interviews was provided to the co-researchers prior to the final interview. See Appendix D for the third interview guide.

During the interviews, I tried to communicate a sense of "empathic neutrality" (p. 457) to convey my genuine interest in the co-researchers' responses without passing judgement or giving advice. As a part of the narrative inquiry tradition (Chase, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016) I also frequently invited my interviewees to become narrators and tell me stories about particular classroom experiences that were meaningful. In order to develop rapport and help co-researchers feel comfortable sharing stories, I offered to discuss some of my own stories and experiences related to the interview questions.

Observations. I conducted two classroom observations with each co-researcher. Each set of classroom observations was one class period in duration. Each observation focused on the same group of students to provide the most complete narrative possible regarding the multicultural curriculum as it was developed by the teacher with a particular group of students. Throughout the course of the two observations, my role evolved from "observer as participant" to "participant as observer" (Creswell, 2013), once the teacher and class became accustomed to my presence and I was able to interact within the setting more freely. Classroom observation data was collected in the form of field notes and field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as well as classroom documents and artifacts (Kim, 2015). These included curriculum documents, lesson plans, and student handouts. Each observation was thoroughly documented through researcher field notes, which were shared with the co-researchers prior to the final interview.

Clandinin, Huber, Huber, Murphy, Orr, Pearce, and Steeves (2006) emphasized the loss of meaning that can result when researchers are absent during the school experiences they are attempting to learn about, "When we do not experience school landscapes and the experiences of those who live on them first-hand, we can write research, shape initiatives and policies in more removed, and therefore less meaningful ways" (p. 98). These experiences are often documented through careful observation over a longer period of sustained interaction between the researcher and co-researcher in the context of the school and classroom landscapes. In a seminal narrative inquiry study, Phillion (2002) spent many hours over the course of an entire year with one classroom of students because she knew "there was much to be learned from up-close, intensive observations" (p. 31).

Observations are an important component of all qualitative fieldwork (Creswell, 2013) even in interview-based studies (Angrosino, 2008). “Observation takes you inside the setting, and it helps you discover complexity” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 192). According to Patton (2015) “the observer has the opportunity to see things that may routinely escape awareness among the people in the setting” (p. 333).

Some traditional narrative inquirers conduct longer-term observations, remaining in the field for several weeks or months to gain a full picture of the experiences of their participants. In the narrative inquiry tradition, these observations are combined with interview data and document analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2006; Phillion, 2002). All these data are necessary to uncover stories of participants’ experience in context. The contextual variables of location, time, and relationships are keys to understanding the meanings of these experiences.

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) explained that teachers’ professional knowledge and experiences are shared narratively in distinctive ways dependent upon context. Within classroom settings generally provide a safe place for teachers to develop and utilize their personal practical knowledge. “These lived stories are essentially secret ones. Furthermore, when these secret lived stories are told, they are, for the most part, told to other teachers in other secret places” (p. 25) This is in contrast to the “sacred stories” put forth in official curriculum documents and school policies and the “cover stories,” which are retellings from the teacher about the events taking place in their classrooms. Direct classroom observation can provide access for researchers to these secret stories of teacher practice.

Documents. According to Patton (2015) documents “constitute a particularly rich source of information about many organizations and programs” (p. 376). Qualitative

researchers can utilize documents for several analytic purposes in studies of education. External documents, such as curriculum guides and policies, can be understood as the “official perspective” (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007) helping qualitative analysts examine the topic from multiple viewpoints. They can also become “a stimulus for paths of inquiry that can only be pursued through direct observation and interviewing” (Patton, 2015, p. 377).

Clandinin and Connelly (1996), explain that official curriculum guides and policy documents can be described as the “sacred story” of what happens in schools. These are best practices or universal standards that districts and teachers strive toward. However, they are rarely followed to the letter because each local district, school administrator, and classroom teacher must interpret these sacred stories in shifting landscapes and contexts. For this research, I used thematic coding to analyze curriculum and policy documents that were provided by my co-researchers. These documents related to their development of appropriately challenging curriculum and services for culturally diverse gifted students. They included various classroom and district documents that co-researchers recommended as important for their unique context.

Data Organization and Management

Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and stored on a password-protected computer. Observation field notes and documents were also stored on this same computer. The first two interview transcriptions and all observation field notes were analyzed prior to the final interview when the co-researchers read and verified the narrative analyses, discussed findings with me, and make corrections or additions as needed. The final set of narrative data is secure in the office of the primary researcher, and will remain there for seven years.

Data Analysis Procedures

I used narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016) throughout this research project. The curriculum documents were analyzed and interpreted using thematic analysis only. After identifying common narrative themes from both co-researchers, I utilized Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry process to explore the three contextual variables of time, place, and relationships within the "secret stories" of the gifted education classrooms. This theoretical framework was reviewed extensively in chapter two.

Analysis of interview transcripts. For the process of narrative analysis, I began by identifying stories that appeared during the interviews. Then I carefully analyzed the context of each narrative with a focus on the socio-cultural context (Grbich, 2013). I also analyzed my own written stories during the interviews. I looked for common narrative themes across interviews and identified commonalities and differences in the types of narratives that were told by each co-researcher. Next, I considered the stories within Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, looking for interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present, and future), and situation (physical and cultural context). The three-dimensional narrative inquiry space was described thoroughly in chapter two. This type of analysis can also be considered a "sociocultural approach" (Grbich, 2013, p.221) wherein the researcher goes beyond the linguistic structure of the narrative to explore its political and social context and examine contrasting stories from multiple perspectives.

This analytical process was completed for each individual interview before the next interview was conducted. During the third interview, I presented the analytical findings to each co-researcher, inviting them to provide feedback, clarification, and corrections as

needed. This helped ensure the validity of my interpretations of each teacher's experiences. After all interviews were completed, I conducted cross-case analysis, comparing themes and narratives identified in each of the teachers' stories.

Analysis of observation field notes. After each observation, I transcribed my field notes within 24 hours and recorded my personal feelings and questions related to the observations in a researcher journal. I did not conduct the full narrative analysis of these observation field notes until both observations had been completed. As I transcribed my observation notes, I also documented major stories that I experienced or heard during the observation. These narratives were recorded as narrative memos or "field texts" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). After all observations were completed, I identified themes that occurred throughout the observations in each separate setting. I also analyzed the stories of each co-researcher according to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework described above. This thematic and narrative analysis of the observations was presented to the co-researchers prior to the final member check interview.

Analysis of documents. The curriculum and policy documents (as provided by the co-researchers) were analyzed using thematic coding for their connections to the narrative themes identified in the interviews and observations. When these documents support the curriculum or teaching experiences that I observed or discussed with co-researchers in the interview, I synthesized the thematic findings of the document analysis with the observation and/or interview findings. Narrative analysis is not used with documents, though they may be considered as examples of "sacred stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996).

Synthesis of data and crystallization. After all documents were coded, interviews and observations have been conducted, transcribed, analyzed, and verified by co-researchers

I used the process of crystallization (Ellingson, 2009) to carefully examine the findings from each data source in each settings. Crystallization replaces the more positivist concept of triangulation. This process allowed me to examine the experiences of teachers from multiple angles to see which themes and stories were clearly reflected in multiple data sets across both settings. Additionally the final cross-case comparative analysis allowed for interpretation of the statewide policy context and answered my research question regarding policy. Within each of the final identified themes, I carefully examined the narrative socio-cultural context (Grbich, 2013) of the teacher and then re-told some of the “secret stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) I heard and witnessed, exploring how these narratives connected to the identified themes. In the following section, I explain the limitations inherent in the study. I also address issues such as validity, reliability, and ethical considerations.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Limitations

There were some limitations inherently present in this type of research. First and foremost, there was a potential for researcher bias. As a White, middle class professional visiting in another teacher’s classroom, there are intrinsic issues of power, privilege, and reflexivity that I must address. As previously discussed in the role of the researcher section, I used journaling during the data collection process to document my own feelings and questions as I conducted the field work. I also addressed researcher bias through using member checks of the compiled data and stories. During these member-check interviews, my co-researchers had the opportunity to correct any misperceptions or biased findings that may have existed in the preliminary analysis.

A second limitation of this study is the imperfect nature of interviews and observations as analytical tools. Crites (1979) discussed the possibility for participants to deceive themselves in telling their narratives of experience. There was also a limited amount of time to observe classroom experiences and stories. This limitation in design was addressed by using multiple interviews and observations. The crystallization process (as discussed above) also helped ameliorate this limitation by examining the experiences from multiple angles and including additional data sources such as documents. Finally, the member check interviews gave the co-researchers the opportunity to identify contradicting stories or themes and resolve them.

Two delimitations may affect the transferability of the findings of this study to outside contexts. This research was conducted in urban public schools that have an active gifted education program. Schools that do not have gifted education programs or do not have many culturally diverse students were considered outside the sampling frame and therefore, the findings would not necessarily be transferable to these contexts. The second delimitation is the use of a comparison-focused sampling process. By choosing to use co-researchers from different states but who have school environments that are similar on many other variables, I have focused the comparison component of the research on the primary variable of state policy. In a different type of study, one might choose to examine a maximum variety of gifted teaching environments and curricular contexts.

Validity and Reliability

According to established qualitative methodology, I use different terms in place of the more positivist terms of *validity* and *reliability*. In narrative inquiry, the terms used are authenticity, trustworthiness, and verisimilitude (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This means

providing an accurate representation of the narrator's voice in telling their stories. It also means reporting detailed and accurate descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of the teacher experiences that I observe. A second qualitative phrase that addresses these same concerns is "credibility and confidence" (Eisner, 1991). By credibility and confidence, I mean that the stories and themes I report are truthful and trustworthy. By grounding my research in both literature and experience, I have begun to address credibility. Additionally I am utilize member check interviews (Creswell, 2013) where co-researchers can confirm the veracity of the findings according to their own experience.

In a seminal discussion of qualitative methods, Lincoln and Guba (1985) contended that since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of validity is sufficient to establish the reliability. Patton (2015) also stated that reliability is a consequence of the validity in a qualitative study. Validity and reliability can only be judged by the readers when the researcher presents a thorough and thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the participants' experiences as well as the design and methods decisions that occur throughout the research process.

In addition to member checks, and thick description, authenticity was addressed according to recommendations by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) of sustained time in the field and researcher wakefulness. Wakefulness means remaining alert to the potential for researcher bias and ethical concerns, which are addressed below. Finally, I used crystallization of multiple data sources (Ellingson, 2009) to find the most authentic themes and stories that are reflected in various aspects of field work with the co-researchers over time.

Ethical Considerations

According to the Belmont Report (National Commission, 1979), all research that deals with human subjects must address three important issues of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. In this research, I respect my co-researchers by encouraging them to adopt the title of co-researchers. The benefits of participating in this study included the opportunity to contribute to an emerging field of knowledge about developing curriculum for culturally diverse gifted students. The co-researchers also had the benefit of an additional person in the classroom to assist with activities or other management tasks as needed. For this study, I believe the benefits of participation outweighed potential risks.

According to my completed courses from the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), I incorporated several ethical protections for the human subjects in this research. In order to protect anonymity, I asked each co-researcher to select a pseudonym. Pseudonyms were also selected for states, schools and districts. Co-researchers were fully informed of the research purpose and design before they consented to participate. See consent form in Appendix A. They were also asked to validate the data through member-check interviews. I followed the required Internal Review Board processes to protect human subjects including managing and storing data on a password-protected computer, maintaining all hard copies of data in the office of the primary researcher for seven years, and allowing co-researchers to end their participation in the study if at any time they chose to do so.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant given the limited understanding of how teachers of culturally diverse gifted students individualize curriculum. This narrative inquiry provides a contextualized understanding of teacher experiences complementing the extensive

quantitative literature available regarding the underrepresentation of diverse students in gifted education programs (Ford, 2011; Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Tomlinson et al., 2004). As noted by several current publications, there is a need for additional research into successful programming for diverse gifted learners (Ford, 2015; Siegle et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2016). Gifted education research heavily favors quantitative work and the need has been expressed for additional exploration of contextual experiences such as teacher knowledge and curriculum development (Coleman, Guo, & Dabbs, 2007).

Some narrative studies exist regarding the experiences of culturally diverse gifted students (Corwin, 2000; Perry et al. 2003; Suskind, 2010). Narratives of gifted education professionals working in primarily White middle-class contexts have also occasionally been published (Coleman, 2014; Isaacson & Fisher, 2007). However, narrative research into the experiences of teachers who work gifted students from diverse cultural backgrounds is virtually nonexistent. Finally, this research is significant because the influence of widely varying state and district policies is evident in the narrative experiences of teachers from two different states. The significance of these policy implications reach far beyond the local boundaries of this research setting.

Conclusion

The purpose of this narrative inquiry research is to explore the experiential stories of gifted education professionals who work in urban classrooms with culturally diverse students within two different states in one large Midwestern city. This chapter has offered an extensive description of the methods that I used in the narrative inquiry. After beginning with an overview and rationale for qualitative research in general, I described the theoretical tradition of narrative inquiry and its particular usefulness in this type of investigation. Next, I

outlined my role as researcher and issues of reflexivity. The bulk of this chapter focused on the methodological design of the inquiry, including the sources of data, the organization strategies for managing this data, and the analytical processes I used for narrative analysis. Finally, I identified the limitations and ethical considerations inherent in this type of qualitative research including strategies to address credibility and rigor. The next chapter includes experiential narratives from each co-researcher and analysis of these experiences in the context of their teaching with culturally diverse gifted students.

CHAPTER 5
DATA ANALYSIS: UNCOVERING SACRED STORIES OF
CONTEXT AND POLICY

Narrative inquiry examines lives through the lens of a story, honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016). The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore the experiential stories of gifted education professionals who work in urban classrooms with culturally diverse students in two different neighboring states in order to gain insight into lived scenarios of gifted education and diversity. Four co-researchers, each with at least six years of experience teaching gifted students in their urban districts, volunteered to participate in the study. This context-setting chapter highlights stories that explore the situational aspect of the research. Within this chapter, I also discuss the results of data analysis pertaining to individual and shared experiences of each co-researcher regarding their state's policies for culturally diverse gifted students. Narrative inquiry analysis illuminates the unique personal and classroom experiences that contribute to their gifted curriculum and the narrative themes that portray similar experiences across varying classroom landscapes. In this chapter and the next, I will consider their stories of experience in-depth within the construct of shared narrative themes I have uncovered.

Throughout this chapter, when I describe the co-researchers and relate their stories, I will list them in chronological order based on the date of their first introductory interview. This chronological presentation reflects the development of the inquiry as it progressed. Emerging themes and new questions arose during the process of collecting stories. As the inquiry transpired, these stories and themes built on each other over time. A chronological

exposition of the stories in this chapter reflects the sequential evolution of my thematic understanding and provides a helpful linear structure to clarify the data collection and analysis process.

Within this context-setting chapter, I will first describe my experiences as a researcher to position myself as a visitor stepping briefly into each teacher's world. I will describe the temporal concerns and challenges of researching "in the midst" of curricular stories and my own resonating experiences with each professional. I will also introduce the new research questions that began to emerge for me through this process and some of the unanticipated outcomes, which grew to become part of my overall understanding of their curriculum stories.

Next, I will introduce each of my co-researchers, providing biographical context for each. This section will also describe some of the co-researchers' "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4) that were uncovered during the narrative data analysis. These stories of identity establish each gifted professional in the context of her own deeply held beliefs about curriculum for gifted learners. They illuminate the personal practical knowledge of each teacher and inform how they respond to the unique daily challenges of making curriculum.

In the final half of the chapter, I will present some of the contextual factors of the inquiry landscape by describing the demographics and a brief history of the two districts where the research was conducted. Then I will review the sacred stories of each state's gifted education policy that were described in detail in Chapter 3. To unpack these sacred policy stories, I will relate the secret stories that demonstrate how each co-researcher has personally experienced the effects of these policies in the classroom. I will explore the common

narrative themes that I uncovered in both states including those pertaining to a lack of clearly dedicated funding for gifted education, nebulous accountability and insufficient curricular guidance.

This final section of the chapter answers my second research question “What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with state-level policy directives pertaining to culturally diverse students?” It also establishes the state policy context for each of the experiential themes shared in the next chapter, which is devoted to answering my first and primary research question, “What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with culturally diverse urban gifted students?”

Throughout this chapter and the next, the reader will find examples of sacred, secret, and cover stories. Italics are used to indicate excerpts from my field notes. These italicized narratives comprise a key part of the documented and storied results of the inquiry. They represent secret classroom stories that were uncovered within the inquiry. Secret stories may also be gained from interviews and these will be indicated with direct quotations from my co-researchers. To strengthen the authenticity of these secret stories, all observation field notes and interview transcripts were confirmed with co-researchers prior to and during their final interviews. By contrast, sacred stories are found in publicly available documents and policy. Their meaning is discussed below in traditional scholarly format, with in-text citations. The first stories revealed here are those secret stories of researching “in the midst” of ongoing classroom stories.

Researcher Positioning

As described in previous chapters, narrative inquiry is deeply personal and necessarily autobiographical at times (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In this section, I will

describe some of my own stories of experience during the inquiry process. The goal is to situate the stories of my co-researchers that follow into the three dimensional narrative inquiry space. First, I will explore the narrative dimensions of temporality and situation by telling the chronological story of my research experience. “Stories are temporal, and it is through the media of time and space that people, things, and events reflect, and are seen to reflect, one another” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, p. 391). Temporal positioning describes the chronological progression of my research and situational positioning will note the various settings where I interacted with each co-researcher. In the next chapter, I will attend to the key narrative dimension of relationship or interaction. As I heard and observed classroom stories with each co-researcher, our interactions created reflexive experiences that altered my own views moving ahead into the inquiry (Kim, 2016; Patton, 2015). My own interest in and subsequent questioning about particular topics, also caused my co-researchers to examine them more closely. Some of these resonating experiences (Conle, 1996; Schlein, 2010) revealed themselves in later interviews and classroom observations. The purpose of this entire section is to incorporate clear descriptions of my relevant experiences, to position my findings and help the reader understand my perspective and voice as I interpret stories from each of the co-researchers.

Researching In The Midst

This narrative inquiry project began with a proposed timeline of research and two imprecise settings. I had hoped to conduct interviews and observations starting in August and completing them by October. There was no way to determine precise dates or times until at least one co-researcher agreed to participate in my study. I was also hoping to describe classroom landscapes in at least two urban districts, in two different states. The actual

timeline and shifting setting for the research is described narratively in this section. A more precise and detailed chart is located in Appendix E.

The purpose of this section is to position myself as a researcher in the midst of ongoing stories. The goal is to allow the reader to visualize the shifting landscape of research with multiple itinerant participants in multiple settings. Glancing quickly over the chart in Appendix E would provide a wide but simplistic view of my research process. In the narratives below, the reader is meant to “see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening” (Greene, 1995, p. 10). Adapting from my field texts, I mention key moments of my initial experiences with each co-researcher and setting. These narrative descriptions reveal that I am entering an ongoing story. What feels new and exciting for me, is ordinary daily experience for my co-researchers. Their stories have begun before I arrive and continue after I leave. The settings of each research opportunity are described in my field notes below with thick rich detail, to help the reader enter the experience.

I am driving westward up a steep and winding hill through a pocket of dense forest in the middle of the city. My stomach flutters as I consider this exciting first day of my inquiry. After negotiating access to the Armstrong School District for months, I have finally secured permission and participants in State A. I arrive at my very first introductory research interview with Leta Keats on September 21. She was one of the first gifted professionals to respond to my recruitment emails. I have met Leta before, but never seen the buildings where she works, or her classroom. Hilltop Middle School is a historic building in an urban State A neighborhood rich with cultural heritage. At one time, this building was the local high school for an independent school district and it retains an active alumni group. Opened in 1906 it resembles many traditional brick school buildings of the era. It has a central auditorium and

a ring of classrooms on each floor with large windows and high ceilings. Since 1973, it has been a middle school and several modern additions have been constructed.

The first thing I notice when I arrive is a large lush garden surrounding the walkway to the main doors. This vegetable and flower garden is well maintained and clearly part of an in-depth outdoor learning experience for students. It provides a pleasant and inviting atmosphere that welcomes me to the school. The secretary points me down the hall to where Ms. Keats has an office space on the main floor. She shares the small room with the school psychologist and it is down a short hallway that also leads to the “green room” where she holds class. Just outside her office door are the metal detectors and a backstage entrance to the auditorium.

Ms. Keats is lively and animated during our first interview, giving me many new ideas to consider immediately. We discuss her biographical history and the reasons she came to work here in the urban Armstrong School District. We schedule a time the following week for me to return and observe her sixth grade class and conduct my second interview (Field Notes, September 21, 2018).

The following week, on September 25 I return to Hilltop to observe with Ms. Keats. As the sixth graders start to arrive they immediately inform Ms. Keats that it is library day. Can they please go check out before class? She agrees quickly, telling me that if they don't go now, they probably won't get any new books this week. I am pleased but not surprised by how important this small concession seems to both the students and their teacher.

We wait for a few minutes and Ms. Keats sets out a tub of small black notebooks, a stack of copied rubrics and looks around for an eraser. Someone has taken the eraser from the dry erase board so she goes back to her office to get a tissue to clean off the board. This

seems to be one of the frustrations of teaching in a shared general space. She decides to go down to the library to collect everyone and hurry them along. I ask if I can come too. She says it might be disappointing, but I am welcome. The library is just down the hall on the same floor. It is small but not disappointing at all. The shelves are well stocked and it is bright and colorful. By the time everyone has selected a book and we return to the classroom, we have used up the first 15 minutes of gifted class time.

After observing Ms. Keats in the “green room” for class and then meeting in her office for the interview, I drive back down the steep hill and head to my first observation with Emri Silver, an elementary gifted professional in State A. We have planned to meet at Anderson Elementary for her afternoon class. My head is swimming with all I have just seen and heard from Ms. Keats, but I try to refocus on a new setting with new experiences awaiting.

Anderson Elementary is a small neighborhood school in an area rich with cultural diversity. Near both a river and railyard, the neighborhood is a combination of very old and very new. Most of the businesses reflect the Hispanic culture of many community residents, with signs in Spanish as well as English. The houses are also older with small yards. Three big new discount stores: Wal-Mart, Dollar General and Sav-A-Lot appear incongruously on a hill of recently razed land near the highway.

Anderson’s original historic school building constructed in 1887 sits empty on the lot across the playground from the current school building, which has been occupied since 1961. The main doors of the modern two-story rectangular school face a grassy park with a pavilion and tennis courts. Newer play structures are accessible here to both the school and the community. Modular classrooms have been placed along one edge of the asphalt

playground. It is a sunny and warm September afternoon. The grass and trees are bright green. When I get out of my car, I hear the shouting happy sounds of recess. Teachers and students fill the large asphalt space between the old and new school as well as the adjacent play structures. Ms. Silver meets me at the front office and we walk back outside through a side door. Her classroom is located in one of the modular buildings along one edge of the playground.

Ms. Silver asks if I would like to go with her to collect her students. I would love to see how this process works so I accompany her back across the now empty playground into the back door of the main building. We ascend a flight of stairs and walk down a long hallway that is filled with teachers and children. The students are mostly in lines waiting for the restroom, filling water bottles at the fountains, and waiting outside classrooms for the teachers. Recess has just ended and one teacher reminds her class that this is their last chance to use the restroom before the end of the day. I notice the bright and colorful themed displays of student work that give a cheerful appearance to the older building. There is a recurring Dr. Seuss theme with vibrant 3D flowers and other interesting posters and signs. It feels like almost any other elementary school I have ever visited. However, Anderson is not like most other elementary schools in the state. I see no White students anywhere, though there are several White teachers. The large restroom signs are printed in five different languages.

Ms. Silver greets teachers and navigates easily to each classroom where a student is expecting her. Some are ready with their materials in hand; others need to be gently reminded that it is time for gifted. Students remind each other to get a snack before they leave and several go back into the classrooms to collect a fresh peach – the fruit of the day.

When we finally leave the hallway to head back outside there are seven students following Ms. Silver, each carrying a folder, a laptop or iPad and a peach. Some students smile at me and speak to me immediately. Ms. Silver tells them I am here to learn about her job. As we walk, I tell them I want to learn how she teaches her class. I tell them I also teach gifted students, but normally at a middle school. They want to know if I can come visit again when they do PBL day on Thursday. Back in her modular classroom, students settle quickly into their routine and appear to forget I am there. After the observation, we schedule her first interview for the following day at a different location (Field Notes, September 25, 2018).

On September 26, I drive to Emerald City Elementary in the same neighborhood as Anderson, but about a mile further Southeast. Emerald City Elementary School is located at the top of a natural bluff overlooking the river and railyards. It is in the center of a wide green park area at the dead end of a small neighborhood road. After driving up and up the long hill to arrive here, the building looks surprisingly flat. A low one-story built from brown bricks, it appears small but more modern and accessible than other elementary schools I have visited in the area. There is a wide circle drive, a broad sidewalk, and a flagpole. The parking lot is almost full and I think about Ms. Silver coming and going to all her buildings at various times during the day, trying to find a good place to park. While checking in at the office, I notice a large bright bulletin board welcoming visitors to the school in fifteen different languages. Ms. Silver has to come straight from her collab class and the secretary has trouble tracking her down. Following this collab class, is her only long planning time of the week, so she has asked me to meet her here, even though this is the building where she has the fewest students.

Emerald City seems to be constructed with a somewhat open concept design. We walk straight into a large colorful library from the office waiting room. To cross the library we go right behind the librarian's desk, which would normally be strange but here it seems like the most commonly followed path through the library. No one else is in her small office today, but Ms. Silver says she shares it with several other people including the speech pathologist. There is a semi-circular counter that she uses as a workspace, a few small student chairs and a door leading to a closet, but not much else. I wonder if this is the space, where Ms. Silver meets with the one identified gifted student at this school (Field Notes, September 26, 2018).

Over the next three weeks, I continue interviewing and observing Ms. Keats and Ms. Silver. On October 8, we run into each other at a statewide Kanas gifted conference in a town two hours outside of the city. We chat pleasantly over lunch, generally avoiding research talk and commenting only about the conference. At the conference, friends and colleagues ask about my doctoral studies, I report that I am pleased with my progress in State A, but still awaiting permission to conduct my inquiry in State B (Field Notes, October 8, 2018).

As an outsider at Benton Public Schools, I have been referred downward through a chain of district personnel since I began my phone calls and emails in July. I have even tried visiting the district office in person with my materials. Each administrator I talk to gives conditional permission to proceed based on what the next person decides. The most recent person I spoke to is the new coordinator of the gifted department, and has many other responsibilities in the district. He has told me he will discuss it with his staff at their next meeting. I am starting to wonder if I need to research and contact a different State B district

instead, or I may not be able to finish my research by the end of the semester (Field Notes, October 18, 2018).

On October 20, I am shocked and overjoyed to meet the entire four-person gifted department of Benton Public Schools at the statewide gifted conference in State B. It took a three-hour drive to the opposite corner of the state, for me to finally meet the people whom I had been waiting to talk to for months. They think they did hear something about me from their director recently. They are interested in my research questions and ask me to join their department meeting on November 7 (Field Notes, October 20, 2018).

Driving to the Benton Public Schools gifted office three weeks later, I am both nervous and excited. I have wrapped up my research in State A, confirming my preliminary texts with both Ms. Keats and Ms. Silver. I feel as though a new chapter may be about to begin. None of the State B teachers actually agreed to become a co-researcher yet, but they are open to discussing the possibility today. It seems like I am not only making a pitch for my study, but also for myself, as a knowledgeable colleague and trustworthy confidant.

The Gifted Education Offices are housed in a large vocational high school building that sits near the intersection of two major highways near downtown. Built in the early 1970's, it has an industrial feel matching the surrounding area. A massive concrete and brick structure, it offers vocational training and contains centralized offices for various district programs. When I arrive on November 7, there are surprisingly few cars in the parking areas. I do not check in at the main office, but instead greet the security guard at the entrance. He scans my driver's license, waves me through a metal detector and says Ms. Gladhart will meet me at the top of the stairs. The gifted education office is on an upper floor and requires a long walk from the top of the staircase. The building is eerily quiet and my

feet echo on the concrete floors. If there are any students in this part of the building, they are working silently. Spaces that used to hold lockers have been converted into display cases where colorful posters hang, reminders of various programs and initiatives the district has undertaken through the years. Groups of chairs are arranged outside classroom doorways here, as though parents or students may need to wait to meet the teachers inside. Signs point visitors in the direction of various offices. When Ms. Gladhart arrives, she is smiling and welcoming. The gifted education office is in a large classroom that feels much more cozy and pleasant than the rest of the building. There is a carpet in the center of the room with a circular table. Around it, four desks are arranged in a semi-circle. The teachers each welcome me warmly and Ms. Gladhart offers refreshments that she and the others have brought to share.

Slowly my nerves melt away as I get to know the teachers. We have so much in common as gifted education professionals and residents of the same city. They ask questions about my research project and about how they might contribute. I have brought copies of my IRB documents but no one seems particularly interested in reading through it all. We discuss instead the national problem of underrepresentation and our shared interests in quality programs for diverse gifted learners. They are surprised that program delivery models are similar in State A and that other teachers travel like they do between multiple buildings, serving kids in shared spaces. When I leave after an hour, I tell them to email or call me if they decide to participate as co-researchers. As I walk back out of the building I feel thrilled by the fascinating conversation and excited about the realistic possibility of continuing my research journey here (Field Notes, November 7, 2018).

On November 12, less than a week later, I am driving to Trent Elementary for my first observation with Ms. Gladhart and my first narrative inquiry experience in State B. Trent Elementary is located in a working class neighborhood just one block from a heavily traveled street that is considered the racial dividing line of the county. Constructed in 1920, the older part of the building forms a traditional square made of red brick with a stone foundation. There is a central auditorium with classrooms around it. The building was renovated in 1986 and again in 1988 when it became a writing and communications magnet school. The front entrance in the newest part of the school includes the main doors flanked by columns and a high triangular pediment with a bright circle of glass. It rises above the street atop a flight of steps and a wide ramp that sweeps down and to the right of a small circle drive.

The library where I will meet Ms. Gladhart is also part of this new wing and stretches to the left of the front entrance, blocking a view of the much older building behind it. When I arrive for the afternoon visit, it is snowing heavily. There is a layer of fresh snow in the parking lot and on the steps crunching beneath my feet as I walk up to the doors. I imagine Ms. Gladhart pulling the large silver cart I saw in her office through this snow. The office secretary greets me warmly and directs me to the library where I find Ms. Gladhart preparing for her class. Two other teachers are chatting with her when I walk in.

At a few minutes after 1:00, we leave to gather up the gifted students. They are in the fourth grade classrooms and should have just finished eating lunch. We walk through a short hallway into the older part of the building and cut through the auditorium across the stage. I peek through the parted gold curtains to see traditional rows of wooden seats stretching up to two sets of rear doors. When we arrive at the first classroom, it is dark and empty. The students are probably still at lunch. We go down the hall to check on the other group and it is

the same. Ms. Gladhart and I sit on a bench to wait and we hear the students' voices coming up the stairwell from the cafeteria on the lowest level.

As students emerge from the stairs, they are talking and joking with each other. Two white male teachers are supervising the groups of African-American children and I notice that several students are wearing pajamas instead of the required uniform. Ms. Gladhart and I guess that it must be pajama day, though it seems that only about ten percent of the kids are participating. This is not a surprise given the frigid winter weather today. Most of Ms. Gladhart's students come right up to us and seem excited to see her. They are all in uniform and immediately ask if they will need their computers today. She says no, so they do not return to the classroom and instead wait with us. One boy is wearing a coat and she asks him to leave it in the room. Another student wants to bring her a story he has written, so he goes back to look for it.

We walk back to the library as a group, this time going around the auditorium through the hallway. A student opens a door to a small conference room, but Ms. Gladhart stops her saying, "We'll be in the library today. We need more room." She tells me this is the room they use when they are doing computer activities only, but it is really too small for the whole group to do anything hands-on. Back in the library, students are excited to see the tables set up with hands-on activities. They settle quickly into their regular routine and Ms. Gladhart begins her gifted class (Field Notes, November 12, 2018).

Over the next two weeks, I visit the Gifted Education Offices in the vocational high school two more times for interviews with Ms. Gladhart and Ms. Willow. Each time, I learn more about my co-researchers, the district and the history of the gifted education program. I am constantly struck by similarities and differences to the experiences of my co-researchers

in State A. I slowly realize that the timing of my bi-state inquiry could not have been planned any better. If both districts had invited me immediately in August, I would never have had time to process all the particularities of each unique context. The teachers also had time to settle comfortably into their normal routines with students, meaning I was truly observing typical classroom experiences. During Thanksgiving break, I furiously type up new State B field notes and texts, feeling like I have finally passed the halfway point. Then a week of snow days descends upon the city on November 26, delaying my inquiry yet again (Field Notes November 26, 2018).

Finally, on December 5, I am prepared to make my way to Wadsworth Elementary for my first observation with my last co-researcher, Ms. Willow. In my own building, my special education coordinator shows up for a surprise observation of my morning class. Instead of leaving a few minutes early to make it to Wadsworth, I am now unfortunately running a few minutes late.

The sun is shining brightly on the playground equipment that surrounds Wadsworth School. There are trees lining the wide flat sidewalk leading from the street to the main entrance. The older part of the building is traditional red brick with a stone foundation, constructed in the 1890's. In 1958, a long rectangular 3-story addition was constructed on the North side. Its rows of windows are now covered with yellow Spandrel panels, a repeated architectural feature on each of the renovated urban buildings where I have observed so far.

When I walk in to the office, the secretary asks for my Photo ID. She scans my driver's license and prints an official visitor badge for me to wear. She says Ms. Willow is expecting me and directs me down the hall to the library where she is holding class. The hallways of Wadsworth are painted with large bright murals depicting different natural

climate zones, which are labeled. Ms. Willow greets me at the library door and says not to worry about being late they are just getting started.

She immediately tells me her present technology concern is a missing cord. Normally, a video cable running out from the wall allows her to connect her laptop to the screen. Today the cable is missing and she does not have an extra in her bag. This is a technology problem I have encountered many times before in my experiences sharing classroom spaces with others. We look around for a minute and I discover that the library computer monitors are connected with the exact type of cable she needs. We borrow one from the nearest computer to get her computer hooked up to the projector. I check to make sure we can reconnect the monitor easily after class ends. I feel happy that I can be helpful, but also a little strange about taking things apart in such a well-appointed school where I am only a visitor. Ms. Willow's students are busy with a warm-up activity and do not seem to notice me. On this first visit, I observe her conducting multiple problem solving challenges with the gifted students and see her welcome two new gifted girls to the class (Field Notes, December 5, 2018).

My final interview with Ms. Gladhart is the next day, December 6. We have arranged to meet at her only school that has a dedicated room for gifted students. I approach Stoneridge Elementary and drive around the block a few times. It is the first time I have been in this particular historic working class neighborhood full of houses, people and cars. Stoneridge was constructed in 1988 on the foundation of an old neighborhood school. Built as a magnet for math, science, and performing arts, the campus is sprawling and impressive. In order to serve the diverse needs of families in the neighborhood, it has a preschool wing, a strong ELL program and welcoming classrooms for "New Americans". I am not sure which

entrance I should use and I have forgotten to ask Ms. Gladhart. I end up picking the wrong door, but a helpful student walks me through the cafeteria, up the stairs and to the front office. There I wait a few minutes for Ms. Gladhart to finish class. After our interview, she walks me back through the building where flags of every country hang in wide bright hallways. Students as diverse as the flags smile shyly at me as they line up for dismissal (Field Notes, December 6, 2018).

The sunshine on December 14 brightens my last day to experience gifted education in State B. Ms. Willow has invited me to conduct our final interview at Cookingham Elementary School. Located in an upper middle class neighborhood, Cookingham was closed for several years and reopened in 2014 as a district school following a grass roots movement of neighborhood residents. The historic architecture of the original building is surprisingly intact and complements the stately homes on the surrounding streets. Built in 1912, it was extended in 1923, and again in the 1930's. In this very different neighborhood, I drive around the block a few times, before choosing a parking spot. After checking in at the office, I make my way toward Ms. Willow's classroom at the back of the school. The hallways are full of students just coming in from recess and taking breaks at the restrooms and water fountains. As their small faces glance up at me, I am caught by surprise. This is the first school I have visited in my entire study that is noticeably full of White students. Ms. Willow's students mirror their peers in the hallway. They are bustling around the room, cleaning up as I enter. It is bright and well appointed. Ms. Willow has some bulletin board displays put up, a computer cart, and plenty of student tables and chairs. There are high ceilings and carpet. Her teacher desk sits at the front of the room near a row of tall windows. There is also a projector and board at the front where she can easily connect her laptop. She and I talk for

over an hour about all her experiences and insights into urban gifted education. As I leave, I feel a mixture of accomplishment and sadness that my research journey has ended (Field Notes, December 14, 2018).

This research story highlights each of the education landscapes where I conducted my inquiry. It also captures the temporal flow of the research from its beginning in September to its conclusion in December. My goal in writing this narrative, is to convey the sense of shifting time and place that I experienced as an itinerant researcher, “in the midst” of stories with itinerant teachers. In these stories, I also highlighted my own feelings and thoughts about each space. Each of the co-researchers was welcoming and supportive, allowing me to develop a comfortable relationship with her quickly.

Co-Researchers and Their Stories to Live By

Connelly and Clandinin (1999) realized that as teachers were telling stories of their classroom, their pedagogy, and their relationships with students, they were really talking about their own identity. These researchers described teachers’ broader identity narratives as “stories to live by” (p. 4). In this section, I will now introduce each of my four co-researchers by describing some of their stories to live by as gifted professionals.

All four co-researchers who agreed to participate in this study have been teaching gifted students in their diverse urban districts for at least six years. They have some other characteristics in common as well. They all work as itinerant teachers, moving from building to building throughout the district usually serving two or more buildings per day. This type of position requires constant flexibility, creativity, and a high level of organization, which will be evident in their stories. For various reasons, none of the co-researchers participated in gifted programming as a child, nor do they have children identified as gifted. I mention this

only to underscore that their experiences with gifted education are exclusively pedagogical and therefore answer the research questions directly. Throughout this section of the chapter, for clarity, I will tell each person's stories in chronological order, according to the dates I interviewed and observed each teacher.

Introducing Leta Keats

Ms. Leta Keats teaches middle school gifted students in the Armstrong School District in State A. In addition to her gifted license, she also has a Master's degree in library science and in Counseling. She is a passionate and experienced educator who has much wisdom to share with others about her role as an urban gifted facilitator in Armstrong, State A. During our first interview, she explains her years in education as a "circle". The building where I meet her is an old traditional 3-story high school that has been converted into a middle school. She describes it as looking exactly like the building where she grew up attending school in a small State A town. Though she is now miles away in a bustling metropolitan area, Leta says, "I am back where I started." After several years teaching high school English, she earned a Master's in counseling, then another Master's in library science. While working as head librarian for a district she agreed to take on some additional responsibilities that changed her career again. She began sponsoring both the scholar bowl team and the National Honor's Society. As she spent more time with those students on road trips and after school in the library, she realized, "I have found my people!" She went back to school again to earn a certification to teach gifted students and now says, "I am ending my career where I probably should have begun it. But I am so grateful for all those years in between."

Story to live by – Social and emotional needs. One of Leta’s stories to live by developed during her years of training and working as a counselor. She is a firm believer that social and emotional abilities of students must be nurtured by teachers. This is a significant component of her gifted education curriculum. “The social piece is so essential with our gifted kids and I don’t think we hit it hard enough in instruction.” She starts every class with a discussion of challenges and successes. Sitting with her middle school students around a large table, she leads a Socratic-style discussion of their weekly triumphs and struggles. My field notes from our first classroom observation capture a typical session.

She begins class by asking for successes and challenges. Who wants to start? Hands go up quickly and she calls on a girl to her right. Her success is getting into the top 10 at the cross-country meet. I expect Ms. Keats to say how nice that is, or some other praise, but instead she immediately responds, “Who wants to compliment her?” Then she calls on another student to tell her how great it is to be in the top 10. Next, the girl says her challenge is that she got a B on a math quiz when she only missed one. There are nods of understanding and commiseration. Ms. Keats asks, “What did you learn from this failure?” She also asks who in the group would like to give advice for handling this challenge. She allows the student time and space to figure out that she may have rushed through because she was overconfident and that if she wants to do better next time, she can. Ms. Keats goes around the circle deftly leading a brief but productive discussion where each student feels valued and heard. Some other challenges shared include robotics practice and honors orchestra on the same night and having too much to do after school: work on cell model, selling chocolate, practicing for orchestra, reading, etc. There is a great discussion of setting priorities and students recommend making a list and then a schedule. As an observer, I am

struck by how Ms. Keats allows and encourages the students to help each other solve their own small problems rather than offering advice herself. She does remind them of terms they have practiced with her, “Oh yes, remember when we talked about self-advocacy week one?” and “We call that setting priorities.” (Field Notes, September 21, 2018)

Ms. Keats’ story to live by includes her priority on meeting social and emotional needs. She exercises her curricular authority to incorporate as much discussion of these issues as she feels her students need. These weekly success and challenge conversations allow her to get to know students on a very personal level while also empowering them to help each other.

Story to live by – Collaboration. Another story that Leta Keats lives by is the practice of collaborating with general education teachers in each of her buildings to meet the academic needs of her identified gifted students. In fact, she tells me, “Being gifted is all about learning to collaborate.” She attends classes with at least one of each of her students’ teachers once or twice a week. This is very complicated to arrange, because she has 32 students spread out between three grade levels in four different buildings. She says, “I could not exist without a schedule,” and she begins working on arranging the next year’s schedule early each spring. “The hardest part honestly, is finding the teachers that are wonderful collaborators.” When the district started to require gifted education teachers to collaborate, Leta began her search in the counselor’s office.

I know counselors, and so my first year I would go to the counselors – and some were better than others. And I would say, “Here’s what I’m looking for. I want someone who is willing to innovate. I’m looking for someone who will let me do different – not extra – different work. I’m looking for someone who doesn’t care if I can do a 180 on what they’ve just said.” And they go, “Oh, well that would be hmm, hmm, and hmm.” And they’d give me three, one two or three. And I’d say, “What hour is that one teaching? Because I need a slot here.”

Sometimes collaboration means joining in to the class discussion and pushing her students' thinking by asking higher-level questions. When she has time to plan with the teacher, she arranges special differentiated projects that will enrich the entire class, but her first priority is to ensure that her gifted students are appropriately challenged. In order to see her gifted students for direct services, she must pull them from a general education class. She finds that the best way to do this is to arrange to pull them from a class where she is already collaborating with the teacher. When describing how she builds her relationships with general education colleagues, she explains, "I think you reap what you sow. If you do your work, and teachers know you're doing your work, they support you." Over several years of working in each building, she has formed trusting relationships with these teachers and they look forward to having her collaborate in their classes again year after year.

Introducing Emri Silver

Ms. Emri Silver is in her eighth year teaching elementary gifted students also in the Armstrong School District in State A. She has a new baby at home and a Master's degree in Gifted Education. She grew up in a large college town about an hour outside of the city. She is proud of her multi-ethnic heritage and describes it as an important part of her upbringing. Her Japanese father was adopted by a Greek woman living in State A. Her mother's family is German. Both of her parents worked at a factory that hosted frequent picnics and social events for families. Emri met many of her closest friends at these multicultural and multilingual gatherings. She describes why these early influences have helped her feel at home working in a diverse urban district.

We would always go out to the factory and they would have tons of family days, just to keep everyone's morale up there. So all my friends were like the friends I met out there, from all different countries and different languages. So when I would go to a

school and I would be with primarily all white kids, it just felt different to me. I guess I just felt excited to work in an urban setting.

Story to live by – Project based learning. Ms. Silver’s most positive memories of education are focused on elementary teachers who helped her learn in creative ways. She describes her favorite teacher from first grade who had a dog in the classroom and got her excited about reading because she could pick whatever books she thought the dog might enjoy. She also remembers a third grade teacher who did hands-on projects. For social studies, her class went on walking tours of historical sites in their town. In science, they turned an entire hallway into a rainforest. “I feel like everything we did was almost always project based and it was almost always over the top and elaborate, and these teachers were all so passionate.”

Ms. Silver wants to bring these exciting and engaging learning experiences to her gifted students now. She describes her curriculum in these terms, “I mean everything is project-based. Just like you. Because that’s really what I loved doing. And I love being a gifted teacher because I have the freedom to develop these units.” She and I have this story in common, though I teach middle school gifted in a different district, she has heard about the kinds of units I usually plan.

Ms. Silver was one of the lead teachers advocating for a district-wide service model change several years ago. She and her colleagues now organize “PBL trips” twice a month where gifted elementary students from across the district meet at the same location to explore challenging topics together for an entire day. She explains how these days are different from the typical classes I observed with her. “So the idea of the PBLs on Thursdays is to kind of get back some of that depth and complexity. Because what I do with them, while it might challenge their brain a little bit, it’s not deep necessarily.” The teachers work as pairs to plan

project-based units lasting for one academic quarter. Students elect to join one of the projects and work in this group every other Thursday. This allows students to work on long-term projects with a variety of intellectual peers and different gifted teachers throughout the year.

Story to live by – Challengers. In addition to direct services and PBL trips, Ms. Silver collaborates with general education teachers, just like Ms. Keats. However, she also organizes another type of learning experience for students who have not yet been identified as gifted. She calls these her “challenger groups.” She mentions them during our second interview, and I am immediately curious. “What is a challenger group?” I ask. She tells me, “So, it’s students who are not identified as gifted, but who the teachers feel like could use an additional challenge.”

It is an innovative strategy designed to benefit more high ability students and provide differentiated curriculum in reading and/or math. These groups are one of the reasons she is able to find and serve so many diverse gifted learners in all of her buildings. Ms. Silver tries to start her challenger groups as soon as the first round of NWEA MAP testing is completed in August. She disaggregates each building’s test results looking for unusually high scores from students who are not already on her caseload. Then she emails her lists to teachers.

I say in the same email that I send them, ‘Please let me know if you see someone who maybe isn’t showing up on MAP, but you think could really benefit.’ And those are some of my best recommendations. The kids who I would have missed completely if I had just looked at MAP scores. Then the teachers brought it up and they might have 70th percentile, 80th percentile in MAP because they just don’t test well, but they’re blowing the cog. out of the water when we do test them.

I ask her how she develops curriculum for these challenger students and she tells me it is a little different from her other groups.

I’ve tried to do units with those groups and it usually does not work out so well. So I kind of do one-off like critical thinking, problem-solving, creative thinking-type tasks. And so, it’s maybe just one problem and we have several steps that we’re going

to use to solve it, or something. And so, when I go into it, I tell teachers I'm not going to be teaching your kids. Like if they're in fourth grade, I'm not going to be doing fifth grade math. I'm going to be doing problem-solving things that are going to challenge their critical thinking, their creative thinking, those thinking skills. And so, a lot of teachers really like that. They'll give me kids who are high in either math or in reading, so I'll have a really good mix of kids.

Ms. Silver's challenger groups are part of a secret story that reveals an innovative identification practice. The State A definition of giftedness, as discussed in Chapter 3, states that gifted students are those who are "performing or demonstrating the potential for performing at significantly higher levels of accomplishment". This sacred story can be interpreted by each district and teacher in varying ways. Ms. Silver has discovered that students in her schools may need a separate group setting with challenging curriculum in order to demonstrate this potential.

She has one or two of these challenger groups going in each of her five buildings, but the groups are dynamic and flexible. If a student qualifies for gifted, they no longer attend the group. Teachers may also refer other students throughout the year. Ms. Silver tells me this is the expected process for the entire Armstrong School District but not all the gifted teachers have had success organizing these groups. She says this is due to the challenge of scheduling as well as a lack of trust from general education teachers for the newer gifted professionals. The district special education supervisors established challenger groups about six years ago to help find more students that are gifted, especially in buildings where a majority of students are from groups underrepresented in gifted programs. I ask Ms. Silver if it has been working and she says, "Yeah, absolutely." She even has data to back this up because she has been keeping track of the district's numbers for the past seven years. They have grown from 57 identified elementary gifted students to 160 since they began using challenger groups and PBL trips.

Introducing Donna Gladhart

Ms. Donna Gladhart teaches elementary gifted students in the Benton School District in State B. Originally from Arkansas, she holds a Master's degree in gifted education and in history. After spending most of her career teaching history and gifted in rural Arkansas, Ms. Gladhart arrived in the Benton School district in State B seven years ago. Living in a busy metropolitan area was a new experience, but she realized quickly that "The kids are exactly the same." Just like in the Benton schools, most of her rural students lived in poverty with families who struggled. She grew up loving school and spoke to me with a smile about her pleasant first memories of education. Similar to Ms. Silver, her earliest memories of school involve an animal. Her kindergarten teacher gave her a kitten and that cat lived to be 20 years old. One of her fondest memories comes from fifth grade when she had a teacher who found exciting ways to engage students in history. "He made history sound so inviting, so fun. Like he would bring in old swords and hats from military time periods and he would wear them into class." This teacher also asked her to do a historical interview with a family member. She already knew that her father was a veteran of World War II, but found out during the interview that her great grandfather actually fought during the Civil War. This family connection cemented her interest in history for the rest of her life.

Story to live by – Gifted is fun. Ms. Gladhart's first job in education was teaching high school history, but she also helped with Quiz Bowl and coached Odyssey of the Mind. She tells me the story of how she was convinced to take over the K-12 gifted program, intending to do it just for a little while.

The superintendent came to my room and said, 'Ms. Gladhart, we're going to need a gifted teacher next year. You'll be great for the job.' And I said, 'I don't know anything about gifted!' He said, 'You don't have to know anything. This is the

easiest. You won't have to do anything! This is the easy class. You'll love it!'... Man did he lie to me!

Her first year she had to stay until 5 or 6 o'clock every night preparing long-neglected student files for a state audit. However, even with all the challenges of paperwork and an extra Master's degree, she has never regretted her decision to work with gifted learners. She still loves history, but explains to me why she hasn't gone back to the history classroom.

Because gifted is too much fun!... It's not easy, but there is no other teaching position that you can get where you can do something different every day if you wanted to... Gifted is just something completely different all the time. Plus, it's a challenge because you have to be one step ahead of those kids.

During my observations in her classroom, Ms. Gladhart and her students are both clearly having fun. She sets up elaborate stations for kids to interact with materials in a challenging hands-on way. She plans complex projects and problem-solving challenges. On their "Fall Festival" day, Ms. Gladhart brought in supplies to do all kinds of exciting hands-on challenges.

Well it was a whole fall theme and the trees kind of followed it up. So we did bridges and the bridges had to hold weight, apples specifically. And it had to have string on it to look like a spiderweb. It was a spiderweb bridge to go with our fall theme. And then we made catapults and we shot pumpkins through different hoops and baskets.

She also does not mind if students start conversations during class that are slightly off topic. She smiles, raises her eyebrows and engages in discussions of science, philosophy, and current events with evident joy. Her passion for learning is contagious and her students cannot get enough.

Story to live by – Expectations and motivation. Ms. Gladhart tells me the best strategy for her diverse urban gifted students has been setting clear and high expectations in

writing and going over them as often as needed. When students come to work with her, they know,

That there is definitely no bullying in my class. If somebody says something, we're going to be respectful, even if it's not an opinion that we share. And with the girls especially, I have to really remind them quite often that we can have different opinions.

She helps students explore new concepts but harnesses their internal motivation by encouraging them to engage deeply in what they find most interesting. She does this in several ways. First she explains how she lets students rotate flexibly between stations and work at their own pace.

You don't have to do the same thing that everybody else is doing, but you have to pick a station and work at it. And once you pick a station, you have to make an honest effort to complete whatever is there.

She creates her stations to require different types of thinking and then sets a timer to help students stay on task. If they finish early, she discusses what they have accomplished, and will let them rotate early. If they are not ready to leave a certain station but are still on task, she lets them stay and continue to explore. She creates these portable stations to work in spaces like the library at Trent Elementary where there are several tables and students can freely move around the room while they work.

The final way she encourages deeper learning is to offer both internal and external motivators for students to go beyond, continuing their work on projects outside of her class. Each of her students has an electronic "bank account" where they can earn points to spend in her classroom store. In our first interview, she tells me about the accounts and shows me the store, which is set up in a closet at the gifted office.

They get points normally for stuff they do outside of class... if they do work outside of class and they bring it in, they get points for it. And then yesterday I let them have points for their Scattergories and stuff.

I ask how the students redeem their points and she explains, “It’s all online so they can shop online and we just keep it all back here on this shelf...they just let me know on Edmodo what they want and we’ve got backpacks and pencils and little toys.” Beyond this little classroom economy, Ms. Gladhart also engages students by connecting to their interests and families. When students have a particular interest in a topic such as dinosaurs or the Civil War, she individualizes and extends their learning using Schoology – a personalized learning website. They can take their interests as far and as deep as they want here, while still earning dollar points for her store. “A little external and a little internal motivation never hurts,” she tells me with a smile.

Introducing Diane Willow

Ms. Diane Willow has been teaching elementary gifted students in the Benton School District in State B for 25 years. In addition to her Master’s in gifted education, she is also considering an additional degree in counseling. A lifelong resident of the Benton School District in State B, Ms. Willow has been teaching diverse urban gifted students longer than anyone else in her department. She is the only African American co-researcher in my study, but she and I have much in common as two teachers who have continued to strive to make the schools where we grew up successful places for bright young minds.

Because she attended schools in the area as a child, changes in the district and community are sometimes quite personal. One of her earliest memories of education involves walking to elementary school through a tunnel. “I think they felt that instead of us crossing the street, that we would be safer underneath the street. So we would go from one corner where the light was, literally across the street in this tunnel.” She describes the tunnel as dark and scary with teenagers waiting inside to cause trouble. Eventually, her parents moved her

and her brother to a nearby private school where she would have some of her most positive experiences with education. The Benton School District ultimately closed her neighborhood school and filled in the tunnels. She tells me the building is scheduled to be torn down this year.

At her private school, Diane would do a lot of memorizing, but she would also find teachers who inspired and challenged her. One of her most positive memories is of a sixth grade teacher who introduced her to creative thinking activities.

She would do cool stuff with us. Now I'm in a private school – but maybe that's why – because she had freedom to do whatever. She wasn't stuck to some kind of curriculum. She would give us a rubber-band and say, "List as many things as you can." Brainstorming! It was brainstorming.

The memory of this exciting and different creative thinking challenge has stayed with her and she now continues to incorporate similar activities for her gifted students.

Story to live by – Family and community. Ms. Willow speaks with love and concern for her district, a place of connection to family and community. She also tells me, "I have very influential teachers in my family." Growing up, one of the most special people in her life was an aunt who taught history in the Benton School district. "She was so jazzed about history, and Black history especially." Ms. Willow remembers how her aunt was a lifelong learner and loved to cook. She pushed her niece to try things that were new and difficult. "Yeah, life with her was just a cool adventure." She gets a little emotional telling me about how her aunt convinced her to go away to college and pursue her goal to become an educator. When she finished her degree and began teaching, her aunt became a treasured colleague and her mother began a second career in education too. When her aunt passed away, she made a surprising connection with another Benton colleague who had worked with

her aunt in the past. He shared a story about her influence that still encourages Ms. Willow today.

And this guy – when my aunt passed away we were still very very close – and I didn't know he was such a good friend of hers. And he said, "Anything you want, I will do for you." He said, "She and I created the desegregation in the teacher's lounge. He said, "Before she got there, Black teachers sat on one side of the teacher's lounge, White teachers ate on the other side." He said, "The two of us were the first." He was a White guy and my aunt was a Black woman and they sat at the same table together to eat lunch.

Ms. Willow now cares for and cherishes her students as if they are her own children.

She works to understand their individual needs and is proud of each accomplishment. When I ask her why these kids and this district mean so much, she tells me,

Well it's just home. I feel like these kids are my kids. I don't have children of my own and so I do feel very protective and very responsible for them. I feel responsible for this city. I didn't feel like that all the time, like I had an impact. But I guess with age, I've learned that ok, it's important for me to take this seriously. These kids might not get another shot, you know. They need me to notice them, to see what they have, what their potential is, you know?

This care and concern is evident in how she builds social and emotional skills into her lessons and I will describe this more extensively in the following chapter.

Story to live by – "It's my job to figure out what he needs". After two anxiety-filled years in a first grade classroom, Ms. Willow moved to teaching third grade and loved it. She didn't realize that her career would soon be changing again. "So my second year with those kiddos as a third grade teacher, I had seven kids being pulled for gifted. They were driving me crazy. I did not know how, but they needed more. I didn't understand." She shares a memorable story about a particular student and her eventual conference with his parent.

I really believe one of the kids that was never pulled for that program should have been in there. But he was more of a, well he was all over the place. He could not sit still and everywhere that he went, he got into trouble. If he went to the support class,

he went to lunch, he was just... One day school hadn't even started yet and somebody was screaming, running through the halls, J- was coming in through the doors with a snake or a lizard that he found out in the creek behind the school. And he knew the Latin word for that animal! He wanted to show the animal. But he also knew enough about it that he wanted to tell me whatever its Latin name was. He was brilliant. He was absolutely brilliant. And his grandmother came in. She was just so frustrated and didn't know what to do with him. I said, "That's not your job. It's my job to figure out what he needs."

That year, Ms. Willow began taking evening courses that the district was offering in gifted education. She learned strategies there that really worked for her students.

I was like, "I need something. I've got seven kids that I don't know what to do with." So I jumped at that opportunity. I started taking those classes and that was my draw. I was so excited to go to those courses and get everything I needed for my kids.

At the end of the school year, she decided to apply for a job in the gifted education department, and 25 years later, she is still dedicated to figuring out exactly what her gifted kids need. When I observe her with students at Wadsworth School, she is especially concerned about one boy. He is easily distracted and got particularly upset when he saw his class at recess through the library windows. He forgot they had changed the schedule without telling Ms. Willow. She was able to help him refocus, but it was clear that encouraging him is a weekly challenge.

That is my all-time goal, every time I see him. It's just, "You can do this. You can be successful." And I was shocked that he was able to come back when he realized he was going to lose his recess time.

Ms. Willow's story to live by reminds her that each time this student gets distracted or discouraged; he may need something from her. A reassuring comment or reminder sometimes works, but she also tells me she has spent a whole class session individualizing activities just to help him.

Each of these stories to live by provide a background for understanding the experiences of gifted education teachers. Clandinin et al. (2006) explained, "Stories to live by

are multiple, fluid, and shifting...stories to live by offer possibilities for change through retelling and reliving” (p. 9). Sometimes these stories to live by may come into tension or align with the sacred and traditional narratives of gifted education. To build on these stories to live by in the second half of the chapter, I explore the sacred and cover stories that were repeated across state lines and common to all four co-researchers.

Sacred Stories of Gifted Education

"Sacred stories" are the official version of classroom events as presented in formal curriculum documents and published school communication (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Each state policy is referred to here as a sacred story because sacred stories are accepted as the ideal to which teachers and students strive. However, they are rarely followed to the letter because each local district, school administrator, and classroom teacher must interpret these sacred stories in shifting landscapes and contexts. In this chapter section, I outline the context of the study and of my participants' experiences with the sacred stories of gifted education that are framed by state-defined policies.

Contextual Features of the Inquiry Landscape

The two districts where I conducted my narrative inquiry research are described broadly in Table 4 and the paragraphs below. The publicly available demographic statistics and historical enrollment shifts represent one type of sacred story. Education researchers often work from this wide lens, reporting enrollment percentages as well as graduation rates and test score gains and losses. Public policy makers frequently consult this type of quantitative data because numbers make it easy to quickly compare, evaluate, and even quickly prescribe solutions.

However, the true picture of what lies behind the numbers is necessarily more nuanced and complex. There are of course, real teachers and children working together in these districts every day. A dynamic exchange of knowledge and social inculcation is constantly transpiring beneath these statistics. My research ultimately focuses the lens in a much more narrow way to see these interactions up close and “big” (Clandinin et al. 2006). The statistical comparisons and broad descriptions here are meant to begin the reader with an establishing shot from a wide-angle lens to situate the narratives that follow in a particular time and place.

Table 4

Demographic Comparisons of Armstrong and Benton Districts

	Enrollment 2018-19	% AA	% H	% W	% A	% Other	% F&R	Sq. Miles	Schools
Armstrong Public Schools (STATE A)	22,794	26	52	11	7	4	100	59	43
Benton Public Schools (STATE B)	14,221	55	29	10	4	2	100	67	31

Sources: (SADE, 2018; SBDESE, 2018)

Armstrong Public Schools is the large diverse urban district in State A where I grew up. It comprises 43 individual schools spread across approximately 59 square miles, which is the majority of one densely populated county. The number of students enrolled has held steadily around 22,000 since the early 1990’s. However, the racial and economic demographics have shifted dramatically during that time. Currently Hispanic students make up the district’s largest ethnic subgroup representing over half of the enrolled students, though 25 years ago they were less than 9%. African American students are the next largest

group at about one fourth of the enrollment, but used to be the largest group at 50% in 1992 when I was a student there. White students make up one tenth of the current enrollment, but in 1992 they were 36%. Asian students currently comprise approximately 7% of the enrolled students, which reflects some growth from 3% in 2009, the first year they were reported as a subgroup.

The Armstrong neighborhoods are generally recognized as lower middle or working class. With over 95% of the students qualifying for free and reduced lunch each year, the state has officially deemed the district to be at 100% and therefore qualifying for additional “at-risk” support. Since the 1990’s various school reform efforts and district policies have led to increases in test scores and graduation rates. However, in general the district ranks lower in most achievement measures than all its geographic neighbors in State A.

Benton Public Schools, where I now live, is also a large diverse urban district located across the state line in State B. It’s enrollment has shifted even more dramatically than Armstrong over the last 25 years. In 1991 there were 34,527 students enrolled in district schools. By 2018, the district had closed dozens of its schools and now the enrollment is at 14,221 students in 31 buildings spread over approximately 67 square miles. Benton Public Schools also comprises a majority of one densely populated urban State B county. The option for district students to attend several charter schools within the Benton attendance area is partially responsible for the decline in overall district enrollment. This district has also seen a shift in the ethnic backgrounds of its students. In the early 1990’s African American students made up 69% of the enrolled population while Hispanic students comprised only 4% of the student body. White students used to represent about 25% of the enrolled students. Currently in 2018, African American students are still the largest ethnic subgroup but make up only

55% of the enrollment, while Hispanic students have increased to 29% and White enrollment has decreased to about 10%.

The geographic attendance area of Benton Public Schools is more economically diverse than its neighbor Armstrong in State A. Historically a racial dividing line in housing was enforced by discriminatory lending practices and racially restrictive covenants (Gotham, 2002). This led to uneven development and real estate property values throughout the school district, which complicated school attendance boundaries and district efforts to fight segregation. Currently many of the city's wealthiest children may live only blocks from the city's poorest children, but with the plethora of parochial and charter options, it is unlikely that they attend the same schools. The Benton Public School district has reported over 95% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch over the past several years, earning it a 100% at-risk designation, just like its neighbor Armstrong in State A.

Measures of achievement have proven more troublesome for Benton Public Schools. Due to chronically low test scores and graduation rates, the district lost its accreditation in 2011. Through various reform efforts and state-mandated improvement policies, the district recently regained provisional accreditation in 2014 and currently most of the district's schools are now fully accredited by the state of State B.

A State Policy Perspective on Gifted Education

While it is significant to examine the features of the contextual landscapes of this study, it is also important to understand how teachers experience these sacred stories of gifted education because their influence at the classroom level can vary so widely. Teachers must consider and interpret sacred stories when they make curriculum decisions. However, they also make use of their own personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988,

p. 25). Their personal reasons for making certain curriculum choices are revealed in “secret stories” of experience. In the following paragraphs, I will explore the sacred stories of gifted policy in each state, then relate secret stories from each co-researcher that reveal how these state level directives affect daily experiences in the gifted classroom with diverse students.

I introduce the sacred stories separately by state because they are fundamentally different in State A and State B as discussed in Chapter 3. However, my co-researchers did share some common experiences with policy in both states. These similarities will be explored as well. The purpose of this section is to explore some of these policy connections and their implicit interpretation at the classroom level, answering research question two, “What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with state-level policy directives pertaining to culturally diverse students?”

State A sacred stories of gifted education. The sacred story of gifted education in State A is centered on the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Students who are identified as gifted in State A have several policy protections, including a statewide mandate for individualized services that is very similar to students with learning disabilities or other special education needs (SADE, 2012). In fact, State A is one of the few states that requires an IEP for each gifted student. Because gifted services are provided through special education in State A, many of the same complex legal requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are also applied to gifted students by State A law (SADE, 2012).

In addition to their teaching responsibilities, my two co-researchers in State A have a supplementary role as IEP case manager for each identified gifted student in the buildings they serve. This means every year they are legally required to compose a new 10-20 page

personalized document and hold an hour-long meeting for every student they teach. The IEP must describe the present levels of performance for each student in several categories including health, communication, social/emotional skills, and academic performance. It also sets at least one specific goal for the student to achieve in the next calendar year and describes how the curriculum will be modified to meet his or her needs (SADE, 2012).

Adhering to this sacred story is a massive organizational challenge, even for such highly accomplished professionals. The meeting and paperwork due dates are interspersed from September to April and must include at a minimum, input from the student, the gifted education teacher, a general education teacher, the student's parent, and an administrator. The gifted teacher coordinates schedules to plan a meeting time and is responsible for all signatures and documentation. My State A co-researchers also both have large caseloads (over 30 students) and must conduct approximately one or more IEPs every week of the year in order to meet their inescapable deadlines. The goal of all this is to plan an individualized educational experience that addresses the students' demonstrated needs (SADE, 2012). This is the sacred story of gifted in State A.

State B sacred stories of gifted education. The sacred story of gifted in State B includes optional services with no IEP required. Gifted students in State B have different protections under state educational law than their counterparts in State A. According to the State B Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2017a), districts “may establish programs for gifted children when a sufficient number of children in the district are determined to be gifted and their development requires programs or services beyond the level of those ordinarily provided in regular public school programs”. This statement hints at the difficult truth of serving gifted students in State B. There is currently no statewide mandate to

identify or serve gifted students. Districts may or may not choose to do so. Districts who do not offer services for gifted tell one cover story and districts who do offer gifted services tell another. Individual students may demonstrate the same high level of academic ability in two different geographic contexts and be treated quite differently. The open-ended sacred story in State B allows district leaders to defend why they must address these needs with gifted services in one district, but ignore them completely in a neighboring district.

Nevertheless, the large urban and suburban districts that *do* have active gifted education programs, generally implement these services in a very organized and effective way, according to clear guidelines for programming from the state (SBDESE, 2017b). These policies represent the more specific sacred stories of gifted education in State B. For example, state approved gifted programs in State B “must provide a minimum of one hundred and fifty (150) minutes per week of direct instructional time in which the identified gifted students work exclusively with the certified teacher of gifted” (p. 4). There are also recommended minimum and maximum class sizes and many other specifications for all state approved gifted programs. None of these clear guidelines is offered in the State A sacred story.

In another detailed policy document from State B (SBDESE, 2016), there are multiple recommendations for how state approved programs should handle the challenging problem of underrepresentation. I describe these recommendations specifically in Chapter 3. These research-based suggestions provide clear and valuable steps, should districts choose to utilize them. I was particularly interested in the Benton Public School district because they chose to enact some of these equity-based changes before they became official state

recommendations. Consequently, they had the highest percentage of non-White identified gifted students in the entire metropolitan area.

Unpacking Sacred Stories of Gifted Education: Contextualized Secret Stories

These sacred stories of state gifted education policy are interpreted by districts and teachers in varying ways. Each of my four co-researchers considered these sacred stories as they made curriculum decisions for their culturally diverse gifted students. They did so in light of their own personal practical knowledge based on their varied experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). The following “secret stories” of experience reveal how these sacred stories are understood by professionals at the classroom level.

Secret storied experiences of gifted education in State A. The paragraphs above describe some of the general facts of life for a State A gifted facilitator. However, my research dug deeper into the actual experiences of teachers who work with diverse urban students. I was interested in how my co-researchers experienced the process of individualizing curriculum for a caseload of students from such diverse cultural and economic backgrounds. What meaning did they find in this somewhat onerous paperwork process? In the following stories, I narrow the focus from broad state policy to individual implementation, highlighting the personal comments and stories of both State A co-researchers. I did not bring up the IEP in any interview question, but it is so ubiquitous that both teachers referred to it within the first 10 minutes of their first interviews. As often as possible in the following stories, I use thick, rich description and the co-researcher’s own words, allowing the reader space to interpret meaning directly.

Leta Keats – “This is your golden ticket”. Ms. Keats and I are sitting in her tiny, shared office space at Hilltop Middle School on either side of her student-sized desk

conducting my first official interview as a narrative researcher. She is lively and animated when discussing her favorite subjects and keeps me laughing and completely engaged in the story of how she became a gifted teacher. She is describing her appreciation for her years as a counselor when she utters a sentence that takes me completely by surprise.

LK: Man, those IEPs are like fun for me!

JL: What?!

LK: Because it's like a group therapy session. Let's go! You know, boom, boom, boom. And it's absolutely fun because I learned a long time ago that the key to a successful IEP is that the parents have to believe you know their kid.

JL: Yes, I agree.

LK: Done! Done and Done. That's me! I am here because I know your kid and I can say, "You know, I really really enjoy him. He's got great ideas. He needs to stop picking his nose. I don't mean that in a mean way. But, by seventh grade it is a distractor. It's hard to believe someone who is picking their nose. Now, we're working on it, aren't we?- turn to the kid- "yes Ms. Keats, we're working on that". And I don't pull any punches. They know exactly what I'm going to talk about. We talk about good things and bad things. And they know when they leave my meeting that I know their kid.

JL: Yeah, yeah I totally agree with you and that's why some IEPs can really go well. I don't know. You surprised me when you said IEPs can be fun. But you were talking about IEP meetings with parents and with students. Not the writing?

LK: Now the writing...

JL: Yeah, the paperwork and everything?

LK: Now remember my background is in writing.

JL: Oh, ok.

LK: And I get people. So my little things, my little vignettes? I like to look at those as exactly what they are. If you didn't know this kid, would you know him when you left my IEP? and the answer should be yes, right?

JL: Yeah that's the point, yeah.

LK: And so I put a lot of focus into those. And it is my homework to make sure my IEPs capture my kids. If they don't, I've failed them. Because our kids are transient.

JL: Yeah?

LK: And I don't want my kid leaving me, for some unknown reason – mom can't afford the house anymore – that's what one of my students told me last week, "We're losing the house, Ms. Keats. I'm going to move," and I pulled out the IEP for him. I said, "This is your ticket. This is your golden ticket. You've read Willy Wonka. This is your golden ticket." And I was very succinct in saying, "See this back here? This is how many minutes you get. No matter where you land, this follows you."

This secret story of the "golden ticket" reveals how Ms. Keats has interpreted the meaning of the sacred story of IEPs. Her personal practical knowledge informs the way she

has chosen to write her IEP documents and how she communicates their importance to both parents and students. In the face of a sacred policy story requiring meticulous legal documentation, she has chosen to define her IEPs as “fun” because they allow her to support her students both academically and socially. After considering her story and its deeper meaning, the idea of a fun IEP became much clearer for me. Ms. Keats thinks IEPs are fun because she enjoys getting to know her students and their families. She enjoys writing and she has seriously considered the educational impact a gifted IEP can have for a bright but economically disadvantaged middle school student who may move several times in the next few years. For some of her students, the IEP might be the best educational advantage they have. In the next chapter, I will explore more of Ms. Keats’ secret stories of IEP meetings including her advice on conducting meetings through an interpreter. For now, I turn to the other co-researcher in Armstrong, State A to consider her experiences with the sacred story of the IEP.

Emri Silver – “It’s supposed to be individualized”. Ms. Silver is smiling, organized and efficient, with a color-coded schedule pulled up on her MacBook and an accordion file of important documents at her fingertips. I have heard from Ms. Keats that Ms. Silver holds more elementary IEP meetings than anyone else in the district due to her large caseload and effective strategies for identification.

Ms. Silver meets with me in her shared office space at Emerald City Elementary. It is shaped like a wedge with a crescent of counters facing tall windows that look out into a large storage room. Almost all of these windows, which rise from the counter to the ceiling, are covered with bright purple butcher paper in case students need to hide from an intruder. Intruder drills have recently become a required component of public school in State A. Open

concept schools like Emerald City have had to design ways to keep small children safe when they cannot easily evacuate the building.

At our first interview, Mrs. Silver is telling me a story about her district supervisors. Over the years, they have tried to set boundaries for what types of gifted services students should receive. She first mentions the IEP while quoting a phrase from her current supervisor.

But then last year she was like, “Well you’re all professionals, and you should be able to determine what this kid’s services should look like.” That’s why it’s an IEP and it’s individualized. We shouldn’t have this rule that says it has to be this. It’s supposed to be individualized.... So my goal is to challenge them. So if they want a million pages of homework every night and they just want more and more and more, I can give them more and more and more ... If they want to just sit and read, and do their projects when they come to me, that’s fine as long as the books are appropriate and it’s challenging them. And we’ll talk about their books and that sort of thing. I try to build it so that it fits all my students.

Ms. Silver sees the IEP as a useful tool. She knows each of her students may need a different customized educational plan. She is skeptical of one-size-fits-all directives from her supervisors and considers each student’s situation individually. In her classroom, I observed her individualizing problem-solving rubrics and discussing books exactly as she described in the statements above. She also gave me copies of the flexible rubrics she uses to measure progress on goals related to thinking and problem solving. In another chapter, I describe these rubrics and I explain how she individually accelerates students using the IEP. Additionally, Chapter 7 will address the implications of writing IEPs in a generic or individualized manner. Here however, I will present the final policy experiences and stories shared by Ms. Silver and Ms. Keats.

In the second and third interviews, (see Appendix C and D) I asked each co-researcher about State A gifted policies, and how these policies might make a difference in

identification or curriculum. Both professionals were knowledgeable about current policies and made uniquely personal observations. Ms. Keats told stories about the problematic umbrella of special education. Ms. Silver is concerned that clear policy and curriculum guidance is not being provided to State A districts from the state level.

Leta Keats – other State A policy experiences. In our third interview, when I ask about state policy, Ms. Keats is clearly prepared with a well-considered response.

LK: Yes. We have done a disservice to our gifted students by having them identified as special education.

JL: Ok, so tell me about that.

LK: My kids are horrified when a teacher says, “According to this little mark, in infinite campus, you receive special education.” And special education, to them, means the other end of the spectrum. Or a speech impediment or occupational therapy or autism. So my kids are like, “That’s a mistake. I’m not special ed.” And so I have had to, more frequently than I would care to, explain to them that because of this umbrella called IDEA, they had to be placed somewhere. So I talk to them about the spectrum and you know, there’s an F and there’s an A, and it just so happens that intellectually you are a group and that this does make you special in a positive way. And they say, “That’s not right.” Because if they don’t know, if the general public out there doesn’t know that special education includes gifted... think about that. If the world doesn’t know, that a gifted student is special, special education, then I’m probably going to be discriminated against, right?

JL: Mhmm there’s a stigma

LK: Yes! Exactly, so I have to calm that and say, “Judiciously, I think you are correct. I’m not going to question that.” But under the law, it has to be someone with a disability. That’s what IDEA is all about. That’s what 504s are all about. Your disability happens to be in learning. And it just so happens that your disability is an ability.

JL: Yeah, an exceptionality

LK: Yeah, think how confusing that is!

In this exchange, Ms. Keats is clearly describing a side effect of state policy that is felt deeply by students and teachers on a personal level. Instead of celebrating their strengths, special education can make them feel confused and inferior. She is also concerned about funding and continuing a mandate for services but then wonders aloud about one of the

policy questions that has concerned me since the start of my research. “I would like to know if kids would fare better without the stigma of special education.”

Emri Silver – other State A policy experiences. In our second interview, Ms. Silver laughs when I ask her how state policies may influence her curriculum or what she actually teaches. “I don’t think they have anything to do with the curriculum or the lessons.” She tells me she is unaware of any clear curriculum standards from the state because there really is no set of available state gifted standards. She and her more experienced colleagues have managed without them for years. However, she is concerned about new teachers who have not taken all the gifted courses and who may not understand how to develop appropriately challenging curriculum. At the same time, she does not want to imply that anything is wrong with gifted education policy at the state level. Suggesting change could have drastic consequences for programming including potentially losing the state mandate for services under special education. She tells me, “It’s almost like, if you’re under the radar...don’t poke the bear, you know?” This is a secret story in the face of the sacred story of gifted as part of special education.

In our third interview, she tells another secret story of her experiences with state policy. When I ask her if she has any recommendations for state policy that could benefit her or her students she is thoughtful and considers the broader impact across the state.

ES: “I don’t know about policy, per se. But, I think having someone at the state who is the gifted person, and then that person going out to all the districts... Because it just blew my mind at KGTC [the state gifted conference] when people were saying like, ‘Well you know the state policy is that we have to have the 98th percentile,’ and I’m like, ‘No, that’s not the case and I don’t know who told you that or where you got it from.’ So that whole discussion just was like blowing my mind how many people believed that whatever their district told them, that was the state policy and that’s what we had to go with... That’s my issue, that people don’t know. I like that it’s up to the districts. I like that it’s mandated and that it’s on an IEP.

JL: So you do like the IEP? You think it’s worth it?

ES: I do. Just because I fear that if it wasn't there, it [gifted services] wouldn't exist at all in a lot of locations. And I could be wrong about that. I know [State B] seems like they're doing Ok, even though it's not mandated.

Ms. Silver's wonderings about clear policy guidance at the state level are a concern for gifted education professionals in many states across the nation. Gifted education state policy is the subject of several studies and comparative analyses (Kettler, Russell & Peryear, 2015; McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012; NAGC, 2015; Zirkel, 2005) though conclusions from these studies are that policies and their implementation continue to vary widely. At this point in my research, her guess about the impact of State B gifted policies was a gentle nudge forward in the process of bi-state comparison. Over the next few months of interviews and observations, I would begin to understand how teachers on the other side of the state line experienced policy decisions in their classrooms.

Secret storied experiences of gifted education in State B. As I began to explore teacher experiences with diverse gifted students in State B, my co-researchers shared several bits of valuable insight related to policy. The identification issue was central to both teachers' responses on this issue so I will address those stories here first. They also each had unique perspectives about how the state could improve other aspects of gifted policy.

Donna Gladhart – The NNAT2 really helps. Ms. Gladhart is warm and friendly though we only met just recently. When she speaks, a hint of a Southern accent reflects her Arkansas roots. She makes me laugh with her stories of the surprising challenges and joys she finds in her daily work with gifted learners.

I am conducting my second interview with Ms. Gladhart, when we begin to discuss policy for the first time. We are sitting at a round table in the gifted education office. It is a large square classroom in a repurposed wing of the vocational high school. The room has a

high ceiling, four concrete walls, and no windows. There are four teacher desks arranged in a semi-circle around us and the other teachers come and go as we talk. Following my interview protocol, I describe how state gifted education policies sometimes affect the types of students who qualify to participate. I ask her “What are your experiences with State B gifted policies? How do they relate to your students?”

As far as the type of students, we really try here to have a very diverse program and we usually do. We were talking about that today too. Across the spectrum, I don’t know how many different cultures and countries that we represent but it’s quite a lot, quite a few. And I do think that the NNAT2, which is what we use as a screener, really helps because it is nonverbal.

Ms. Gladhart and I begin to discuss the additional possibility of using local norms in the identification criteria. This is another recommended strategy from the state. It usually goes along with universal screening, however it is difficult to implement in a large district where there are several different types of neighborhoods. She tells me they have been talking about this as a department lately and she has come up with a solution that works for her.

DG: This discussion, we have it on a regular basis. Because our schools are so different from one another. We have a set district-wide criteria that they have to meet.

JL: Most districts do.

DG: But we’re really flexible, if I see a student that I’ve tested that hasn’t met the cutoff, but I know that there’s something there that I can work with, then we have a visitor program.

JL: Oh tell me about that.

DG: They come in and we work with them and they join our class. I send a permission slip home... and they come in with the rest of the gifted group and work with our gifted students and then I usually test them again after they’ve had a chance to come into the program and to work one on one, get a little practice. I test them again, I don’t know if that’s the same for how everybody does it. But that is how I do it. And then, usually when I test them again, their scores do come up.

Ms. Gladhart goes on to describe how she looks at “a wide range of scores” from different tests and listens carefully to referrals from teachers to decide which students are good candidates to visit. I am intrigued because each of these practices are spelled out in the

state recommendations document for underrepresented groups, but she never specifically mentions this. She tells me a story about listening to a classroom teacher who saw the gifted potential in one of her students who was still learning to speak and write in English. He was also currently being tested for special education, but the teacher knew there was more to his abilities.

DG: I had a third grade teacher that actually called a student over and said, “Explain to Ms. Gladhart what those pictures out there on the playground mean.” They had some silhouettes on the playground wall and he had created a whole story about the silhouettes on the playground wall for her... I tested him separately. She thought because he didn’t speak English that he didn’t understand the directions as the computer teacher was walking around, and that was the problem. And when I tested him again, he scored the highest score in the school.

JL: Wow

DG: Number one, on the test. And then, he did not stay. Because he was also being tested as the lowest.

JL: What do you mean he didn’t stay?

DG: In the district, the parents pulled him from the district. Yeah.

JL: Oh wow,

DG: Yes, I know and that’s heartbreaking, because I would have liked to see what he was going to become.

With no prompting or even mention of the recommendations document, Ms. Gladhart shared three critical emergent identification strategies for underrepresented groups as just “how I do it.” Her description of using the screener and even the visitor program can be understood as cover stories, which reference the larger sacred story of addressing underrepresentation. Her story about the student who left the district is a secret story. It reflects her concern for individual students and opens a window into the complicated process of assessing students’ strengths when they have different cultural or linguistic backgrounds. These identification stories will be discussed again in a later chapter, but are important windows here as they show us a glimpse of how these recommended practices play out at the classroom level. Ms. Gladhart also referenced a larger ongoing tension within the Benton

School District, students with unmet needs leaving mid-year to enroll in private or charter schools. This concern is one Ms. Willow has seen play out over her many years in the district. She has also seen positive changes in equitable identification since the implementation of the new universal screening procedures.

Diane Willow – “Not getting the kids that we get now”. For our first two interviews, Ms. Willow and I also meet in the gifted education office at the same circle table in the center of the converted classroom. A lifelong resident of the Benton School District and the most experienced teacher in the gifted department, she often repeats how much she cares for her students. She also repeats messages of hope and pride in her district as a whole. During our second interview, when I ask her about her experiences with state policy, identification of underrepresented students is the first thing she mentions.

The only thing that I can think of is that they recommended the NNAT2 test, and that’s a positive thing as far as I’m concerned, because it did open up our ability to reach students that we hadn’t in the past. We were using the ITBS, we were using the WIAT and the WISC. And those were not getting the kids that we get now. So as far as policy is concerned, we met the requirements and we’re very proud of that, that our department was looking at that back then. That would be a very positive thing.

Ms. Willow is referencing the new sacred story of how the state wants districts to find underrepresented students. She knows that her district switched testing instruments sooner than other districts in the metropolitan area and around the state. She has seen firsthand, the benefits of universal nonverbal screening. She is proud to have participated in that process of change. In her classroom, I observed her finishing the identification process with two sisters recently identified in fifth grade. Their teacher had referred them for screening and they were finishing their creativity assessment with Ms. Willow on the first day I met her at Trent Elementary. Her small class of six students was accurately mirroring the cultural diversity of

the students in the rest of the building, which is not the case in most other districts across the city.

Beyond the identification practices, both Ms. Gladhart and Ms. Willow mention other specific policy ideas and concerns. Their differing perspectives and stories to live by underscore the influence that each teachers' experiences can have on her personal teaching philosophy. These personal philosophies were explored as "stories to live by" in an earlier section of this chapter. However, both Benton teachers share a concern about the optional nature of gifted services for State B students and tell me stories of how these open-ended state sacred stories influence their daily curriculum challenges.

Donna Gladhart – Other State B policy experiences. During our third interview, Ms. Gladhart and I meet at one of her schools in a small windowless conference room with a wall of stuffed bookshelves. This is the only dedicated classroom space she currently has. When I arrive for her interview, I observe her finishing class with a small group of students working on a project about family history. I ask her if she has any suggestions for state policies that could improve the services she provides to gifted students and she immediately refers to the open-ended sacred story of gifted across the state.

DG: You know, if the state would make their suggestions actual rules. Such as... 15 is supposed to be the max. I've had like 22.

JL: Really?

DG: Uh huh. Yeah 22 I think was the biggest class. I've had 22 eighth graders. Two classes of 22 eighth graders.

JL: You can't address all their needs at that level?

DG: Yeah, it's too many. But it was only a suggestion, that 15, so they put 22 in there.

State B's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education approves gifted programs based on how well they follow the recommended practices, such as serving students for at least 150 minutes per week or maintaining class sizes of 15 or less (SBDESE,

2017b). The practices for serving underrepresented groups are another example of a state policy recommendation (SBDESE, 2016). However, districts can and do frequently operate gifted programs that are not state-approved for various reasons. In one brief secret story of her teaching experience, Ms. Gladhart has demonstrated the problematic nature of State B's statewide recommendations. After teaching gifted students for many years in Arkansas, she understands that another state managed to make more steadfast gifted policy guidelines. During her first year of working with gifted students in Arkansas, she was even visited by a state auditor who reviewed each gifted student's cumulative file. In the more recent past however, the flexible nature of State B's gifted policy has allowed the Benton School district to make its own decisions about class size among other things. This directly influenced her ability to serve her gifted students in an effective way. Ms. Willow would express a similar concern about the open-ended nature of state policies in our third interview.

Diane Willow – Other State B policy experiences. Following a busy day of teaching for us both, Ms. Willow and I are seated at a student table in a spacious and bright elementary classroom. It belongs to her gifted students one day a week and she is quick to emphasize it is the exception, rather than a typical example of her workspace. She has had more time to consider policy implications since we first met over five weeks ago. When I ask if she has any other suggestions for state policies that might actually improve services for gifted students she speaks openly and confidently, "It should be required."

She has heard from a source in Jefferson City that a bill has just recently been filed in committee, which will require all districts with a sufficient number of gifted students to provide a state-approved program. I have also heard about this legislative development and we briefly discuss this interesting possibility. She admits, "I'm kind of, very excited about

that. I think that's what's making me answer that question that way". In a comfortably established gifted program in a large urban district, it seems that Ms. Willow is not necessarily concerned about her job security, or even about how the possible new mandate will affect her students. It is a larger matter of educational justice for gifted students across the state.

Uncovering Intertwined Narrative Threads: Shared Sacred Stories and Teacher Experiences in Both States

The sections above outline the insights gained in this study regarding differences in sacred stories of gifted education across the contexts of State A and State B and the way such differences translated into secret stories that were cultivated by my co-participants. In turn, throughout my discussions with all four co-researchers, there were three sets of shared stories related to state policy. These narratives referenced similar sacred stories on both sides of the state line, and they gave me a glimpse of what gifted teachers in general may want from their state level policy-makers. These primary common narrative themes are: "A Lack of Clearly Dedicated Funding;" "Nebulous Accountability;" and "Insufficient Curricular Guidance." Though each of these common narrative themes were mentioned less frequently than the descriptions of the sacred and secret stories that were identified in my study and described above, their power is in the repetition of related stories across different grade levels, districts, and even states.

A lack of clearly dedicated funding. The first shared narrative thread regarding sacred stories in both states was a lack of clearly dedicated funding for gifted programs, staff, and materials. Education funding is generally problematic across the nation for teachers, policy-makers, and even voters (Hartman, 1999; Lefler et al., 2018). However, funding for

gifted programs carries its own set of emotionally charged issues (Kettler, Russel, & Puryear, 2015). Ms. Keats in State A mentioned it to me in her final interview.

I guess if we're going to stay [under special education] in [State A], let's get some money. Let's get some of those federal dollars attached to it. And if you're not going to have money attached to it, give me another umbrella.

She also described the many politically savvy ways she has learned how to access funds to purchase resources for her students. She shared multiple secret stories of grants, special requests to principals, and even spending her own money to buy supplies for her students' projects.

In State B, Ms. Gladhart described the lack of earmarked funds from the state as creating misunderstanding at the district level. When I ask her if she has any recommendations for policy that could improve services for students, she tells me,

Their financing needs to be separated too. So the school actually knows how much money they're getting for gifted and it's not just in the general fund. That's the way Arkansas does it and I think that is a great policy. So the school knows this specific amount of money is for gifted... Because I've been at meetings before where they say, 'We don't get any money for gifted.' I was like, 'No I don't think that's true.'

Ms. Gladhart is concerned that her supervisors at the district level do not understand the state funding processes for gifted education. This unclear sacred story leaves gifted program funding uncertain. When funding is uncertain, teachers must rely on their own resourcefulness to find supplies and materials for programs. Ms. Gladhart and Ms. Willow also have spent their own money on supplies for lessons and items to stock the shelves of their student store.

Ms. Willow described the need for clear funding to provide more teachers. The challenges of teaching as an itinerant are multiplied when there are fewer teachers to cover the same large number of buildings and students. She describes the staffing changes in her

department over the years. “In the past I worked with a group of 24 gifted teachers. And now our department is, well the district shrank and schools closed and whatnot, but I feel like we need more than four teachers.” Clearly earmarked state funds would help establish how many gifted teachers the district should be hiring and perhaps alleviate some of the most extremely high caseload numbers that teachers in the Benton School District are carrying.

Nebulous accountability. My co-researchers in both states told stories of ill-defined accountability at both the district and state levels. In State A, Ms. Keats emphasized the autonomous nature of her job as an itinerant teacher for students whose needs few others understand. She remains deeply concerned about the indifference with which other new gifted teachers have approached the position.

This job is a challenge and I really want more people to come in that are willing to take it on. Not just to get it done, because anybody can write IEPs, they don’t have to be good. Anybody can service minutes. They don’t have to be enlightening. Anybody can come up with units or projects. They don’t have to be custom to your kids. But I want somebody who wants to work as hard as I do, and I’m not finding them.

As previously described, Ms. Silver would like to have more clear guidance from a state-level director of gifted education. She is concerned that district decision-makers may receive misinformation about state gifted policy from various sources. Additionally her own direct supervisors have not had training in the needs of gifted learners. During her third interview, we discuss a nearby suburban district that is the only one in the State A side of the city to have a district level gifted coordinator with a background in teaching gifted students. “I know my coordinator, was a coordinator at B- before she came here and so she knows of this person. So she emails her questions frequently.” Both State A co-researchers realize that legal requirements for IEP development are the only sacred story provided and enforced by the state (SADE, 2012).

In State B, Ms. Gladhart and Ms. Willow are both very pleased to have a new district coordinator with expertise in gifted education, but are concerned that lack of accountability at the state level leaves the district free to implement gifted program changes for the sake of systematic convenience rather than established research on best practice. They both expressed their concern about the lack of gifted services for middle school students in the Benton School District. Ms. Gladhart relates it to the lack of clarity from the state on requirements and speculates that funding is the only reason they are noticing a problem. “I think they got a wake-up call this spring when the state department realized we had nobody serving middle school anymore. I think they realized they do get money. Because they took a hard hit moneywise.”

Each of these stories of nebulous accountability can be both beneficial and detrimental for my co-researchers. They often described how much they appreciate the freedom to innovate and create the kinds of curricular experiences that will benefit their students. However, when problems arise, there are rarely clear answers from a hierarchy that is uninformed about the specific needs of gifted learners.

Insufficient curricular guidance. The final common narrative theme that was referenced by all four co-researchers, was curricular standardization, or lack thereof. Ms. Keats described the challenging task of developing district level gifted curriculum standards for the Armstrong Public Schools back at a time when there was some guidance from the state. She still uses these to design each of her units. “One of the things we did early in my coming to this district was to align our outcomes with the state guidelines.” The guidelines she is describing were provided in a gifted education handbook published by the state department over ten years ago. It was even available online for several years. In 2014,

however, the state removed this handbook from its website and now only offers the guidelines on how to include gifted education services in the IEP (SADE, 2012).

Ms. Silver on the other hand, develops her individualized IEP goals and project-based units relying on her own professional knowledge and in collaboration with other gifted teachers. She asked me directly in our second interview, “Are there state standards for gifted?” She is mainly concerned about her colleagues with less experience and training.

We have teachers on waivers. I feel like that’s probably pretty standard throughout [State A] is to hire gifted teachers on waivers. Just teachers that don’t have any, but will be working on their license. So if you’re a teacher on a waiver and you don’t have any support... It would be really impossible.

Every year, the Armstrong School District hires new gifted teachers on a waiver program, meaning they have no training or experience in gifted yet. As two of the most experienced gifted professionals in the district, both of my State A co-researchers are frequently tasked with mentoring new teachers who have no official guidance on what they should actually be teaching.

In State B, Ms. Gladhart gives me a copy of a small booklet during my first observation. Her students all have one of these in their folders because it describes the five strands of the gifted education curriculum in the Benton School District. She and the other gifted teachers have developed these standards to guide them in selecting activities for the gifted students because there are no curricular guidelines (even optional ones) offered by the state. She and Ms. Willow both refer to the national standards for gifted education (NAGC, 2010) when describing how they make curriculum decisions. Ms. Gladhart says, “The national standards are the ones that I usually use or think about when I’m trying to design lessons.”

Ms. Willow suggests that State B could adopt or officially endorse these national standards to help guide teachers.

It would be nice if they would just, if [State B] would just adopt them. You know, make them their own, make it official. I think that would be wonderful. I mean we've got something from the state that backs us, you know some kind of support is mainly what I would like. I mean, we do this. We found our own, but back us up on it, [State B].

From the experiences described in this section, it should be clear that sacred stories of state gifted education policy vary widely, yet the co-researchers have some shared concerns in both states. This section explored some of these policies and their implicit interpretation at the classroom level, answering research question two, "What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with state-level policy directives pertaining to culturally diverse students?"

Chapter Summary

The overall purpose of this narrative inquiry research is to examine the experiential stories of gifted education professionals who work in urban classrooms with culturally diverse students in two different neighboring states. This context-setting chapter explored my experience researching in the midst of stories and the experiences of four co-researchers with state gifted education policy. I described the individual stories to live by of each co-researcher, shedding light on their teacher identities and cultural identities. I also highlighted the contextual setting of the research in two different neighboring districts, focusing on historical shifts in demographics and enrollment. In addition, I introduced some of the sacred stories of each state's gifted education policy then described how each co-researcher has experienced the effects of these policies in the classroom. I also described the shared policy experiences that are common to both states.

CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSIS: SHEDDING LIGHT ON GIFTED EDUCATION EXPERIENCES WITH DIVERSE AND URBAN STUDENTS

In the previous chapter, I showcased the contextual features uncovered through my inquiry. I described sacred stories of gifted education policies from State A and State B and secret stories that have been fashioned from within those settings. I further examined some of the cultural and identity features that my co-participants have developed as a result of engaging in practice within those educational settings. Moreover, I explored the primary common narrative themes of my inquiry in connection with state expectations, convergent and divergent practices, and the interconnection of practice and policy as found within teachers' professional and cultural identities. Making use of the three-dimensional narrative framework, I displayed how my co-participants' stories shaped common narrative themes that told and re-told stories of social and personal interaction across space and culture. In this chapter, I continue to highlight the findings from my data analysis. I attend more closely to the experiential classroom narratives of my co-participants to bring to light additional common narrative themes and related potential secret stories. In this chapter I thus specifically aim to approach my first research question, "What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with culturally diverse urban gifted students?"

Common Narrative Themes and Secret Stories of Classroom Practice

In this chapter section, I unpack the common narrative themes of classroom practices that were developed as an outgrowth of coding my data. The four common narrative themes that I uncovered are (a) "Identifying Culturally Diverse Students;" (b) "Relationships and Motivating Students;" (c) "Negotiating Space and Time – Shifting Classroom Landscapes;"

and (d) “Creative and Challenging Curriculum.” I organized the discussion of data analysis below in accordance with these themes, which represent some common understandings and experiences. Within each theme, I draw forward tentative interpretations about possible cover stories and secret stories of practice that are based on my classroom observations and interviews with co-participants. During interviews, I understood that the co-researchers might have been telling cover stories in response to my questions about their practice, especially during the first interview when we had not fully developed a trusting relationship. Thus, interview stories of past classroom experiences were considered cover stories until they were compared with documents, or confirmed during the observation phases of the inquiry to be considered as potential secret stories. Stories formatted in italics below are taken directly from my field notes and are direct experiences of these potential secret classroom stories.

Identifying Culturally Diverse Students

The first shared narrative theme across both districts and all four researchers is the story of identification practices. Each district and teacher somehow expressed that finding culturally diverse gifted learners was a challenge not to be taken lightly. They were concerned about equity and understood that traditional methods like teacher and parent referrals were not working to identify non-White kids and students from low-income families. This is a concern shared by gifted education professionals nationally, but few know what steps to take to correct it (NAGC, 2015). In this sub-section, I will highlight the various ways that each teacher approached this undertaking and their secret stories that reveal how complex these strategies are to implement. First, I will share the teachers’ specific stories of practice that represent successful innovations or disruptions to traditional methods. Then I

will focus on areas of experience with identification that still puzzle my co-researchers. These are ongoing stories of tensions, equity concerns and questions yet unanswered.

Purposeful Practices to Find Diverse Gifted Learners. The following stories of practice represent successful innovations to the traditional gifted identification process. They were developed at the district or building level. Some have connections to previously published research, while others are simply one person's idea to solve a complex and challenging problem.

At Hilltop Middle School and three other Armstrong middle schools, Ms. Keats collaborates with her general education colleagues. As described earlier, she actually participates in classes at least weekly, develops projects with teachers and discusses student needs. This is not only a personal story to live by, it is a required practice for gifted teachers in the Armstrong School District, but is very rare throughout the rest of the state and nation. The trusting relationships she has developed over years of collaboration seem to provide an opportunity for identifying gifted learners who may have slipped through the cracks in elementary school or who may be new to the district. She explains this to me in our first interview.

Over time, I can say to teachers, 'What about this kid? I've looked at his records, I have access to all MAP scores, right? I've looked at his records. I looked at his performance. I talked to you all, what do you think about pushing him and maybe looking at some gifted identification?' 'Oh yeah! Where do we sign?' And it's done! Why? Because I'm knowledgeable, I'm present.

Elsewhere in Armstrong School District, Ms. Silver is also busy collaborating and organizing her challenger groups. These strategies are part of her story to live by as described previously. In some buildings, she will sit in on classes, helping the teacher differentiate as needed. However, she prefers to plan for times when she can lead small groups within the

class. She teaches reading groups, math groups and consults during Monitored Independent Reading (MIR) time.

Beyond these strategies, Ms. Silver also explains her district's innovative gifted identification matrix (see Appendix F). In the Armstrong Public Schools, students can be identified as gifted through a combination of scores and demonstration of need for services. "Now, our matrix is a cognitive test, an academic test, and the creativity assessment." The first two tests are administered by a school psychologist and the third, the creativity assessment is given by the gifted facilitator. Students' scores earn them a one, two, three, or four in each category and they must have at least eight total points to qualify. Ms. Silver explains that the matrix has shifted over the years since she started teaching, but they have used the current version for the last four years.

I think we're identifying the right kids now. Like instead of the high achievers who would always qualify. I've had kids whose MAP scores were in the 50th percentile in both reading and math. And they qualify because we weren't catching them before. Because we wouldn't even consider a student who's MAP scores were that low.

She explains that underachieving gifted students may need her help most. "It takes a really strong team, like a gifted team – which we haven't always had – to advocate for those kids." Ms. Silver has pointed out a serious but often hidden concern for diverse gifted students. They may have a strong advocate in a teacher like Ms. Silver who recognizes their abilities, but if she transfers to another school or leaves the district, they may no longer have an advocate who understands them.

The next innovative strategy is happening in the Benton Public Schools in State B. Ms. Gladhart and Ms. Willow both explain their district's process of universally screening all students for gifted identification. In third grade, all district students take the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test – Second Edition (NNAT2). Students who score over the district's

cutoff of 115 on this test are considered gifted. When new students move into the district, they are supposed to be screened within their first year as well. This innovative practice is called “universal screening” and is backed by empirical evidence as described in Chapter 3. It is also one of the recommended practices published by the state because it bypasses the problematic and biased system of teacher referral. What makes it so innovative, is that the Benton Public Schools have been utilizing the screener for almost four years, long before it was recommended by the state. After students qualify, the gifted education professionals also conduct a creativity assessment to understand more about each student’s creative potential.

Finally, the visitor program described previously by Ms. Gladhart is another example of an innovative identification strategy. Similar to Ms. Silver’s challenger groups, students get exposure to high-level problem solving and critical thinking, before they are given the qualification test or screener. These two practices are similar to those recommended by national researchers and have some empirical support from studies conducted in other urban areas (Briggs, Reis, & Sullivan, 2008). The Armstrong and Benton school districts are identifying more underrepresented groups of gifted students, with much more equitable percentages than the state averages reported in Chapter 3. However, merely reporting the successful practices, does not tell the whole story of identification.

Continuing Identification Puzzles – Secret Stories and Tensions. Behind each of the innovative strategies that are discussed above are secret stories of obstacles and puzzles left unsolved. Each of my co-researchers also described concerns they still have with their district’s current identification practices. These secret stories reveal tensions between each co-researcher’s desire for an equitable identification process and their need to function within a bureaucratic system, where decisions are often made without consulting teachers.

In Armstrong, Ms. Keats noted during our second interview that State A state policies allow districts to identify gifted students using a measure of creativity. According to the Armstrong matrix, a high score on this assessment can help a student qualify for services even if their cognitive and achievement scores are lower. She has noticed that students who qualify with a very high creativity score and more average cognitive abilities tend to have problems keeping up with others during challenging critical thinking activities.

It is very clear when it is the 3 or 4 in creativity that has allowed a kid to qualify. Amazingly clear and many times they will self-identify and they will say to me, “I don’t get that,” or “that concept is too big for me, but wouldn’t it be funny if…” and I’ll say, “Yeah, we’ve got to tap into your strengths.” And so they know that there is some kind of stratification, if you will, among gifted. When someone has been, perhaps misidentified, and is in the gifted program based on a huge creativity score. And their other components are in the average range, and we start going into deep discussions, I have seen kids check out.

Ms. Keats is also concerned that the scoring of the creativity assessment “can be very subjective”. Because she gets middle school students from several different elementary gifted teachers, she has noticed patterns in groups of students from particular case managers. These patterns lead her to be concerned about the validity of the test and its weight within the overall matrix.

It’s very, very clear when a kid is identified for creativity – I don’t want to say alone – but really, as the guiding factor. And we have, or have had, people who place great value on creativity. And I’m not saying there’s no value in that. But I’m saying you can go back to that triangle, it’s only one piece of this picture. Don’t make it bigger than the other two.

Ms. Silver confessed that even with all the changes to Armstrong’s identification matrix over the years, she thinks there are still issues. Our conversation while examining the matrix during her third interview reveals this ongoing puzzle.

ES: I’ve found a few flaws with it that I would love to figure out. For example, if they get a 4 and a 3, [pointing to ability and achievement] that’s pretty darn good. But if

they get a 1 here [pointing to creativity] they're still only at 8 points. So this one, the creativity point is essentially useless for my higher kids.

JL: Oh, and you're saying a 4 on ability. That would be a 128 or above IQ so...

ES: Well we've talked about if this ability score is a 4 then we should just qualify them. And that hasn't gone official yet, but we've talked about it multiple times. We debate about if that would have to be full scale or if that could be one of our subtests.

Another concern Ms. Silver has is related to the length of time required for psychologists to administer all the tests, and how some students are still excluded based on achievement. I described how my district has used Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) scores as a measure of achievement, and in response she stated that they are required to use a separate full achievement test administered by a psychologist.

ES: I wish we could use MAP scores. That would be so amazing.

JL: Why do you think that would help? Because it would just speed up the process?

ES: It would speed up the process. And there would be just, a lot more kids. Because some of my kids who score super high on the MAP do not do as well on the achievement.

JL: Oh really, so MAP would be more inclusive?

ES: I think so. I think we would have to have it both ways, kind of like you were saying.

JL: Use one or the other?

ES: Yes, because some of my kids don't have great MAP scores, but their achievement tests are incredible.

Over on the State B side of the city, Ms. Gladhart thinks the third grade screening is not enough. When I ask her if she thinks the process is working, she tells me candidly, "It needs re-vamped." Referring to one of her buildings with a high percentage of LatinX students, she tells me,

I really appreciate that the district screens all third graders, but past that it's hit and miss. The teacher has to tell me that a new student has come in and they don't always do that. I have no fourth grade at J-. I know surely, there are some really bright fourth graders at J- but no teacher has notified me that there's a new child. So what will happen is that next year in September I'll get a whole load of referrals from the fifth grade teacher who now has these fourth graders. And they're like, "I don't know why you didn't test them last year."

This concern has led her to reflect on the value of creating an electronic referral system for classroom teachers to notify a gifted education professional whenever they see emergent talent or have a new student. She refers to the State B Assessment Program (MAP) tests given annually in State B schools.

I would do it, if I had the know-how to do it. Because I think if I had a form... and the teachers know all the MAP scores too, so they could plug in the MAP scores and all the other things that we look at.

When I visited Ms. Gladhart's class for my second observation, I witnessed a story that confirmed this problem. A sixth grade student had arrived back at the district in September, after a year in a charter school, then another year out of state. He was identified for gifted services in Benton Schools back in third grade, but he was not on Ms. Gladhart's roster until she happened to recognize his name in the school database that morning in December. When we stopped at his classroom before the gifted class began, his teacher practically pushed him out the door, "Yes, yes. He needs to be in your class," she declared. Ms. Gladhart thinks that if there had been a simple way for his teacher to refer him electronically, he would have been receiving the services he needed much sooner.

Finally, Ms. Willow also shared some secret stories about the identification process in the Benton School district. She related to me how she would like to have more information about her students before they begin receiving gifted services. The district has introduced a new standardized test for all students this year. She and her colleagues in gifted have attended all the professional development concerning this assessment, but have no way to know what their students score. "I would love it if we could get access to the scores," she says. She also remembers prior years when gifted was part of the "exceptional education" department. At that time, psychologists were assessing the students using traditional tests,

similar to the process in Armstrong Schools in State A. She would like to have the “support of psych services.” She remembers that tests like the Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children (WISC) and the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT) provided more information, which was beneficial in the identification process and she suggests that these tests could be given after the initial screener only for those who had an NAI score over 115.

That wouldn't be too much to ask. And we, at the first meeting we had with our new director, that was one of the suggestions we had. I believe that actually may still be in play. I think they may be still trying to work all that out behind the scenes and we just don't know yet what's going on.

During our second interview, Ms. Willow tells me she would also like to see the Benton School District find a way to identify children who are gifted in the arts. She feels they are missing this important group because of a reliance on cognitive screening.

That also concerns me when we don't meet the needs of gifted students that we should be looking for in the arts... Why can't they give us something that would do it? And maybe they do and I just don't know about it. But how do we identify the gifted child in the arts?

She brings up this problem again in our third interview,

Kids that are in the arts. Kids that are, you know just in areas that we're not testing for. We're not looking for that. I know we made a decision years and years and years ago that we would be an academic program, because we could get scores from the ITBS way back then and the MAP and then the achievement tests. They're all reading, math, science, spelling. That's what those categories were. And that's what we've been testing for, but I know there are other children out there. Artistic, kids that are just made that way. You can tell they're just gifted in that area. And they don't have anywhere to go with that.

Each of these identification concerns points to areas of possible narrative tension. Ms. Willow's desire to meet the needs of all students in her community is part of her story to live by. The sacred story of the school policy to identify only academically gifted students is a competing story and is seemingly limiting her ability to meet all the needs of gifted students that she recognizes around her. On the State A side, Ms. Silver is committed to her

challenger groups, and has seen the benefits of this successful story to live by. However, not all the students who benefit from her challenger groups will receive the gifted label because of limitations in the sacred identification story and potential flaws in the matrix. She even attends meetings with parents and teachers where they must agree that a student they all thought needed services, does not meet the criteria, possibly because they were just not creative enough. Ms. Keats experiences moments of tension with her students who are highly creative, but cannot perform at the level of their more cognitively advanced peers. Finally, Ms. Gladhart knows there are missing fourth, fifth and sixth grade gifted students in her buildings. The population of her schools is transient and she experiences tension when her story of setting high expectations leaves some students out due to a flawed referral process. These moments of tensions are the puzzles that keep each co-researcher wondering how they could continue improving identification.

Relationships and Motivating Students

The second shared narrative theme that connects all four co-researchers is the priority of relationships. Each teacher emphasized this in different ways, in practice and during our interviews. The following sub-section will explore the stories of these individuals as they commit to meeting a need that goes beyond academics.

Meeting affective and social needs. As previously described, Leta Keats explained to me how she places a high value on relationships with and between her students. She directly teaches affective skills. Her success and challenge discussions are one example of this. “The time to process and problem-solve is about their whole world, not just their gifted world...There are real challenges that come up once they start to believe that it’s a sincere

place to share them.” She explained to me that she believes that her counseling background allows her do this effectively and she has seen the rewards.

I have given them the avenue to get social assistance, without it being painful... And I love that I get to take a backseat there. Because it’s really about you guys helping each other. It’s really about your self-advocacy. You are going to find a teacher who wants you to slow down and stay with the class. What’s your best bet? How do you do that? And it’s real and it’s in their language. It’s better than anything I’ve seen in any textbook. Two simple questions: What was a success you had this week and what was a challenge? In your order, I don’t care. What my kids found out pretty quickly was if they could identify their challenge, then how they dealt with that challenge can become their success.

Ms. Silver also related how she finds ways to help her gifted kids develop positive relationships with intellectual peers. As previously described, she organizes the bi-monthly PBL trips where they can socialize and learn with other gifted kids from around the district. She also sets up ways for them to interact with her and each other outside of class.

They can get on my Google classroom. I am on there communicating with them. I’m posting different things they can do. And so they have my personal Google classroom, if they’re one of my students. And they have their Google classroom for their project, their PBL that they picked for those Thursdays.

Ms. Gladhart described in our first interview how social interaction with intellectual peers is one of the greatest benefits of her gifted classes.

I’ll just say that regardless of their cultural background or their economic background, when they get in gifted and they come in and they all start working together, you can see that they like being with their peers and they like showing out a little bit. It’s different when they’re in the classroom because maybe they’re helping other kids that are struggling and maybe the teacher doesn’t really have time for them. But when they’re in here, you know we focus on them. So they have my undivided attention for a certain period of time and they get to shine and they get to help their peers. You know the peers that maybe better at math than they are, but you know they’re better at creating poetry or drawing or something. They get to shine that way too in front of their peers.

She also emphasizes her priority on relationship-building in our third interview when we are discussing what happened during the observations. “The relationship-building. I

wanted to really point that out because I do feel that the students having a chance to interact with each other is very important.” In the library at Trent, I observed her accomplishing this by grouping students into teams at stations. She also facilitates conversations around topics of shared interest. She supports students building relationships with each other by setting clear expectations for behavior and treating others with respect. She explains how she helps students understand each other’s perspectives on racial identity.

If somebody says something, we’re going to be respectful, even if it’s not an opinion that we share. And with the girls especially, I have to really remind them quite often that we can have different opinions. So we can call ourselves... some of the girls, when they’re writing they want to call themselves African American. I think that’s fine. Other girls don’t want to call themselves African American, they don’t think they are. They want to call themselves Black. I say, “That’s fine. However you feel that you want to associate or identify yourself, that’s fine. You cannot talk down to her because she wants to use a different word. If she’d describing herself that’s her self.”

Ms. Willow tells me during our first interview that she is so focused on social and emotional needs she is considering going back to school to get a degree in Counseling. The following conversation reflects her desire for students to feel comfortable with their exceptional needs.

DW: I need some tools for these gifted kids to have what they need to go further.”
One of my favorite websites is SENG. S-E-N-G

JL: Yes oh they’re great.

DW: Just because that is what they do. They have all of those wonderful articles for you to tap into these different intensities. I just need them to know, “You’re ok. You’re perfectly normal in a different way.”

JL: Yeah but to be able to actually talk about it with them and be able to recognize it in each other.

DW: Yes and have that sense of knowing who they are and still making it a safe place for them to be that.

During my observations, I notice Ms. Willow encouraging students to build each other up. “I like those empowering words”, she says. She uses Class Dojo to award points for positive social behaviors. Students hear a little ding from her computer and they can watch

their point totals go up. She lets them order things from the gifted store with these points.

During our third interview, I ask her about this method of teaching social skills. She tells me she has designed each of the point categories herself, for behaviors she wants to encourage. Reading from her Class Dojo site, she explains, “On task, participating, persistence, helping others, empowering words, kind and considerate. I usually give them five points if they go above and beyond. Above and beyond, and teamwork.”

Ms. Willow also wants her students to feel like a family. She instigates and participates in silly traditions that bring kids together. She and I both start to laugh when she tells me about helping kids make up a class handshake.

They created their own handshake and of course, I have them teach me. So they put something really silly in it. Like, ‘It’s time to do the handshake!’ And they just want to see me do – because they put the floss, that dance... ‘You just did this so you can see me do this floss dance.’... They love it and they love seeing me look silly doing it.

This classroom handshake is one way that students feel a sense of belonging when they come to Ms. Willow’s gifted class. They also sense that she cares about them, so much so that she will do a silly dance to make them laugh.

This section described experiences of each gifted teacher with developing relationships and motivation for their culturally diverse students. It was emphasized by multiple co-researchers as a key component of their gifted program. In the next section, I will describe another type of experience these teachers have in common, because they have developed these close relationships.

Understanding poverty and student/community needs. After my observations, I provided each co-researcher with field texts describing the neighborhood surrounding their school. This description included historical facts and my own perceptions as a city resident.

During my third interview with each teacher, I asked if there was anything additional I should know about the students or the neighborhood, anything that I had not captured in my observations. Invariably, they wanted to convey concerns about their students and their communities that were not obvious to me as a visitor. Three of the co-researchers in my study underscored the poverty that many of their students face. These teachers had developed trusting relationships with their students and the following secret stories reveal their experiences with both poverty and violence in the urban neighborhoods where they teach.

Ms. Keats was the first co-researcher to bring the concerns about poverty to my attention. She tells me about how she became truly aware of the scope of food insecurity that her students faced.

I want you to understand that for a lot of our kids, if we don't have school, they don't have food. And that didn't ring true with me when I first started here. Until I started helping after school with the Friday, we call them backpacks. They are food that comes from Harvesters, to get you through the weekend until Monday... I volunteer for that and I think that's good because I see some of my gifted students in those lines too. And I don't know that people realize that gifted kids can come from socio-economic stress. And here they do and it's real.

Ms. Keats also explained that her success and challenge activity often reveals deeper challenges of students related to their family's economic situation. However, she is constantly impressed with her students' willingness to help each other solve problems. The following story brought me to tears during our third interview.

I think of the kid who said, 'Ms. Keats, my challenge is that I haven't been able to play my X-box.' At first I was skeptical, 'What a big challenge that is!' I thought maybe his older brother was demanding it. So I said, 'Tell me more about that.' He goes, 'Well, this is going on day four without electricity.' Wow, this isn't really about your X-box is it? But that was an easy way to convey it. I was shocked but the kids were like boom, boom, boom, with ideas to help him. 'Have your parents tried hmm-hmm-hmm? The church on so-and-so will help you pay so much of your electricity bill. Have you talked to your grandparent? Do you have any aunties? And they knew this like, resource checklist. And I was just like, "Wow". Because I'm saying, "Do your project." And they're saying, "The electricity is out." That time to process and

problem-solve is about their whole world, not just their gifted world. And I appreciate that right now they're saying, "Oh it was a challenge to get this project done," but there are real challenges that come up once they start to believe that it's a sincere place to share them.

Ms. Silver first wants me to know about the strength and resilience of the neighborhood where I observe her teaching.

It's a really, really strong neighborhood. They're very proud. They do Emerald City Days. And so, that's like all the elementary schools. I've taught at all of them before, I don't teach at N- anymore. So all four schools are represented. The neighborhood comes out. It's a huge block party...and it got cancelled for the rain and it's never been cancelled before. It was a huge deal in the community. But they just have so many vendors that come out, they just couldn't reschedule that quickly, to get it done before they thought it would get too cold. And so families were very sad and very hurt. Like at Anderson, the school you were at, we threw a huge tailgate on Friday for the families...even though it was pouring rain. So they still had the families come out. They had a tailgate tent and still grilled out but brought the food inside and we just ate in the cafeteria.

However, Ms. Silver is also concerned about the violence in one of the Section Eight housing projects near the school. She explains why students from that complex may attend either of three buildings in the area, not just the one nearest their home.

There's a lot of violence in there, in that complex. So that means there's a lot of trauma those kids are coming with. There was just a shooting there last year. There was a stabbing there this year. It was right when the school bus was dropping kids off. The stabbing happened so all of our kids witnessed it. So we had the counselors come out and talk to our kids then. So there's just a lot of trauma that goes on in that particular area so I guess they felt like splitting it up between the buildings would be better.

Understanding both the economic situation of students' families and the traumatic events they may have witnessed is part of teaching in this type of urban community, even when teaching gifted students, whose high level of academic talent may mask their other struggles.

In State B, Ms. Gladhart also wants me to understand more about the neighborhood around Trent Elementary and the students she sees there.

I believe that area is very economically depressed. I want to say that they're above 75 percent on free and reduced. So whenever you have a neighborhood that is so economically stressed, you've got stressed kids coming in there too and you always have to be aware of that. Because those kids have even more of a struggle. She also describes the needs of her students at Stoneridge Elementary where I conducted her last interview on a cold day in December. She tells me what she and the other gifted teachers are currently concerned about with their schools in that area.

We were just talking yesterday in our meeting about the middle school that this school feeds into. And they were collecting money for blankets because in an essay that the counselor did on what you would do if you had, I think, a hundred dollars is what she said. And you would expect kids would say, "I would buy the newest game," or whatever. But she had a multitude of students that said, 'I would buy an extra blanket because I share my blanket on the floor with five of my siblings.'...they didn't even have a bed. They had a pallet on the floor, them and their siblings. More than one student said I share a blanket, or I sleep on the floor and an extra blanket would make me warmer... Yes, I've often been shocked when I do some of these affective things and they say stuff like, "If I had extra money I would have water and electricity at the same time."

This secret story reveals Ms. Gladhart's compassion and concern for her students and their families. Ms. Gladhart, Ms. Willow, and the other gifted teachers were donating blankets to the local middle school because she understood that the younger siblings described in those middle school essays could be their gifted students.

Ms. Gladhart also reveals that her students have to process the trauma of violence in their community and sometimes in their homes. She tells the following story about how her photography curriculum revealed a traumatic situation that one of her most challenging students had been dealing with recently.

We were talking about photography. We went out, took the iPads out and did some photography. I said, 'If you see something at home that you want to take a picture of, borrow your parents' phone, take the picture and then send it in to me.' Then the student came back and the next time I saw him he said, 'I wanted to take a picture of my front door and my mother wouldn't let me.' So I said, 'Why wouldn't she let you take a picture of your front door?' And he said, 'I wanted to take a picture of it because my uncle got shot there.' Was it two days ago? His uncle had recently been

shot there. And he was just as calm as if he's talking about the weather. 'My uncle got shot there and I wanted to take a picture of the bullet holes.'

All four of the teachers expressed concern for their students, families, and the communities where they live and teach. These situations are part of their experience with diverse urban gifted students and become part of the curriculum because of the deep and meaningful relationships they build with students over time. These stories reveal that for my co-participants, two important aspects of gifted curriculum go beyond academics; they require relationships that are both social and emotional. These secret stories of relationship and community reveal that teachers' experiences with gifted students are deeper than simply planning and executing lessons. In the next sub-section, I will describe a third narrative theme that highlights another unrecognized aspect of my co-researcher's curriculum experiences.

Negotiating Space and Time – Shifting Classroom Landscapes

According to my co-researchers, some of the greatest challenges of teaching diverse urban gifted students are the scheduling difficulties and political negotiations required to hold a regular weekly class. They must constantly defend their program against variables beyond their control such as support class schedules, library availability, and lack of technology. As itinerant teachers, my co-researchers all must negotiate every logistical aspect of actually holding a class including time, space, students, and materials. They explained to me how they each felt that it was a surprisingly intricate challenge to combine organization skills, political maneuvering, resource management and luck. They cannot ever assume that they will actually have a classroom, that their students will be available to attend, or that any materials will ever be provided. I examine here their shared experiential stories of shifting landscapes

and constant flexibility. I will also describe the complex and shifting power dynamics between my co-researchers and the classroom teachers in their buildings.

Finding, Earning, or Sharing a Space. All of my co-researchers work in four or more different buildings throughout the week. Most days, they visit at least two buildings, holding multiple class sessions with different groups of students. This common job description brings about a host of issues that all the gifted professionals referred to frequently when describing their experiences. As I observed them, I also noticed numerous daily logistical challenges that required my co-researchers to be flexible, resourceful, and think on their feet. In the next several paragraphs I will describe these secret stories that reveal how different and challenging it is to teach diverse students in these urban settings.

Ms. Keats works with diverse gifted students at four different middle schools. Over the years, through her collaborations, she has developed very strong relationships with classroom teachers and administrators. She now has modest, but dedicated classroom space at three out of four buildings. She tells me, “I’ve earned that space, honey.” When she first began teaching gifted in the Armstrong School District, she had a classroom in only one school. When I observe her at Hilltop Middle School, kids are meeting with her in the teacher workroom, also known as “the green room”. She tells me “This is the weakest. You have been at the weakest link in all my buildings.” The following thick rich description from one of my field note entries will help the reader picture Ms. Keats’ classroom space on a typical day.

The first thing I notice is that this space is about the size of a classroom, but has a much different feel. It has two large conference tables and seems to be a teacher workroom or conference room. I know tables are ideal for project based classes and Socratic

discussions so it must work well for Ms. Keats to hold her gifted classes here. There is a large black copier in one corner next to an even larger blue recycling trashcan. It stands out to me as the brightest and most colorful object in the room. There is an old blackboard on one wall. Hung next to it is a new dry erase board covered with writing. There is no projector or computer anywhere. The room has several smaller assorted tables, chairs, and a few bulletin boards around the outer walls. There is a die-cutting station, a microwave and a refrigerator. I decide that it must be called the green room because one of the large conference tables and several of the chairs are a dark forest green. During the 45 minutes of class, I count at least 3 other teachers coming into the room to make copies, get lunch out of the fridge or use the microwave (Field Notes, September 25, 2018).

Ms. Keats is undaunted by the challenge of teaching without a projector, without even a shelf for storing supplies, and with the constant flow of people in and out of the room. She brings everything she and the students need in small blue tubs. In this building, the kids all carry an iPad provided by the district, and she incorporates this technology as needed.

The greatest logistical challenge for Ms. Keats' shifting classroom landscapes is scheduling. With three grade levels and four different bell schedules to contend with, she starts working on her schedule for the next year in early spring. First, she considers which teachers she works well with in each building, "those are my collab teachers. Ok, and so then, once I have identified who those teachers are, then I work with the counselors." She must arrange collaboration and direct time with each grade level at each building. She calls these "push-ins" and "pull-outs" respectively. "Well, I have four sixth grade push-ins, four seventh grade push-ins, and I have pull-outs in each building, one for sixth grade, one for seventh grade, and then for individual time." What makes this scheduling task frighteningly

complex is the additional legal requirement of the IEP. She must see students for exactly the number of collaborative and direct minutes that are listed on their IEP documents. After choosing her collaboration partners, confirming schedules with counselors, and verifying IEP minutes, she is all set for the year, unless students or teachers move over the summer.

Also on the State A side, Ms. Silver teaches in five different elementary buildings and has a dedicated space at most of them although she shares it with others. The following paragraphs are a description of the gifted space in a modular classroom on the playground at Anderson Elementary, the building where I observed her classes.

Ms. Silver has been using this room since her first year in the district. There are five teacher desks around the outer edges of the room, each near a small window. Three of these seem to be actively used including Ms. Silver's desk where I am sitting. Another adult is working quietly at her computer the entire time I am there. The occupant of the largest desk near the door does not appear. Two rectangular tables in the center of the room can hold approximately five children each. It is a cozy and welcoming place for small group work but feels somewhat crowded even with just six students. There is a pull-down screen at the front of the room behind Ms. Silver's rolling dry-erase easel. Around the room are several large boxes, empty bulletin boards and pieces of furniture, but I cannot see a clock anywhere. These various articles and assorted furniture make the room feel like it is also used to store things. Ms. Silver says every summer people pile things up out here, then at the beginning of the year, things start to disappear one at a time. She is never sure which desks, chairs or tables will stay in the room for her students to use (Field Notes, September 25, 2018).

Ms. Silver also has the challenging task of developing her own schedule each year. In addition to collaboration time and direct service time like Ms. Keats, she fits in three other

types of programming. She schedules time to meet with her challenger groups, her bi-monthly PBL trips, and creativity testing for new students. In each building, she meets with principals and teachers at the beginning of the year to carefully arrange time and space for her classes. She tries to start her days with meetings and then fit in a challenger group or two. During our second interview, she explains,

I see my identified students both as a collab in their classroom and as pull-out, for direct services and that's pretty much my day. I go – I have a pretty regimented schedule – I can show you. I color code, so you can see I'm literally like back-to-back-to-back.

On Ms. Silver's laptop screen is a detailed and color-coded spreadsheet, with a key off to one side explaining what each color means. I can see that every minute of every day is accounted for. Some days she does not even have time for lunch.

Ms. Silver also tells me about another set of negotiations she must have at the beginning of every year, access. She is describing how she has to coach new Armstrong gifted teachers each year to help them through this process.

It's a big part of this job especially those first weeks like August. The space-finding, the printer code-finding, especially if that has changed. You have to go get the codes just to get into the building, justifying why you need a building code. Or a key card sometimes. Some buildings are like, 'Well you're only here half a day so you can buzz in.' But if I'm getting here in the morning for an IEP, I'd like to get in early and get my meeting set up. So usually it's the secretary that would give me the code at most of my buildings. But at some of my buildings the secretary wouldn't give me the code so then I had to ask the principal and sometimes the principal would not get back to me. So sometimes, I would just end up asking one of my teachers. Just like off hand, 'Hey what's the code?' And they're like 'Oh! blah, blah, blah.' They have no idea that it's like probably something they shouldn't be telling me. So I've gotten around the system that way. But it seems silly.

My co-researchers revealed how itinerant gifted professionals are the majority across both State A and State B. Across the state line from Ms. Silver, the elementary gifted teachers in Benton School District are facing the same difficulties of finding, earning, and

sharing a classroom space. In State B, however, one of the sacred state stories that was related to me is a minimum requirement of 150 minutes per week of gifted class for each identified student. This is very challenging for itinerant professionals at the mercy of five different building schedules. Ms. Gladhart tells me about negotiating her complex schedule.

I go out and I get a support schedule and a lunch schedule from each school, each of my five schools...So in that first week or so, the school support schedule may change a couple of times. And then as a matter of fact, H-'s schedule changed after I started picking up kids. I went to pick up the kids one day and they were no longer there because the support had changed. At J-, I picked up the fifth grade at J- for three weeks and then the support changed and they were no longer there and I had to redo that schedule too. But I look at the support schedules and the lunch schedules. I map them all out on a chart, then use that to see where I'm going to be able to pick those kids up at.

At the beginning of the year, she is frequently negotiating with classroom teachers to find the best time for her to meet with students.

I start picking them up and sometimes something else will, like the science teacher at Stoneridge just said, 'They just can't be pulled out of my class one day a week. It's just not going to work out.' Then the English teacher said, 'Well I don't care, just go ahead and pull them out of my class because we are reading on Friday anyway.' So I had to switch that group which meant I had to go ask the fifth grade teacher if I could move them to a different day. Then the schedule finally gets worked out and we're finally going along hopefully really good. But the first time it's in a big chart so I can map the schools. And I also have to look for a space.

One of the spaces Ms. Gladhart meets with her students is at Trent Elementary in the library on Mondays. The following excerpt from my field notes describes her "classroom" on a typical day.

The library appears very new and clean with natural light from high snow-covered windows at one end of the room. The light blue walls are accented by the pale wood shelves and bright posters of quotes from famous authors. There are six gray student tables with four blue and green chairs around each one. Ms. Gladhart has set out workstations at four of the tables. I immediately recognize that this will be a hands-on lesson involving multiple types of

thinking and problem solving. One table has several large numbered zip-lock bags full of nature items, a set of identification cards and a tree reference book. I recognize maple leaves, pinecones and several different types of seeds, pods, and nuts including a huge hedge apple. A second table has cut sections of tree trunks and some worksheets that include tree diagrams and instructions on how to estimate the age of a tree. A third table has a large mysterious box covered in yellow paper. There is a hole cut in the top and a sign that says, "No peeking". The table where she is seated has her tablet and attached keyboard with a timer display set up for seven minutes. There is also a small stack of papers and a pile of sharpened pencils. She has a rolling metal cart near her chair and two bags full of file folders and various other supplies.

During the observation, I notice many adults and groups of children entering and exiting the library. A therapy teacher works at one of the other library tables with her students for over an hour. There seem to be three small classrooms located off the library and throughout the afternoon, people are walking right through the main workspace. One very small boy wanders in alone and the therapy teacher talks with him for several minutes then escorts him back out to the front office. The gifted students do not appear to notice the other students and teachers and because there is so much talking and movement during her lesson, the extra people are not really a disruption (Field Notes, November 12, 2018).

Elsewhere in the Benton District, Ms. Willow also shares a space in most of her buildings. She feels very fortunate to have the support of principals and a dedicated space at Cookingham Elementary, but in every other building, she is in the library or computer lab. The following paragraphs describe my first impressions of Ms. Willow's typical classroom space.

The library at Wadsworth School is large and bright with pale blue walls and several South-facing windows where sunlight streams in. I immediately notice the sound of running water and look to my left to see a massive aquarium bubbling away in one corner near several long shelves of books. On my right, there are eight rectangular wooden tables arranged in rows with four pale green sturdy plastic chairs for each. This appears to be the classroom area of the library. Most of the tables are empty. Under the windows, eight desktop computers seem to wait for a chance to be useful.

Three students (two girls and one boy) are seated at the only table that is arranged horizontally in front of an empty projection screen. I notice each of these students has a closed laptop and a plastic folder. Two other girls are each at their own tables facing a wall on the far right side of the room. A basket of colored pencils sits on a table between them. All the kids are working intently with a paper and pencil in hand. I notice Ms. Willow has at least three bags of materials and her laptop is sitting on a long wooden bench on the front wall of the room. Behind this bench, there is a large brick fireplace with a decorative stone mantle. This surprising fireplace is clearly part of the original architecture of the old building but strikes me as out of place in the otherwise very modern room. (Later I researched the history of the building and discovered that this fireplace was used to heat the old kindergarten room, which has been renovated and turned into the school library.)

One girl's laptop is at seven percent and she is trying to decide where she can plug it in. There are no working outlets near the front table. As she and Ms. Willow are glancing around for a solution, the library door opens. A large group of adults enters the library and Ms. Willow is noticeably surprised. They are all wearing coats and stickers that say "Bus Tour". The woman leading the group announces in a loud cheerful voice that this is the

library and these gifted students are working with their very talented teacher. Yes, they do have an active gifted program here. She seems quite proud as the group smiles and nods at the students who glance around uneasily. The adults continue to look around the library for a few more minutes. The tour guide is excited that their very popular book fair will be coming in here next week. As she describes the book fair, I wonder where Ms. Willow's class will go. There are more smiles and nods from the group as they file back out into the hallway (Field Notes, December 5, 2018).

Ms. Willow supplemented my observations by telling me the following:

Our schedule just changes so often, depending on what the school is doing. They may change their schedule. Computer class might change. If I'm using the computer class and that teacher is now going to be in there, that causes a lot of, flexibility on our part.

I ask her if she is the one who must be flexible or if this applies to all teachers in the building. "It depends on the school," she tells me.

Sometimes it's wonderful where the principal will go, 'Oh no, no, no. That's her room. It's been established. We'll have to find you somewhere else.' But then, sometimes because I'm only there once a week, they'll forget. Because it's just the library so, 'Oh yeah, the library is open.' That's all they know. You know, I'm there on Tuesdays, so they'll forget.

Each of these teachers in both State A and State B seemingly remains committed to flexibly solving their challenges of space and scheduling at the beginning of the year and as time goes on. They noted how they all value their time with students and accept the responsibility of making it work, in the best way possible. Another related challenge is described below. In addition to negotiating space and time, each co-researcher described moments of tension, where generally supportive relationships with general education teachers are tested.

Complex relationships with general education teachers. A further common secret story related to the theme of shifting classroom landscapes that I uncovered from my co-participants' data was the challenge of complex relationships with general education teachers. As described in the previous chapter, sacred policy stories at the state level leave many curriculum decisions open to the districts and teachers. For varying reasons, each of my co-researchers explained how they were responsible for arranging a scheduled time to pull gifted students from their regular classes in order to receive gifted services. They additionally claimed that this led to dynamic relationships between the gifted professionals and their colleagues in general education. Within their experiential stories, I teased apart secret stories that tested my co-participants' authority as curriculum makers and that frequently brought them into competing or conflicting stories.

In State A, Ms. Keats related how she pulls her gifted students from various traditional middle school subjects. According to each student's IEP, she needs to provide a certain number of collaboration minutes (in the general education classroom) and direct minutes (out of the general education classroom). This is the basic logistical format expected by leaders at the district level. Ms. Keats chooses to do this by carefully selecting her collaboration partners and consulting with the school counselors. In this way, she is able to collaborate with other general education teachers who appreciate and align with her stories to live by. Then, when it is time to pull students for direct services, she takes them from that same collaborating teacher who already trusts and knows her. In each of her four buildings, she must arrange at least three of these cooperative relationships, one at each grade level she teaches. She describes this kind of successful maneuvering as spinning plates.

I absolutely love pushing in. So if I can keep my teachers happy, my kids happy, my parents happy, and my principals happy, I can do whatever I want. Right? I really

can! So, let me spin my plates. You all got what you need? Ok fine, let's work with the kids now.

At the elementary level in Armstrong, State A, Ms. Silver has a slightly different challenge. Her students also have collaboration minutes listed in their IEPs, but they spend most of the day with one teacher and are generally not all grouped by grade level into a single teacher's classroom. This means that Ms. Silver has even more teachers to collaborate with and less time to develop those trusting relationships. She also has little input on whom she gets to collaborate with. She describes meeting with teachers before and after school, occasionally planning things together, but her relationships with these teachers vary dramatically on a case-by-case basis. "It's hard to get a good relationship," she tells me. When I ask what a successful collaboration looks like, she describes the importance of consistent communication.

Where it works really well, is where the teachers will email me. At the beginning of the week, she'll email me her lesson plans and I can see the skills. So for this particular teacher where it works really well, I go in twice a week because I know it works and I know the kids are actually getting something from it.

We discuss that this communication really just amounts to the teacher copying Ms. Silver when she emails her weekly lesson plans to the principal. I ask about what percentage of her collaborations are successful and she tells me, "like five to 10 percent." The rest of her teachers may occasionally share lesson ideas and plans with her, but some will not communicate at all. She tells the story of a current fourth grade collaboration where she always feels like she is trying to differentiate spontaneously.

I'll walk in and it's supposed to be literacy time. But like this week they were doing writing. Last week they had a math lesson they had to finish up so they were doing math. So I'm just like, whatever you've got going on, let me figure that out. Ok let me write something harder here. Here's a harder word. Here's a harder problem.

She knows this kind of random differentiation is not the best way to meet her gifted students' needs, but without consistent communication and a positive relationship, she cannot effectively collaborate, even if it is required on the IEP.

On the other side of the state line, Ms. Gladhart and Ms. Willow explained to me how they have even less time for developing positive relationships with their general education colleagues because the Benton School district does not have required collaboration time for gifted students in the elementary classrooms. Furthermore, State B students have the sacred story of a recommended 150 minutes of gifted services each week. This requires that classroom teachers give up 150 minutes of time with their brightest students.

Ms. Gladhart has been in the Benton School district for seven years, and has noticed that most of her general education colleagues are supportive even if she doesn't know them very well. During our first interview she says, "Sometimes you run into a teacher that doesn't like gifted but it's not often." She tells me about a science teacher at Trent Elementary,

Two weeks ago iReady scores came in and he met me at the door with his massive sheet of students and iReady scores and he had highlighted the ones that had done the best... in science to see if I had previously tested those.

She also describes her relationships with teachers at two schools where she has worked the longest.

Across the district, I would say there is often a large teacher turnover. But for most of my schools, it's the same teachers that I've seen year after year, and once they get to know you, I think they are willing to be a little more flexible too... there's been a few teachers that have asked to see my lesson plans. Or they'll meet me at the door and say, 'The kids said that they were working on dinosaurs last week and we're about to start dinosaurs, can I see what you have done?' That kind of is good, because at least you know they're interested in what you are doing... and I've also had teachers meet me at the door and say, 'Take this one for as long as you want!'

Like Ms. Keats, Ms. Gladhart has had relationships with general education teachers whose stories to live by align with her own.

Ms. Willow has been teaching gifted students in Benton School District longer than any of her colleagues, and because of this experience, she has many stories about working with general education teachers across the district. She describes changes in the rules about when they can pull students. These may change from year to year and building to building. According to the sacred story of State B law, she cannot take them from support classes like art, music and physical education, but some principals are also protective of reading time, or other parts of the day. For the most part, she has also had wonderful support from her general education colleagues. When I visit her at Wadsworth School she comments about how flexible and encouraging her students' teachers are. However, she mentions that some teachers in other buildings misunderstand her class as special privilege rather than a needed service, "At a lot of the schools, the teachers think that it's a reward to come to my class."

That really frustrates her because she has seen teachers try to hold students in class, refusing to allow them to come to gifted when they haven't finished all their classwork or to punish them for some other infraction. She tells me about a "David and Goliath face-off" where she had to stand up for a student's right to receive the additional challenging experiences for which he was qualified. The same classroom teacher refused to allow different students to leave at different times over multiple years and finally Ms. Willow reached the point where she had to use her curricular authority to become a strong advocate for her student. She describes the conversation when the teacher told her the student could not come because he was finishing work.

Ms. Willow said, I have this child for two and a half hours, one day a week, you have them the rest of the time."

“Well they didn’t get their work done. They had work they were supposed to complete and they didn’t get it done,” said the classroom teacher.

Ms. Willow replied, “I’m so sorry, where did you say they were again?”

“David won,” Ms. Willow tells me with a smile. “I went to find that child and that child was like, ‘I can’t, I didn’t...’ and I was like, ‘I’ve already spoken to your teacher. Come with me.’ And the rest of the kids that I picked up from that same room, were like, ‘Oh, he’s not going to let you take him.’ Excuse me? That was just all I needed. Because now it’s like you’re pitting me against my students. You’re making my students see me in another light, like I’m lesser than you. So I’m like, “I have to go find that child.” That particular time (Interview Notes, November 20, 2018).

Later in our third interview, Ms. Willow described how that was such a difficult moment for her because she generally gets along so well with the other teachers. She prefers to avoid conflict and be as flexible as possible with scheduling. However, that day proved to be a turning point for her relationship with that teacher. “I believe I was seen differently after that,” she tells me.

Ms. Willow and I discussed that explaining your purpose as an educator is not something most teachers have to do very often. However, her stories underscored how in gifted education, gifted teachers and gifted students can sometimes be misunderstood, which might make developing a successful relationship more complex. During her third interview, she and I agree that a classroom educator’s teacher identity and cultural identity, or their story to live by, can be in conflict with those of others. Through the process of data analysis, I came to see this as a potential source for tension regarding professional relationships and gifted education within this common narrative theme. Ms. Willow’s story to live by of

meeting her gifted students' needs was in conflict with the classroom teacher's story of also being able to meet his own students' needs. At the Montessori schools in the district, where educators are trained to focus on the "whole child," she explained that she has run into this conflict more often over the years, but she also has teachers in those buildings that are quite supportive of gifted programming. She is cautiously interested in the power of an IEP for gifted services – like in State A – and she wonders if it might help her avoid this type of conflict and better meet her gifted students' needs.

Looking at these situations through the lens of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) can help bring meaning to these complicated secret stories of tension. In the following chapter, I will interpret these narratives of negotiating space and time as they occurred on shifting classroom landscapes. After teachers have successfully navigated the many barriers to meeting with their students, they can begin to concentrate on curricular activities that will challenge and motivate them.

Creative and Challenging Curriculum

A final important theme from the experiences of teachers with diverse urban gifted students came in the types of activities and experiences that my co-participants planned for their students. I discuss below how each of my co-researchers was teaching their students to hone their strengths in critical thinking and problem-solving through highly engaging activities. They also had developed different ways to individualize their curriculum and meet students varying needs. Finally, all four teachers told stories of incorporating culturally responsive practices and I witnessed some of these during my observations. These became especially meaningful for the socio-cultural aspect of my narrative analysis (Grbich, 2013). I have grouped all these stories together calling them "Creative and Challenging Curriculum."

Strategies like these are not often incorporated into traditional general education classrooms, and they represent part of what makes my co-researchers' experiences so unique (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2005). This section answers the question that many outside the field wonder: "What are they actually doing in that gifted class?" (NAGC, 2018).

Higher-level thinking and problem solving. Engaging in data analysis helped me to uncover how creating opportunities to practice higher-level thinking might be a part of the sacred story of gifted education curriculum development. The national standards for gifted education (NAGC, 2010) require these activities and they most directly address the cognitive abilities demonstrated on IQ tests. Gifted students think at a deeper and more complex level. Their curriculum should match this ability and strengthen it.

Ms. Keats explains how she incorporates thinking skills by designing her middle school units around big questions that have more than one answer. She wants students to stretch so she asks them things like, "How does data drive decision-making?" She tells me about another unit based on the question, "How do shapes impact our world?" If students can Google the answer, she says, it is not a good enough question. She references 21st century learning and contrasts her work with what students have often experienced in their regular classes.

It's the critical thinking. It's the ability to present. It's the ability to defend. It's the ability to innovate. It's the ability to improve and to say, 'Solutions are...' and have more than one answer. That's the hardest thing that I always have to teach my kids right away is that there's more than one answer. There's more than one.

One of Ms. Silver's stories to live by is "project-based learning". She incorporates problem solving with her elementary students during her project-based lessons and units. She also weaves it into the longer collaborative units she designs with colleagues for the bi-monthly PBL trips. Each time they do an activity with her, they are trying to solve some type

of problem. During my observations, I see students solving the Tham Luang Caves hands-on STEM challenge. I also see them working on “homework” from their PBL trip. The short excerpt below from my field notes describes how several students are solving two different types of problems at the same time for their different PBL groups.

They each place their cave rescue designs into their folders and get out their PBL materials. Ms. Silver helps the younger kids with the architecture math problems. The fourth and fifth grade students open their Chromebooks to the Google Classroom site for their games and strategies PBL. Today they are writing up a plan and details of their own new board game.

Ms. Silver is helping the third graders decide what scale they want to use to draw doors and windows on a house. I am impressed by the conversations between the older students about their games. I hear them talking about wolves, magnets, cards, and gemstones. Ms. Silver returns to their group to remind them that their game has to require some type of strategy to win. It cannot be just about luck. One student has a very elaborate idea of a game that involves multiple boards at different heights with moving steps between them. There are also magnets incorporated somehow. Ms. Silver specifically asks one boy if the players will be cooperating on a strategy or competing. Another girl is googling different types of gemstones. She says her game will require strategy and memorizing patterns of stones to choose the correct path (Field Notes, October 2, 2018).

Like in Ms. Keats’ middle school class, these students have been given questions with more than one right answer. What is the best scale for drawing and building a model of a house? Is a cooperative or competitive board game more fun? What is the best strategy? Ms. Silver has even developed rubrics to measure student’s thinking skills and this is how she

reports their progress on IEP goals related to problem-solving. For an example of these rubrics see Appendix G.

In State B, elementary gifted students are also challenged with critical thinking and problem solving activities in every class. I observe Ms. Gladhart's students doing short warm-up activities when they first arrive in her gifted class. These activities are brief, but require both divergent and logical thinking. The following excerpt from my field notes captures how the students and I all respond to a verbal activity called "Things in Common".

Ms. Gladhart's first slide is trees and books, "What do trees and books have in common?" They seem a little perplexed, but attack the challenge and make some guesses aloud. She reminds them to write down their ideas on their paper. The next slide is rainbows and crayons. There is an audible "Oh" from the students, who clearly know the answer to this one. Ms. Gladhart says this was supposed to be the easy one to get them started. They also are confident about the next one, doughnuts and tires. They proceed to think about what each pair has in common as the vocabulary and concepts become more challenging (porcupines and inkwells; clocks and gloves; pillows and lawyers; jars and rivers; needles and hurricanes; insects and radios; contests and ledgers). After going through the slides once, Ms. Gladhart allows them to ask questions, review any they skipped and finalize their guesses. Then she announces the correct answer for each pair (leaves, colors, holes, quills, hands, cases, mouths, eyes, antenna, and entries). It is a classic creative thinking activity and the gifted students are highly engaged with it, even if they didn't know all the answers. As she reads the answers, one student remarks multiple times, "These are all jokes!" Another tells Ms. Gladhart, "You picked the hardest ones!" The new sixth grader was skeptical at the beginning of the activity, but becomes excited when he realizes he knows several answers the

others don't. By the end of the class, he is highly engaged in a discussion with Ms. Gladhart and the others about the extinction of dinosaurs and about black holes. "I can throw some knowledge at you anytime," he tells Ms. Gladhart (Field Notes, December 3, 2018).

Ms. Willow also opens her classes with a warm-up that stretches her students to think in different ways. Both times that I observe her, she is using thinking challenges from a book called "Waker-Uppers". The challenge level for her students is just right. They struggle through seven short divergent thinking puzzles in about fifteen minutes, discussing with Ms. Willow and sometimes helping each other. During my first observation, two new girls have joined her group for the first time. Rather than continue all her normal projects, she has decided to incorporate two game-based thinking challenges that are novel for the entire group and will make the newcomers feel part of the group. These thinking activities require students to listen, think, and make decisions quickly. One activity is called "The Paper Wad Game" and the second is called "Moving Colors". I also observe them doing a team bridge-building activity requiring hands-on creative problem solving.

Each teacher is incorporating higher-level thinking and problem solving skills into their curriculum. These stories were consistently key components of each co-researcher's classroom experience with diverse gifted students. These secret stories of critical thinking activities are shedding light on the ways each co-researcher challenges students to engage their minds to work at the highest level. These thinking tasks often frustrated students because of their depth and complexity. They required students to struggle in a way that rarely happened in their general education environments.

Individualized and choice-based curriculum. As described in the literature review chapter, individualized curriculum is part of the sacred story of gifted education (Rimm &

Davis, 2004). I explore here secret stories of how each co-researcher individualized learning experiences for their culturally diverse students and how they incorporated choices into the curriculum. I will reconstruct meaning from data across both interviews and classroom observations.

Ms. Keats explained how she individualizes for her middle school students in several ways. First, she interviews and surveys each of them at the beginning of the year and again before their annual IEP meeting. Her goal is to get to know their interests and needs well enough to write a specific and thoughtful IEP. She also individualizes her entire curriculum for the few eighth grade students she has. Most eighth grade students in the Armstrong School District leave the neighborhood middle schools to attend the academic magnet school. The few who decide to stay in her buildings, have a completely individualized curriculum. As a third example, during my interview with Ms. Keats, she describes individualizing through her problem-solving units, specifically her current unit on the Tham Luang Cave Rescue. Students are encouraged to choose a way to solve the problem that utilizes their own strengths and interests. In class, I saw her draw a triangle on the board labeling each side with a word that describes the key components of their project, “Concept, Content, and Creativity”. In this short vignette, she describes how individualized the projects can get.

This unit is huge, I mean when I say that we’re doing it on the Wild Boars that are trapped, automatically, it’s kids trapped in a cave and so they’re automatically zinged in going, “What would I do? How would I feel?” But then, when I start to break it down into geography, break it down into engineering and then I say, “Well, where’s your talent?” So if my whole concept is a spoke in a wheel, right? Then they can pick whichever spoke or strand – whatever language you want to use – and say, “Ms. Keats I want to work on this part of the problem. This is where I can give voice.” And so I think “give voice” is a great way of looking at a project. How will your voice come through? So yes, there were thirteen boys, well twelve boys and their leader, trapped in a cave. What do you have to say about it? “Ms. Keats I think that the music and the meditation things were important. Here’s why. I can back it up, you know

with my content. I can talk conceptually about that, how it influenced the whole picture. And then I can be creative.” “Oh, ok you’ve sold me on that.”

In class, I observe Ms. Keats’ students working on different types of projects during my first classroom visit. One student is mapping the unmapped cave and designing a 3D model focusing on the most difficult spots. Another student is using an iPad app to create music with Thai instruments that would have helped inspire and calm the boys while they waited to be rescued. Ms. Keats discusses the projects with each student as they research and plan their presentations.

In the elementary schools of Armstrong, State A, Ms. Silver also individualizes based on students’ IEPs. She asks them to self-assess their strengths in various areas and conducts individual interviews with each student before his or her IEP meeting. In class I see her working on these self-assessments with students and I have included a copy of an example rubric she developed to meet an individualized problem-solving goal for a student (see Appendix G). During our second interview, when I ask her about individualizing, she tells me the following story, which reflects more of the individual benefits and obstacles afforded by the IEP.

So I have one student who since kindergarten has always gone at least one grade level up in math. And my buildings are really used to kids switching around for reading. That’s like a really typical thing. But to have teachers wrap their heads around that this student is very bright in math, has always been a challenge. And so, since, like kindergarten, he’s been going at least one grade level up. Well, he is in fifth grade this year so we had it worked out for him to bus to the middle school but...mom is not comfortable because he’s small and quiet and she’s very concerned.

So I’m individualizing the sixth grade curriculum as much as I can for him and so we’ve gotten through one unit. They’ve adopted a new math curriculum this year in Armstrong. It’s called Eureka, but it’s just at the elementary school, which I didn’t realize. But, I’m using sixth grade Eureka curriculum, that they’re not using at the middle school, but I’m still hitting the same standards...So ideally he would be able to test out of the sixth grade math so he could go straight into seventh grade math next year. His building where he is going to attend is going to develop this test,

specifically for him, that covers the major standards. And then if he gets a certain percentage he can move on.

And so getting him to be self-directed this year has been really interesting. Every year we've done it, he goes into another teacher's classroom and does all of their work and I kind of throw things in where I can, because he's still... I mean even last year, when he was in fourth grade and he went to the fifth grade classroom. I would go collab in there because I could hit my fifth graders and he would get his collab time at the same time. And he was still even above my fifth grade gifted students. He was raising his hand. He was the first one done with everything. He had everything one hundred percent correct. But that was always being taught. This year he has to be more self-directed. Because his IEP right now only says 30 minutes, one day a week for collab with me and I'm not allowed to over serve.

Ms. Silver has been able to create a completely individualized math curriculum that is differentiated to meet this student's needs because he has an IEP. However, the minutes in the IEP dictate exactly how much time she is allowed to use for this and because their plan changed at the beginning of the school year, she now must hold a new meeting, to change the number of minutes required and rewrite the plan.

In State B, Ms. Gladhart uses a technological platform to individualize for her diverse elementary gifted students. During our second interview, she tells me,

Most of our units are not individualized. Everybody does most of the units. But, if there is a student who has a specific interest, such as dinosaurs. Or I had one student that was intensely interested in the law. She wanted to be a lawyer when she grows up. I will individualize lessons for those particular ones and I do it through Schoology.

She goes on to explain that Schoology is a self-paced learning platform similar to Moodle, which they used in the past. She likes Schoology because, "It is so kid-friendly, once they complete one lesson, they hit this arrow and it goes right on to the next lesson." She creates most of the lessons for her students but occasionally links them to EdX or Coursera lessons from university professors.

There was this dinosaur class on EdX, a complete one by a professor in Calgary. We did that dinosaur course. It's still in Schoology. I'm about to break it out again because one of the little boys at Trent loves dinosaurs... The dinosaur one is really

good because he covers lots of stuff that the sixth grade science curriculum covers, habitat and evolution and all of those and if you're dinosaur-crazy you already know all those names so you don't get lost in that.

She also tells me that those students who have an individual interest and a Schoology course use some of their class time with her and some time at home to complete the courses.

They still have to follow the same curriculum that everybody else does, but I will cut their time shorter and then they can work on their own on the thing that they're interested in. And plus it's on Schoology, so if they want to go home and do four hours at home, it's all there waiting for them and they can go ahead and do it.

She explains that Schoology is also one of the approved sites they can access from their regular classroom, when they finish other work early. She communicates this to the classroom teachers at the beginning of the year so teachers can use it as an option for differentiation. In Ms. Gladhart's class, I observe her discussing points with students, referring to her classroom store, where students earn points and then buy small toys or prizes. Completing lessons on Schoology is another way kids can earn points for the store. This classroom economy is very motivating for some students and I observed one student very excited to show Ms. Gladhart a creative writing story he had completed outside of class to earn points for the store.

Throughout her interviews, Ms. Willow also mentioned several different ways she individualizes for her students. The first project she tells me about is partially choice-based. Students have been working through a unit on "Change" and part of that unit was to document their own personal growth over time. They are creating a personal time capsule, which they will bury and re-open at the end of the school year. Students can choose to create the container in a creative way that reflects their own strengths; they also create a bumper sticker that Ms. Willow says has been the most challenging part for her youngest students. "They have to reflect on the year of 2018."

Another way that Ms. Willow individualizes is with the Briggs Personality Test for kids. This adapted version of the longer personality assessment has allowed her students to find out about their own personality strengths. She extended this by allowing students to research famous people and careers that were associated with their own personalities. Students created an individual chart and learned so much about themselves, “They loved it,” Ms. Willow says. The final way she individualizes is by creating packets for students to take home, when they have particular interests in continuing a skill or activity they began in class. She tells the following story about a student who was a strong logical thinker.

We were doing something called Logic Links, and it was just problem-solving, but in a different way, spatial and logical thinking. And this kid is amazing. We might do a couple of logic links together in class...but he would finish the book. So I made him his own that he could just do and complete. And he’s not bored by it, just page after page after page. He completed them.

She also tells me about another individualizing idea she has:

So I have a child this year, who is obsessed with war. He knows all the details of wars, I’m not sure if it’s any war. I’m trying to find out what his main war is, but he’s got books. He knows the authors. He knows details of, ‘What if a platoon hadn’t gone into whatever country?’ He knows the details, they did go and this happened. But what if they had retreated, or what if they hadn’t? This could have happened. So I want something for him. And I actually heard the Schoology description from my colleague and I’m wondering if I might find something on Schoology for him. That might be another individualized thing.

Each co-researcher’s secret stories of individualization aligned with the sacred stories of their respective states. In State A, Ms. Keats and Ms. Silver were able to reference the IEP consistently, because as Ms. Silver said, “It’s supposed to be individualized.” In State B, Ms. Gladhart and Ms. Willow had more class time with their students due to State B’s recommendation of 150 minutes per week, and they incorporated individualized lessons both in and out of class. I will examine next how these teachers all took their individualization to the next level, by celebrating cultural differences and incorporating culturally responsive curriculum for their diverse gifted learners.

Incorporating culturally responsive practices. Culturally responsive teaching is a relatively new phrase in the education lexicon (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ware, 2006). Its purpose, benefits, and key components were described thoroughly in the theoretical framework chapter of this dissertation. Part of the purpose of this narrative inquiry was to discover the experiences of gifted education professionals with culturally responsive pedagogy in gifted education programs. I directly asked each co-researcher about her experiences with culturally responsive curriculum. I will describe below my co-participants' varied responses and the culturally responsive strategies I observed them using during class. In the next chapter, I will explore possible differences between each teacher's interpretation of culturally responsive teaching.

In the Armstrong middle schools, Ms. Keats sees a wide range of diverse cultures in her gifted classrooms. Her students typically mirror the student population as described in Chapter 5. I observed her practicing culturally responsive pedagogy before I asked her about it during our interview. The following excerpt from my field notes during our first observation offers a glimpse into how she naturally connected the Tham Luang Caves Rescue project to her students from immigrant families and their Asian cultural heritage.

Ms. Keats holds a discussion with an Asian student asking him about primary sources. She thoughtfully commends him on his ability to speak Hmong with his family and asks him to interview his parents as a primary source of research about Asian culture. A student who was working in her office returns to work in the classroom. His complaint is that the music another student is composing for her project is distracting him. "It sounds too Asian in there!" he jokes. Ms. Keats is quick to reply that it really should sound Asian, that makes it authentic. Instead of making jokes, she wants students to respect each other's

heritage. Returning to her conversation with the first student, she suggests questions and they discuss his grandmother. He says she would really like him to improve his speaking. “Why do you think that is?” Ms. Keats asks. “Because she wants me to be proud of my ethnicity, my heritage.”

The discussion continues with both Asian students participating. Ms. Keats helps the boys make connections between the different boys in the cave story and their own parents. Several of the boys trapped in the cave were immigrants or refugees in Thailand and one spoke multiple languages. She reminds them that their parents would have experienced monsoon rains like the ones that trapped the boys. They could describe that in a very real way. She encourages each of them to make a list of interview questions about Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, and monsoon rains. She asks to see those questions next time they meet (Field Notes, September 25, 2018).

Ms. Keats has planned a challenging and engaging problem-solving project that intentionally engages these students in connecting with their family’s heritage. She is providing both a mirror and a window into Asian geography and culture. The Asian students have the opportunity to see other boys like them as heroes in the current events story and make connections to their personal family history and language. The other students in the class see through a window into a different cultural place by researching music and geography. Later in Ms. Keats’ second interview, she tells me, “You have to dignify their authenticity.” She also tells me about her experiences conducting IEP meetings with families through an interpreter.

I like having mom and dad in the room, or guardian in the room. The kids know I know them... It is my job to tell parents, your child is gifted. They can only be limited by themselves or you. They have dual languages, most of my kids know at least two languages. Well, originally when I started in this district, seven years ago,

parents were embarrassed. And kids were embarrassed. And I'm like, "Whoa, what are you talking about?" Do you realize that if you go right over here to KU Med Center, they're going to give you a bonus, because you're bilingual? And I'm like "Never lose that! Oh my god, you are headed, you are two steps above me because you know two languages!" And then the parents – through an interpreter – begin to have that twinkle and say, "Oh she gets it. She gets it." And then, they say, "I have told my son – through an interpreter – I have told my son that it is important for him to keep our language." And I'm like, "No question. You are absolutely correct. Do not question your parents. They are right!" And then the parents are like, "I'm a winner." And so then that whole factor of needing an interpreter becomes my burden, not theirs. And I own that. I apologize and say, "I am so sorry that I am not fluent in your language. I need this person here to be able to tell you how wonderful your kid is.

Ms. Keats uses culturally responsive methods both in and out of her classroom. She is conscious of each student's need to define themselves within the context of their own family heritage. She also encourages students to learn about the cultures of places around the world and make connections to their own experiences. The IEP meetings she must hold with parents are one way for her to do this more effectively.

When I ask Ms. Silver about culturally responsive teaching, she takes a different perspective. In her classes, being culturally responsive means adjusting or adding components to the curriculum for all students to make connections to the material. She tells me, "I feel like you have to adjust curriculum to what the students are going to have some background knowledge in. That's like teaching 101." When I ask her what that looks like in her classroom she shares an example from a recent collaborative reading group.

So it's just a lot of conversation. A lot of interest. I do some interest surveys as the beginning of the year, that kind of thing. When I'm introducing a unit, I try to pull in lots of pictures, depending on what it is. If we're learning about, like we've done a cultures unit, in the past, like a geography thing. So we'll bring in lots of pictures and we'll let the students talk about their own experiences with that. But it's just really important for them to have that background knowledge, so that's what we try to build up every single time. Especially if we're doing a new novel. I'm trying to think, like for *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. We've done that one before. We did a lot of pre-loading about what it looks like. Even just the environment, what an island would look like... We try to make as many connections as possible to what they're doing

here or what their experiences might be here. Which, the students really struggle. I'm thinking of *Island of the Blue Dolphins* because I did a ton of front-loading but the kids had a really hard time connecting with that book. We did a lot of themes and how they have those sorts of themes that go on in their life. In Benton Public Schools in State B, Ms. Gladhart asks me to explain a little more about what I mean when I ask her about culturally responsive teaching. After clarifying that it is similar to multicultural education, she begins to describe the anthropology unit she and her colleagues did with students a few years ago, and that they are planning to start again in the next semester.

The students were researching their own background and their own history and developing things to go along with it. Then we made project boards that displayed them... They did the flag for their country. If they weren't from the United States, they researched their country flag and a little part of their board had that on there. Because almost everybody has come here from somewhere else.

She also tells me about a special component of the project where students get to interview a family member. On the last day that I observe her class, they are beginning this part of the new anthropology unit. The following excerpt from my field notes describes what she calls her "Intro to Anthropology."

Holding up the packet she gave them when they arrived, Ms. Gladhart says, "We are going to put together a book. We'll make it really nice and take our time, because this is what we're taking home." The packet includes a title page called "My Family and Traditions". She tells them they have several days left before Christmas break and they will be working on the book each Monday until then. The first page they discuss is an interview planning worksheet. It is a long list of possible questions for interviewing a family member. I remember this as one of the activities we discussed in Ms. Gladhart's last interview. It is from a StoryCorps contest called "The Great Thanksgiving Listen". She tells students they will highlight the questions they are going to ask a relative. There is another page with a list

of questions to help them make a family tree. One student speaks up that he has a great great grandmother. Ms. Gladhart says that is wonderful, he can interview her. She will have a lot of history to share about her family (Field Notes, December 3, 2018).

This anthropology unit is one example of Ms. Gladhart's use of culturally responsive curriculum. Celebrating students' personal strengths and their family's traditions allows her to begin a counter-narrative that disrupts the deficit perspective that may follow these diverse students (Milner, 2008). The higher-level thinking required by the research aspect of the project is also an appropriate strategy for gifted learners (Davis & Rimm, 2004). In this way, the team of Benton teachers that designed this unit have successfully combined culturally responsive pedagogy with gifted pedagogy.

Ms. Willow also tells me about the anthropology unit after we discuss the meaning of culturally responsive teaching during the second time we meet. She is excited to repeat this unit again next semester. She is looking forward to the interview component, but she also remembers another culturally responsive part of the anthropology unit that combines geography with cultural history research.

We found a site where they could look up their last name and get the origin of their last name. They loved it. What was kind of cool, is that they would have a – well it didn't work for everybody...but they would show you on a map where the majority of... the Hernandez family, the majority of people with your last name lived... I'm trying to think if it was ancestry.com or what? It was nothing we paid for, I promise I didn't spend any money. But we found that site and they loved that. That was one of my favorites because we were talking about how we want to do it again. Looking up their last names was awesome. The origin of their last name.

I have them go home – because some student's names are very unique – and interview mom or dad or grandmother, whoever, about their first names. Sometimes their first names are very interesting. Or they might have special family connections through first names...I was named after my grandmother, so I kind of lead with that. "Nobody calls me by my first name, but my first name is my grandmother's. Do you have anything like that"? And usually it's also easy. Your name is an easier than maybe any other aspect for wanting to share. And it's very personal, very much so. Yeah, that's a good one that we use, and that sticks with them, you know, it does.

And it was definitely one of the things we showcase when parents came to visit and we had set up things during parent-teacher conferences when they would come, if they would come. Those that did saw the flags. They all had to discover what flag represented their culture, if they found out what their background, what their name derived from.

In this part of the unit, students were analyzing data represented graphically on a United States map and making deeply personal connections to family and history. This unit also allowed students to make additional contacts with family members through the interviews and during the presentations at parent-teacher conferences. It was interdisciplinary and culturally responsive. In the next chapter, I will discuss in detail the implications of these secret curriculum stories for both the teachers and students.

Reflexive and Resonating Experiences

In the section above, I considered the common narrative themes that I uncovered, and I provided tentative interpretations of my co-participants' secret stories in relation to the shared narrative themes. This section focuses on the important narrative dimension of relationship or interaction, as I return to deliberating over my own positioning as a researcher in this study and the telling and re-telling of my own stories to live by as a gifted teacher as a result of engaging in meaningful dialogue with my co-participants.

Throughout my inquiry, my co-researchers shared many classroom stories and I observed many more. Our interactions created reflexive experiences that changed my perception in an irreversible way (Kim, 2016; Patton, 2015). At the same time, my questioning about particular topics caused my co-researchers to examine them more closely. These are known as resonating experiences (Conle, 1996). As I continued to interact with each co-researcher over time, these topics revealed themselves in later interviews and classroom observations.

The first reflexive experience of my inquiry began in Ms. Keats' classroom. She uses a simple affective discussion technique to open her weekly lessons with students. She calls it "success and challenge" and I describe it thoroughly in previous sections. During my first observation with Ms. Keats, I was surprised and intrigued by the success of this straightforward strategy to discuss social and emotional issues. In each of my subsequent interviews and observations, this technique became part of our conversations. Ms. Keats encouraged me repeatedly to try it, so I did. Beginning in second quarter I began having weekly "success and challenge" discussions with one of my seventh grade gifted classes. I know I do not have the same counseling background or experience with Socratic Method as Ms. Keats, but I found it was replicable, even in my own, very different class. She was right, gifted kids seemingly like to be heard about issues that are not necessarily academic. They also like to give each other compliments, advice, and commiseration. In fact, they seemed to much prefer this to guidance from me. After a month of holding my own weekly success and challenge discussions, I conveniently forgot to plan it into our Monday activities one week and students immediately called me on it. They craved that time to share, to listen, and to be heard.

My observations with Ms. Silver gave me project-based curriculum ideas that I felt could be immediately implemented in my own classroom. She and Ms. Keats were both using an exciting topic from recent current events that also had cultural connections for their students from immigrant families. In the Tham Luang Cave Rescue, 13 boys and their soccer coach were trapped in a cave for 25 days. As a STEM challenge, Ms. Silver's students were planning construction of a scale-model rescue vehicle that could transport a tiny model of a soccer player through a complex underwater maze. I have been able to rewrite this activity as

a similar high interest problem-solving challenge for my middle school students. Ms. Silver and I also figured out that we were both planning mock trial units in the upcoming quarter. She was working on a unit for her PBL groups, while I developed a similar unit for my caseload at a single building. These connections and similar interests in curriculum development brought us closer during the research process. We trusted each other's instincts in a way that is unusual for teachers, but especially rare for researchers and participants.

Another significant reflexive experience took place in State B. Ms. Gladhart and Ms. Willow introduced me to an anthropology unit they had done with students in the past. A way for students to honor and celebrate their family's heritage, it is described fully earlier in this chapter. I was inspired by the connections they made for students between history, geography, and culture. My careful notes from interviewing these teachers allowed me to begin developing an anthropology unit for my students next year. I even researched the websites they told me about to find the roots of my own family heritage.

This anthropology unit also became a resonating experience for me. During my second interview with both Ms. Willow and Ms. Gladhart, I found myself explaining what I meant by "culturally responsive curriculum". They were familiar with these strategies for diverse learners, but did not know all the terminology. My interest in the anthropology unit as an example of culturally responsive teaching led them to both think about it more deeply and realize the power it held for students in the past. Before I came to meet with their department, they had not all decided which units they would implement during the spring semester, but during my final observation and interview, Ms. Gladhart told me they had settled on bringing back the anthropology theme. I observed her creating a family history booklet with students, which she called her "intro to anthropology".

In this section, I have further positioned myself carefully as a researcher walking “in the midst” of teacher and classroom stories. My goal was to explain clearly how the research progressed as well as some of my thoughts and feelings during the inquiry. The reader should now be well aware of my own researcher voice and stories. The implicit biases and assumptions I brought to my study should also be clear, as well as my perceived growth in direct connection with my co-researchers.

Chapter Summary

The overall purpose of this narrative inquiry research is to examine the experiential stories of gifted education professionals who work in urban classrooms with culturally diverse students in two different neighboring states. This second data analysis chapter explored the experiences of four co-researchers who work with culturally diverse urban gifted students in order to answer my first research question, “What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with culturally diverse urban gifted students?” I described both the individual and shared experiences of each co-researcher, shedding light on common narrative themes as well as unique personal and classroom experiences. This chapter contained both secret and cover stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

This chapter has examined the curriculum stories that all of the co-researchers had in common. The four common narrative themes that I examined above are (a) “Identifying Culturally Diverse Students;” (b) “Relationships and Motivating Students;” (c) “Negotiating Space and Time – Shifting Classroom Landscapes;” and (d) “Creative and Challenging Curriculum.” Accordingly, I first described the secret stories of identification, noting unique and purposeful practices from each side of the state line. The second category of relationships highlighted ways that each co-researcher emphasized motivating students

through establishing caring relationships. The third shared narrative theme was negotiating time and space. This logistical theme included stories of teachers finding or earning space to have a class and scheduling time to pull students from their general education classes. The fourth theme of creative and challenging curriculum answered the two original research sub-questions about teachers' experiences with individualization and culturally responsive teaching. Finally, I ended this chapter with another careful examination of my experiences as a researcher. These reflexive and resonating experiences demonstrate how my own stories to live by as a gifted education professional have been shaped by the opportunity to learn from each of my co-researchers.

In this chapter, I highlighted secret stories, the actual happenings of daily experiences creating curriculum for and with diverse gifted students. In the next chapter on the implications of this study, I will more thoroughly explore these stories through the lens of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework to shed light on the meaning of each co-researcher's experience. I will also explore the implications and significance of these stories for practicing gifted educators as well as future research in curriculum for diverse gifted learners.

CHAPTER 7

STORIED MEANINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the previous two chapters of data analysis, I have presented the findings of this narrative inquiry research including several types of stories from teachers and classrooms and identified four narrative themes. The purpose of this inquiry is to explore the experiential stories of gifted education professionals who work in urban classrooms with culturally diverse students in State A and State B. The four co-researchers who participated in my study shared cover stories, secret stories and stories to live by. They also described their experiences in response to the sacred stories of gifted education policy in their respective states. This final chapter of analysis provides a deeper look into the collective stories of my co-researchers and explores their potential meaning within the context of their classrooms and beyond.

In this chapter, I return to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework introduced in Chapter 2 (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Utilizing this analytical structure, I uncover potential meaning from the stories lived and told by my co-researchers. These implications are situated within the particular contexts and themes previously established by the stories of Chapters 5 and 6. I also extend the narrative analysis to describe other potential meanings suggested by my findings. These include a storied interpretation of the IEP in State A and an analysis of the varying interpretations of culturally responsive curriculum found within this study.

Three Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Analysis

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe the narrative inquiry method with attention to three aspects of storytelling: temporality, situation and interaction. These three concepts

are understood as dimensions within the narrative inquiry space. This analytical process allows researchers to explore the context and meaning of experiences beyond the present time and location of the telling. In the following paragraphs, I examine the dimensions of temporality, situation, and interaction for each co-researcher. I also compare and summarize their implied meanings within each dimension of the narrative inquiry space.

Temporality

The first narrative dimension is the concept of time or *temporality*. “Temporality is a central feature...When we see an event, we think of it not as a thing happening at that moment but as an expression of something happening over time” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 29). When discussing Coles’ (1989) analysis of stories, these researchers also clarified the essential chronological nature of narrative, “Stories are temporal, and it is through the media of time and space that people, things, and events reflect, and are seen to reflect, one another” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, p. 391). As a narrative inquiry researcher, I was aware that each story I witnessed had a past that I was not present to observe, a present occurring in the moment, and a future that was yet to be played out. My interviews, classroom observations, and careful field notes could reveal only part of the greater continuing story being experienced in the life of each co-researcher. In previous chapters, I have closely analyzed the temporal dimension of my own research journey. Here I refocus the narrative lens on my co-researchers and their own curricular stories. In the following paragraphs, I interpret the temporal dimension of meaning related to the four narrative themes and the experiences of my co-researchers in gifted classrooms with culturally diverse students.

Leta Keats. As I met with Ms. Keats in her tiny shared office at Hilltop Middle School, we often discussed the path her career has taken through time. She described her teaching career as “a circle” and mentioned, “I am ending my career where I probably should have begun it. But I am so grateful for all those years in between.” Considering the temporal dimension of her stories requires viewing them from the lens of a very experienced educator who is almost ready to retire. “I’m getting closer to the end,” she tells me. “I just don’t know how much longer I can close the door and teach.” She told me she could have retired years ago, but continues her position for multiple reasons including her love for the “phenomenal” diverse gifted kids she teaches. “I realize I’m at the end of my journey. I am. I am. And I’m good with that.” However, the primary reason that she has not yet retired from the Armstrong School district is her concern for the future. If she retires, she is not sure that the person taking her position will have the same passion and drive to really challenge students and meet their social/emotional needs. She mentioned this apprehension multiple times. When discussing her future replacement she said, “I want somebody who wants to work as hard as I do, and I’m not finding them.”

Emri Silver. The temporal dimension of Ms. Silver’s stories reflects almost the opposite timeline. She began her teaching career in the Armstrong School district about eight years ago, choosing to work in an urban setting with diverse gifted learners. She can look only briefly into the past at successes in changing the program structure, adapting identification practices for culturally diverse students, and developing new and exciting project-based curriculum. During our interviews, we frequently discussed these struggles and her satisfaction at successfully advocating for change. When we examined the Armstrong gifted identification matrix she said, “I feel like this is a really strong version that we have

now.” She also mentioned, “I think we’re getting the right kids now.” However, the future of her career is wide open. She may choose to stay in Armstrong, coordinating her challenger groups and arranging complex schedules of direct and collaboration service minutes.

Alternatively, she may one day take a position in a different district that provides more time-based consistency and resources for their gifted professionals, allowing her to focus her energy on project-based curriculum.

Donna Gladhart. Interpreting the temporal dimension of Ms. Gladhart’s stories requires me to consider both her past and future. Though she has been working in the Benton School District for only seven years, she has already had a long and rewarding career in education teaching both high school history and K-12 gifted. During our interviews, she often mentioned the gifted curriculum and strategies she brought with her from her past position. As a former history teacher, she also considers the past a valuable learning tool, incorporating it into her curriculum as much as she can. She described seeing her former students growing up to come back and work in the school with her in her prior district. She even had a former student become a principal. Ms. Gladhart looks ahead to the future for her Benton students too. She is concerned about their experiences in middle school and high school and mentioned multiple times that particular students were truly destined for great accomplishments one day.

Diane Willow. As I analyzed the temporal dimension of Ms. Willow’s stories, it was clear that her past and future in education were the most clearly connected of all my co-researchers. She has spent her entire life living in the Benton School District. Before she became a teacher, her aunt, a very influential role model, taught history in the district and ignited Ms. Willow’s own passion to become an educator. During our interviews, she

frequently described the history of the Benton gifted education department. She remembers past colleagues and programming strategies fondly and with a profound sense of loss. However, this love and concern for her district also compels her to look forward into the future with hope. She acknowledges the progress they have made in identifying more students of color for the gifted program and explains that she would like to see the district hire more teachers to serve her students as they move on to middle school. In our third interview, she said,

I would like to see a component for middle school... the person we got who was supposed to do middle school, got a vice principal position. They left, so it has just not been filled back in like it could be.

Ms. Willow has witnessed a decrease in the number of gifted education teachers from around 24 at the beginning of her career, to only four teachers now in the department. She remembers with fondness a bustling active program that ran “like a well-oiled machine.” These recollections permeate her stories and inform her understanding of what is possible in her district.

Temporal implications for curriculum stories. As experienced educators, all four co-researchers look toward the past to define their curriculum successes and challenges. Ms. Keats, Ms. Gladhart, and Ms. Willow are closer to the end of their careers and remember times before gifted students were an identified population in public schools. Their temporal orientation allows them to reflect over decades of progress in learning to meet the needs of this unique population. Two themes discussed in Chapter 6 relate directly to my co-researchers’ ability to look back across a career of professional growth. First, the theme of “Relationships and Motivating Students” highlights the ways that each teacher has learned to connect with their students over a long career. The theme of “Creative and Challenging

Curriculum” is also made up of strategies that have been honed over decades of classroom experiences.

Ms. Silver’s temporal orientation reflects backward on success in her stories addressing my first theme of “Identifying Culturally Diverse Students”, but primarily she is looking ahead to her continued growth as a professional. Considering how teachers reflect forward and backward in time sheds light on their curriculum practices and the types of strategies they may employ. This temporal aspect of the narrative inquiry framework contributes to their stories of culturally responsive pedagogy along with the two other dimensions.

Situation

The second dimension of the narrative inquiry framework is context or *situation*. This concept “attends to the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 51). It also refers to the culture of a particular setting. This concept of place, which is also known as a narrative landscape, helps researchers to consider how situations outside of the typical classroom setting might impact the stories researchers hear and tell. Like time, situation lies along a metaphorical continuum from personal space or culture (home and family settings) to the shared classroom space, and to the out of classroom spaces within the larger school or community. While attempting to understand the personal practical knowledge of teachers, it is potentially illuminating to consider how stories fit along the continuum of context (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). This variable is significant in my research because in diverse urban classrooms, students’ and teachers’ stories may reference specific cultural ways of understanding.

Each of my co-researchers shared common experiences which helped me uncover the theme, “Negotiating Space and Time – Shifting Classroom Landscapes”. The excerpts of field notes I presented in Chapters 5 and 6 reveal the constant motion of these gifted professionals from one classroom landscape to the next. Beyond this preliminary analysis, each teacher also had unique and storied experiences that conveyed additional movement through contextual situations of culture, and the varied ways she interpreted her role in each setting. The individual analyses in this chapter shed light on the personal potential meanings for each co-researcher on these shifting landscapes. In the paragraphs below, I will attend to this narrative dimension from the perspective of each co-researcher, then summarize the findings and implications for the entire study.

Leta Keats. When Ms. Keats took a job in the Armstrong school district, she transplanted herself into a new cultural and economic setting far different from the small State A town where she grew up and the suburban schools where she previously taught. This would have meant that each time she entered her classroom context; she would be traveling a great distance along the continuum of place from her personal culture to the diverse multicultural classroom context. However, Ms. Keats’ personal practical knowledge and experiences include more than just her small town State A upbringing. During her first interview, she told me about being a young girl and wishing to “see the world”. This desire to experience new places, has taken her on yearly summer adventures over decades of teaching and each fall it brings her back to the city with fresh ideas and experiences to share with her students. She describes these world travels and the impact of her cultural experiences on her teaching:

I think for me, it’s been wonderful to have come from the middle of nowhere, where you couldn’t see the crown jewels, to have been that person who has seen them and

been to countless countries and comes back and tells kids “Change the world. Change the world. You should go see the crown jewels. I think you could design a better one!”

These immersive summer experiences in other cultures have taught her to appreciate her students from immigrant families. When others might experience a discomfort or apprehension moving constantly from place to place, meeting people from different backgrounds and speaking different languages, Ms. Keats is energized by the diversity around her in the Armstrong School District. In a later section of this chapter, I will explore the potential meaning of these situational experiences for her interpretation of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Emri Silver. The situational dimension of Ms. Silver’s stories shifts not between countries, but between neighborhoods. She spends part of her time in the Emerald City neighborhood of Armstrong, State A. She teaches gifted students at two different schools in this neighborhood and has been working there since her first year of teaching. She describes the community as “really strong” and “tight-knit”. She appreciates the supportive families and the community spirit. This neighborhood is made up of many low-income and immigrant families, primarily of LatinX and Asian heritage. Ms. Silver feels comfortable in this diverse setting because it reminds her of all the close friends she had as a young girl.

However, the largest group of students on her caseload are not from this neighborhood. They live and attend school in a very different neighborhood closer to the outside edge of the city. I did not have the opportunity to observe her in this context, but Ms. Silver describes it as much higher in socio-economic status and even somewhat “rural”. The students at this school are mostly White and solidly middle class. Her fourth school is near a university medical school and many students in that neighborhood have the advantage of

highly educated parents. During our last interview, she tells me about how it feels to shift from one cultural context to the other several times a week and why the identification strategies that help in one context may not work in another. She showed me a notebook listing all the students whose test scores have qualified them to participate in her “challengers” enrichment group. The pages for her outlier schools are full and the pages for the Emerald City schools have only a few names.

I was just actually going through the data this morning so you can see. I just pulled kids that had scores at the 90th percentile or above that weren't already identified at S— for challengers. S—had all that and that other page. So then these other buildings, like this one has 5 kids... But then at my other outlier building, F--, which is also kind of a higher SES. It has University students...they have a page and a half also...I just know, even from home maybe discipline and school is more – especially like the University students' kids, they're used to their parents studying. They've got that model of how you're going to work really hard to achieve, and some of my other buildings, maybe don't have as much support at home or as much modeling at home.

As Ms. Silver shifts daily from one building and neighborhood context to another, she must be conscious of the differing cultural backgrounds and family experiences of each group of students. She is diligently finding ways to identify diverse students, but realizes that different tools are needed in different situational contexts. Her stories of identification and curriculum reflect the challenge of constant fluctuations along the continuum of place.

Donna Gladhart. In 2012, Ms. Gladhart experienced a greater shift in her personal sense of place than any of my other co-researchers. She moved from a gifted teaching position in rural Arkansas to the inner city district of Benton Public Schools in State B. The district she used to call home was permanently consolidated into a larger neighboring district. When this happened many teachers, administrators, and other staff were forced to move away and continue their careers elsewhere. This left her and others in the community with a deep sense of loss. When Ms. Gladhart came to Benton, she chose to live within the urban

boundaries of her new district. Her personal context of home is now remarkably similar to her students. She told me that living in the city took some adjustment, but the gifted kids she is serving here, are “exactly the same” as the gifted students she worked with in rural Arkansas.

Ms. Gladhart explained that she understands that both groups of students faced the challenges of growing up in poverty. “They struggle with the same things, like poverty is a major deciding factor in success. It’s not how smart you are it’s your ability to overcome your past.” When Ms. Gladhart tells stories of her students and her pedagogy, these narratives reflect her understanding of students’ context or situation. Her experiences with students from poverty in two very different cultural contexts, have taught her what kind of strategies to employ. In this way, her personal practical knowledge is a combination of her old sense of place and cultural belonging, with a new sense of place and belonging. In a later section of this chapter, I will continue to explore how these shifts in context might have influenced her practical application of culturally responsive curriculum.

Diane Willow. As previously discussed, Ms. Willow is my only co-researcher who has lived and worked in the same community her entire life. Her sense of place and cultural context is well-defined and even treasured at a deeply personal level. Over the course of our interviews and observations, she often repeated, “I love my district.” When asked why she felt such a deep connection to the Benton Schools she said, “It’s just home...I feel responsible for this city.” A profound sense of family and community bind her to the stories of school in this place. Though she has taught in almost every elementary school in the district, and travels to five different neighborhoods every week, she is never very far from the place where she grew up. As a member of the African-American community, she also shares

part of her cultural heritage with a majority of students in the Benton, Schools. In this way, her personal context, or home culture have always closely mirrored the cultural situations of many of her students.

When Ms. Willow tells her stories of school and gifted curriculum, they are also stories of her home. After teaching gifted students in the same district for over 25 years, she takes personal responsibility for her students without hesitation.

I feel like these kids are my kids. I don't have children of my own and so I do feel very protective and very responsible for them... I didn't feel like that all the time, like I had an impact. But I guess with age, I've learned that ok, it's important for me to take this seriously. These kids might not get another shot, you know. They need me to notice them, to see what they have, what their potential is.

This sense of responsibility and connection to home makes Ms. Willow's stories of school align easily with her stories of culture and context. Along the continuum of situation, Ms. Willow's stories fit together naturally.

Implications for curriculum stories on shifting classroom landscapes. The narrative dimension of situation allowed me to examine my second theme, "Negotiating Space and Time – Shifting Classroom Landscapes" in a more nuanced way. Together the four co-researchers' stories reflect the variety of contextual experiences that many groups of teachers bring to their respective classrooms. As relatively recent transplants to the city after many years elsewhere, Ms. Keats and Ms. Gladhart are ending their teaching careers in a diverse urban setting. They are finding storied meaning for their work through new connections with their students who come from very different home and cultural backgrounds. Ms. Silver intentionally brought herself to the diverse urban environment of Armstrong because she felt most comfortable in this type of setting. She described her weekly visits to the mostly White suburban school as very different and as a situational

context that required distinctive strategies. Finally, Ms. Willow's teaching stories are an example of finding meaning through consistency of cultural situation. Her personal, classroom and community spaces have aligned for many years allowing her to define her classroom situational context as "home."

Interaction

The third dimension of the narrative inquiry framework is relationship or *interaction*. This aspect helps researchers examine the social context of stories as they are lived and told. The interaction continuum ranges from personal to social and is described as looking inward or looking outward. When storytellers look inward, they are examining their own internal conditions like "feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). The opposite direction on the continuum of interaction is social or outward toward the environment and the existential conditions of life.

Each of my co-researchers told stories that were personal in orientation or were looking inward to analyze their own experiences and pedagogy. They also each told stories that were social or looking outward. An investigation of this interaction dimension can help shed light on the meaning that each co-researcher has found in her work. It also presents a deeper analysis of the four previously identified themes from Chapter 6. In the paragraphs below, I will analyze this narrative dimension from the perspective of each co-researcher, by returning to the four narrative themes and then examining the stories that were told when looking both inward and outward. Then I will summarize the findings and implications of this analysis for the narrative inquiry as a whole.

Leta Keats. From our very first interview, Ms. Keats was prepared to look inward often during her storytelling. I provided the first interview questions to her about a week

before we met, and she spent time thinking carefully about her personal history and its effects on her current teaching. The following story is one example of a personal reflection story that reveals how Ms. Keats defines herself in relation to her students.

I think most of my kids look at me and know I'm different from them. Not just because I'm White or because I'm educated. They think I'm different because I'm funny, I get their jokes. And because I say, "You guys, you think you have it rough with these iPads, my god I had to learn to type on a typewriter! You don't even know what that is!" And so, I don't know. I think it all comes back to... same kind of different as me.

She is referring to a best-selling memoir (Hall & Moore, 2006) about two best friends of different races and socio-economic backgrounds. She suggests that I read it to understand how she and her students can be so alike and so different.

When Ms. Keats focuses her story-telling outward, she is usually discussing the needs of her students and the services she provides to them. This social aspect of her stories is a clear extension of her years as a school counselor. One of her stories to live by includes a sharpened focus on social and emotional needs. When she speaks of the needs of gifted students, she is often describing these social concerns.

Emri Silver. Ms. Silver told fewer personal stories that focused inward along the dimension of interaction, but she did reflect thoughtfully about her individual history as a teacher and the impact of her decision to teach in an urban school. During her Master's program in gifted education, she had the opportunity to teach gifted students in two very different contexts and the following story is part of her own self-analysis about how these experiences affected her decision to teach in the Armstrong district. It began during parent teacher conferences.

I had a student who was in high school still and her son was in my class. She was a junior in high school and her son was in my class. And so they came to the conference and sat down and I was talking to her mom, who would be grandma, and

she was telling me, “No, no, no, don’t tell me. You know, this is *her* child.” And it was just like, these things just open your eyes. I don’t know, I just have a heart for it I guess, it made me feel for the kid. It made me feel for the mom, who you could see was trying. I mean she was at a parent teacher conference. Not all parents have to come too and she really wanted to do things that were best for her son, and I just feel like I connected well. I connect well with these families.

In this story, Ms. Silver is focused inward along the continuum of interaction, carefully examining her own feelings and motivation. However, she is also placing these feelings in relation to the types of students she wanted to help. In contrast, the only story she told about her student teaching experience in a wealthy suburban district was personally upsetting. It made her feel less connected to the students and families there, ultimately helping her decide to take a permanent position back in Armstrong.

The majority of Ms. Silver’s stories were focused outward toward the social environment of her teaching. This may be because she spends a large part of her time collaborating with other teachers in both general and gifted education. She also has become a leader within her department advocating for changes in the service model. Below is one example of how Ms. Silver finds meaning in her social and collaborative teaching experiences.

So Anderson works out really well. They usually put my kids in the same rooms. And if they don’t, I know they group them for reading groups and that’s when I usually go collab because it’s easy to do. Because I still only do 30 minutes and it’s easy to go collab with a reading group in 30 minutes. It’s still not exactly collab, I’m not co-teaching with the teacher but I’m enriching that reading group.

The stories Ms. Silver told about her teaching experiences demonstrated the variety of pedagogical situations that fill her week. She negotiates each of these curricular experiences with the other adults involved, working as an advocate for her diverse gifted students to enrich their curriculum in many different ways.

Donna Gladhart. Ms. Gladhart also often focused her storytelling outward toward the social end of the interaction continuum. As described in the previous chapter, she repeated her priority on developing relationships with and between her students. “I think it’s so important for them to have good relationships.” She deliberately arranges group work at stations so her students can interact and work together. Another example of her outward or social focus is about building relationships with families and communicating throughout the district.

This, communicating with parents, is a central issue that we talk about at meetings all the time. Because we struggle with how to reach the most parents. Because some parents don’t have an internet, or email or Twitter. Now, I do it all. I do Twitter. They can log on to Edmodo in their own private Edmodo parent account. And I have some parents that do that. I think I have two parents that follow me on Twitter. And we put out this newsletter [pointing to copy of newsletter on bulletin board]. I used to put this out 4 times a year. Yes, and now we’re trying to put this out more often because four times a year doesn’t give parents enough notice about what’s happening.

Ms. Gladhart’s outward storytelling focus is a natural extension of her outgoing personality. She was the first to volunteer to participate in my study and welcomed me very openly to her classrooms and office. Her concern for others and their well-being meant that she did not tell as many inwardly focused or personal stories. However, when she did direct her stories inward, she often reflected on her experiences in Arkansas and her professional growth as an educator. Several of these stories were related in Chapters 5 and 6. They reveal that during Ms. Gladhart’s first years in gifted, she experienced both challenges and rewards managing the logistical and academic planning required in gifted education.

Diane Willow. Ms. Willow’s stories of teaching fell clearly into the personal end of the relationship continuum. Her stories usually reflected inward because of her strong bond to the Benton community. She used personal pronouns such as “my”, “we”, and “our” when referring to the district and her students. She prefaced any criticisms carefully by saying “I

want to be kind because I love my district.” She also saw herself as a resource to her students and reflected on her own professional growth as a direct factor in their success. She is now interested in pursuing a degree in counseling to improve her ability to meet the social and emotional needs of her gifted students.

I’ve got this counseling bug... I do, I would like more tools. It’s almost like. It’s exactly how it was with my regular classroom when I was like, “I need some tools for how to work with these gifted kids.” And now, I’m like, “I need some tools for these gifted kids to have what they need to go further.”

When Ms. Willow’s stories focused outward along the relationship continuum, she was often describing her colleagues in the gifted department. She explained the many strategies they had developed as a team to meet the needs of Benton gifted students over the years. She was quick to direct credit for successes toward others though it was clear she also played a significant role in implementing these ideas. When describing the time capsule project, where students reflected on the concept of “change” through the year 2018, she says, “This by the way, is the brainchild of our dear colleague, C-.” She also frequently referenced Ms. Gladhart’s ideas and contributions to the successes of Benton gifted students. As the gifted teacher with the most years of experience in the district, Ms. Willow could easily take credit for many projects and curriculum ideas over the years, but instead she describes the collaborative efforts of the team and mourns the loss of many colleagues as the district and department has declined in numbers. “In the past I worked with a group of 24 gifted teachers and now our department is, well the district shrank and schools closed and whatnot, but I feel like we need more... than four teachers.”

Implications of personal and social curriculum stories. As a group, my four co-researchers told stories that reflected both inward and outward along the narrative continuum of interaction. Both Ms. Keats and Ms. Willow were slightly more reflective and personal in

their story-telling. They considered the particular meaning of curriculum experiences for themselves individually. Moreover, they acknowledged personal responsibility for curriculum decision-making that could directly benefit their students. Ms. Silver and Ms. Gladhart, told personal stories as well, but more often, their narratives were directed outward into the social context of their work. Ms. Silver's focus on collaboration with colleagues in general education was reflected in her stories of interpersonal relationships with other teachers. Ms. Gladhart's stories of relationships with students and families indicated the importance she placed on socially constructed meaning for her work. These two teachers focused outward in order to find meaning in the relationships they built with students and colleagues.

The three dimensions of the narrative inquiry framework include temporality, situation, and interaction. These variables come together to place stories within the three dimensional narrative inquiry space. My narrative analysis above examines the meaning of stories and themes for each of my co-researchers. In the next section, I describe some more general analyses that connect these meanings to state policy and culturally responsive practice.

Comprehensive Analysis Connecting Narratives to Policy and Practice

This narrative inquiry has identified several tentative personal meanings constructed by the co-researchers through living and telling secret stories of curriculum experienced alongside culturally diverse gifted students. These personal meanings point toward some potential broader implications for state level gifted education policy and for other practitioners. In the following paragraphs, I describe two significant conclusions suggested by the narrative data analysis. First I explain one interpretation of the State A sacred story of

gifted education implied by my co-researchers' experiences. Next, I investigate the varying interpretations of culturally responsive curriculum as described by the four different gifted education professionals. The implications of these variations in meaning are explored with reference to both general and gifted education.

The IEP as a Cover Story in Context

"Cover stories" (Crites, 1979; Olson & Craig, 2005) are told by people to explain events in a socially acceptable way. These types of stories generally highlight the best events of daily classroom life, and usually reference the sacred, socially acceptable story in some way. In State A gifted classrooms, implementation of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) can be understood as a type of complex shared cover story that begets additional cover stories.

Ms. Keats and Ms. Silver both alluded to the idea that within the context of State A policy, gifted teachers have the ability to write their IEPs in a generic standardized fashion. Ms. Keats told me, "Anybody can write IEPs, they don't have to be good." Ms. Silver reiterated the importance of individualizing an IEP during each interview and resisted the district telling her how many minutes all gifted students "must" receive. "I even think that I don't necessarily want that to be told to us, because I think that that's taking away the individualized part of the IEP." A general IEP that could be applied to almost any gifted student is a cover story that glosses over the secret differences between students of varying cultural backgrounds and their individual needs. The stories of my State A co-researchers instead reflect IEPs that are context-sensitive and specifically address the unique cultural landscapes of family and school that have a real effect on student's academic experience.

These stories also address a gap in available research on the effectiveness of IEPs for gifted learners.

Experts in the field of gifted education have recommended the use of IEPs for gifted students (Davis & Rimm, 1998; Dettmer, 1994; Renzulli & Smith, 1988; Whitmore, 1985). Renzulli and Smith's recommendations explain that the IEP is a practical way to make individualization a reality based on the assumptions that gifted students learn faster, they should be provided opportunities to pursue advanced topics, and programming for these students should focus on strengths not weaknesses (1988). In 2003, Shaunessey reported on statewide policies for gifted education including the use of IEPs. She noted that "limited suggestions for generating IEPs have been reported but further evidence of their actual implementation would shed light on their effectiveness in gifted education" (p. 21). Finally in 2008, a researcher attempted to determine if the IEP process was a useful tool for planning programming for advanced readers in New Zealand (Mazza-Davies, 2008). She noted that "with limited guidelines available on the use of IEPs for gifted and talented children, the field is 'wide open' for the creative interpretation and application of such plans," (p. 47). The narrative data collected in my current study contributes a contextual understanding, which supports the use of IEPs for diverse gifted learners, when they are carefully crafted to meet the unique needs of these students.

If all gifted students appear to have similar academic strengths, the same goals, and the same number of service minutes, the job of the gifted teacher (and IEP-writer) can become much easier. These cookie-cutter IEPs can be considered a type of cover story because they explain the student's needs and services in universal educational terms referencing all the right sacred stories and making it easier for outsiders to categorize

students and set expectations for them. I choose to use the phrase “shared cover story” here to emphasize the fact that multiple adults participate in developing this cover story together. Even if the gifted teacher writes the document, it must be signed by the parent, the classroom teacher, and an administrator. Each time an IEP is signed, a group of people is tacitly agreeing to a certain conceptual definition of giftedness and what educational modifications it should necessitate.

The more generic an IEP becomes, the more it is like a cover story. Ms. Keats and Ms. Silver both implied multiple times that this type of IEP is not as valuable or effective for their culturally diverse students. They wanted to write IEPs that were more like secret stories. Ms. Keats told me,

The key to a successful IEP is that the parents have to believe you know their kid... So my little things, my little vignettes, I like to look at those as exactly what they are. If you didn't know this kid, would you know him when you left my IEP? And the answer should be yes, right? And so I put a lot of focus into those. It is my homework to make sure my IEPs capture my kids. If they don't, I've failed them.

Ms. Silver explained the professionalism required to make these complex decisions and write them into a plan. “You should be able to determine what this kid’s services should look like. That’s why it’s an IEP and it’s individualized. You shouldn’t have this rule that says it has to be this. It’s supposed to be individualized.” This type of IEP is more difficult to write and requires a deeper trusting relationship between the teacher, student, and parents. Though both Ms. Keats and Ms. Silver questioned the sacred story of gifted education being placed under the umbrella of special education, they also firmly supported the need for a gifted IEP. It helped them meet their students’ individual needs for differentiated curriculum and social/emotional support. It also provided a vehicle for academic acceleration when needed.

State A is one of very few states that provide the same legal support for gifted students as they do for special education students. This unique policy context has rarely been considered in prior research, so the implications of these curricular stories should be carefully considered here. According to the experiences of my co-researchers, the gifted IEP is a valuable tool, but one that can be misused if it does not address the unique and individual needs of each student. In the next section, I will consider another set of important curriculum decisions that can be misunderstood or misused.

Varying Interpretations of Culturally Responsive Curriculum

This section continues to unpack the meaning of my fourth identified theme “Creative and Challenging Curriculum” by the examining the interaction dimension of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework specifically in the ways that my co-researchers understand the meaning of culturally responsive curriculum. As explained in Chapter 2, culturally responsive teaching methods (Gay, 2010) raise expectations for diverse students (Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009) while simultaneously providing caring (Valenzuela, 1999/2013) and support. In Chapter 6, I began to consider the different ways that each of my co-researchers utilized culturally responsive curriculum to meet the needs of their culturally diverse gifted students. Here I extend this analysis to probe the deeper meanings of culturally responsive curriculum as it is interpreted in personal and social ways within my co-researchers’ stories.

The phrase “culturally responsive” has only been part of the lexicon of education for less than a decade, so some of my co-researchers were somewhat unfamiliar with the terminology. When I first brought it up during interviews, it immediately sparked a dialogue about the needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds. The co-researchers seemed

to want to clarification from me and as they verbalized their ideas and questions, I was able to gain insight into their particular perspective on this complex aspect of their practice. In this section, I will consider the differing ways that each co-researcher responded to these dialogues and the secret stories of classroom experience that reflected their nuanced interpretations of culturally responsive teaching.

Leta Keats. The first time Ms. Keats and I discussed culturally responsive teaching, was during my second interview with her. It was immediately following my first observation of her sixth grade class. I asked her, “What are your thoughts about using culturally responsive teaching methods in gifted?” She responded,

Oh, absolutely! You have to dignify their authenticity. I mean these kids are real... I am almost always saying, “Wait, let’s make that connection to home. What’s mom saying? What’s dad saying? What would your mom say about that?” And some of them will give me clues, like oh that’s a conversation to have with me later... I have to pick up on those and respond.

Ms. Keats immediately associated my mention of culturally responsive teaching to her practice of getting to know students personally. Her counseling background informs her “story to live by” that includes consistently making home-school connections for her students. The IEP process allows her to get to know students and their families very well during the two or three years she has them in gifted class. Through her weekly “success and challenge” practice, she also gets to know their individual cultural backgrounds by discussing individual interests and struggles.

As our conversation about culturally responsive teaching continued, she referenced the dialogue I had witnessed earlier between her and two of her Hmong students. They were planning how to incorporate primary sources into their projects about the Tham Luang Cave Rescue. This secret story was described fully in Chapter 5. Ms. Keats’ personal practical

definition of culturally responsive teaching includes specific knowledge of each student's family background. She knew that these two particular students were second-generation immigrants whose parents and grandparents wanted them to maintain a knowledge of their family's heritage language. She continued to explain the importance of these connections to me later in our interview. "I think we have to dignify that. That is their life. And if we don't say, 'There's more out there. Here's where you came from. Where are you going?' And if we don't make that connection, who will?"

Emri Silver. During Ms. Silver's second interview, I posed the same question about culturally responsive teaching, but she took a different position in her response. "I feel like you have to adjust curriculum to what the students are going to have some background knowledge in. That's like teaching 101... I do some interest surveys as the beginning of the year, that kind of thing." Her description of culturally responsive teaching is less focused on personal connections to a home language or culture. Instead, she highlighted how she adjusts the school curriculum, to meet students where they are. "It's just really important for them to have that background knowledge, so that's what we try to build up every single time."

During my first observation with Ms. Silver, I witnessed her providing one type of cultural background knowledge to a student. The excerpt from my field notes below reveals one secret story of Ms. Silver's desire to fill in small but important pieces of cultural knowledge for her diverse gifted students. They have just finished a short self-assessment while eating the school's "fresh fruit of the day", a peach.

Mrs. Silver collects completed rubrics and has a short discussion about peaches with one boy. He has never eaten one before, but found it to be very tasty. He wants to keep the huge seed he found inside. I am surprised when Ms. Silver tells him he could plant it and it

would probably grow. She gets him a paper towel to wrap it up so he can take it home (Field Notes, September 25, 2018).

Ms. Silver's emphasis on "background knowledge" implies that she believes many of her culturally diverse gifted students may need some additional information to access the traditional school curriculum. She also describes this as "front-loading", meaning teaching important vocabulary and concepts prior to the main content of a unit or lesson. This type of response might imply that Ms. Silver is approaching her diverse students from a deficit-oriented view, focusing on what knowledge they lack. However, she combines this front-loading with very challenging curriculum on her PBL days and individual goals to move students beyond the typical grade-level curriculum. This combination of rigor and support allows her gifted students to thrive in a challenging personalized classroom environment.

Donna Gladhart. When I ask Ms. Gladhart about culturally responsive teaching during our second interview, she asks me to clarify this concept for her first. My explanation of culturally responsive teaching included the following statements, "Culturally responsive teaching would be like the opposite of focusing on what people's problems are. Instead, we're thinking about what are they good at, what do they already know, and how can we take them farther." She quickly remembered a curricular example and shared it with me during this dialogue.

We did an anthropology unit last year or the year before and Ms. Willow and I were just talking about this today. And one part of that anthropology unit was the students took multiple learning styles tests to see in what way they best learned. And that one worked out really well because once students realized that they learn a certain way the best, they could incorporate that into their own learning. If they learn in a hands-on way then they were challenged to find ways to use that knowledge that they've gotten to help themselves learn.

Ms. Gladhart's story about culturally responsive teaching reflects a different interpretation than Ms. Keats and Ms. Silver. She brought up the anthropology unit, which I discussed extensively in Chapter 6, but she specifically mentioned a learning-styles assessment that helped students participate in self-reflection. This type of culturally responsive teaching recognizes the heterogeneity of students' cultural experiences, as did the entire anthropology unit. All the students that I observed in Ms. Gladhart's class at Trent were from African American families, but she was focused on them as unique individuals with different talents and learning preferences. Her recognition of their personal strengths combined with her "stations" approach to curriculum empowered her students to share curricular authority with her. While learning about the same content as their peers, they could select the types of activities that were most challenging and exciting to them personally. In the following short excerpt from my field notes, Ms. Gladhart's style of culturally responsive teaching becomes clear.

"We're going to look at trees today and try to identify them." She explains each station and asks the students to divide into three groups. They will have ten minutes at each station to complete the activity. As she is explaining, the students are clearly excited and begin to start working before she is even finished. When she starts the timer there are two girls taking turns with the large yellow box, one boy and a girl at the tree trunk station and one boy alone at the table with the plastic bags full of seeds, pods, and pine cones. Students are very actively engaged in these activities and seem to be appropriately challenged. The girls at the touch box are making lists of all the items they think they can feel. Ms. Gladhart helps the two students with the tree trunks and shows them how to complete the other handouts at this station. The boy with the plastic bags of seeds and leaves is working very

intently, flipping through reference cards and books. I notice that there are three distinct paces of work happening in the room even though all students are equally engaged. One student is racing ahead. She finishes quickly and is moving on to the next station before the ten minutes is over. Three other students seem to be taking about the amount of time that Ms. Gladhart expected they would for each station. The last boy is so absorbed and thorough with his work that he stays at the same station for nineteen minutes before moving on.

What became clear to me during this observation with Ms. Gladhart was her appreciation for the differences in her students. She was not stuck in a lesson plan designed for her own convenience. She incorporated flexibility and planned many opportunities for choice and inquiry. Students could work at their own pace and access multiple types of learning experiences.

Diane Willow. When I visited with Ms. Willow about culturally responsive teaching during our second interview, she also engaged in a thoughtful dialogue with me before responding. It seemed that my phrasing of the question implied to her that I might intend for her to make things easier for her students from diverse backgrounds or treat them differently if they spoke a language other than English at home. I was able to clarify by referring to lessons she had already told me about that included sustaining and valuing her students' culture and family traditions. When I mentioned her time capsule project could be considered culturally responsive even if she did not call it that, she sat up and responded with excitement. "Oh I've got more then! When we talk about that, almost like celebrating? Oh we totally do that! Oh my gosh. We had this really great lesson." Then she proceeded to describe the anthropology unit. She was enthusiastic about how they were able to incorporate student research into family history with geography and history.

Ms. Willow's interpretation of culturally responsive teaching was deeply embedded into her personal practical knowledge. She has spent her entire lengthy career teaching culturally diverse gifted students. The strategies she knows work with them resonate as just good teaching. Applying the term "culturally responsive teaching" seemed to obscure rather than illuminate the practices she uses in class daily. During my observations of Ms. Willow's classroom, I was able to see other culturally responsive techniques, beyond just the time capsule and anthropology projects.

Ms. Willow utilizes a technology application called Edmodo to communicate with her students both in and out of class. I observed her students writing responses to the "Question of the Day" both times I visited her class. She utilized questions such as "If you wrote a book, what would it be about?" to learn about students' interests and to help them make connections with each other. She also encourages each class to create a group handshake to create camaraderie and connections between her students of varying racial backgrounds. These small techniques build trust and rapport between her and her students. They reflect her own version of culturally responsive teaching.

Implications of varying interpretations of culturally responsive curriculum. The four co-researchers in this study offered widely varying interpretations of culturally responsive curriculum. By analyzing their experiences as a group, some new insights became clear. First, their diverging interpretations reflect the need for increased training in this area. As I discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, many teachers have not had courses related to the needs of culturally diverse students, especially those who earned a teaching license many years ago. The most experienced teachers in my study had the most questions about the meaning of the term "culturally responsive." Additional opportunities for professional development in this

area could offer my co-researchers more tools to understand and implement culturally responsive strategies more completely. New directions in theory and research include the term “culturally sustaining pedagogy” (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017) which offers a more dynamic way for teachers to engage students’ cultures in the classroom.

Secondly, all four classrooms that I observed were lacking the sociopolitical aspect of culturally responsive curriculum. Though all four co-researchers engaged their students in self-reflection and made cultural connections a priority, I did not observe or hear of any opportunities for the gifted students to identify a local or national issue to begin questioning and confronting injustice. By adding this challenging critical aspect of culturally responsive curriculum, the diverse gifted students in these classrooms might experience a more complete version of this pedagogical theory. Throughout our extensive discussions about identification, it became clear that each of my co-researchers were personally looking for ways to resist discrimination and equitably identify as many culturally diverse students as possible for their programs. Their personal energy for these undertakings could be inspirational for their students to challenge inequity in other places.

Finally, all four co-researchers had a shared understanding that part of culturally responsive teaching included a focus on individual strengths and interests. They were all highly skilled at strength-based curricular strategies. They each had different ways of getting to know students both academically and on a deeply personal level. They were able to leverage this knowledge of students’ strengths and interests into challenging and motivating curricular experiences that gave students voice and choice while affirming their cultural heritage. This is the aspect of gifted education pedagogy that most clearly overlaps with culturally responsive pedagogy. It was so natural for my co-researchers that it was sometimes

overlooked by them when verbalizing their responses to my questions about culturally responsive strategies. Ms. Keats alluded to this personalization of learning when she said, “You have to dignify their authenticity...these kids are real!” These strength-based strategies were described extensively in Chapters 5 and 6. They offer suggestions to the broader field of educators looking to implement culturally responsive practices that build on the funds of knowledge that diverse students bring to their classrooms.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have identified several personal and general implications of the themes uncovered in this research. The three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework allowed me to find tentative meaning for each theme and each co-researcher’s set of stories through the lenses of temporality, situation, and interaction. Then I extended the discussion to include implications relating to the broader context of education policy and theory. I explored the storied meaning of the required gifted IEP in State A and analyzed each co-researcher’s interpretation of culturally responsive teaching. The narrative analysis in this chapter offers descriptions of experiential meaning found in the unique context of culturally diverse gifted education. In the following final chapter, I will review the findings and significance of this work as well as look toward future research suggested by the themes of my co-researchers’ stories.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this narrative inquiry research was to explore the experiential stories of gifted education professionals who work in urban classrooms with culturally diverse students in the two different policy contexts of State A and State B. Through examining the complex experiences of urban gifted education professionals, I was able to uncover some of the "secret stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of teachers in these types of classrooms, and began to understand how social justice and equity factors were accounted for in statewide policy and in the enacted curriculum for gifted learners. Four gifted education professionals shared their experiences from decades of work in diverse urban gifted classrooms. Through telling and retelling these stories, they constructed personal meaning for their work. These meanings are not easily quantifiable or transferrable to a different context (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). However, by better understanding these stories, other educators may reflect on their practices and improve services for future classrooms of culturally diverse gifted learners. In this concluding chapter, I will describe the educational significance of these stories for personal practice, policy, and future research. I will address the limitations and ethical considerations inherent to this work, and finally consider the emerging themes and enduring questions that remain to be explored in the future.

Educational Significance for Research, Policy and Practice

The stories collected and analyzed as part of this narrative inquiry are significant given the limited understanding of how teachers of culturally diverse gifted students individualize curriculum. This section describes the significance of this study within the current body of research in gifted education for culturally diverse learners. It also explores

the connections to policy development and practical classroom applications. Finally, I conclude this section with a reflection on equity within the field of gifted education and the implications of this research to the wider pursuit of educational justice for underserved gifted learners and their teachers.

Connections to Current Research

This study provides a contextualized understanding of teacher experiences complementing the extensive quantitative literature available regarding the underrepresentation of diverse students in gifted education programs (Ford, 2011; Lamb, Boedeker & Kettler, 2019; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). It shifts the research lens from seeing teachers and their work with diverse students as small, to seeing them as big (Greene, 1995). This shift allows readers to glimpse the practical challenges and complexities of implementing strategies to reverse underrepresentation in gifted programs.

As noted by several current publications, there is a need for additional research into effective programming for culturally diverse gifted learners (Ford, 2015; Siegle et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2016). There is also a need for additional exploration of contextual experiences such as teacher knowledge and curriculum development (Coleman, Guo, & Dabbs, 2007). This narrative inquiry provides stories of effective programming, teacher knowledge, and curriculum development.

The four co-researchers who shared stories were utilizing research-based practices such as universal screening (Card & Guiliano, 2015), local norms (Jordan et al., 2012), using a body of evidence (Frasier, 1994; Harris & Ford, 1999; McBee, 2006; Peters & Engerrand, 2016), and culturally responsive curriculum (Ford, 2015; Ford et al., 2018). They also faced significant obstacles in their work. These barriers substantiate the findings of other research

in urban and gifted education such as lack of funding (Kettler et al., 2015), incomplete policy (Shaunessy, 2003; Zirkel, 2005), and deficit perspectives about culturally diverse learners (Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Perry, Hilliard, & Steele, 2003). This narrative inquiry confirms and complements current research by giving names and voices to the teachers who are on the front lines of the battle for both excellence and equity (Peters & Engerrand, 2016) in gifted programming.

Significance for Policy Development

This research is also significant because it examines the influence of widely varying state and district policies in the narrative experiences of teachers from two different states. It confirms that services for gifted students vary widely in both quantity and quality from state to state and district to district (Kettler et al., 2015; NAGC, 2015; Shaunessy, 2003). The policy context of State A provides an IEP for gifted students (SADE, 2012) which my two co-researchers were able to use as a vehicle for individualization and developing relationships with diverse families. Policy guidance in State B (SBDESE, 2016) offered direct guidance for my co-researchers to identify and serve their traditionally underrepresented gifted learners. However, neither state provided clear policy guidance on curriculum, nor did they enforce any requirements for equitable identification. The stories in this dissertation present a direct and unflinching look at the implementation of these state level policies at the classroom level.

Significance for Practice

There is an established need for research on effective programming strategies for diverse gifted students (Ford, 2015; Siegle et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2016). The practical significance of this work can be found in the classroom stories of curriculum development.

Practitioners concerned about serving their culturally diverse gifted students may be able to learn from the experiences of Ms. Keats, Ms. Silver, Ms. Gladhart, and Ms. Willow. Their narratives relate the challenges and complexities of working with this unique population of learners.

Narrative analysis in previous chapters uncovered four important themes of experience for these gifted education professionals. First, they were actively concerned about equitable identification and working to improve their school and district practices through innovative strategies such as the challengers groups and the visitor program. Secondly, they focused on developing meaningful caring relationships (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Noddings, 2012) with their diverse students through social and emotional learning. Third, they faced continuous challenges related to their status as itinerant teachers and often lacked resources and adequate space. Finally, in spite of this, they managed to develop creative and challenging curriculum that met the individual needs of their students and offered multicultural connections. Each of these themes reflect the overall experience of gifted education practice in a unique and demanding context. However, behind each of these themes was a lingering question of equality. Were these professionals actually providing a more equitable, representative, and culturally responsive gifted program?

Impact of Narrative Findings for Educational Equity

I began this dissertation with a description of the status of culturally diverse students in gifted education programs, noting that across the nation students of color are underrepresented in and underserved by traditional gifted education programs (Ford, 2011; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Many of these sacred research stories present concerns about equity from a wide statistical lens, offering an important critical stance to hold the field

accountable for a century of discrimination and ignorance. These critical voices have pointed to potential causes of underrepresentation and offered theoretical solutions (Ford, 2013; 2015; Lamb et al., 2019).

In this narrative inquiry, my goal as a White researcher advocating for diversity was to capture a different type of equity story. I intentionally chose to research curriculum in districts that reported some success with identifying and serving gifted students of color and those from families who faced economic hardship. I wanted to see these gifted students and teachers up close and personal, to highlight the complexity of tackling the challenges fostered by a system of educational injustice. As I asked teachers about their experiences with finding and serving their diverse talented students, I was looking for solutions and hope that the field of gifted education was capable of change. I discovered many of these solutions, but also found more problems.

Some of the clear solutions to underrepresentation were obvious at the level of policy, but proved complex and challenging at the classroom level. For example, the policy document from the state of State B offered several research-based solutions to districts who chose to replace discriminatory practices with more inclusive ones. However, there was no legal mechanism to enforce or regulate these recommendations. The Benton district also struggled with how to implement them effectively.

In State A, both of my co-researchers had found ways to identify diverse students using collaboration, challenger groups, and a flexible matrix of test scores. Nevertheless, their innovative strategies had no basis in policy guidance at all. If Ms. Keats or Ms. Silver happen to retire or move to a different teaching position, it would be much easier for a new

teacher to return to traditional identification methods like the bias-ridden referrals-only system in my suburban district.

An additional complication related to equity was the issue of student mobility. In both districts, my co-researchers reported that their student population was transient and moved often between neighborhoods and schools due to socio-economic factors. This mobility of students is an equity issue because it depends on the cultural capital of choice and family circumstances. In State A, a gifted student with an IEP would be guaranteed services, at least temporarily, as long as they moved to another school in State A. This is why Ms. Keats referred to the gifted IEP as her students' "golden ticket." In State B, no such requirement or provision exist. I saw the challenge of finding gifted students who moved in mid-year during my observations with Ms. Gladhart, even when they had been previously identified in the Benton schools. The greatest complications arose for gifted students who moved across state lines, which was common in this large bi-state metropolitan area.

When examining curricular experiences, I also learned that my co-researchers faced complex and numerous obstacles to their missions of justice in gifted education. They had to personally educate general education colleagues and administrators, not only about the needs of gifted students, but also about inherent biases in the curriculum, in standardized tests, and implicit biases in teacher thinking. They had to defend their time with these students as valuable and they had to convince various persons of power to provide time, space, resources, and legitimacy for their work. These secret curriculum stories are significant, not because they can be easily applied nationwide, but because they are fundamentally complex and challenging. They reveal some of the various forces stacked against gifted students from

diverse backgrounds and partially explain why so many districts and states continue to struggle with these equity problems even when they have been obvious for decades.

I did observe small gains in equity, in both the Benton and Armstrong districts. Students of color filled these gifted classrooms. They were appropriately challenged, highly engaged, and cared for by their teachers. However, these successes are not sustainable and not scalable without much more work at the district and state levels. The narratives of my co-researchers might be easy to disregard as circumstantial, but their real significance can be found in a glimpse of possibility. They show us what gifted education could look like across the nation if teachers, researchers, and policy-makers are willing to demand equity in gifted programming and work hard to remove the obstacles that hold back our brightest students. This study as a whole can begin to raise discussions about equitable practices and affect further action in gifted programs locally and more broadly on a national level.

Limitations, Validity and Ethical Considerations

As presented in Chapters 1 and 4, the design of this qualitative study included several strategies to address validity and ethical considerations. This section will outline the limitations of this narrative inquiry, explain how I ensured validity and credibility of the findings, and discuss the ethical considerations.

Limitations

This research examines the experiences of gifted education professionals who work with culturally diverse students. As a narrative inquiry study, it has some limitations that are common to many other types of qualitative research. The first limitation involves the imperfect nature of interviews and observations as analytical tools (deMarrais, 2004). Co-researchers may not have accurately described all experiences and I could observe only a

portion of the classroom interactions. These limitations were ameliorated by using multiple interviews combined with in-class observations, and collection of curricular documents.

A second possible limitation of this study is potential researcher bias. As a narrative researcher, I interpreted stories told by my co-researchers and developed strong personal connections with them over the extensive time of the study. Throughout this document, I have incorporated many clear descriptions of my relevant experiences and assumptions to position my findings and help the reader understand my perspective and voice as separate from the voices of my co-researchers. I also recorded my own responses to the interview questions and analyzed my own stories, noting when reflexive and resonating experiences changed my own beliefs and those of my co-researchers.

Validity Through Crystallization

Validity is a complex but important issue for qualitative researchers. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) wrote that narratives should have authenticity as well as an explanatory and invitational quality. In this narrative study, I primarily addressed validity concerns by examining participant experiences from multiple angles. I conducted analysis of narratives told by participants during interviews, observations and notes from classroom experiences, and analysis of documents, to confirm or elaborate on interview and observational findings. This process is known as “crystallization” (Ellingson, 2009) and replaces the more positivist concept of triangulation. Though other researchers may not agree with the situated truth of my findings, thorough description and rationale for design choices make it difficult for this work to be dismissed as careless or random.

This study incorporates several additional methods to ensure credibility of the findings. I incorporated participant validation into the third and final in-depth interview,

where co-researchers were asked to examine preliminary data analysis to confirm, correct, or elaborate on the narrative findings. Secondly, I spent time conducting observations in the field. Clandinin and Connelly described the observation process as “walking into the midst of stories” (2000, p. 63). The experiences and narratives I am attempting to understand take place in a context that is not bound by the limited times of scheduled interviews and classroom observations. A third credibility consideration I incorporate is rich, thick description. This makes it possible for readers to understand how I arrived at the narrative interpretations, which constitute the findings of my study. The final step in ensuring credibility of the narrative findings was to clarify my own positions and biases as a researcher from the beginning. Statements and stories of researcher positioning are located throughout this narrative inquiry to provide the reader with a clear picture of my perspective as a researcher.

Ethical Considerations

The research had a relatively low amount of ethical risk compared to the benefits it provides. The co-researchers were simply reporting about their experiences teaching gifted education in the schools they work in. They are the most knowledgeable sources of this information. Co-researchers were asked to select their own pseudonyms, which were used as a substitute for their individual names. Fictitious school labels were substituted for school names and neighborhoods throughout the narrative data.

All co-researchers were also given informed consent letters and the option to refuse or discontinue participation at any time. The consent document in Appendix A clearly explained the purpose of the study and all benefits and risks involved. After I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) courses, the Institutional Review Board

(IRB) of my university was responsible for verifying that all ethical concerns regarding the protection of human participants were satisfied in this research.

During the qualitative analysis of the research, there was a potential for my personal bias to affect the outcomes of the narrative interpretation process. The qualitative procedures to ensure credibility described above (such as crystallization, member-checks, thick description, and researcher positioning) are accepted ways to lessen the effects of researcher personal bias. In the next section, I will further address these personal biases by reporting my experience of Clandinin and Connelly's "researcher wakefulness" (2000, p. 181).

Emerging Themes and Enduring Questions

Throughout the process of engaging in my narrative inquiry, I found myself increasingly aware of new concerns and questions that I did not anticipate during the proposal phase of this study. These surprises and wonderings changed some of my long-held assumptions, and influenced my thinking as I moved from my very first, to my very last interview. They also revealed new research puzzles that need to be explored in further study.

The Challenge of Space and Time

The first surprising theme was that my co-researchers experienced a continual challenge of finding time and space to hold classes. I knew before I started, that each of my co-researchers would be itinerant, working in multiple buildings, but I drastically underestimated the impact this would have on their daily curricular experiences. As a stationary teacher, with one building and one classroom, I began to realize, how much I take for granted. I have a dedicated space and time to provide gifted services. It is written into my building's master schedule and very rarely changes. This theme of space and time is thoroughly explored in Chapter 6, but here I must mention the two types of experiences that

surprised me most because I became more sensitive to them as the inquiry progressed, even directly asking follow-up questions that never would have occurred to me before I began this research.

I was struck first, by the extremely high level of organization and thoughtful preparation required for even a single class to be held. My co-researchers had the constant challenge of scheduling down-to-the-minute travel across broad geographic distances. They needed to plan carefully for every single item to be packed and ready in at least four different locations during the week. They laughed about this part of the job, some calling their car a hidden classroom storage space. However, they all had developed strategies for managing hands-on engaging lessons from a cart or bag.

Secondly, I was surprised by the negotiation and political maneuvering required to access students at all. While many general education teachers and administrators were supportive of gifted programming, each co-researcher also experienced push-back in one form or another. Ms. Keats carefully maintained key relationships with counselors and administrators so she could continue to have a dedicated space and collaborate in classrooms where she felt effective. Ms. Silver accommodated all kinds of different collaboration arrangements in order to access both her gifted students and her challenger groups. Her schedule was so complicated it appeared impossible. Last year, she was actually forced to meet fifteen of her gifted students on the floor in a hallway because there was no other time or space to hold class.

In the Benton district in State B, Ms. Gladhart and Ms. Willow spent many days in libraries, conference rooms, and other shared spaces sometimes without dependable technology, storage, or basic supplies that they did not carry in themselves. Ms. Gladhart had

to arrange her gifted classes artfully around every “support class” because legally students were not allowed to miss physical education, art, music, etc. Ms. Willow had similar scheduling challenges and I witnessed her class in the library at Wadsworth being constantly invaded by strangers, the Scholastic book fair, and even a bus tour of 20 chatting adults. Finally, all four teachers mentioned that occasionally their class or program is misunderstood as some type of special privilege instead of a true learning need. To do their job successfully, they needed to be prepared to run both offense and defense for their students.

As these realities slowly sank in for me, I began asking more questions during my interviews and noticing more details about locations and resources during my observations. I grew to understand my co-researchers as champion flexible problem-solvers. They planned and organized for every available minute with students, then rolled with the punches as new challenges emerged each day to thwart those plans.

Collaboration

A second surprising theme was the level of teamwork and collaboration required by all four co-researchers in both states. I knew this might somehow be part of their experiences, but it was actually a deep and integral part of successfully meeting students’ needs. In State A, the co-researchers collaborated with general education but also with each other. In State B, the gifted professionals met weekly in their offices to brainstorm curriculum ideas and create shared units of inquiry. I had heard about the required collaboration minutes in Armstrong Public Schools and I knew other gifted education teachers saw them as a waste of time or a nuisance. Their true value was way beyond anything I could have anticipated.

Ms. Keats negotiates her way into the best classrooms along with her students. She stays with teachers for years, contributing to class discussions, planning shared lessons and

projects, and generally differentiating the curriculum. However, she does not have much time to collaborate with other gifted professionals in the district. Ms. Silver also collaborated successfully in general education every day. She switched hats with ease moving from reading instructor to math specialist as she went from classroom to classroom. Sometimes teachers let her in on lesson plans ahead of time and sometimes they did not. Ms. Silver also collaborated with all the other elementary gifted professionals in the district to organize their bi-monthly “PBL trips”. Each quarter, she co-planned a new unit that would bring her into relationships with different teachers and students.

Ms. Gladhart, Ms. Willow, and the rest of the Benton Public Schools gifted department were a tight and supportive group. This was clear to me from the moment I first met them. They collaborated to plan activities and entire units. They trusted each other and shared materials and resources freely. During each interview, Ms. Gladhart and Ms. Willow referred often to their colleagues when discussing how they developed curriculum. The district allowed them some professional development time to work together and they used it to develop quarterly progress trackers, shared curriculum strands and outcomes, even to plan fun activities for students such as the Fall Festival. Ms. Gladhart also told me about designing a middle school unit for her colleague who had never taught that grade level before. During the course of the narrative inquiry, I found myself wishing I had understood this level of collaboration better before I began my research. I might have written better questions or framed my study to include observations of collaborative experiences.

Changing Assumptions and New Research Puzzles

Both of these emerging themes challenged my assumptions about gifted services for diverse urban learners and opened my eyes to new possibilities. They did not exactly fit

within the box of my research questions because I had not even thought to ask about them. Additionally, neither of these concepts can be directly understood as culturally responsive practices, but they are such an integral part of these teachers' experiences that I could not simply ignore or leave them out of my field texts. Flexible problem solving and collaboration are 21st century skills that many districts are now trying to teach directly to students. They are also examples of skills that underrepresented social cultures have perfected outside of mainstream education. They hint at new research puzzles to be explored in future inquiries.

Conclusion

In this final chapter, I described the educational significance of my co-researchers stories for practice, policy, and future research including a personal reflection on equity in gifted education. I addressed the limitations and ethical considerations inherent to this work, and finally considered the emerging themes and enduring questions that remain to be explored in the future.

This narrative inquiry has explored the experiences of four gifted education professionals who work with culturally diverse gifted students in State A and State B. It analyzed several different types of stories according to Clandinin and Connelley's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework. First, I examined each co-researcher's personal biography and stories to live by. These identity stories inform each teacher's personal practical knowledge and the curricular experiences of their classrooms. Then I examined sacred policy stories of gifted education, which highlighted the differences in context between the gifted professionals working in State A and in State B. Next, I analyzed cover stories from interviews and secret classroom stories from my observations to uncover four major narrative themes including (a) "Identifying Culturally Diverse Students;" (b)

“Relationships and Motivating Students;” (c) “Negotiating Space and Time – Shifting Classroom Landscapes;” and (d) “Creative and Challenging Curriculum.” Finally, throughout the dissertation I have interspersed my own personal secret stories revealing my thoughts and growth as a narrative researcher “in the midst” of stories.

This narrative inquiry provides a contextualized understanding of urban teacher experiences to complement the extensive quantitative literature available regarding the underrepresentation of diverse students in gifted education programs (Ford, 2011; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). It highlights the opportunities and challenges of four gifted education professionals who work to provide academic opportunities to those talented students who might be overlooked or misunderstood in other settings. The stories and strategies described in this dissertation offer perspective for educators seeking to understand how to develop curriculum for culturally diverse gifted students. They describe specific and practical ways that skilled gifted professionals have been able to make a difference for students who are often viewed from a deficit perspective, offering counter-narratives that celebrate their strengths (Milner, 2008; Perry, Hilliard, & Steele, 2003). In the future, I hope that this study will spark discussion and further change to curricular practices for diverse students in gifted classrooms locally and across the nation.

EPILOGUE

After this narrative research formally ended, students and co-researchers carried on with teaching, learning, and advocacy for change. As I described in Chapter 2, the temporary nature of my conversations and visits to their classrooms can be understood through the metaphor of a parade (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 16; Geertz, 1995). The parade of urban gifted education had begun before I arrived and continued to move ahead after my study ended. My viewpoint as a temporary marcher allowed me to catch a glimpse of these important experiences. However, a few additional recent events must be recounted here because of their significance and relevance to the research.

After the weeks I spent with Ms. Keats and Ms. Silver in September and October, many of the gifted teachers in the Armstrong district began researching gifted education and requesting to move to an even more equitable identification process. They decided to advocate for the research-based strategies promoted by the State B recommendations, including universal screening, local norms, and multiple criteria. They related to me how, to their surprise, a new superintendent and several school board members have been supportive of these changes. These educational leaders have also promised to provide funding to support growth of the program and more equitable processes and challenging curriculum for diverse gifted students.

Ms. Gladhart, Ms. Willow, and others across State B have been focused on a different kind of advocacy. They have persuaded state lawmakers to write and consider multiple bills finally mandating gifted education statewide. This would offer some measure of consistency for the diverse Benton students who are identified gifted but may move out of the district. On April 10, 2019, the State House of Representatives passed House Bill 112 (2019) with a vote

of 138 to five. This bill requires all districts with at least 350 students to establish and maintain programs for gifted learners. At the time of this writing, gifted education professionals are looking forward to similar bi-partisan support in the state senate.

In this dissertation research, my goal was to focus on the individual lived experiences of teachers. I wanted to understand the phenomenon of underrepresentation from their perspective and provide a glimpse into the diverse gifted classroom for others who may not fully appreciate the challenges and complexities of this work. Rather than imposing solutions and best practices, this work empowered teachers by attending to their own ideas and appreciating the explanations and answers they had already found. The co-researchers in both states took this encouragement and continued advocating for their diverse gifted students after the research concluded. Their ongoing success is a testament to the power of teachers to create real change in both curriculum and education policy by focusing on equity and the needs of students.

APPENDIX A

Consent for Participation in a Research Study

Narrative Exploration of Teacher Experiences in Culturally Responsive Gifted Education

Student Investigator: Jessica LaFollette Primary Investigator: Candace Schlein

Request to Participate

You are being asked to take part in a research study about the experiences of gifted teachers in the area. The purpose of this study is to explore the stories of gifted education professionals who work in urban classrooms with culturally diverse students in either State A or State B. The goal of this research is to understand how social justice and equity factors may be accounted for in statewide policy or in the enacted curriculum for gifted learners. The findings of the study will be shared through a research dissertation submitted to a doctoral committee at The University of Missouri – Kansas City.

The researcher in charge of this study is Mrs. Jessica LaFollette, a doctoral candidate in education at The University of Missouri – Kansas City. While the study will be conducted by her, other qualified supervising professors and faculty at the university who work with her may act for her for supervisory purposes or data analysis auditing.

The study team is asking you to take part in this research study because you are a teacher of gifted students. Research studies only include people who choose to take part. This document is called a consent form. Please read this consent form carefully and take your time making your decision. The researcher or study staff will go over this consent form with you. Ask her to explain anything that you do not understand. Think about it and talk it over with your family and friends before you decide if you want to take part in this research study. This consent form explains what to expect: the risks, discomforts, and benefits, if any, if you consent to be in the study.

Background

This is a study about the unique experiences of urban gifted education professionals. It uses narrative inquiry methods to collect stories of experience and analyze their meanings in context. This will be done through oral interviews and classroom observation. Much research has been conducted over the past decade about identification of diverse students and their participation in gifted programs (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Much less research has been done about the teachers of these students.

You are being asked to participate because you have unique inside knowledge about how gifted education programs provide services to advanced students from all different cultural backgrounds. This is a study about the experiences of gifted teachers and you are the most knowledgeable source of this information. The stories you share will help other teachers, policy-makers, and researchers to better understand the complex work you do. You will be

one of about 4-8 subjects in the study. At least two subjects will be teachers in State A and at least two subjects will be teachers in State B.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the complex experiences of gifted education professionals who work with diverse populations of gifted students. Teachers who share stories about their experiences construct personal meaning for their work. By better understanding the stories of these individual professionals, other educators may reflect on their practices and improve services for future classrooms of culturally diverse gifted learners.

There are two central questions guiding this research and the first central question is supported by two sub-questions.

- 1) What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with culturally diverse urban gifted students?
 - 1a) What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with culturally responsive pedagogy in gifted education programs?
 - 1b) What are gifted education professionals' experiences with individualizing curriculum for culturally diverse students?
- 2) What are the experiences of gifted education professionals with state-level policy directives pertaining to culturally diverse gifted students?

Procedures

This study includes 5 sessions of interaction between you and the researcher over the course of 3-6 weeks. The scheduling of each session will depend on the mutual availability of the researcher and participant. Interviews and observations may be scheduled on the same date.

1st session: Biographical introductory interview lasting approximately one hour. The purpose of this interview is to allow you to describe your earliest experiences in education, reasons for choosing to work as a teacher and to work with gifted students. The interview will be conducted as a dialogue and you will be encouraged to ask questions of the researcher as they arise. A complete list of planned questions will be provided to you at least three days prior to the scheduled interview. All interviews will take place in the school setting in a private location selected by you outside of class time. During this first session, you will also be asked to choose a pseudonym that will represent you in the research study. The interview audio will be digitally recorded and a complete transcription provided to you for updating and corrections if needed. The digital audio file will be deleted after the transcription has been confirmed.

2nd session: Classroom observation 1 lasting one full class period. The purpose of this observation is to gather descriptive data about the classroom setting and typical classroom environment and procedures. The researcher may observe quietly during

the class session, or (if you request) provide assistance with minor classroom tasks as needed.

3rd session: Curriculum interview lasting approximately one hour. The purpose of this interview is to allow you to describe your typical experiences with curriculum for diverse gifted students. The interview will be conducted as a dialogue and you will be encouraged to ask questions of the researcher as they arise. A complete list of planned questions will be provided to you at least three days prior to the scheduled interview. All interviews will take place in the school setting in a private location selected by you outside of class time. The interview audio will be digitally recorded and a complete transcription provided to you for updating and corrections if needed. The digital audio file will be deleted after the transcription has been confirmed.

4th session: Classroom observation 2 lasting one full class period. The purpose of this observation is to confirm descriptive data about the classroom setting and typical classroom environment and procedures. It will take place *in the same setting and with the same student group as observation 1*. The researcher may observe quietly during the class session, or (if you request) provide assistance with minor classroom tasks as needed.

5th session: Final interview lasting approximately one hour. Prior to this interview, you will be provided a preliminary analysis of the previous interviews and observations. During this final interview, you will be asked to confirm or correct the narrative findings. You may also be asked follow-up questions related to the observations or to relevant gifted education policies in your state. The interview will be conducted as a dialogue and you will be encouraged to ask questions of the researcher as they arise. A complete list of planned questions will be provided to you at least three days prior to the scheduled interview. All interviews will take place in the school setting in a private location selected by you outside of class time. The interview audio will be digitally recorded and a complete transcription provided to you for updating and corrections if needed. The digital audio file will be deleted after the transcription has been confirmed.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be involved in this study for approximately 5 hours over a period of no less than 3 weeks and no more than 6 weeks. The sessions will be scheduled at your convenience.

When you are done taking part in this study, you will still have access to the interview transcriptions and preliminary analysis that have been provided to you. You will also be provided with an electronic copy of the final dissertation project if you request one.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate in certain activities or answer certain questions. You may withdraw from the study at any time by notifying the researcher in writing.

Risks and Inconveniences

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks of taking part in this research are not expected to be more than the risks in your daily life. You will be asked questions about your own experiences as a teacher of diverse gifted students. You are the most knowledgeable source of this information. You may feel uncomfortable talking about some parts of your educational history or teaching experiences. You are not required to share any information that you consider private or that you would be uncomfortable sharing with a colleague. You may feel uneasy about having an observer in your classroom. You will be encouraged to select the dates and times of these observations when you will feel most at ease and when the observations will cause minimal interruption to your daily classroom routine.

Benefits

As a participant in this study, you will have the opportunity to reflect on your own experiences as a teacher of diverse gifted students. You may benefit from a deeper understanding of your own experiences with curriculum and state policies related to gifted education.

On a broader level, other teachers and policy-makers may benefit in the future from the information you provide. Educating gifted students can be a difficult and complex endeavor, and many people are interested in understanding how it is done. Your personal experiences will provide stories that give deeper meaning to the statistics currently available regarding diverse students participating in gifted programs.

Fees and Expenses

There are no monetary costs or fees associated with participation in this study.

Compensation

There is no payment for taking part in this study.

Alternatives to Study Participation

The alternative is not to take part in the study.

Confidentiality

While we will do our best to keep the information you share with us confidential, it cannot be absolutely guaranteed. Individuals from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies), Research Protections Program, and Federal regulatory agencies may look at records related to this study to make sure we are doing proper, safe research and protecting human subjects. The results of this research may be published or presented to others. You will not be named in any reports of the results.

As previously described, you will be asked to select a pseudonym during the first interview session. This name only will be used on all written transcriptions, notes, and in the final dissertation write-up. Fictitious names for schools and districts will also be substituted to protect your confidentiality. Only state names will be retained in the final written dissertation because the policies in each state are publicly available information.

Electronic versions of study data such as interview transcriptions, observation notes, and analyses will be stored on a password-protected computer. This data will not be retained for future research. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you may request that your data will not be kept or used. Personally identifiable information will not be shared with any third party unless in the case of mandatory reporting of child abuse.

Contacts for Questions about the Study

You should contact the Office of UMKC's Institutional Review Board at 816-235-5927 if you have any questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research subject. You may call the researcher, Jessica LaFollette at 913-220-3650 if you have any questions about this study. You may also call her if any problems come up.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this research study is voluntary. If you choose to be in the study, you are free to stop participating at any time and for any reason. If you choose not to be in the study or decide to stop participating, your decision will not affect any care or benefits you are entitled to. The researchers may stop the study or take you out of the study at any time if they decide that it is in your best interest to do so. They may do this for medical or administrative reasons or if you no longer meet the study criteria. You will be told of any important findings developed during the course of this research.

You have read this Consent Form or it has been read to you. You have been told why this research is being done and what will happen if you take part in the study, including the risks and benefits. You have had the chance to ask questions, and you may ask questions at any time in the future by calling Mrs. Jessica LaFollette at 913-220-3650 or at lafollettej@umkc.edu. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

APPENDIX B

Interview 1: Biographical Experiences in Education

Introduction: I would like to ask some general questions about your experiences in education, from your first memories of school to the time you came to work here in this school. There are no right or wrong answers. Your unique experiences and your stories will help others better understand the complex work you do. As a co-researcher in this study, I would like to offer to share my own experiences with you. At any time during our interviews, please feel free to ask me questions about my own experiences.

1. What are some of your earliest memories of school?

Possible follow-up questions:

- a. Describe a particular teacher or adult who influenced you during this time.
- b. Do you have any other meaningful memories of school or teachers that you would like to share?

2. Describe how you decided to become a teacher.

Possible follow-up questions:

- a. Was there a particular subject or age level you were most excited about teaching?
- b. Were there any other meaningful influences in your life that affected this career decision?
- c. What were some memorable good or bad experiences from your first year(s) as a teacher?

3. How did you first become aware of gifted education?

Possible follow-up questions:

- a. How did you decide to become a teacher of gifted students?
 - b. How did you spend your first year(s) as a teacher of gifted students?
 - c. What are some of your most meaningful experiences during this early time?
4. Tell me about your first experiences in a diverse urban school such as this one.

Potential follow-up question:

- a. Is there anything personally meaningful to you about working here in this district/school?
 - b. What are some positive experiences you have had with students here whose cultural background differs from your own?
 - c. What are some negative experiences you have had with students?
5. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your education background or about how you came to work in this current position?

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences and stories. I will send you a copy of the transcription of this interview so that you can review your responses and make any additions or changes necessary. I am really looking forward to our next visit.

APPENDIX C

Interview 2: Teaching Experiences and Curriculum

Introduction: Today I would like to ask some questions about your experiences with activities and curriculum for your gifted students. There are no right or wrong answers. Your unique experiences and your stories will help others better understand the complex work you do. As in the first interview, I would like to offer to share my own experiences with you. At any time, please feel free to ask me questions about my own experiences.

1. What are your experiences during a typical day of working with gifted students?
 - a. Tell me about one experience with students that stands out as meaningful to you.
2. Suppose I were new to this district and I asked what strategies would be most successful with the gifted students here. What would you tell me works well for your students?
 - a. What is one successful teaching strategy? How it has helped your students?
3. Some teachers in gifted education try to individualize or differentiate curriculum to meet the needs of their students. In what ways, if any, do you individualize or differentiate curriculum for your gifted students?
 - a. Tell me about one specific experience you had individualizing curriculum for a student.
4. Some teachers in urban settings try to adjust their teaching style or curriculum when working with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. What are your thoughts about using culturally responsive teaching methods in gifted education?
 - a. What are your experiences with culturally responsive teaching?

5. State gifted education policies and requirements sometimes affect the types of students who qualify to participate in gifted programs. They might also affect lessons or activities with these students.
 - a. What are your experiences with state policy in State A/State B and how do these policies relate to your students or your curriculum?
6. Are there any other stories that you would like to share about your experiences working with diverse urban gifted students?

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences and stories. I will send you a copy of the transcript of this interview so that you can review your responses and make any additions or changes necessary. I am really looking forward to our next visit.

APPENDIX D

Interview 3: Member-Check and Follow-Up

Introduction: Today in our final interview, I would like to ask you about the themes and stories I have written about based on our previous interviews and observations. The goal of today's interview is to ensure that I have portrayed your experiences accurately and to allow you as a co-researcher to make corrections or add any further ideas or interpretations that I may have missed.

1. Are there any additions or corrections you would like to make regarding the transcriptions of the first interview including your biographical experiences and the stories of how you became a teacher of gifted students?
2. Are there any additions or corrections you would like to make regarding the transcription of our second interview about your curriculum experiences and strategies that have worked with your diverse gifted students?
3. Are there any additions or corrections you would like to make regarding the stories of experiences I observed in your classroom?
4. Observation follow-up questions:
 - A. In my observation field texts, I have described my impressions of the neighborhood, school and classroom environment. Is there anything else I should know about this particular location that would help me better understand your experiences here?
 - B. In my observation field texts, I have described my thoughts about the students in this particular class and how they interact with you and each

other. Is there anything else about this particular class that I missed or that would help me better understand your experiences with this group?

5. Policy follow-up questions:
 - A. In the last interview, we discussed current state policies regarding gifted students and how these affect your program here. Based on your experiences with diverse gifted students, do you have any suggestions for policies that could improve the services you provide to your gifted students in the future?
 - B. Do you have any other ideas about policies that could improve curricular experiences for all gifted students in State A/State B?
 - C. Do you have any other ideas about policies that could improve curricular experiences for all teachers of gifted students in State A/State B?
6. Is there anything else you would like to know from me about the research process?

Thank you again for sharing your experiences and stories.

APPENDIX E

Calendar of Interviews and Observations Fall 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
16-Sep	17-Sep	18-Sep	19-Sep	20-Sep	9/21/2018 LK Int 1	22-Sep	STATE A
23-Sep	24-Sep	9/25/2018 LK Obs 1 LK Int 2	9/26/2018 ES Int 1	27-Sep	28-Sep	29-Sep	
		ES Obs 1					
30-Sep	1-Oct	10/2/2018 ES Obs 2	10/3/2018 ES Int 2	4-Oct	5-Oct	6-Oct	
7-Oct	8-Oct	10/9/2018 LK Obs 2	10-Oct	11-Oct	10/12/2018 LK Int 3	13-Oct	
14-Oct	15-Oct	16-Oct	10/17/2018 ES Int 3	18-Oct	19-Oct	20-Oct	
21-Oct	22-Oct	23-Oct	24-Oct	25-Oct	26-Oct	27-Oct	
28-Oct	29-Oct	30-Oct	31-Oct	1-Nov	2-Nov	3-Nov	
4-Nov	5-Nov	6-Nov	7-Nov	8-Nov	9-Nov	10-Nov	
11-Nov	11/12/2018 DG Obs 1	11/13/2018 DG Int 1	14-Nov	15-Nov	16-Nov	17-Nov	STATE B
		DW Int 1					
18-Nov	19-Nov	11/20/2018 DG Int 2	21-Nov	22-Nov	23-Nov	24-Nov	
		DW Int 2					
25-Nov	11/26/2018 <i>SNOW</i>	11/27/2018 <i>SNOW</i>	11/28/2018 <i>SNOW</i>	11/29/2018 <i>SNOW</i>	30-Nov	1-Dec	
2-Dec	12/3/2018 DG Obs 2	4-Dec	12/5/2018 DW Obs 1	12/6/2018 DG Int 3	7-Dec	8-Dec	
9-Dec	10-Dec	11-Dec	12/12/2018 DW Obs 2	13-Dec	12/14/2018 DW Int 3	15-Dec	

APPENDIX F

Armstrong Gifted Matrix

Student: _____ Grade: _____ School: _____ Date: ____/____/____

ABILITY WISC IV: VCI PRI, GAL, or FS Stanford-Binet WJ Cognitive Wechsler NV KABC II	4 97 %ile & above 128 & above	3 96% – 94%ile 127-123	2 93% - 91%ile 122-120	1 90% – 88%ile 119-118	
ACHIEVEMENT W-J III WIAT III KTEA II Composite Score Used: _____	4 95 %ile & above	3 94% – 92%ile	2 91% - 89%ile	1 88% – 86%ile	
CREATIVITY Torrance Test Of Creative Thinking-F or V	4 90 and above	3 89 - 80	2 79 - 70	1 69 - 60	

Comments: _____	POINTS: _____ 9 total points recommended for eligibility OR 8 points on the sum of Ability and Achievement
-----------------	--

APPENDIX G

Armstrong Elementary Gifted Problem Solving Rubric

Characteristics	Beginning	Developing	Applying	Innovating
	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20
Question identified/ Clarified	No math information/ numbers identified. Prompt is copied. No math information is used to solve the problem.	Math information/ numbers identified. Labels may be missing. Some of the math information is used to solve the problem.	Math information/ numbers identified. Appropriate labels identified. Most of the math information is used to solve the problem.	Information/data identified. Appropriate labels identified. Math information used to solve the problem.
Selects appropriate problem solving strategy	There is not attempt to select an appropriate problem solving strategy.	Student makes an attempt to select a strategy, although it may not be successful.	Student is able to select an appropriate strategy to solve a problem.	Student is able to select more than one effective and appropriate problem solving activity.
Use of Strategy or Process	There is an attempt to solve the problem. No strategy is applied that could lead to an answer. Uses no content knowledge.	Used an appropriate strategy. Reasonable strategy selected, minimally developed. Uses content knowledge with conceptual errors.	Used an appropriate strategy. Reasonable strategy selected, moderately developed. Content knowledge used appropriately, with minor computation errors.	Used an appropriate strategy. Reasonable strategy selected and developed. Content knowledge is used correctly.
Explanation of strategy for solving the problem.	Attempted an explanation, but	Could not explain the strategy used.	Adequately explained the strategy but did	Adequately explained the answer.

	incorrect or unclear.	Explanations are somewhat clear. Lacks details.	not calculate the correct answer. Explanation contained adequate details. Adequate clarity.	Exemplary explanation. Detailed and clear, examples may have been provided.
Research & Gather Information	Student attempt to collect only minimal information that relates to the topic.	Collects some information related to the topic.	Does a good investigation into the problem collecting sufficient information, mostly related to the topic.	Thoroughly investigates the problem, collecting a great deal of information, which relates to the topic.
Assessing self and others	Student is not able to evaluate self and/or others.	Student attempts to evaluate self and/or others.	Student is able to effectively evaluate self and/or group members.	Student is able to effectively evaluate self and/or group members and give constructive feedback.
Designing and conducting experiments	Student is not able to identify a hypothesis or conduct an experiment that relates to the topic.	Student is able to state a basic hypothesis. Student begins to design and conduct an experiment that involves the stated hypothesis.	Student is able to state a hypothesis. Student designs and conducts an experiment that involves the stated hypothesis.	A student is able to state a well-defined hypothesis. Student designs and conducts an effective experiment that either proves or disproves the stated hypothesis.
Communication	Uses little or no mathematical language, graphs, diagrams, and/or charts but contains conceptual errors. Presents the problem in an	Uses mathematical language, graphs, diagrams, and/or charts appropriately, but contains conceptual errors.	Uses mathematical language, graphs, diagrams, and/or charts appropriately, but may contain transcription or computation errors.	Uses mathematical language, graphs, diagrams, and/or charts appropriately. Solution is presented in a clear and orderly manner so the reader can follow the flow of the

	unclear manner, steps are missing or out of sequence. Scorer cannot determine a sequence of steps.	Solution is presented in an unclear manner. Scorer has difficulty following the sequence of steps.	Solution is presented in a manner so the scorer can follow most of the steps in the solution and final answer.	solution and final answer.
Application	The student is not able to use the strategy in other situations.	The student is able to use the strategy in 1 unfamiliar situation	The student is able to use the strategy in 2 situations	The student is able to use the identified strategy in a variety of situations
Selecting Information	The student is not able to select useful data.	The student is able to select some useful data, but includes data that is not useful.	The student is able to select data that is useful with some data that is not useful.	The student is able to identify useful data that is related to the topic.
Justifying/Defending Selected Position	The student may try to solve a problem but prefers directions on how to do structure their argument.	The student may solve a really confusing problem, but is unable to articulate their own thinking.	The student will solve a confusing problem, and can explain their thinking process and selected method for proceeding.	The student can articulate the selected strategy that created their solution and can evaluate their selection.
Asking Higher Order Questions	The student may see parts of a concept, but has difficulty articulating ideas or steps to clarify a new concept or process.	The student develops ideas by formulating basic questions to develop concepts and is begin to see how the ideas fit into the whole.	The student can link ideas, steps or concepts together in a new way, but may not see all of the relationships.	The student can link ideas, steps, or concepts together in new and complicated ways to explain complex relationships that are formed.

<p>Collaboration</p>	<p>As a group member, student played a passive role in the completion of the project.</p> <p>Student was not able to work cooperatively on shared tasks.</p> <p>Student was often off-task and did not complete assignments or duties.</p>	<p>As a group member, student occasionally played a passive role in the completion of the project.</p> <p>Student was able to work cooperatively on shared tasks.</p> <p>Student was off-task part of the time.</p>	<p>As a group member, student worked cohesively and generated new ideas.</p> <p>Student was organized and worked diligently.</p> <p>Student was able to manage time well.</p>	<p>As a group member, student was organized and divided the work evenly.</p> <p>Student checked with others to understand project progression.</p> <p>Student demonstrated willingness to complete assignments outside of class group time.</p>
-----------------------------	--	---	---	---

REFERENCES

- Adams, C., & Chandler, K. (2013). *Effective program models for gifted students from underserved populations*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Allen, J. K. (2017). Exploring the role teacher perceptions play in the underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in gifted programming. *Gifted Child Today*, 40(2), 77-86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1076217517690188>
- Angrosino, M. V. (2008). Recontextualizing observation: Ethnography, pedagogy, and the prospects for a progressive political agenda. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (pp. 161-183). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Apple, M. W. (2008). Curriculum planning. In F. Connelly, M. He, & J. Phillion (Eds.) *The SAGE handbook of curriculum and instruction* (pp. 25-44). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Apple, M. W. (2013). Controlling the work of teachers. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader (4th ed.)* (pp. 199-213). New York, NY: Routledge. (Original work published in 1986)
- Ayers, W. C., & Schubert, W. H. (Eds.). (1992). *Teacher lore: Learning from our own experience*. London, England: Longman Publishing Group.
- Bakken, J. P., Rotatori, A. F., & Obiakor, F. E. (2014). *Gifted education: Current perspectives and issues* (First ed.). United Kingdom: Emerald.
- Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. (Eds.) (2004). *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Betts, G. T., & Kercher, J. K. (1999). *Autonomous learner model: Optimizing ability*. Greeley, CO: ALPS Publishing.

- Bloom, B. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives. Handbook 1: Cognitive domain*. New York, NY: John Wiley.
- Bobbitt, F. (2013). Scientific method in curriculum-making. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader (4th ed.)* (pp. 11-18). New York, NY: Routledge. (Original work published in 1918)
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- Bridgeland, J. M., Diulio Jr, J. J., & Morison, K. B. (2006). *The silent epidemic: Perspectives of high school dropouts*. Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises.
- Briggs, C. J., Reis, S. M., & Sullivan, E. E. (2008). A national view of promising programs and practices for culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse gifted and talented students. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 52(2), 131-145.
- Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry*, 18(1), 1-21.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/448619>
- Card, D., & Giuliano, L. (2015). *Can universal screening increase the representation of low income and minority students in gifted education?* (No. w21519). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Carger, C. L. (1996). *Of borders and dreams: A Mexican-American experience of urban education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Chan, E. (2013). Teacher experiences of culture in the curriculum. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader (4th ed.)* (pp. 348-361). New York, NY: Routledge. (Original work published in 2006)

- Chan, E., & Schlein, C. (2017). Narrative and critical explorations of voice in intercultural experiences. In C. Schlein & B. Garii (Eds.), *A reader of narrative and critical lenses on intercultural teaching and learning* (pp. 165-182). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Chase, S. (2008). Narrative inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 421-434). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2007). (Ed.) *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1992). Teacher as curriculum maker. In P.W. Jackson (Ed.) *Handbook of research on curriculum: A project of the American educational research association*. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1996). Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes: Teacher stories—stories of teachers—school stories—stories of schools. *Educational Researcher*, 25(3), 24-30.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Clandinin, D. J., Huber, J., Huber, M., Murphy, M. S., Orr, A. M., Pearce, M., & Steeves, P. (2006). *Composing diverse identities: Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Coil, C. (2007). *Successful teaching in the differentiated classroom*. Marion, IL: Pieces of Learning.
- Coleman, L. J. (2014). The invisible world of professional practical knowledge of a teacher of the gifted. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 37(1), 18-29.

- Coleman, L. J., Guo, A., & Dabbs, C. S. (2007). The state of qualitative research in gifted education as published in American journals: An analysis and critique. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 51*(1), 51-63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0016986206296656>
- Coles, R. (1989). *The call of stories: Teaching and the moral imagination*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Conle, C. (1996). Resonance in preservice teacher inquiry. *American Educational Research Journal, 33*, 297-325.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 19*(5), 2-14. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1176100>
- Connelly, F. M., Clandinin, D. J., & He, M. F. (1997). Teachers' personal practical knowledge on the professional knowledge landscape. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 13*(7), 665-674.
- Constantine, M. G., & Ladany, N. (2000). Self-report multicultural counseling competence scales: Their relation to social desirability attitudes and multicultural case conceptualization ability. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 47*(2), 155.
- Corwin, M. (2001). *And still we rise: The trials and triumphs of twelve gifted inner-city students*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Crites, S. (1979). The aesthetics of self-deception. *Soundings, 62*, 107-129.

- Czarniawska, B. (1997). *Narrating the organization: Dramas of institutional identity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Debnam, K. J., Pas, E. T., Bottiani, J., Cash, A. H., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2015). An examination of the association between observed and self-reported culturally proficient teaching practices. *Psychology in the Schools, 52*(6), 533-548.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21845>
- Delpit, L. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Delpit, L. D. (2012). *"Multiplication is for white people": Raising expectations for other people's children*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- deMarrais, K. (2004). Qualitative interview studies: Learning through experience. In K. deMarrais & S. D. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences* (pp. 51-68). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (Vol. 3). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dewey, J. (1998). *Experience and education: The 60th anniversary edition*. West Lafayette, IN: Kappa Delta Pi. (Original work published 1938)
- Dewey, J. (2013). My pedagogic creed. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader, fourth edition* (pp. 33-40). New York, NY: Routledge. (Original work published in 1897)

- Ecker-Lyster, M., & Niileksela, C. (2017). Enhancing gifted education for underrepresented students: Promising recruitment and programming strategies. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 40(1), 79-95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0162353216686216>
- Elbaz, F. (1981). The teacher's "practical knowledge": Report of a case study. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 11(1), 43-71.
- Elbaz-Luwisch, F. (2007). Studying teachers' lives and experience: Narrative inquiry into K-12 teaching. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.). *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 357-382). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Eisner, E. W. (1991). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Eisner, E. W. (2013). Education objectives – Help or hindrance. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader (4th ed.)* (pp. 109-116). New York, NY: Routledge. (Original work published in 1967)
- Ellingson, L. L. (2009). *Engaging crystallization in qualitative research: An introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-95 § 114 Stat. 1177 (2015-2016).
- Feldhusen, J. F. (1989). Synthesis of research on gifted youth. *Educational Leadership*, 46(6), 6-11.
- Ford, D. Y. (1994). *The recruitment and retention of African-American students in gifted education programs: Implications and recommendations*. Storrs, CT: National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.

- Ford, D. Y. (1998). The underrepresentation of minority students in gifted education: Problems and promises in recruitment and retention. *The Journal of Special Education, 32*(1), 4-14.
- Ford, D. Y. (2004). *Intelligence testing and cultural diversity: Concerns, cautions, and considerations*. Storrs, CT: National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.
- Ford, D. Y. (2010). Underrepresentation of culturally different students in gifted education: Reflections about current problems and recommendations for the future. *Gifted Child Today, 33*(3), 31–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107621751003300308>
- Ford, D. Y. (2011). *Multicultural gifted education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Ford, D. Y. (2013). *Recruiting and retaining culturally different students in gifted education*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Ford, D. Y. (2014). Multicultural issues: Gifted education discrimination in "McFadden v. Board of Education for Illinois School District U-46": A clarion call to school districts, state departments of education, and advocacy organizations. *Gifted Child Today, 37*(3), 188-193.
- Ford, D. Y. (2015). Culturally responsive gifted classrooms for culturally different students: A focus on invitational learning. *Gifted Child Today, 38*(1), 67-69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1076217514556697>
- Ford, D. Y., & Grantham, T. (2003). Providing access for culturally diverse gifted students: From deficit to dynamic thinking. *Theory into Practice, 42*, 217-225.
- Ford, D. Y., Grantham, T. C., & Harris, J. J. (1996). Multicultural gifted education: A wakeup call to the profession. *Roeper Review, 19*(2), 72-78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02783199609553794>

- Ford, D. Y., Grantham, T. C., & Whiting, G. W. (2008). Culturally and linguistically diverse students in gifted education: Recruitment and retention issues. *Exceptional Children, 74*(3), 289-306.
- Ford, D. Y., & Harris, J. J. (2000). A framework for infusing multicultural curriculum into gifted education. *Roeper Review, 23*(1), 4-10.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/027831900009554054>
- Ford, D. Y., Harris III, J. J., Tyson, C. A., & Trotman, M. F. (2001). Beyond deficit thinking: Providing access for gifted African American students. *Roeper Review, 24*(2), 52-58.
- Ford, D. Y., Howard, T. C., Harris III, J. J., & Tyson, C. A. (2000). Creating culturally responsive classrooms for gifted African American students. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 23*(4), 397-427.
- Ford, D. Y., & Webb, K. S. (1994). Desegregation of gifted educational programs: The impact of Brown on underachieving children of color. *The Journal of Negro Education, 63*(3), 358-375.
- Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the "burden of 'acting white'". *The Urban Review, 18*(3), 176-206.
- Frasier, M. M. (1994). *A manual for implementing the Frasier talent assessment profile (F-TAP): A multiple criteria model for the identification and education of gifted students*. Athens, GA: Georgia Southern Press.
- Frasier, M. M. (1997). Multiple criteria: The mandate and the challenge. *Roeper Review, 20*(2), A-4.

- Frasier, M. M., Garcia, J. H., & Passow, A. H. (1995). *A review of assessment issues in gifted education and their implications for identifying gifted minority students*. Storrs, CT: National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.
- Freeman, K. (1999). No services needed? The case for mentoring high-achieving African American students. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 74(2), 15–26.
- Freire, P. (2013). Pedagogy of the oppressed. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader, fourth edition* (pp. 157-165). New York, NY: Routledge. (Original work published in 1970)
- Gallagher, J. J. (1964). *Teaching the gifted child*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Geertz, C. (1995). *After the fact*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gotham, K. F. (2014). *Race, real estate, and uneven development: The Kansas City experience, 1900-2000*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Grantham, T. C. (2004). Rocky Jones: Case study of a high-achieving black male's motivation to participate in gifted classes. *Roeper Review*, 26(4), 208-215.
- Grbich, C. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Greene, M. (1988). *The dialectic of freedom*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Griner, A. C., & Stewart, M. L. (2013). Addressing the achievement gap and disproportionality through the use of culturally responsive teaching practices. *Urban Education*, 48(4), 585-621. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085912456847>

- Hall, R., & Moore, D. (2008). *Same kind of different as me: A modern-day slave, an international art dealer, and the unlikely woman who bound them together*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Hansen, D. T., Anderson, R. F., Frank, J., & Nieuwejaar, K. (2008). Reenvisioning the progressive tradition in curriculum. In F. Connelly, M. He, & J. Phillion (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of curriculum and instruction* (pp. 440-459). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Harris, J. J., & Ford, D. Y. (1999). *Multicultural gifted education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Harris, B., Plucker, J. A., Rapp, K. E., & Martínez, R. S. (2009). Identifying gifted and talented English language learners: A case study. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 32(3), 368-393.
- Hartman, W. (1999). Education funding disparities: What do the dollars buy? *Journal of Education Finance*, 24(3). Retrieved from <http://proxy.library.umkc.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.40704073&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Hattie, J. (2003). *Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence?* Camberwell, Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Hayes, W. (2006). *The progressive education movement: Is it still a factor in today's schools?* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Hébert, T. P., & Reis, S. M. (1999). Culturally diverse high-achieving students in an urban high school. *Urban education*, 34(4), 428-457.

- Howard, G. R. (2016). *We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools*. (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- House Bill 112, 100th General Assembly of State B (2019).
- Irvine, J., & Fraser, J. (1998, May 13). "Warm demanders": Do national certification standards leave room for the culturally responsive pedagogy of African American teachers? *Education Week*, 17(35), 56.
- Isaacson, K. L., & Fisher, T. J. (2007). *Intelligent life in the classroom: Smart kids and their teachers*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
- Jackson, P. W. (1968). *Life in classrooms*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Johnsen, S. K. (2011). *Identifying gifted students: A practical guide*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Jones, J. K., & Hebert, T. P. (2012). Engaging diverse gifted learners in U.S. history classrooms. *Gifted Child Today*, 35(4), 254.
- Jordan, K. R., Bain, S. K., McCallum, R. S., & Mee Bell, S. (2012). Comparing gifted and nongifted African American and Euro-American students on cognitive and academic variables using local norms. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 35(3), 241-258.
- Kettler, T., Russell, J., & Puryear, J. S. (2015). Inequitable access to gifted education: Variance in funding and staffing based on locale and contextual school variables. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 38(2), 99-117.
<https://doi.org/10.0162353215578277>
- Kim, J. H. (2016). *Understanding narrative inquiry: The crafting and analysis of stories as research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

- King, K. A., Kozleski, E. B., & Lansdowne, K. (2009). Where are all the students of color in gifted education?. *Principal*, 88(5), 16-20.
- Kliebard, H. M. (1995). *The struggle for the American curriculum, 1893-1958* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kozol, J. (2012). *Fire in the ashes: Twenty-five years among the poorest children in America*. New York, NY: Crown.
- Kulik, J. A., & Kulik, C. L. C. (1992). Meta-analytic findings on grouping programs. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 36(2), 73-77.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994; 2009). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teaching for African-American students*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: Aka the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 74-84.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Brown, K. (2008). Curriculum and cultural diversity. In F. Connelly, M. He, & J. Phillion (Eds.) *The SAGE handbook of curriculum and instruction* (pp. 153-175). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lamb, K. N., Boedeker, P., & Kettler, T. (2019). Inequities of enrollment in gifted education: A statewide application of the 20% equity allowance formula. *Gifted Child Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0016986219830768>.
- Lampert, M. (1985). How do teachers manage to teach? Perspectives on problems in practice. *Harvard Educational Review*, 55(2), 178-195.
- Langellier, K. M. (2003). Personal narrative, performance, performativity: Two or three things I know for sure. In Y. S. Lincoln & N. K. Denzin, (Eds.). *Turning points in*

- qualitative research: Tying knots in a handkerchief* (pp. 441-468). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Lefler, D., Woodall, H., Bergen, K., & Tobais, S. (2018, June 25). State A school funding still inadequate court says. *Kansas City Star*, p. 1. Retrieved from <http://www.kansascity.com>
- Lieberman, A., & Friedrich, L. (2007). Teachers, writers, leaders. *Educational leadership*, 65(1), 42.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2003). Ethics: The failure of positivist science. In Y. S. Lincoln & N. K. Denzin, (Eds.). *Turning points in qualitative research: Tying knots in a handkerchief* (pp, 219-238). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- McBee, M. T. (2006). A descriptive analysis of referral sources for gifted identification screening by race and socioeconomic status. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 17(2), 103-111.

- McBee, M. T., Shaunessy, E., & Matthews, M. S. (2012). Policy matters: An analysis of district-level efforts to increase the identification of underrepresented learners. *Journal of Advanced Academics, 23*(4), 326-344.
- McClain, M. C., & Pfeiffer, S. (2012). Identification of gifted students in the United States today: A look at state definitions, policies, and practices. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 28*(1), 59-88.
- Mertens, D. M. (2014). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Milner, H. R. (2008). Disrupting deficit notions of difference: Counter-narratives of teachers and community in urban education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(6), 1573-1598.
- Moll, L. C., & González, N. (2004). Engaging life: A funds-of-knowledge approach to multicultural education. In Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. (Eds.) *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed.). (pp. 699-715). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- National Association for Gifted Children. (2010). *Redefining giftedness for a new century: Shifting the paradigm*. Retrieved from <https://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/Position%20Statement/Redefining%20Giftedness%20for%20a%20New%20Century.pdf> August 28, 2017.
- National Association for Gifted Children. (2010a). *Pre-k-grade 12 gifted programming standards*. Retrieved from <http://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/standards/K-12%20programming%20standards.pdf> January 5, 2019.

- National Association for Gifted Children. (2015). *State of the states in gifted education: Policy and practice data*. Retrieved from <http://www.nagc.org> November 23, 2015.
- National Association for Gifted Children. (2017). *Common characteristics of gifted individuals*. Retrieved from <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/my-child-gifted/common-characteristics-gifted-individuals> August 28, 2017.
- National Association for Gifted Children. (2018). *Frequently asked questions about gifted education*. Retrieved from <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/frequently-asked-questions-about-gifted-education> January 5, 2019.
- National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. (1979). *The Belmont report: Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research*. Bethesda, MD: The Commission.
- Nguyen, H. T. (2012). Culturally & linguistically diverse students with giftedness: How teachers & parents can support their academic & social needs. *Multicultural Education, 19*(2), 10.
- Noddings, N. (2012). The caring relation in teaching. *Oxford Review of Education, 38*(6), 771-781.
- Null, J. W. (2008). Curriculum development in historical perspective. In F. Connelly, M. He, & J. Phillion (Eds.) *The SAGE handbook of curriculum and instruction* (pp. 478-490). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ogbu, J. U. (2003). *Black American students in an affluent suburb: A study of academic disengagement*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.

- Olenchak, F. R., & Renzulli, J. S. (1989). The effectiveness of the schoolwide enrichment model on selected aspects of elementary school change. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 33(1), 36-46.
- Olson, M. R., & Craig, C. J. (2005). Uncovering cover stories: Tensions and entailments in the development of teacher knowledge. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 35(2), 161-182.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-873X.2005.00323.x>
- Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (Eds.). (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Patton, M. (2015). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pedersen, K. S., & Kitano, M. K. (2006). Designing a multicultural literature unit for gifted learners. *Gifted Child Today*, 29(2), 38-49. <https://doi.org/10.4219/gct-2006-195>
- Perry, T., Hilliard, A. G., & Steele, C. (2003). *Young, gifted, and black: Promoting high achievement among African-American students*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Peters, S. J., & Engerrand, K. G. (2016). Equity and excellence: Proactive efforts in the identification of underrepresented students for gifted and talented services. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 60(3), 159-171. <https://doi.org/10.0016986216643165>.
- Phillion, J. (2002). *Narrative inquiry in a multicultural landscape: Multicultural teaching and learning*. Westport, CN: Ablex Publishing.
- Pierce, R. L., Adams, C. M., Speirs Neumeister, K. L., Cassady, J. C., Dixon, F. A., & Cross, T. L. (2006). Development of an identification procedure for a large urban school corporation: Identifying culturally diverse and academically gifted elementary students. *Roeper Review*, 29(2), 113-118.

- Pinar, W. F. (2004). *What is curriculum theory?* Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410609793>
- Powers, E. A. (2008). The use of independent study as a viable differentiation technique for gifted learners in the regular classroom. *Gifted Child Today*, 31(3), 57-65.
- Reis, S. M., McCoach, D. B., Little, C. A., Muller, L. M., & Kaniskan, R. B. (2011). The effects of differentiated instruction and enrichment pedagogy on reading achievement in five elementary schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(2), 462-501.
- Reis, S. M., & Fogarty, E. A. (2006). Savoring reading schoolwide. *Educational Leadership*, 64(2), 32-36.
- Reis, S. M., & Renzulli, J. S. (2003). Research related to the schoolwide enrichment triad model. *Gifted Education International*, 18(1), 15-39.
<https://doi.org/026142940301800104>
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Renzulli, J. S., & Reis, S. M. (1997). *The schoolwide enrichment model: A how-to guide for educational excellence*. Mansfield, CT: Creative Learning Press.
- Renzulli, J. S., & Renzulli, S. R. (2010). The schoolwide enrichment model: A focus on student strengths and interests. *Gifted Education International*, 26(2-3), 140-156.
- Rimm, S. B., & Davis, G. A. (2004). *Education of the gifted and talented* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Rogers, K. B. (2004). The academic effects of acceleration. *A nation deceived: How schools hold back America's brightest students*, 2, 47-57.

- Rossman, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. (2012). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rowland, S. (1984). *The enquiring classroom: An approach to understanding children's learning*. London, England: Falmer Press.
- Schlein, C. (2010). Resonating effects of cross-cultural teaching. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue, 12*(2), 153-175.
- Schlein, C., & Chan, E. (2012). Cross-cultural interpretation of field texts. In E. Chan, D. Keyes, & V. Ross (Eds.), *Narrative inquirers in the midst of meaning-making: Interpretive acts of teacher educators* (pp. 109-129). Bingley, UK: Emerald.
- Schubert, W. H. (2008). Curriculum inquiry. In F. Connelly, M. He, & J. Phillion (Eds.) *The SAGE handbook of curriculum and instruction* (pp. 399-419). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Scott, M. T. (2014). Using the Blooms–Banks matrix to develop multicultural differentiated lessons for gifted students. *Gifted Child Today, 37*(3), 163-168.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1076217514532275>
- Shaunessy, E. (2003). State policies regarding gifted education. *Gifted Child Today, 26*(3), 16-65.
- Shaunessy, E., McHatton, P. A., Hughes, C., Brice, A., & Ratliff, M. A. (2007). Understanding the experiences of bilingual, latino/a adolescents: Voices from gifted and general education. *Roeper Review, 29*(3), 174-182.
- Siegle, D., Gubbins, E. J., O'Rourke, P., Langley, S. D., Mun, R. U., Luria, S. R., . . . Plucker, J. A. (2016). Barriers to underserved students' participation in gifted

- programs and possible solutions. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 39(2), 103-131. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0162353216640930>
- Sleeter, C., & Carmona, J. F. (2017). *Un-standardizing curriculum: Multicultural teaching in the standards-based classroom*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Sotomayor, S. (2013). *My beloved world*. New York, NY: Knopf.
- State A Association for the Gifted, Talented, and Creative. (2014). *Current practices survey*. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B5oVYXMaKJ-hbXI5QmlFVjVPQ3c/view> September 1, 2017.
- State A State Department of Education. (2012). *Receiving gifted services in State A: Statutes and regulations*. Retrieved from <http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/SES/Gifted/ReceivingGiftedServicesKansas.pdf> August 28, 2017.
- State A State Department of Education. (2017). *Data Central: K-12 report generator*. Retrieved from http://datacentral.ksde.org/report_gen.aspx September 1, 2017.
- State B Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2016). Identifying and serving traditionally underrepresented gifted students: Guidance for school districts. Retrieved from <https://dese.mo.gov/quality-schools/gifted-education> January 20, 2017.
- State B Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2017a). Gifted education. Retrieved from <https://dese.mo.gov/quality-schools/gifted-education> August 28, 2017.

- State B Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2017b). Gifted education program guidelines. Retrieved from <https://dese.mo.gov/quality-schools/gifted-education> September 1, 2017.
- State B Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2017c). Advisory council on the education of gifted and talented children: Annual report 2017. Retrieved from <https://dese.mo.gov/quality-schools/gifted-education> September 1, 2017
- Steele, C. M. (2011). *Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do (issues of our time)*. New York, NY: WW Norton & Company.
- Steenbergen-Hu, S., Makel, M. C., & Olszewski-Kubilius, P. (2016). What one hundred years of research says about the effects of ability grouping and acceleration on K–12 students' academic achievement: Findings of two second-order meta-analyses. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(4), 849-899.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316675417>
- Sternberg, R. J. (1985). *Beyond IQ: A triarchic theory of human intelligence*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Sternberg, R. J., Castejón, J. L., Prieto, M. D., Hautamäki, J., & Grigorenko, E. L. (2001). Confirmatory factor analysis of the Sternberg triarchic abilities test in three international samples: An empirical test of the triarchic theory of intelligence. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 17(1), 1-28.
- Suskind, R. (2010). *A hope in the unseen: An American odyssey from the inner city to the Ivy League*. New York, NY: Broadway Books.

- Swanson, J. D. (2016). Drawing upon lessons learned: Effective curriculum and instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse gifted learners. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 60(3), 172-191. 10.1177/0016986216642016
- Thompson, L., Hobson, L. D., Smith, P. A., & Tanner, T. (2016). Using the culturally proficient continuum to evaluate the cultural relevance of gifted and talented programs. *Journal of Research Initiatives*, 2(1), 10.
- Thorp, L., & Shacklock, G. (2005). Life history and narrative approaches. In B. Somekh & C. Lewin (Eds.), *Research methods in the social sciences* (pp. 156-162). London, England: Sage Publications.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2000). Reconcilable differences: Standards-based teaching and differentiation. *Educational Leadership*, 58(1), 6-13.
- Tomlinson, C. A., Ford, D. Y., Reis, S. M., Briggs, C. J., & Strickland, C. A. (2004). *In search of the dream: Designing schools and classrooms that work for high potential students from diverse cultural backgrounds*. St. Paul, MN: National Association for Gifted Children.
- Torrance, E. P., & Personnel Press. (1966). *Torrance tests of creative thinking*. Princeton, N.J: Personnel Press.
- Tyler, R. W. (2013). Basic principles of curriculum and instruction. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.) *The curriculum studies reader, fourth edition* (pp. 59-68). New York, NY: Routledge. (Original work published in 1949).
- Uresti, R., Goertz, J., & Bernal, E. M. (2002). Maximizing achievement for potentially gifted and talented and regular minority students in a primary classroom. *Roeper Review*, 25(1), 27-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02783190209554194>

- Valenzuela, A. (2013). Subtractive schooling, caring relations, and social capital in the schooling of U.S.-Mexican youth. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.) *The curriculum studies reader, fourth edition* (pp. 289-300). New York, NY: Routledge. (Original work published in 1999)
- VanTassel-Baska, J., & Stambaugh, T. (2005). Challenges and possibilities for serving gifted learners in the regular classroom. *Theory Into Practice, 44*(3), 211-217.
- Walker, S. A., & Pearsall, L. D. (2012). Barriers to advanced placement for Latino students at the high-school level. *Roeper Review, 34*(1), 12-25.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02783193.2012.627549>
- Walker, D. F., & Soltis, J. F. (2009). *Curriculum and aims* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Ware, F. (2006). Warm demander pedagogy: Culturally responsive teaching that supports a culture of achievement for African American students. *Urban Education, 41*(4), 427-456. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085906289710>
- Warren, C. A. (2018). Empathy, teacher dispositions, and preparation for culturally responsive pedagogy. *Journal of Teacher Education, 69*(2), 169-183.
- Westbury, I. (2008). Making curricula. In F. Connelly, M. He, & J. Phillion (Eds.) *The SAGE handbook of curriculum and instruction* (pp. 45-65). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Winters, M. A. (2012). *Teachers matter: Rethinking how public schools identify, reward, and retain great educators*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Yarahmadzahi, N., & Bazleh, E. (2012). The effects of applying Betts' autonomous learner model on Iranian students. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal, 3*(3), 310-321.

Zirkel, P. A. (2005). State laws for gifted education: An overview of the legislation and regulations. *Roeper Review*, 27(4), 228-232.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02783190509554323>

VITA

Jessica Lynne LaFollette is gifted education professional from the Midwest. She graduated from Sumner Academy of Arts and Science in 1998 then went on to attend Emporia State University, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Education Degree in 2001 and a Master of Science Degree in 2003. She is licensed to teach Earth and Space science, French, Mathematics and Gifted Education. She currently teaches gifted students at Piper Middle School and Curriculum Design at The University of Missouri – Kansas City.

Mrs. LaFollette has been a doctoral student at the University of Missouri – Kansas City since 2014 and began to work there as an adjunct instructor in 2017. She has four children in grades 3 through 8. She is active in her church and the parent organization at her children's school. She is an executive board member of the State A Association for the Gifted Talented and Creative and a member of the National Association for Gifted Children and the Gifted Association of State B.

Upon completion of her degree requirements, Ms. LaFollette plans to continue her career teaching middle school gifted students and as an adjunct instructor at The University of Missouri – Kansas City. She is also interested in continuing curriculum research and advocating for the needs of diverse gifted learners.