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COLLABORATIVE CONVERSATIONS WITH PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS OF
BLACK GIFTED STUDENTS

A Doctoral Research Project

Presented to

The Faculty of Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

In partial fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Rebecca A. McKinney

June 2017

Advisor: Norma Hafenstein

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Title: Collaborative Conversations with Parents and Caregivers of Black Gifted Students

Advisor: Norma Hafenstein

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Abstract

This research study attempts to address the persistent problem of practice of inequitable identification and programming for culturally and linguistically diverse gifted learners. One of the possible root causes of this persistent problem is the lack of parent engagement from culturally and linguistically diverse parents and caregivers (Jolly & Matthews, 2012; Grantham, Frasier, Roberts & Bridges, 2005). This phenomenological study targets parent and caregiver engagement of African American or Black parents and caregivers through the collaborative development of parent education. Participants were parents or caregivers of African American or Black school age children in metro Denver who participated in four conversations. During these four conversations, the participants worked collaboratively with facilitators to design parent education relevant for other parents. This collaborative development process serves as the phenomenon for this qualitative study. Data was collected through observation, focus groups, individual interviews and product analysis. The key findings of this research study include the need for Black parent and caregivers to be supported through a conversational approach. Study participants identified talking points for parents to use when engaging other parents in conversations about giftedness.

Keywords: African American, Black, Giftedness, and Parent Education

Acknowledgements

“Who's to say
What's impossible
Well they forgot
This world keeps spinning
And with each new day
I can feel a change in everything
And as the surface breaks reflections fade
But in some ways they remain the same
And as my mind begins to spread it's wings
There's no stopping curiosity.”

-Jack Johnson

The supports of family, friends, professors, and colleagues have been invaluable in helping me to spread my wings over the course of this journey.

My husband and kids have never wavered in their belief I could attain this goal and willingly stepped in to lend an extra hand during the many hours I spent working on this project.

Encouragement, thought partnership, and collaboration from my cohort and professors has helped me to grow in ways I never imagined.

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Chapter One: Persistent Problem of Practice

Inequitable identification and programming for culturally and linguistically diverse gifted learners is a persistent problem of practice in the field of gifted education. This research study addresses this persistent problem of practice by targeting one possible root cause, the lack of understanding of gifted education by families and caregivers of culturally, linguistically diverse and low-income students (Jolly & Matthews, 2012; Grantham, Frasier, Roberts & Bridges, 2005). The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the process of collaboratively developing gifted education conversations for parents and caregivers of Black students in the Denver metro area. Expected outcomes of this study include a greater awareness of the needs of parents and caregivers of Black students, a parent led education series on gifted education targeted to the specific needs of families of Black students and a replicable method for creating relevant gifted parent and caregiver education for culturally, linguistically diverse families.

Chapter One will set the context for the persistent problem of practice in three settings; national, personal and situational. This chapter will also set the stage for the research study which will be conducted to address one possible root cause of this problem of practice. Chapter one will include the research questions used to guide the phenomenological study and will include information about the community partnership developed for this study. The terms parent(s) will be used broadly to include caregivers

defined as any adult providing support to Black students. African American and Black will be used interchangeably throughout this study.

Persistent Problem of Practice: National Context

While *Brown vs. Board of Education* took major steps toward “providing equal educational opportunities for minority students..., surprisingly... little has been done under federal or state laws to ensure the educational rights of the 6.7% of American students, regardless of race, who are identified as gifted...” (Ford & Russo, 2014, p. 214). Furthermore, the field of gifted education itself has been accused of largely serving students with means and opportunity while ignoring the needs of low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse students (Ford & Russo, 2014; Ford & King, 2014). Michael-Chadwell (2010) states, “The under-representation of historically underserved student groups continues to be a phenomenon in gifted and talented (GT) programs” (p. 99). “Black and Hispanic students are less than half as likely to be in gifted programs as White students... [furthermore, this] also includes the underrepresentation of students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds” (Callahan, 2005, p. 98). Elitism has long been a challenge in the field of gifted education (Myths about Gifted Students, n.d.). According to Ford & Russo (2014),

most of the past and current efforts to redress the status of gifted students generally and the underrepresentation of minority children specifically have been inadequate, resulting in what may be the most segregated and elitist programs in American public schools (p. 233).

Gifted and talented students from low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse families, receive inequitable programming options when compared to programming options available for their white, affluent counterparts. “Hispanic and Black students are being denied school-based opportunities to develop their gifts and talents or to reach their full potentials” (Ford & Russo, 2014, p. 233). Hébert (2002) notes, “With the understanding that gifted students are found in the culture of poverty, educators must not overlook the fact that these young people have achievement needs that must be addressed in school regardless of the impoverished communities in which they live” (p. 128). Ford & Russo (2014) address the need for “comprehensive, proactive, aggressive, and systematic efforts to recruit and retain Black and Hispanic students in gifted education...” (p. 234). Inequitable programming for low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse gifted students is a long established nationwide persistent problem of practice in the field of gifted education (Ford, 1995, 2011; Lee, Matthews, & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008; Yoon & Gentry, 2009).

Inequitable identification and programming for low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse gifted students may be tied to the lack of parent educational opportunities specifically targeted toward this population. Parents of low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students have long been disenfranchised by the American educational system (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). A system which is rampant with white privilege. White privilege is the “attempt to name a social system that works to the benefits of whites” (Pulido, 2000, p.13). “The intensified, and/or additional, barriers CLD parents face are not unlike the speed bumps, roadblocks and tollbooths,

drivers encounter on a highway or byway” (Cobb, 2012, p. 12). Many have no personal experience in the American educational system while others may have long since turned away from the school system based on their own personal experiences as students within the educational system. Often parents from CLD backgrounds see educators as authority figures whose guidance is more directive rather than collaborative (Cobb, 2012). “If success at school and in life begins at home, then all parents need knowledge about what they can do to fulfill their critical roles in the home, in academics, and in providing talent development opportunities and support” (Schader, 2008, p. 481). According to Weinfeld (2013),

As educators and parents, we must find a way of unleashing the potential and freeing the power within all of our children regardless of gender, race, cultural background, or socioeconomic level, in order to discover their interests and develop their strengths (p.169).

Based on personal experiences of the researcher, parent education opportunities often take place in a school and are lead by educators who are representative of the dominant culture. Schader (2008) states, “recent work has brought attention to ethnic group differences among parents and how their underlying beliefs and values affect children’s education achievement” (p.483).

Existing models for gifted parent education highlight attempts to engage and support parents of gifted children. A current widely used model for parent education is SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted). SENG Model Parent Groups (SMPGs) are designed to bring together up to twenty parents of gifted and talented

children to discuss such topics as motivation, discipline, stress management, and peer relationships weeks (SENG, n.d.). Conversations are co-facilitated by leaders knowledgeable about parenting and educating gifted children in a nurturing environment. SENEG also sees the participants as a valuable resource. SENEG workshops meet weekly for eight to ten weeks (SENG, n.d.). These workshops are structured around the book *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children* (Webb, Gore, Amend, & DeVries, 2007). The book is used to guide discussions on parenting issues and provides a supportive community to help navigate the trials of raising a gifted child (SENG, n.d.). Homework assignments are used to assist parents in applying strategies learned between conversations. In reviewing the list of trained facilitators within the state of Colorado, the researcher notes there seems to be a predominant number of leaders who are white and therefore are not representative of the diverse student population in Colorado (SENG, n.d.). Using a book and relying on homework may turn many low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse families away from SMPGs. Some families may not possess the educational level to access the content of the book, while others may not have the financial means to afford a book. Based on the researcher's personal experience, many school systems try to offset the costs for these books but beyond that other barriers still exist. Families where English is not the language spoken, do not have access to the book in their native language. These families may not feel comfortable sharing within this setting if the group is not of a similar cultural background, as their experiences are different from the dominant culture. Recent changes to SENEG parent groups, which require parents to pay several hundred dollars to attend a SENEG session, make this opportunity even further out

of reach for low-income and many culturally and linguistically diverse families. While SENG provides a wonderful opportunity for many families, for low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse families, in its current form, it is not the answer.

A system for parent educational opportunities specifically developed with and for parents and caregivers of low-income, culturally, and linguistically diverse gifted children is being researched with specific focus on African American parents and caregivers. The findings of this study will attempt to address one possible root cause of inequitable programming and identification of CLD and low-income gifted learners which continues to plague the field of gifted education.

Persistent Problem of Practice: Personal Context

When the researcher began the journey into the field of gifted education, the professional role of the researcher was a classroom teacher at a small private school. The school had a very diverse population, which served many first generation African, Mexican, and Asian immigrant families, many of whom spoke limited or no English. The many African languages made communication difficult with students and families. The school also served low-income families as well as families with ample resources. This interesting mix provided a wonderful opportunity to develop understanding of how different parents interacted with the school. Families from the dominant culture were very active participants, in most cases, having both the resources and time to volunteer within the classroom. Other families where English was not their native language often felt uncomfortable volunteering because they not only lacked proficiency in English but experience with the educational system. Developing rapport and making the school a

reflection of their culture, allowed these families to gain comfort and eventually become more active. It was not because they didn't care that they didn't readily volunteer but rather they needed to see the value they brought to their child's educational experience and gain familiarity with the educational system.

As the researcher began to develop gifted programming at the school, one thing was clear. The parents of the more dominant culture students did not hesitate to advocate for their children's participation in gifted programming. They asked questions, advocated for specialized programming based on their child's strengths, and had high expectations of the program. The families of the minority students did not ask questions or advocate. They trusted the system and without a teacher who was mindful of this population, their needs and abilities could have easily been overlooked. In most instances, participation of these students within in the program was teacher driven.

The researcher is very cognizant of the challenge of leading parent educational opportunities in diverse communities as a white female. The researcher's personal experiences are not the same as those parents and caregivers targeted for support. This is one reason why the researcher explored a parent education program, which is not only offered in the community, places where families feel safe, but also is led by those who are members of the community. By developing content collaboratively, these conversations will address the specific needs of the community and the participants. Conversations can be led in the native language of the participants by one of their own community members, someone they know and trust. The researcher believes with increased understanding of the educational system and the unique needs of their gifted

children, low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse families can advocate for more equitable programming.

Persistent Problem of Practice: Situational Context

This research study is being conducted in the metro Denver area. The research will take place in a community setting and will not be directly linked to any one school district. It is however important to understand the context of public education in the Denver metro area. This research study will not include a contextual frame for private schools in the Denver metro area. This work will use Denver Public Schools to help the reader understand the climate of education and more specifically gifted education in the Denver metro area. Denver Public Schools was chosen because it is currently the largest district in the state of Colorado and the recreation center used for this study is located within the boundaries of the district.

Denver Public Schools is comprised of 226 schools ranging from early childhood centers, elementary schools, K-8 schools, middle schools, high schools, alternative schools, charter schools, [and] innovation schools (Denver Public Schools, n.d). Denver Public Schools, currently the largest district in the state of Colorado, has struggled to provide equitable education to the diverse student population of Denver. In the court case, *Keyes vs. Denver School District No 1* (Denver Public Schools), the court ruled on June 21, 1973 Hispanic and Black students were not receiving equitable opportunities and called for desegregation within Denver Public Schools (Horn & Kurlaender, 2006, p. 3). Moran (2013) states:

There was a presumption that curing the wrong of intentional discrimination would lead to improved school performance for Black and Latino students. Instead, after Keyes, public schools in Denver remain racially and ethnically identifiable, and the achievement gap persists. Despite ongoing racial disparities, reformers today pursue a colorblind reform agenda. With segregated conditions treated as a given, officials struggle to find solutions that will transform every child's experience, no matter how impoverished or isolated the school (p.1229).

The gifted education programs within Denver Public Schools are not immune to the challenges of serving a diverse student population (Schimke, 2016). Despite the fact gifted identification in Denver Public Schools includes the use of universal sweeps, assessment of all students, at several grade levels using nonverbal measures such as the NNAT2 and different criteria and thresholds for identification of students considered underrepresented, underrepresentation of student groups is still prevalent (Schimke, 2016). Low-income students are underrepresented by only 15 percent in gifted programming as compared to 80 percent under-represented in the highly gifted magnet program (a program designed to serve the needs of the top one to three percent of the gifted population), which requires an application for admittance (Schimke, 2016). In 2015, whites are overrepresented in the highly gifted program in Denver Public Schools (Schimke, 2016).

Systems for parent education are non-existent in gifted education in Denver Public Schools. As of 2015, there was no parent advisory group for gifted education. Parent education is left to individual teachers, who are predominantly white. The need

for a systematic approach to parent education with a specific focus on low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse families is essential if the district is to address the current inequities in programming that exist within Denver Public Schools.

Conclusion

“Public education is sometimes referred to as the great leveler because it is instrumental to the creation of opportunity and socioeconomic mobility” (Sawhill, 2006). However, Glaser, Hildreth, McGuire, & Bannon (2011) state, “Unfortunately, urban public schools, disproportionately burdened with children living in poverty, often lack the capacity to overcome deficits that contribute to and are the product of systemic societal inequality” (p.19).

As for the field for gifted education, Ford & Russo (2014) addresses the approach of colorblindness stating:

Colorblindness is not the answer to addressing inequities...Under the excuse and guise of colorblindness, gifted education has too often operated as if culture and cultural differences are trivial and inconsequential to the recruitment and retention process—screening, testing and assessment, curriculum and instruction, and placement and policies and services” (p. 144).

Yun Dai (2013) states, “a gifted education [process] is equitable and defensible if diverse opportunities and ways of achieving excellence are honored and facilitated, with a good balance between maximal participation and rigorous standards” (p. 99). By developing families’ ability to advocate, they will begin to push for equitable programming, which will lead to positive outcomes for all gifted learners.

“No longer is there room for the purely symbolic victory in educational reform” (Moran, 2013, p.1229). We must tackle these persistent problems of practice within our field if we hope to fulfill our mission as educators. Reis & Renzulli (2004) state, We need to continue our search for those elusive things that are left over after everything explainable has been explained, to realize that giftedness is culturally and contextually embedded in all human activity, and most of all, to value the value of even those things that we cannot yet explain (p. xiii).

Community Partner

Ochoa & Rhodes (2005) state, “To better understand the possible cultural and social perspectives of parents, consultants should seek assistance from persons knowledgeable of the culture (i.e., cultural brokers), as necessary” (p.89). In order for the research to be authentic and truly address the needs of underserved families, the community partners must have the lived experience of the families targeted by this study. Since the study cannot not focus on all culturally, linguistically, and low income subgroups, this study will specifically target parents and caregivers of Black students. The community partners for this research study are parents who live in the Denver metro area. They have three school-age children and one child who is a college student. One of their children is identified as gifted. As community partners, they will provide a unique perspective, which will aid the researcher in navigating the process as a white female. The mother is white with experience navigating in the Black community as part of a bi-racial family. She will be able to provide guidance on building rapport, how to frame questions and what topics might be of interest for parents and caregivers relating to the

topic of gifted education. The father has experience with public speaking on a variety of topics related to his personal experiences growing up as a Black youth. The importance of selecting community partners impacts the framing of the study. In speaking with the mother, the researcher is offered a unique perspective on the experiences of parents of Black children through the eyes of someone who did not personally experience the school system in the same way her children are experiencing the school system and world in general. The community partner has personally experienced how white privilege has allowed her to successfully advocate for her children. The awareness this mother brings to the day-to-day challenges of raising Black children from the lens of a White woman provided valuable understanding for the researcher into the differences in culture, experience and values. Since the facilitators and researcher of this study are white women, having a community partner who is a white woman and a parent of Black children will allow the researcher to explore nuances in the phenomenon. As partners, they will not only push the researcher's thinking but will be advocates for building a strong community program. Ouyang & Conoley (2007) state, "even when program leaders are open to evidence-based information, school board members or powerful parent groups might wield primary influence over the content of a program" (p. 302). By building a strong parent education program with parents and caregivers of Black or African American students, they will be able to advocate for equitable programming for their gifted children.

Research Questions

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the process of collaboratively developing gifted education conversations for parents and caregivers of Black students in the Denver metro area. This research study attempts to provide data to answer the following research questions.

How is a community based parent gifted education series effectively developed and implemented?

Sub questions:

1. How do parents of Black gifted learners describe the impacts of their own educational experiences on their relationship with their children's school?
2. What do parents of Black gifted learners identify as relevant topics for parent education series on gifted education?
3. How do parents of Black gifted learners describe characteristics of giftedness to other parents within their community?
4. What strategies do parents of Black gifted learners identify as appropriate for the delivery of the parent education series within their community?

Research Methodology

This research study will use a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is defined as a study “in which the researcher identifies the ‘essence’ of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by the participants in the study” (Creswell, 2003, p. 15). Phenomenological research studies a small number of participants in an attempt to “develop patterns and relationships of meaning” (Creswell, 2003, p. 15). According to

Creswell (2003), phenomenology is somewhere between qualitative and quantitative research because it deals with both the subjective experiences of the phenomenon and objective experience of the shared phenomenon.

Phenomenological research includes the bracketing out of the study by the researcher. Bracketing is a discussion of personal experiences the researcher may have with the phenomenon so the researcher can attend to the experiences of the participants of the study (Creswell, 2013). Bracketing provides the reader with the opportunity to “judge for themselves whether the researcher focused solely on the participants’ experiences in the description with bringing himself or herself into the picture” (Creswell, 2013, p. 79).

There are two approaches to phenomenological research, hermeneutic phenomenology (Van Manen, 1990) and empirical, transcendental or psychological phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Hermeneutic phenomenology is “oriented toward lived experiences (phenomenology) and interpreting the ‘texts’ of life (hermeneutics)” (Creswell, 2013, p. 79). Moustakas’s (1994) empirical, transcendental or psychological phenomenology focuses on the description of the experiences of the study participants and less on the researcher's interpretations (Creswell, 2013). This research study will follow the latter approach. This will allow the focus to be on the participants rather than the researcher. This approach is especially important given the cultural mismatch of the participants and the researcher.

This research method was selected for this study because it will allow for the phenomenon (collaboratively developing a parent education series) to be explored in

depth. This study will be exploring the impact of a new approach to parent education which puts the parents in the driver's seat, guiding not only content but delivery method. The process, personal experiences and product are all important to addressing the research questions. Phenomenology will allow the researcher to observe and frame the experience using the participant's own descriptions. Parent voices are the foundation of this study.

The research questions, which will guide this study, align well with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach will allow the researcher to address the question of how is a gifted education series effectively developed and implemented? The data collected through a phenomenological approach will provide a rich description of the participants experience during this action research study.

Conclusion

This chapter provided the rationale for this phenomenological study by exploring the persistent problem of practice in national, local and situation context. The community partners, research questions and methodology were shared. In the remaining chapters, a review of relevant literature, an in-depth description of the research methodology, data analysis, and results will be provided. Chapter Two will provide an overview of relevant literature, which will speak to the long-standing persistence problem of practice and root cause being addressed by this study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter Two will include definitions of relevant terms, a literature review which includes additional literature to explain the contextual frame for the persistent problem of practice addressed in chapter one. The theoretical frame for the research study will also be explored in this chapter. The research lens used for this study, phenomenology, will be defined and set in the context of how this lens supports the needs of this research study.

The literature review will address the intersections of various areas whose overlap creates a unique set of experiences. The research questions for this qualitative study focus on this intersection of gifted education, Black gifted learners, and parent education. Ample research exists on gifted education specifically in the areas of identification practices and programming yet gaps continue to exist in research focusing on culturally, linguistically diverse gifted learners. “Ford (1994) found that only 2% of articles and scholarly publications focused attention on gifted minority learners in general, and even fewer focused on African American students...” (Bonner, 2000, p. 643). There is a large gap in the research on parent education for families of gifted learners.

This literature review is not intended to summarize all research in the field of gifted education but will provide context for the persistence problem of practice as seen in the literature. Research on African American or Black gifted learners and their parents will be provided to further define the depth of the persistent problem of practice. Gaps in the literature regarding gifted parent education specifically designed for Black parents

will be explored. Finally, the theoretical framework, which will be used in this study, Adult Learning Theory, will be explained.

This literature review will address broad issues and topics related to gifted education, Black gifted learners, and parent education. It should be noted that these generalizations are used to provide an overarching understanding of the topics. Within each topic, there are many unique characteristics of learners, which may not be captured in this literature review. The generalizations are not intended to perpetuate stereotypes but serve as a broad overview of the challenges within the intersection of gifted education, Black gifted learners and parent education.

Definitions

Terms used throughout this proposal carry many and varied definitions. Therefore, terms will be defined for the purposes of this research. Acceptance of the use of some of these terms has varied throughout various periods in American history.

- The terms *African American* and *Black* will be used interchangeably to identify an ethnic group of Americans whose ancestry stems from the Black populations of Africa.
- *Colorblind/ Colorblindness* is the belief that race does not impact an individual's behaviors and therefore race can be ignored (Schofield, 2001).
- *Culturally, linguistically diverse learners* are those “students who may be distinguished [from the mainstream culture] by ethnicity, social class, and/ or language” (Perez, 1998, p. 6).

- *Culture* is defined as “the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldviews, created, shared and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors [such as] common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion” (Nieto, 1999, p. 48).
- The term *Hispanic* will be used to define “a person of Latin American or Iberian ancestry, fluent in Spanish. It is primarily used along the Eastern seaboard, and favored by those of Caribbean and South American ancestry or origin. English or Spanish can be their ‘native’ language” (Hispanic Economics, n.d.).
- When specifically referring to income levels, the term *low income* will be used to describe students or families living below the level of poverty.
- *Socioeconomic status* refers to a family’s “social standing or class measured as a combination of education, income and occupation” (Socioeconomic status. (n.d.).
- *White* will be defined using Nieto’s (2004) definition of European- American. Nieto’s (2004) definition is Caucasian Americans whose behaviors and cultural history is grounded in European values.

Giftedness will be defined in depth in the next section of this paper. Several terms associated with giftedness and gifted education will be used throughout this literature review.

- *Disproportionality* is defined as “the representation of a group in a category that exceeds our expectations for that group, or differs substantially from the representation of others in that category” (Cobb, 2012, p 13).

- The term *identification* when used in the context of gifted education is the process of selecting students to participate in specialized programs beyond what is offered in the traditional curriculum.
- *Parent advocacy* is defined as the act of parents expressing support for an issue or recommendation (Karnes, Lewis, & Stephens, 1999).
- *Parent education* is defined as the process of providing information and guidance to parents. Gorman & Balter (1997) state “Parent education is an umbrella term, encompassing a wide variety of programs that differ in both content and format. Terms such as *parent training*, *parenting programs*, and *parent support* are often used interchangeably with *parent education*” (p. 340).
- *Programming* is the term used to refer to specialized services provided to gifted learners.
- The term *underrepresentation* will be used throughout this literature review to refer to the discrepancy between demographics within the United States, school district, or school and the demographics of students identified and/ or participating in gifted education programming.

Definitions of Giftedness

In the field of gifted and talented education, confusion and dissent result from the many and varying definitions of giftedness (Renzulli, 1973). Reis and Renzulli (2010) state, “Difficulty exists in finding one research-based definition to describe the diversity of the gifted and talented population and the number of overlapping definitions that are proposed in the educational research” (p. 308).

Reviews of the definitions of giftedness from various school districts, cultures, and the National Association for Gifted Children, would result in many definitions, all with similarities and differences, varying from very specific to vague. This literature review will not include all the various definitions of giftedness but will focus on those most relevant to the field of gifted education at this time.

The National Association for Gifted Children provides “support and develop policies and practices that encourage and respond to the diverse expressions of gifts and talents in children and youth from all cultures, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic groups” (NAGC, n.d.). The National Association for Gifted Children’s (n.d.) website defines gifted as:

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, and sports) (NAGC, n.d.).

The National Association for Gifted Children’s definition focuses on the academic needs of gifted learners yet fails to address the social and emotional needs experienced by many gifted learners.

The 1972 Marland Report to Congress was the first appearance of a federal definition of gifted and talented. The current Federal government definition is still grounded in the 1972 Marland report and states,

The term ‘gifted and talented,’ when used with respect to students, children, or youth, means students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in such areas as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities (NAGC, (n.d.).

The Marland report definition also addresses the unique academic needs of gifted learners. Again, little attention was paid to the social and emotional needs of gifted learners. It was not until 1991, a definition included the social and emotional needs of gifted learners. In 1991, a small group of parents, educators and psychologists, who had experience working with gifted learners, gathered in Columbus, Ohio to develop a comprehensive definition of giftedness. The result was a definition that included not only the academic needs of gifted learners but addressed the social and emotional needs of gifted learners. The Columbus Group (1991) definition states,

Giftedness is *asynchronous development* in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally (NAGC, (n.d.).

The Columbus Group (1991) definition addresses the vulnerability of gifted learners, which is lacking in the previously stated definitions.

The state of Colorado has a definition of gifted children, which guides the identification of students throughout the state. The Colorado Department of Education's (2014) defines gifted and talented is as follows:

[Gifted and talented children] means those persons between the ages of five and twenty-one whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Children under five who are gifted may also be provided with early childhood special educational services.

Gifted students include gifted students with disabilities (i.e. twice-exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potential from all socio-economic and ethnic, cultural populations. Gifted students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue of any or a combination of these following areas of giftedness:

- General or specific intellectual ability.
- Specific academic aptitude.
- Creative or productive thinking.
- Leadership abilities.
- Visual arts, performing arts, musical or psychomotor abilities (CDE, 2015).

“Within the American public schools, giftedness is associated largely with traditional school skills and characteristics measured by traditional intelligence and

achievement tests” (Callahan, 2005, p. 99). The various cultural values represented in the ever-changing demographics of the United States public school system, create an issue for defining giftedness. The issue becomes “what is valued as gifted in one culture may not be valued as gifted in another culture” (Sternberg, n.d., as cited in Ford & Grantham (2003), p. 219). A deep, cohesive, and clear understanding of giftedness is needed in the field of gifted education. For the purposes of this study, the Colorado Department of Education’s definition of giftedness will be utilized.

Characteristics of Gifted Learners

Gifted learners exhibit many characteristics, which set them apart from their same age peers. While these characteristics are generalizable to many gifted learners, it is important to note, as Davis & Rimm (2004) state:

Gifted children differ from one another not only in size, shape, and color, but in cognitive and language abilities, interests, learning styles, motivation and energy levels, personalities, mental health and self concepts, habits and behavior, background and experience, and other mental, physical, or experimental characteristic that one cares to look for (p.32).

Some common characteristics as noted by Davis & Rimm (2004) are found in the list below. These characteristics are framed as either positive or negative.

Characteristics of Giftedness

Positive Characteristics	Negative Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infancy- unusual alertness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asynchronous development (uneven academic and social

emotional development)

- Early, rapid learning
- Oral language development rapid
- Verbally precocious at a young age, possesses a large vocabulary
- Large knowledge base
- Superior ability to analyze, reason and problem solve
- Very observant
- Understands his/her own thinking
- Interests beyond those of typical age peers
- Overexcitability
- Highly curious
- Recognizes patterns, connects topics- sees the big picture
- Difficulty connecting with same age peers
- Underachievement
- Perfectionism
- Nonconforming
- Self criticism and self doubt
- Frustration, anger and depression

- Aware of social justice issues
 - High expectations of self and others
 - Long attention span
 - Independent, self-directed
 - Empathetic
 - Honest
 - Able to apply knowledge to new situations
-

The National Association for Gifted Children uses list of characteristics from Webb et al. (2007) on its website as shown in the list below. This list of characteristics shows overlap of some positive characteristics with the Davis & Rimm (2004) list. The National Association for Gifted Children's list does not include the possible negative manifestations of giftedness.

Webb's (2007) Characteristics of giftedness

- Unusual alertness, even in infancy
- Rapid learner; puts thoughts together quickly
- Excellent memory
- Unusually large vocabulary and complex sentence structure for age

- Advanced comprehension of word nuances, metaphors and abstract ideas
- Enjoys solving problems, especially with numbers and puzzles
- Often self-taught reading and writing skills as preschoolers
- Deep, intense feelings and reactions
- Highly sensitive
- Thinking is abstract, complex, logical, and insightful
- Idealism and sense of justice at early age
- Concern with social and political issues and injustices
- Longer attention span and intense concentration
- Preoccupied with own thoughts—daydreamer
- Learn basic skills quickly and with little practice
- Asks probing questions
- Wide range of interests (or extreme focus in one area)
- Highly developed curiosity
- Interest in experimenting and doing things differently
- Puts idea or things together that are not typical
- Keen and/or unusual sense of humor
- Desire to organize people/things through games or complex schemas
- Vivid imaginations (and imaginary playmates when in preschool)

(Webb, 2007)

Characteristics of giftedness manifest differently in different students especially those students from cultural, linguistic, or low-income backgrounds whose culture does not mirror the dominant culture.

Considerations for Black gifted learners. While the characteristics in the lists from Davis & Rimm (2004) provide an overall picture of giftedness, it is important to consider how culture and race impact the manifestation of these characteristics. Ford (1996) provides additional characteristics of gifted students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Characteristics of Culturally Diverse Gifted Students

- Learn quickly through experience
- Retain and use ideas/information well
- Ability to generalize learning to other areas
- Making connections between seemingly unrelated content
- Resourceful problem solving
- Persuasive language
- Rich imagery in language
- Creativity
- Social intelligence
- Resilience
- Psychosocial sensitivity
- Sensitive to movement and action

(Ford, 1996, p.14)

When looking more specifically at gifted Black students, Ford (1996) states, “The strengths that Black students bring into the classroom too often become weaknesses in school settings” (p.14). According to Ford & Webb (1994), “African Americans tend to be relational, visual, mobile/kinesthetic, concrete/global tactile learners, while school success in the United States is heavily dependent upon abstract, auditory, less mobile, tactile, and kinesthetic learning” (p. 358). Gay (1978) identifies manifestations of gifted characteristics in gifted Black students. These manifestations are explanations of how general strengths of gifted students may show up in Black students.

Gay's Manifestations of Gifted Characteristics in Black Children

- Picks up more quickly on racist attitudes and practices; may feel alienated by school at an early age;
- Seeks structure and organization in required tasks; may be slow to motivate in some abstract activities;
- Have large vocabulary inappropriate for school setting; thinking in Black English may hinder the facility of expression in standard English;
- Difficult to determine many areas of experiential knowledge in Black children;
- Through some may ask too many “wrong” questions some may have been conditioned to suppress questioning behavior;
- Explores (in perception of relationships) better or wiser choices; reads behavioral implications;
- Makes up games and activities; expresses original ideas in other ways;
- May find some have extremely strong concentration due to persistent noise in

environment; may also express displeasure at having to stop activity;

- Need for less supervision
- Frequently artistic, musical, creative writing, psychomotor or leadership talent in addition to global intellectual ability, may neglect school work due to other interests;
- Good at basic school tasks, may not have expected achievement due to inferior schooling

(Gay, 1978, p. 354-355)

Ford (1996) states,

Black students prefer to respond with gestalts rather than atomistic responses, they prefer inferential reasoning to deductive or inductive reasoning; they focus perceived injustices; they lean toward altruism; they prefer novel approaches and freedom (particularly relative to music, clothing, speaking); and they favor nonverbal communication modalities (p. 15).

The support of “Racial identity development functioning assumes added significance for African American students, who confront a barrage of racism and oppression as an inevitable aspect of their schooling” (Kozol, 2005; Tatum, 1997 as cited in Henfield, M., Moore, J., & Wood, C., 2008). Characteristics of Black gifted students must be understood and nurtured in order to address underrepresentation in gifted identification and programming (Ford, 1996).

Contextual Framing of Persistent Problem of Practice

Rationale for gifted education. “In our effort to leave no child behind, we are failing the high-ability children who are the most likely to become tomorrow’s scientists, inventors, poets, and entrepreneurs and in the process we risk leaving our nation behind” (Finn, 2014, p. 50). In a time where our nation’s focus is on getting students to minimum proficiency, gifted education is critical to ensure today’s learners reach their potential. Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach (2012) state, “While improving all students’ performance is a critically important goal, there is now evidence that this basic-level focus does little to advance the growth and achievement of higher achieving students” (p. 8). The key to “our nation’s success depends on our ability to develop the talents of high-ability students in every community” (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012, p. 8). Gifted education provides programming to address the development of our high-ability students.

Academic Needs. Gifted and talented students need programming which will challenge them to reach their potential. Finn (2014) states:

There are more potential high achievers among our 55 million students than are currently getting the opportunity to thrive. And plenty of them are hiding in plain sight in neighborhoods and schools where adults are unaccustomed to recognizing such potential and are ill equipped to challenge such students (p. 61-62).

According to Payne (2010), “All students, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, or race should have access to, and be provided with the best educational opportunities” (p. 18). The best educational opportunities must include equal access to

gifted programming and talent development. “Closing excellence gaps is both a social-equity issue and a workforce development issue that carries national competitiveness and security implications” (NAGC, 2015). Addressing the academic needs of high ability learners is essential to ensuring the success of our nation. “... If the country is to remain competitive internationally, as well as facilitate individual opportunity and social mobility, we must face the reality that cultivating tomorrow’s intellectual and scientific leaders is a key part of the education system’s function” (Finn, 2014, p. 61).

Social/Emotional Needs. In the current educational climate, the hyper focus on academic skills leaves gaps in affective support for today’s students. “Many experts and researchers suggest that affective development of gifted students differs from that of their same age peers by intensity or degree” (Purcell & Eckert, 2006, p.2). Ferguson (2006) cites Silverman (1993) stating, “When school curriculum focuses solely upon the cognitive realm, the uneven development of the other domains may be enhanced, thus emphasizing the gifted child’s feeling of being ‘out of sync’ with his or her peers” (Silverman, 1993, as cited by Ferguson, 2006, p.1). Gifted educational programming is essential to ensure the affective needs of gifted learners are nurtured. “With current emphasis placed upon standardized testing and content standard accountability, the need to seamlessly incorporate strategies aimed at balancing the cognitive and affective for a balanced educational product seems greater than ever” (Ferguson, 2006, p.1).

Gifted education is a critical component to ensuring our nation’s future. Finn (2014) shares the dire consequences of neglecting gifted learners:

Continuing on our current path and ignoring this problem would be bad for the economy, for society, and for the hundreds of thousands of gifted children who now lack the opportunities they need to thrive. There is no excuse for neglecting our best and brightest students (p. 51).

United States changing demographics. Kurtzleben (2011) notes the United States population is becoming more diverse. The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) predictions for the changes in the United States population demographics by 2060 are explored below. In 2043, the United States population is expected to shift to a majority-minority for the first time. The non-Hispanic white population of the United States will remain the largest single group but no demographic group will make up the majority population (Bernstein, 2012).

U.S. Census Bureau Predictions

- Non-Hispanic white population will decrease by nearly 20.6 million from 2024 to 2060.
- Hispanic population will more than double, from 53.3 million in 2012 to 128.8 million in 2060 resulting in nearly one in three U.S. residents being Hispanic, up from about one in six today.
- Black population is expected to increase from 41.2 million to 61.8 million over the same period resulting in a change from 13.1 percent of the total population in 2012 to 14.7 percent in 2060.
- Asian population is projected to more than double from 15.9 million in 2012 to

34.4 million in 2060, climbing from 5.1 percent to 8.2 percent of the national population by 2060.

- The American Indian and Alaska Native population is projected to increase by more than half from now to 2060, from 3.9 million to 6.3 million, with their share of the total population edging up from 1.2 percent to 1.5 percent.
- The Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population is expected to nearly double, from 706,000 to 1.4 million.
- The number of people who identify themselves as being of two or more races is projected to more than triple, from 7.5 million to 26.7 million by 2060.
- Minorities, now 37 percent of the U.S. population, are projected to comprise 57 percent of the population in 2060. (Minorities consist of all but the single-race, non-Hispanic white population.)
- The total minority population will more than double, from 116.2 million to 241.3 million by 2060.

(U.S. Census, 2012)

There are also changes to the number of Americans living in low-income households. The poverty rate seems to have stabilized at 15.9 percent in 2012 and 15.8 percent in 2013 after a four year period of increasing numbers of Americans living in poverty (Bishaw & Fontenot, 2014). Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach (2012) state “in 2011, 21% of children between five and seventeen in America lived in poverty, an

increase of 4.3% since 2007” (p. 5). According to Stambaugh & Ford (2015), “In 2010, 27.4% of Blacks and 26.6 percent of Hispanics were poor compared with 9.9% of Whites and 12.1% of Asians” (p. 193).

While poverty rates have held relatively stable over the past two years in the state of Colorado, poverty is still a critical factor impacting many of the students who walk into Colorado classrooms today. Colorado’s poverty rate in 2012 was 13.7 percent. 694,842 people in the state of Colorado were living in poverty (Bishaw & Fontenot, 2014). The Denver, Aurora, Lakewood Metro area saw a poverty rate of 12.1 percent in 2013 (Bishaw & Fontenot, 2014). Hodgkinson (2007) points out, “poverty is only one of the risks that many children are exposed to, it magnifies all other risks” (p. 11). The changing demographics and socioeconomic levels of the United States population is having dramatic impacts on the educational system as a whole and on the field of gifted education.

Impacts of changing demographics on education. With the United States demographics continuing to grow more diverse, our schools struggle to keep pace with the rapid change in the students and families they serve. For example, English language learners are the fastest growing population within schools in the United States (Uro & Barrio, 2013). Schools in the United States must adapt to multiple races, multiple levels of socioeconomic status, multiple cultures, and multiple views on education within one school community. This influx of changing demographic demand needs attention and specialized instructional strategies from all classroom teachers.

Students who have been traditionally considered English language learners are in need of specialized instruction, but also in need of this specialized instruction are students from low-socioeconomic families. Hart & Risley (1995) identified a language discrepancy between children in professional families and children in low-income families. This gap results in a thirty million word gap between children raised in professional families and those raised in low-income families (Hart et al., 1995). Renzulli (1973) called for the educational system to recognize the potential and gifts of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Beyond recognition, Renzulli (1973) urges educators to create educational opportunities to meet the unique needs of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Impacts of changing demographics on gifted education. Hébert (2010) states, “With the understanding that gifted students are found in the culture of poverty, educators must not overlook the fact that these young people have achievement needs that must be addressed in school regardless of the impoverished communities in which they live” (p. 128). Hébert (2010) also emphasizes the need for teachers to provide enriched experiences for students of low-socioeconomic backgrounds because remediation underestimates the capabilities of students from poverty. Poverty is shown to be a barrier to gifted identification and programming. Since poverty is more prevalent in Hispanic and Black communities, it creates yet another barrier for these students to receive gifted services. The National Excellence Report (U.S. Department of Education, 1993) stated that only 9% of students receiving gifted programming were in the bottom

quartile for income based on information from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (Callahan, 2005).

The increase in Hispanic, Black, and Mixed Races in the United States public school system requires systematic change in order to address the needs of the this diverse population. The demographic population impacts schools' Gifted and Talented programs, both in terms of identification and programming. Culturally and linguistically diverse students are underrepresented in gifted programs similar to their counterparts from low-socioeconomic backgrounds.

Underrepresentation in gifted programs. With changing demographics in the United States, gifted education must address the long-standing issue of underrepresentation. Disproportionality in gifted education is well documented in research (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012; VanTassel-Baska, 2007; Esquierdo & Arrequin-Anderson, 2012). Callahan (2005) states, "Black and Hispanic students are less than half as likely to be in gifted programs as White students... [furthermore, this] also includes the underrepresentation of students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds" (p. 98). Ford et al (2014) state, "There is no denying that gifted education classes and services are disproportionately represented by and serving White, higher-income, and privileged students: and gifted education gives them a boost up the social and fiscal hierarchy, a function of White privilege" (p.306). The underrepresentation of students from low-income families cuts across racial lines. The disproportionate number of students of color and students from low-income families in gifted education programs

requires school districts to adjust practices for identifying and meeting the needs of gifted students from diverse backgrounds.

Payne (2010) states, “all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, or race should have access to, and be provided with the best educational opportunities” (p. 18). The best educational opportunities should include equal access to gifted programming and talent development.

Underrepresentation of Black students in gifted education. Particularly alarming is the underrepresentation of Black students in gifted education. Ford & King (2014) state, “Black students should represent a *minimal* 15.2% of students in gifted education. Nationally, the percentage in 2011 is 10%” (p. 306). This is significant and beyond statistical chance (Ford et al, 2014). Denver Public Schools also see disparities in gifted identification rates for Black students. Blacks make up 13.4 percent of the total student population in Denver Public Schools yet Black students make up only 7.2 percent of the identified gifted population (Colorado Department of Education, n.d.). Bonner (2000) states, “ Black students particularly males, are three times as likely to be in a class for the educable mentally retarded as are White students, but only one half as likely to be in a class for the gifted and talented” (p. 643). At least 250,000 Black students annually, are missed by current identification practices for gifted education (Ford et al, 2014).

Attempts to address underrepresentation. There have been numerous attempts and systems developed to address underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students and low-income families in gifted programs. Borland, Schnur, & Wright (2000) state:

In order to address the problem of disproportionate educational failure among economically disadvantaged students more effectively, we need to identify the sociological and psychological processes that shape the attitudes and behaviors underlying educational disadvantage and to understand how these develop and operate within specific sociocultural contexts. (p. 14)

Alternative testing, alternative assessment measures, and alternative procedures for identification have been widely implemented but have only been “met with modest success” (Van Tassel-Baska, p. 364 as cited in Bass, 2009, p. 17).

Contributing factors to underrepresentation. There are many contributing factors to the underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students and students from low-income families in gifted programs. Factors range from the varying definitions of giftedness mentioned earlier, teacher expectations, the identification process, and parent perceptions of giftedness.

Bonner (2000) identified several barriers to identification and support for gifted Black students. These barriers include definitions of giftedness, overreliance on standardized testing, teacher expectations, learning styles, family and peer influences, underachievement, and the screening and identification processes (p. 644).

Teacher expectations. Expectations for students are grounded in teacher perceptions of their students. Culturally and linguistically diverse students and students from low-income families are often held to lower expectations. Ford (2007) states:

Deficit thinking exists when differences are interpreted as deficits, disadvantages, or deviance. The deficit-thinking paradigm places the blame for poor outcomes

within the students, as if they are somehow inherently inferior or substandard...[thinking this way] about children in poverty blinds educators from seeing [these students'] strengths (p. 38).

Callahan (2005) states many teachers hold “inherent beliefs about the low capabilities of poor and minority children” (p. 99). Since teachers do not see the possible gifts and talents of culturally and linguistically diverse students and/or students from low-income households, teachers do not often hold high expectations for these students or refer them for gifted and talented programming. According to Bonner (2000), “Without proper training, teachers make judgments based on their own preconceived ideas of what characteristics a gifted student should exhibit” (p. 647). This has “exacerbated the problem of under identification of African American students” (Bonner, 2000, p. 647).

Pre-service teaching curriculum does not regularly include the skills needed to combat the complex issue of deficit thinking. Callahan (2005) states, “Seldom are teachers provided the skills in discerning either (a) alternative ways in which students may be gifted, or (b) ways to identify verbal talents that may exist in students who may not have had opportunities to develop fluency and advanced expressive abilities in formal English” (p. 99-100). Bonner (2010) likewise discusses the issue of teacher training by stating, “Without proper training, teachers will continue to refer only those students who fit their preconceived ideas of how a gifted student behaves; this misconception immediately rules out many students who, by current definition, show gifted potential” (p. 655). Ford et al. (2014) state, “Culturally incompetent educators- educators who are ill-prepared for or uncommitted to working with Black students- risk compromising or

sabotaging the educational experiences of Black students, and thereby contribute to the segregated gifted education programs” (p. 308). Sadly, “students who are out of “cultural sync” with their teachers will go unidentified, regardless of their intellectual abilities” (Bonner, 2000, p. 647).

The cultural mismatch between teachers and students creates a barrier for Black students abilities to be recognized. Communication style differences can impact how teachers view students. Delpit (1995) highlighted the difference in communication styles between White and Black cultures. Delpit (1995) noted white children’s narratives during story time were more “topic-centered” focusing on one event where as Black children shared longer, more “episodic” narratives in which scenes shifted (p.55). “The thinking of these speakers appears to be circular, and their communication sounds like storytelling. To one who is unfamiliar with it, this communication style ‘sounds rambling, disjointed, and as if the speaker never ends a thought before going on to something else’ ” (Gay, 2000, p. 96 as cited in Gay, 2002, p.112).

Delpit (1995) goes on to note adult reactions to the narratives depended on the race of the adult. White adults responded negatively to Black children’s narratives, noting concern for the child’s academic abilities (Delpit, 1995). They also expressed concern about possible language problems, reading difficulties, family problems or emotional problems based on the perceived incoherent nature of the narrative (Delpit, 1995). The reactions of Black adults were surprisingly different. Delpit (1995) states, “They found this child’s story ‘well informed, easy to understand, and interesting with lots of detail and description.’ Even though all ... mentioned the ‘shifts’ and

'associations' or 'nonlinear' quality of the story, they did not find these features distracting (p. 55). Gay (2002) states "the communicative styles of most ethnic groups of color in the United States are more active, participatory, dialectic, and multi-modal. Speakers expect listeners to engage with them as they speak by providing prompts, feedback, and commentary" (p.111). Gay (2002) continues, "the roles of speaker and listener are fluid and interchangeable. Among African Americans, this interactive communicative style is referred to as 'call-response' (Baber, 1987; Smitherman, 1977)" (p. 111). These communication mismatches impact teacher expectations and therefore opportunities for Black students abilities to be recognized and supported within the school system.

Culturally responsive teaching has risen out of the need to prepare the United States teaching force to better meet the needs of the increasingly diverse student population. Gay (2002) defines culturally responsive teaching "as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106-107). According to Gay (2002), culturally responsive teaching "is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly" (Gay, 2000 as cited by Gay, 2002, p. 107). Gay (2002) states the five elements of culturally responsive teaching are: "developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity, including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum, demonstrating caring and building learning communities, communicating with ethnically

diverse students, and responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction” (p. 106).

Cross-cultural communication between educators and parents or caregivers is essential to developing effective systems for supporting culturally, linguistically diverse learners. Gay (2002) states,

Effective cross-cultural communication is a fourth pivotal element of preparing for culturally responsive teaching. Porter and Samovar (1991) state culture impacts “what we talk about; how we talk about it; what we see, attend to, or ignore; how we think; and what we think about” (p. 21). Montagu and Watson (1979) added that communication is the “ground of meeting and the foundation of community” (p. vii) among human beings (p. 110).

Gay (2002) explains,

Building community among diverse learners is another essential element of culturally responsive teaching. Many students of color grow up in cultural environments where the welfare of the group takes precedence over the individual and where individuals are taught to pool their resources to solve problems (p. 110).

By incorporating these principles, educators will better be able to address the needs of culturally diverse learners.

Identification process. Much like the definitions of giftedness, identification procedures for gifted education vary from state to state, district to district, and in some instances school to school. Over twenty years ago, 90 percent of states used IQ

assessment as the sole method to determine entry into gifted programming (Ford, 1995). Gifted programs, which rely on intelligence tests, continue to see the inclusion of White, middle class students and the exclusion of culturally diverse students, especially those from lower socioeconomic income levels (Bass, 2009).

In order to address underrepresentation, the identification process of gifted students should include a “complex interaction of factors...[including understanding of] the inadequacy of one-shot, paper-and-pencil assessments [and] the inherent bias and shortcomings of policies and procedures” (Callahan, 2005, p. 99).

Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach (2012) recommend identification practices should be reviewed if they:

- Do not include multiple and varied types of assessments (e.g., tests and portfolios)
- [Contain] selection criteria that do not evaluate students’ ability or potential in light of their previous opportunities to learn
- [Are reliant] on nominations or evaluations from teachers with little or no training in gifted education and/or advanced subject-matter knowledge, multicultural education, or experience teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students; and
- [Have] identification practices that gives students ‘one shot’ at entrance (p. 10).

“If we are to optimize our use of giftedness as a national resource, we will have to take into account the multiplicity of forms in which it can be found” (Bonner, 2000, p. 654). Borland, Schnur & Wright (2000) state “we need to adopt nontraditional, rigorously validated identification methods that are more sensitive to expressions of

potential giftedness in environments outside the mainstream, in which this field has usually operated” (p. 30). Clark (1997) recommends educators learn to recognize intellectual abilities common to all gifted students, regardless of their culture. These intellectual abilities include “a strong desire to learn; intense, and sometimes, unusual interests; an unusual ability to articulate ideas; inventive problem solving strategies; exceptional retention; extensive inquiries; quick grasp of new concepts and connections; originality; and a keen sense of humor” (Clark, 1997, p. 19). Deficit thinking will continue to lead to underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students as well as students from low-income families in gifted programming until educators recognize the strengths and the potential each student brings to the classroom.

Programming discrepancies. While identification practices still result in underrepresentation, the challenges do not end there. Issues still remain with providing equitable programming and supports for culturally, linguistically diverse and low income gifted learners after they are identified as gifted. Borland et al. (2000) explains students from low-income households need provisions to ensure their success in gifted programs. They write:

Placing them in traditional gifted programs without adequate preparation, without accelerating their learning so they can make up for time lost, would, in most cases lead to failure. Structured, well- thought-out intervention designed to bring students from the status of potentially academically gifted to academically gifted is needed and ought to be a priority in our field (p. 30).

Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach (2012) outline recommendations to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse gifted students. Their recommendations include:

- Provide challenging, enriching learning experiences to all students as early as preschool...
- Use challenging and enriched instruction with underperforming, high-ability students that is designed to develop advanced skills, rather than remediation, in order to fill in skills or content gaps...
- Ensure that curriculum is multicultural and enables students to make connections to their lives (p. 23).

This research challenges the notion identification of culturally and linguistically diverse students and students from low-income households is the only area that needs to be addressed in order for these learners needs to be met through gifted education. A clear plan for equitable programming must be established.

Parents and caregivers. Research in gifted education has long been interested in parents of gifted learners. Beginning with Galton's 1871 study, parents of gifted learners were noted as an area of interest for research (Jolly and Matthews, 2012). Terman's (1926) longitudinal study gathered some of the first data on parents of gifted learners (Jolly & Matthews, 2012). Goertzel & Goertzel (1962) in *Cradles of Eminence* explored home environment and parental influence on the development of the nearly 400 individuals studied. Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen (1996) found talent development to be influenced by parents. Ongoing research continues to grow in the

field of gifted education looking at parent's roles in their children's adjustment and success in school and career.

Research widely documents parental involvement in students' education is a critical component to increased academic success in students (Borland, Schnur, & Wright, 2000). Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez (2006) state attitudes of parents and their subsequent behaviors affect self-confidence and resiliency in children. In Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss' 2006 study "results support[ed] the usefulness of family involvement in schools as a means of improving the achievement of children living in low-income families and underscore the value of empirically modeling both family involvement and child achievement as developmental phenomena" (p. 662).

Parent perceptions of education in general vary among demographic groups. "Fordham and Ogbu (1986) maintain that because African-Americans collectively have been shunned and oppressed economically, politically, socially, and psychologically, they have developed a sense of collective identity that is in opposition to the social identity of Whites" (Bass, 2009, p. 44). Crozier (1996) states,

Moreover, with regard to black parents, one might argue that there is a particular urgency in getting them more involved in the light of the research demonstrating the disadvantage and discrimination experienced by black children, particularly in terms of academic achievement and school exclusions (Policy Studies Institute, 1994).

While well over 140 years have passed since the first attempts to study parents of gifted children, not much progress has been made in understanding the needs and

influence of parents (Jolly & Matthews, 2012). Saranli & Metin (2014) state, “the issue of parents has been one of the least-studied fields among research-based studies conducted on gifted children...” (p.1). More attention needs to be paid to the role of parents in supporting the needs of their gifted children and advocating for strong gifted programming.

Parent advocacy. Parent advocacy is a topic which provides a framework for needed research in the field of gifted education. Grantham, Frasier, Roberts & Bridges (2005) state “to reverse underrepresentation among culturally diverse students in gifted education, the role of parents as advocates is critical” (p. 138). Grantham (2003) developed an advocacy model designed to increase minority enrollment in gifted education. Wiskow, Fowler, & Christopher (2011) describe Grantham’s Gifted Program Advocacy Model (G-PAM). “The model allows parents to co-advocate for equity and excellence within educational programming” (Wiskow, Fowler, & Christopher, 2011, p. 22). Grantham et al. (2005) explains the importance of parents of culturally diverse gifted learners being informed and involved so that they may better advocate for their children’s educational needs. The Gifted Program Advocacy Model includes several phases; needs assessment, development of advocacy plan, implementation, and follow-up and evaluation (Wiskow et al, 2011). While the G-PAM provides an overall framework for advocacy, its focus is broader than simply parent advocacy. This model does not address the myth that “all parents are the same...mask[ing] the complexity of needs, the roles that ethnic minority parents are playing, or the constraints that impede their involvement, and at the heart of this is structural racism” (Crozier, 2001, p. 330).

Wright et al. (2000) found that when black parents tried to intervene on behalf of their children, they were often ignored which resulted in feelings of frustration, despondency and anger. Jolly & Matthews (2012) call for,

Additional research focused on developing our understanding of how parents understand giftedness, gifted children, and gifted programs can lead toward improved advocacy efforts, to the provision of more effective specialized training for teachers who work with gifted learners, and to improved efforts to focus and prioritize future research in gifted education settings (p. 274).

Crosier (2001) shares the limited research into ethnic minority parent and school relationships shows that school personnel often view these parents in stereotypical ways as negative and not interested in their child's education.

Parents as change agents. There are various examples, which highlight the power of parents as change agents. Yell, Rogers & Rogers (1998) state “the history of special education law is a chronicle of the efforts of parents and advocacy groups in the courts and legislatures of this country” (p. 219). Building on momentum from the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education court rulings, parents of students with disabilities began to advocate for equal rights for their children (Yell, Rogers & Rogers, 1998). While the movement in the early 1970's finally led to federal legislation to protect the rights of students with disabilities, parents of children with special needs were acting as change agents on smaller scales throughout the United States as early as the 1930's. In 1933, five mothers joined together to form the Cuyahoga County Ohio Council for the Retarded Child (Yell, Rogers & Rogers, 1998). This group of mothers fought against the

exclusion of their children from school and as a result a special class was created, sponsored by the parents themselves (Yell, Rogers & Rogers, 1998). While small groups like the Cuyahoga County Ohio Council for the Retarded Child existed throughout the country in the 1930's and 1940's, it wasn't until the 1950's when these smaller groups began to connect on a national level (Yell, Rogers & Rogers, 1998). In 1975, the parent advocacy efforts resulted in federal legislation, which protected the rights of students with disabilities in the educational system (Yell, Rogers & Rogers, 1998).

Other examples of parents as change agents exist beyond the educational setting. Mothers Against Drunk Driving, "founded by a mother whose daughter was killed by a drunk driver, ... is the nation's largest nonprofit working to protect families from drunk driving, drugged driving and underage drinking" (MADD, 2017). Marion Stubbs Thomas started another such organization, Jack and Jill of America, Inc. on January 24, 1938, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The mission of Jack and Jill of America, Inc., "is a membership organization of mothers with children ages 2 – 19, dedicated to nurturing future African American leaders by strengthening children through leadership development, volunteer service, philanthropic giving and civic duty" (Jack and Jill, 2017). Organizations such as these work as change agents and began with parents advocating for the rights of their children.

Davis (2010) emphasizes the critical role of Black families as advocates and change agents. Davis (2010) states, "The role of family members, including parents, grandparents, and others, is more important than that of any other individuals who come into contact with children over the course of their lifetime" (p.180).

Parent education. Parent education in the field of gifted education is one of the least researched topics. This is particularly striking when including a focus on parent education for culturally, linguistically diverse parents. Crozier (2001) states, “The blanket assumption that all parents are the same, with the same needs, and that their children can be treated in the same way is disturbing for all parents and particularly those who are already disadvantaged” (p.330). “Parent knowledge is one of the most important contributions to the optimum development of all children including gifted children” (Pearl, 1997, p. 41).

The most well know model of parent education in the field of gifted education is the Social Emotional Needs of Gifted Children (SENG). “The primary purpose of the program is to understand the social-emotional needs of gifted children and satisfy these needs through a parent education program, based on the idea that parents are the first... most important teachers of their children” (Saranli et al., 2014, p. 3). Solely focused on social and emotional needs of gifted learners, SENNG has provided ongoing parent support for over 25 years (Saranli et al., 2014).

“To fully advocate for their children, parents need information about giftedness, programming options, and the policies and practices involved in gifted education” (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Bass, R. 2009, p. 53). Several variables impact the success of parent education programs. The four variables, which influence the effectiveness of a parent education program, are: content relevancy, teaching techniques, teacher characteristics, and practical considerations (Pearl, 1997).

Content Relevancy

Content relevancy involves a collaborative team, which considers timing of parent education, relevant and culturally appropriate content, and consideration of reasons for parents seeking a parent education program (Pearl, 1997). Pearl (1997) states, “It is a fundamental law of human nature that any person tends to feel committed to a decision or activity to the extent that he feels he has influenced the decision or activity” (p. 42). A needs assessment rather than one person’s assumptions should guide the planning process (Pearl, 1997). Parents who are encouraged and who are welcomed, serve as valuable advocates for their children (Silverstein, 2000).

Teaching techniques. The content itself and methods used for delivery of the content are both part of effective parent education programs (Pearl, 1997). Despite the fact that learning styles vary, most parent educators turn to lecturing as the main method of parent education delivery (Pearl, 1997). Cultural considerations should be taken into account when collaboratively planning parent education (Pearl, 1997).

Teacher characteristics. Parent education leaders are as important as any other aspect of a parent education plan. According to Pearl (1997), “the parent educator’s rapport with the parents is critical to his or her effectiveness as an educator” (p. 45). Characteristics include being open, caring, non-judgmental, and flexible (Pearl, 1997).

Practical considerations. Simple practical considerations can make a difference in the effectiveness of parent education programs. This is especially true when programs are targeted to typically underserved families. Childcare, transportation, location, group size and demographic make up are all things to consider when planning a parent

education program (Pearl, 1997). The setting of the meetings should also be taken into consideration. Pacing and organization of the activities provides an opportunity to set the tone for the learning experience (Pearl, 1997).

Parent education programs and the effectiveness varies with many variables impacting the success of the program. Gaps in literature regarding effective gifted parent education for culturally, linguistically diverse families, continue to marginalize typically underserved families and students. The lack of research targeting effective parent education programs for Black families is startling. Jolly et al. (2012) states

African American parents clearly exert a positive impact on their children's achievement, but we know less about the specific practices through which this influence occurs. More work clearly needs to be done to learn about parents of gifted and high-achieving learners from non-majority backgrounds... (p. 273).

“Too many Black students fail to achieve their potential because they are denied access to gifted education classes and opportunities (Ford et al. 2014, p. 307). The creation of parent education targeted to parents of Black students can provide qualitative data to address the persistent problem of practice and help to fill the gap in literature. Saranli et al. (2014) state, “there are not sufficient studies focusing on the role of parents, one of the most important parameters of this field” (p. 1).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used as a guide for this research study will be Adult Learning Theory. Adult learning theory will be augmented with principles of culturally linguistically diverse principles and Black culture.

Adult learning theory. Adult Learning Theory is grounded in the concept of andragogy, which is defined as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1980, p. 43).

The five pillars of andragogy identify the adult learner as someone who:

- (1) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning,
- (2) has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning,
- (3) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles.
- (4) is problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge,
- (5) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (Merriam, 2008, p. 5).

Adult Learning Theory has undergone many changes since its inception. Merriam (2008) provides an explanation of some of the changes. Context of the learning was introduced to the theory in the 1980's driven by the emergence of several other theories such as feminist theory, critical social theory and postmodern theory (Merriam, 2008). Merriam (2008) states, "sociocultural context of adult learning is recognized as a key component in understanding the nature of adult learning" (p. 94). By taking into account the social context of the learner, adult education provides a much richer learning experience (Merriam, 2008).

"Adult learning is a complex phenomenon that can never be reduced to a single, simple explanation. Rather...[it is more of an] ever-changing mosaic where old pieces are rearranged and new pieces are added" (Merriam, 2008, p. 94). The use of Adult

Learning Theory as a theoretical framework for this action research will be explained in the methods sections of this chapter.

Culturally, linguistically diverse learners and adult learning theory. Guy (1999) cites Hollins, King, and Hayman (1994) stating, “culturally relevant adult education is essential to helping learners from marginalized cultural backgrounds learn to take control of their lives and improve their social condition” (Guy, 1999, p 5). In order to ensure the needs of a variety of parents are addressed when using the principles of Adult Learning Theory, Guy (1999) points out the need to address, “The tendency of white, middle-class Americans to question the experience of people of color from the perspective of their own ethnic experience [which] suggests a broad view within U.S. mainstream culture that strives to diminish the significance of cultural differences within the population” (p. 10). Rather than diminish the significance of cultural differences, those working with adult learners must understand that inclusion alone doesn’t create equity (Guy, 1999). Guy (1999) goes on to further state, “cultural self-awareness, cultural knowledge about learners, and instructional skills that are inclusive and empowering constitute the kind of knowledge and skills required for service to marginalized learners” (p. 16).

Black culture and adult learning theory. Colin (1994) argues most mainstream models of adult education have often been developed without the needs of African Americans in mind. Most theories, like Adult Learning Theory, focus on the individual when African Americans tend to have more “communal values” (Rowland, 2000). Flannery (1995) states, "communal values include knowledge which is valued, how

learning occurs, [and] communication patterns of working together for the good of the community" (p. 153-154). Flannery (1995) goes on to caution theories must "give voice to all people and groups, allowing missing voices to narrate their diverse stories of how and where they learn..." (p. 156). The culture and voices of African American parents and caregivers should be central to any adult learning opportunity.

Conclusion

Gifted education has long struggled to equitably serve culturally, linguistically diverse gifted learners. This persistent problem of practice is especially troublesome when looking at the disproportionality for Black learners served in gifted programs. Gaps in literature focusing on gifted Black learners are large. As noted earlier, Bonner (2000) states "two percent of articles and scholarly publications in the field of gifted education focus on diverse gifted learners and even fewer are focused on African American learners" (p. 643). While existing literature on Black gifted learners tend to focus on inequities in identification and programming, few studies exist on parent education programs specifically designed to address the needs of Black families.

"Parent familiarity with what happens in the gifted setting varie[s] widely, suggesting that parents could benefit from greater communication about... gifted program[s]" (Jolly & Matthews, 2012, p. 273). The importance of parent education programs especially for culturally, linguistically diverse families has been addressed in this literature review with specific focus on Black gifted learners. This study will explore the impacts of the development of a targeted parent education program collaboratively developed with Black parents and caregivers in a large urban city.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Three contains a detailed explanation of the research methodology used in this phenomenological study. This chapter will explore the research context, study participants and researcher bracketing. The action or innovation being explored in this research study will be discussed. Data collection and analysis related to the phenomenological research approach applied to this study will also be explored. Reliability and validity measures addressed in this research study will be discussed in this chapter.

Context and Participants

This phenomenological research study took place in early fall 2016 in a large urban area in Colorado. Participants were parents and caregivers of Black school aged children. School aged is defined, for the purposes of this study, to be children in three-year-old preschool through high school. Participants were not limited to parents and caregivers whose children attend a certain school district. The age, educational background and gender of the parent study participants varied.

A critical component of a phenomenological research study is the central phenomenon, which “is the one central concept being explored or examined in the research study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 135). All study participants participated in a training series for parents and caregivers who wish to provide gifted parent education in their communities. The training series will serve as the central phenomenon for this study. The training series used Adult Learning Theory principles with a culturally, linguistically

diverse lens as the theoretical approach. A literature review of Adult Learning Theory was included in Chapter Two of this doctoral research project. This central phenomenon provided the context for this research study, which provides data on how a community based parent gifted education series is effectively developed and implemented.

“In phenomenology, ... the number of participants range from 1 (Dukes, 1894) to up to 325 (Polkinghorne, 1989)” (Creswell, 2013, p.157). In a phenomenological research study, “Dukes (1984) recommends studying 3 to 10 subjects and one phenomenology” (Creswell, 2013, p.157). The target number of study participants for this research was between five and ten participants who will participate in the phenomenon (collaboratively developing a parent education approach for Black parents and caregivers). This target number aligns with Dukes recommendation and allows for some attrition. A target number of three to five participants will be chosen from those who participate in the phenomenon to partake in semi structured interviews with the researcher upon completion of the training. Three is the minimum number recommended by Dukes, 1984, so by targeting three to five, the study will have a minimum number of participants even if some participants are unable to complete the interview process. This subset of parents and caregivers will be intentionally selected to be representative of diverse family make up. This sample may include single parent families; two parent families, multigenerational families as available (Ruggles, 1994). Gender will also be a consideration when selecting interview participants.

The selection of participants for this research study was done purposefully. “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study

in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the research...” (Patton, 1990, p.160 as cited in Glesne, 1999, p.29). The selection strategies, which were employed to find research participants, included both snowball sampling and homogeneous sampling. Snowball sampling is defined as participants being identified from “people who know people who meet the research interests” (Glesne, 1999, p.29). The researcher shared information about the study with contacts within the community who may have contacts with parents of Black school age children. Personal contacts of the researcher, as well as targeted communication of the need for research study participants, was shared within several community settings such as churches, community recreation centers, and other community gathering locations in the urban area where the research study took place. The community partner for this study helped to identify potential research participants as well. A sample of the letter introducing the study and the request for participants is included in Appendix A.

The second sampling strategy employed in the selection of study participants was homogeneous sampling. Homogeneous sampling is the selection of “similar cases in order to describe a subgroup in depth” (Glesne, 1999, p.29). All participants are parents or caregivers of Black school age children. This sampling approach allowed the researcher to target a specific subpopulation, which will provide for increased understanding of the impacts of the collaborative development of parent education model for parents of Black school age children.

Informed consent was obtained from study participants prior to the first conversation held for the research study. The researcher met individually with potential participants to review the research study in the weeks prior to the start of the study. Written informed consent was obtained at this initial meeting. Only participants who agreed to participate and signed the informed consent were involved in the research study. Participants were able to complete the training series even if they did not wish to take part in the research study. No participants choose to complete the training without participating in the study. A sample of the Informed Consent form used for this research study is included in Appendix B. The researcher reviewed the informed consent in person with potential participants and answered any questions they may have about the research process. Participants were informed of the following:

- The training series will serve as central phenomenon for a dissertation project.
- Study participants will agree to participate in a minimum of two structured interviews with the researcher following participation in the training series.
- Participation in the research study is voluntary and information from those training participants who do not participate in the study will not be used in the data collection or analysis for the research study.
- Participant names will be changed in the data collection and dissertation write up to obscure participant identity. Due to small sample size, complete privacy cannot be guaranteed.
- Interviews will take place individually and will focus on participant's experiences during the training series. Appendix C contains interview questions.

Role of the Researcher

A critical factor in phenomenological research studies is for the researcher to clearly define their role in the research process and to bracket their experiences. The researcher provided the theoretical frame and guidance for the facilitators who worked directly with the participants to develop the parent education series. The researcher used principles of Adult Learning Theory infused with a culturally, linguistically diverse lens to ensure facilitators were equipped to lead the participants in developing relevant parent education, which parents and caregivers can choose to deliver within their community. The researcher was not be involved directly in the delivery of the training series to avoid possible conflict of interest. The researcher conducted the participant interviews after the completion of the training series to capture “ ‘what’ they experienced and ‘how’ they experienced it” (Moustakas, 1994 as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 76).

Bracketing oneself as a researcher allows the researcher to discuss “personal experiences with the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 78). The researcher has numerous prior experiences participating in a training series designed to provide a foundational skill set in order to allow the researcher to provide a presentation or professional development series which has been created by another professional. These training opportunities varied and were not all framed in the components of Adult Learning Theory. These past experiences will influence the data review as the researcher looks to extract critical components of effective training for parents of Black school aged students. Therefore, the use of pre determined intentional interview questions was critical to allow for participants to share their experiences without influence from the

researchers prior experiences. During the data analysis and write-up of research findings, the researcher continued to bracket herself throughout the process. The use of direct quotes from research participants allow for the participants experience with the phenomenology to not be influenced by the researchers lens.

Role of the Facilitator

Two facilitators led the conversations with parents. These facilitators were chosen for their knowledge and understanding of gifted education, competence in understanding culturally, linguistically diverse learners, and their ability to develop rapport with parents. The facilitators were in their final year of work toward a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in gifted education. Both facilitators have worked extensively in diverse schools throughout their careers. One facilitator has organized parent sessions during the Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented Conference. The other facilitator runs parent meetings in her role with a large urban school district in Colorado.

Both facilitators were white female educators. The researcher intentionally chose to select facilitators who were not of the same race as the targeted study participants. This allowed for the researcher to explore the differences in approach to developing parent education. This intentional racial mix between participants and facilitators also allowed participants to give voice to how Black's learn which may not have occurred had the facilitators also been Black. The phenomenon would have been very different had the facilitators been of the same race as the participants. The researcher's choice to use White facilitators was driven by the racial miss match which plagues the United States

educational system today. According to Mahatnya, Lohman & Brown (2016) eighty five percent of teachers in the United States are white. The changing United States demographics mean there is a widening divide between the predominately white teaching force and the students they serve (Kurtzleben, 2011; Mahaynya et al., 2016). Mahatnya et al. (2016) state

With the United States' teaching force representing predominantly white, middle-class females (Causey et al. 2000) and classrooms becoming increasingly diverse, more research on teachers' cultural awareness seems necessary to bolster their relationships and perceptions of youths' educational attainment, especially for students of color (p. 430-431).

In order to allow for the research study to be more widely relevant, the researcher was intentional in selecting facilitators who did not mirror the racial group targeted by this study.

The facilitators were responsible for leading the parent and caregiver conversations. They began by interacting with participants during a meal provided by the researcher prior to the first conversation. The meal allowed for the facilitators and the research participants to begin to establish rapport prior to the formal study. Parents who are encouraged and who are welcomed, serve as valuable advocates for their children (Silverstein, 2000). This welcome set the tone for the research study as welcoming and open.

The facilitators collaborated with families to determine the content, process and product of the parent training. The object was to collaboratively develop training which the parents and caregivers can deliver to other families within their community.

Describing the Action/Innovation

This research study is grounded on the phenomenon of parents participating in a training series in which they collaboratively develop training to be able to facilitate parent education within their community. The innovation of this approach to the development of a parent education series was the use of Adult Learning Theory, the collaborative development of the content and the delivery by parents of the product (educational series) created. The training series was developed organically with participant need as the driving force. The process participants and facilitators went through was documented as part of this research study.

According to Knowles, (1984), there are several principles to adult learning. The first principle is the need of adults to be participants in planning and evaluating their instruction (Knowles, 1984). Therefore, the training series began with the facilitators gathering input from participants so that the content could be tailored to their needs. This is critical especially for parents and caregivers of Black students who have often been disenfranchised by the educational system (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). As parents and caregivers of Black students, the participants were asked to share any experiences with gifted education or general experiences with the education system so these experiences could frame the parent education they will facilitate. This allowed for the parent

education to be tailored to the needs of the parents and caregivers. The questions used to guide this process were as follows:

- What do you want to know about gifted education?
- What would help you advocate for your child's educational needs at school as it relates to gifted education?
- What experiences have you had with your child's school, which had a positive impact on your child's education?

The final guiding question only solicited experiences which had positively impacted the participants children's education. This was intentional on the part of the researcher to allow participants to highlight what has worked for their children rather than dwell on what has not worked. This was done intentionally because literature on the experience of Black students highlights the negative experiences which often occur in the school system. Crozier (1996) states,

Moreover, with regard to black parents, one might argue that there is a particular urgency in getting them more involved in the light of the research demonstrating the disadvantage and discrimination experienced by black children, particularly in terms of academic achievement and school exclusions (Policy Studies Institute, 1994).

Participants were also provided with opportunities to share any additional information they wished to address during this training.

The facilitators, as a starting point and a guiding frame for the collaborative process, introduced several topics. These topics were: characteristics of giftedness, social

and emotional needs of gifted learners, and parenting a gifted child or children. Other topics raised by research participants, which did not align with the potential topics, were addressed as needed.

Instead of assuming what parents in a community need, the personal experiences of the parents who were participating in the training series grounded and framed the learning activities. These experiences, both good and bad, allowed for the training to be relevant to the audience. These are the second and third principles of Knowles (1984) Adult Learning Theory. The idea that adult learning is problem centered instead of content driven was a critical component of this innovative design for providing parent education. Not only will parents or caregivers within the community be delivering the parent education, they were also involved in the development of the content.

The steps to the research process began with the participants meeting with the training facilitators and the researcher. This initial meeting started with a shared meal. The researcher provided the food. This time was used for the facilitators and the researcher to meet and develop rapport with the participants. After the meal, the researcher shared the context of the research study again and reviewed with participants the option to cease to participate at anytime if they wish. Upon completion of this aspect of the research process, the researcher turned the process over to the facilitators who began to collaborate with participants to develop topics for the content of the training. Rapport with participants was critical for the facilitator in order to allow for all participants to be engaged in leading this process. During this time, the researcher was observing and taking notes on the process as it developed. The researcher used a

framework to guide the notes taken during the observations. The conversations were also audio recorded. The framework used to capture observation notes can be found in Appendix E.

The participants engaged in four conversations in which they collaboratively developed a parent education series. Cotton & Wikelund (1989) state it is important to “provide orientation and training for parents, but remember that intensive, long-lasting training is neither necessary nor feasible” (p. 8). Four conversations provided time for the parents and caregivers to build rapport with the facilitators, explore content, and develop a product for training other parents and caregivers. Table 1 provides information about each of the four conversations. The four conversations were held at a local recreation center in early fall 2016. Fall was selected for this project intentionally. By completing this work in the fall, the participants will be able to provide the training within their communities throughout the remainder of the school year if participants choose. The recreation center was selected in collaboration with input from the community partner. Thursday evenings were chosen to accommodate the facilitators work schedules and to allow for working parents and caregivers to participate after work. The four conversations were one hour in duration with a 15-minute focus group at the end of each hour-long session. The first conversation included a 45-minute meal and introduction to the study prior to the start of the conversation.

Table 1

Conversation Details

Conversation 1

August 25, 2016

Martin Luther King Recreation Center

5:15 pm-6:00pm Dinner

6:00pm-7:00pm Training Session

7:00-7:15pm Focus group

Conversation Content

Dinner will provide time for the researcher and the facilitators to develop rapport with the participants and to obtain written consent prior to the start of the first conversation. This is the time when the researcher will review the study and answer any questions.

The conversation will begin with the facilitators asking participants the following questions:

- What do you want to know about gifted education?
- What would help you advocate for your child's educational needs at school as it relates to gifted education?
- What experiences have you had with your child's school, which had a positive impact on your child's education?

Participants will also be provided with opportunities to share any additional information they wish to address during this training.

The facilitators will share information about possible topics to be explored. These topics will be: characteristics of giftedness, social and emotional needs of gifted learners, and parenting a gifted child or children. The parents and caregivers will

decide on which topics are most relevant to them to include in the parent education approaches they will be developing over the course of the remaining three conversations.

The focus group will consist of all participants and will be led by facilitators. The framing questions for the focus group will be:

- What did you like about the session today?
- What didn't work during today's session?
- What else would you like to tell us?

Conversation 2

September 1, 2016

Martin Luther King Recreation Center

6:00pm-7:00pm Training Session

7:00-7:15pm Focus group

Conversation Content

Conversation two will take the topics identified in the first conversation and provide resources and information to the participants to help them develop a knowledge base on the topic beyond the knowledge they already had on the topic.

The focus group will consist of all participants and will be led by facilitators. The framing questions for the focus group will be:

- What did you like about the session today?
- What didn't work during today's session?
- What else would you like to tell us?

Conversation 3

September 8, 2016

Martin Luther King Recreation Center

6:00pm-7:00pm Training Session

7:00-7:15pm Focus group

Conversation Content

The third conversation will continue to allow participants to gain knowledge of the topics identified by the participants as important to include in parent education opportunities. The participants will review and discuss possible delivery methods by examining several existing parent education models (SMPG, samples of parent education sessions provided in various districts around Colorado).

The focus group will consist of all participants and will be led by facilitators. The framing questions for the focus group will be:

- What did you like about the session today?
- What didn't work during today's session?
- What else would you like to tell us?

Conversation 4

September 15, 2016

Martin Luther King Recreation Center

6:00pm-7:00pm Training Session

7:00-7:15pm Focus group

Conversation Content

The fourth conversation will focus on product development and finalization of the parent training session by the participants. This conversation should result in a product, which can then be used by the participants to provide parent education within their own community.

The focus group will consist of all participants and will be led by facilitators. The framing questions for the focus group will be:

- What did you like about the session today?
 - What didn't work during today's session?
 - What else would you like to tell us?
-

At the end of each of the conversations, the researcher led focus groups with the participants to gather information about the conversation. The questions, which guided the focus group after each conversation, are:

- What did you like about the session today?
- What didn't work during today's session?
- What else would you like to tell us?

This allowed the facilitators to adjust their approach based on feedback in future conversations and allow for ongoing data collection during the phenomenon.

Upon completion of the training, select participants in the study met with the researcher for individual interviews. The interviews focused on the phenomenon of collaboratively developing a parent education series. One focused interview was held with each participant for duration of up to 90 minutes. Ninety minutes in either one or two conversations was selected as an approximate time frame for gathering the personal

experiences of the individual participants. The interview participants did not need a second conversation to complete their individual interviews. The product developed as a result of this process is also included as data for this research study.

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the research study approach. The five research participants and two facilitators participated in four conversations in which they collaborated to develop a parent education approach targeted to African American parents and caregivers. The outcome of the four conversations was a collaboratively developed product. The product was developed over the course of the four conversations and is used as one data point to explore the phenomenon. Following each of the four conversations, participants took part in focus groups. Finally, three individual interviews were conducted to gather additional data about the phenomenon being studied. This visual does not include data analysis approaches which were used in this study. This information will be provided in the Chapter 4.

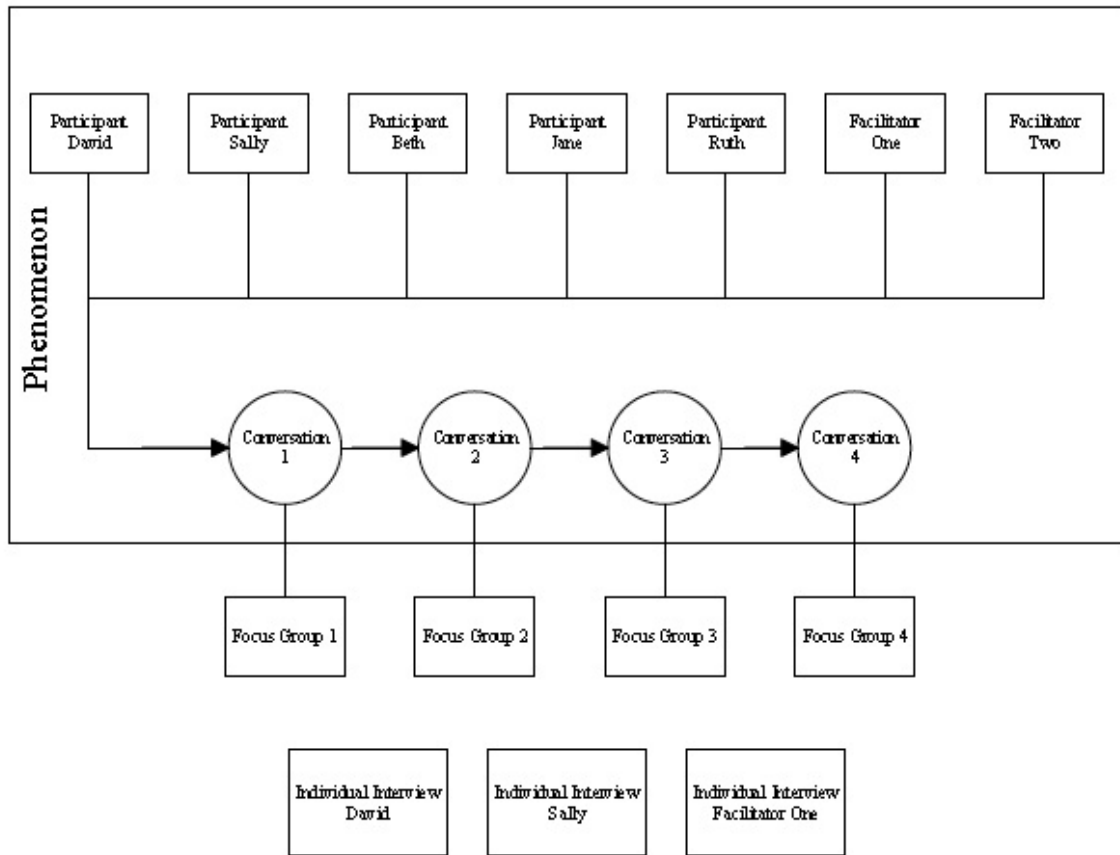


Figure 1. Visual Representation of Research Approach

Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

Several instruments were used to allow for the triangulation of data. Observation, focus groups, interviews and product analysis were all employed as part of this research project. Ely (1994) defines triangulation as the convergence of data gathered through a variety of methods. This approach contributes to the trustworthiness (Ely, 1994).

Trustworthiness occurs when research is “carried out fairly, that products represent as closely as possible the experiences of the people who are studied” (p.93). *Figure 2* visually represents the data collection methods used for this study.

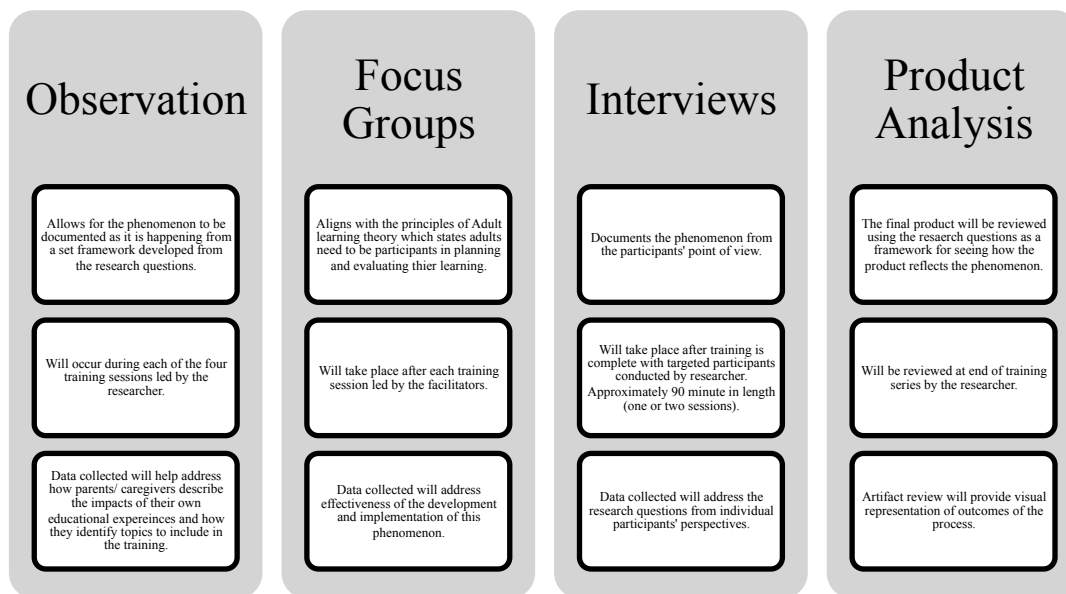


Figure 2. Four data collection methods employed during this study.

Creswell (2013) states, “observation is one of the key tools for collecting data in qualitative research” (p.166). This research study used the nonparticipant/observer as participant approach to observation. Creswell (2013) describes the nonparticipant/observer as participant approach as one in which “the researcher is an outsider of the group under study, watching and taking field notes from a distance” (p. 167). This approach allowed the researcher to record data and take field notes without being involved in the activity (Creswell, 2013). Field notes will be prepared after the observation in order to capture a “thick and rich narrative description of the people and events under observation” (Creswell, 2013, p. 168). Observation requires participants are informed data was collected during this process. Informed consent was collected prior to the initial conversation of the training series as noted earlier.

Focus groups were held after each of the four conversations and data was collected from these conversations. The researcher captured the information gathered during these focus groups in the observation form and also audio recorded the focus

groups. This data will be used to inform the research question of the effectiveness of the development and implementation of the collaborative process for creating parent education.

Interviews were also an integral instrument for data collection in this phenomenological research study. According to Glesne (1999), “Your research questions formulate what you want to understand; your interview questions are what you ask people in order to gain that understanding” (p.69). A complete list of interview questions is included in Appendix C. The questions were developed to intentionally be very open-ended and therefore not leading. Leading questions are questions in which “the interviewee hints about what would be a desirable or appropriate kind of answer” (Patton, 1990, p. 318 as cited in Glesne, 1999, p. 72). Interviews provide the researcher with a window into the phenomenology experienced by the participants from their perspective and serve to provide insight into the research questions. The interview questions were asked in parent friendly language; what was their experience of the phenomenon and what contexts influenced their experiences?

Finally, the end product developed as a result of the collaboration is included as part of this research study. The collaboratively developed parent education conversation talking points will be used to frame the data gathered from the observation of the process, focus groups, and the individual interviews with participants.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis for this research study followed systematic procedures. The observation notes were coded and categories or themes identified. Interviews were

reviewed for significant statements, which were analyzed and then coded into meaning units of overarching themes, or clusters of meaning, which emerged from the participant interviews (Creswell, 2013). This study is grounded in a phenomenological approach that relies on the stories of participants to make meaning of the data collected through observation and the final outcome/product of the phenomenon. Once the significant statements and clusters of meaning were identified from all three data sources, a description of the participants experience was written. This textual description will include the context of the training series, or a structural description of the context (Creswell, 2013).

Threats to Reliability and Validity

In order to limit validity threats in this phenomenological research study, member checking was employed to check the credibility and interpretations of the interview data (Creswell, 2013). The researcher also uses rich, thick description so readers may generalize findings “because of shared characteristics” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p 32. as cited in Creswell, 2013, p 252). The use of low inference descriptors, using verbiage similar to that of participant’s accounts added to the validity of this research study (Johnson, 1997, p.283). The choice to use as many verbatim statements, low inference descriptors, as possible for this study also allowed for participants’ own words to tell the story of the phenomenon.

Other considerations, which may impact the validity and reliability of this study, include participants wanting to please the researcher. This threat will be limited by

ensuring the interview questions are not leading and the participants can speak freely about their experiences.

Observation could also impact the training process because it might be considered intrusive or impact the rapport of the group (Creswell, 2003). The nonparticipant/observer as participant approach to observation limited the interaction of the observer and the participants thus minimizing this possible threat to the validity and reliability of this research study.

Since this study was based on a collaboratively developed parent education series, there is a risk to reliability. The nature and variability of personal experiences is a challenge of this study. In order to increase the reliability, detailed notes and audio recording were used to capture the information from the interviews. The primary researcher will use direct quotes in the narrative description of the phenomenon to assist with reliability.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study captures the “what” and “how” of the research study participant experiences. These experiences were captured to answer the research question: How is a community-based parent gifted education series effectively developed and implemented? Chapter Four will present the data collected as part of this research study. Themes, which emerged from observation, focus groups, individual interviews and product analysis, will be used to tell the story of the phenomenon.

Chapter Four: Results

Chapter Four presents the data collected to describe the phenomenon being examined by this research study, the collaborative work of developing conversations about gifted education relevant to Black parents and caregivers. This study was designed to describe parents or caregivers of Black students shared experiences with creating these types of conversations. Data for this study was gathered through observations, focus groups, and individual participant interviews. The final product created by study participants was also used to shed light on the phenomenon. The researcher observed four conversations, each an hour in length. During these conversations, the researcher observed the interactions of parents and facilitators as they discussed and planned the creation of an approach for parent education targeted to address the needs of Black parents or caregivers. This collaboratively developed parent education approach was designed to specifically address to the needs of African American or Black parents and caregivers.

Both focus groups and semi-structured interviews were used to develop a more complete picture of the phenomenon. Through the focus groups, all research participants were able to provide feedback to the researcher on the effectiveness of the facilitation approach as well as provide input regarding the planning for future conversations. Three semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to add additional data to help the researcher understand and explain the phenomenon through the eyes of the study participants.

First, an overall description of the phenomenon will be discussed using Moustakas's (1994) phenomenology approach which focuses on the description of the experiences of the study participants and less on the researcher's interpretations (Creswell, 2013). This description will include the setting, participant information, and the facilitator role. Each of the four data collection methods will be explained. Following this explanation, data analysis procedures will be shared and the themes which emerged will be identified. These themes will be then used to create a picture of the phenomenon using data collected through each of the four data collection methods; observation, focus groups, interviews, and product. Figure 3 provides a visual representation of the data analysis process used for this study.

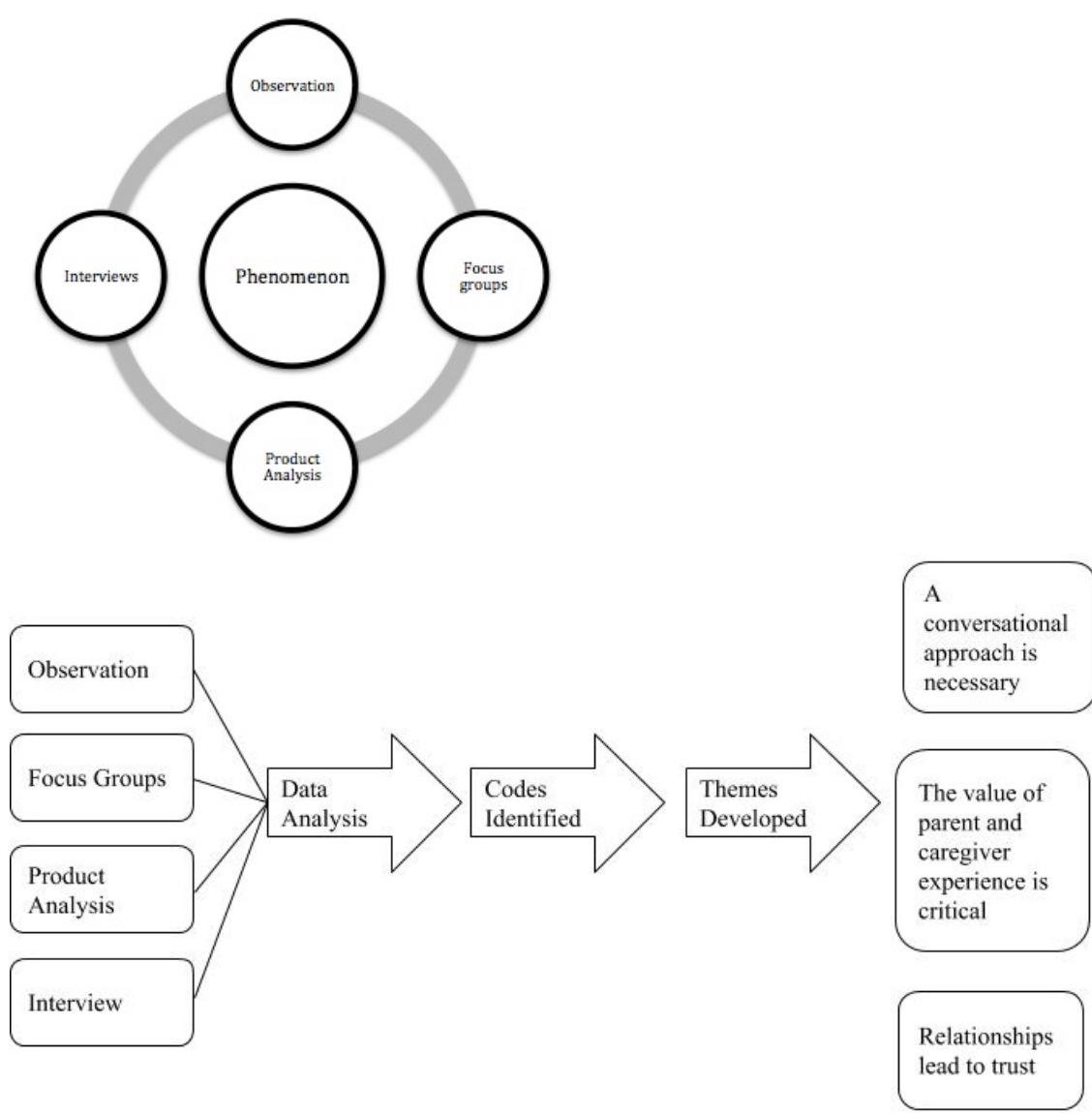


Figure 3. Data Sources and Data Analysis Process

Finally, a conclusion will summarize the information shared in this chapter and lead into Chapter Five where a discussion of the data as it relates to the research questions and theoretical frame will be explored.

Description of phenomenon

Setting. The research studies four evening conversations were held at a recreation center community room located in the Denver metro area. The purpose, of these conversations, was for parents, caregivers and facilitators to collaboratively develop parent education for other Black parents or caregivers of gifted children. The bustling recreation center hosts community members for fitness and craft classes throughout the day and evening. The community room used for the conversations was spacious with beige and rose-colored cinder block walls on three sides. The fourth wall was a movable partition, which separated the room used for the conversations from the jewelry making class taking place in the other half of the room. One research participant, Sally, was also taking the jewelry making class so periodically she would venture over to the other side to grab her materials. The low hum of the jewelry polishing tools could be heard periodically over the course of each session. The background noises of the jewelry making class did not seem to distract participants or facilitators.

The room was filled with plastic six foot folding tables in rows facing the front of the room with hard plastic chairs around each table. Since the group size was small, the researcher of the study pulled two tables together so participants could sit facing one another rather than rows. As seen in *Figure 4*, the tables used were near the entrance to room rather than being toward the “front” of the room as identified by the room set up

when the researcher arrived. One table was pushed along the partition wall and snack and beverages were provided. Prior to the first conversation, dinner was provided for participants and facilitators so as to provide an opportunity to build relationships between parties. Refreshments were provided for the remaining three conversations. An agenda and guiding questions were placed on the wall for each of the four conversations on large chart paper. After the first conversation, the notes from each prior conversation, which had been captured on chart paper, were hung on the walls as a reference point for participants and facilitators. The images in *Figure 4* show the layout of the community room during the four conversations.

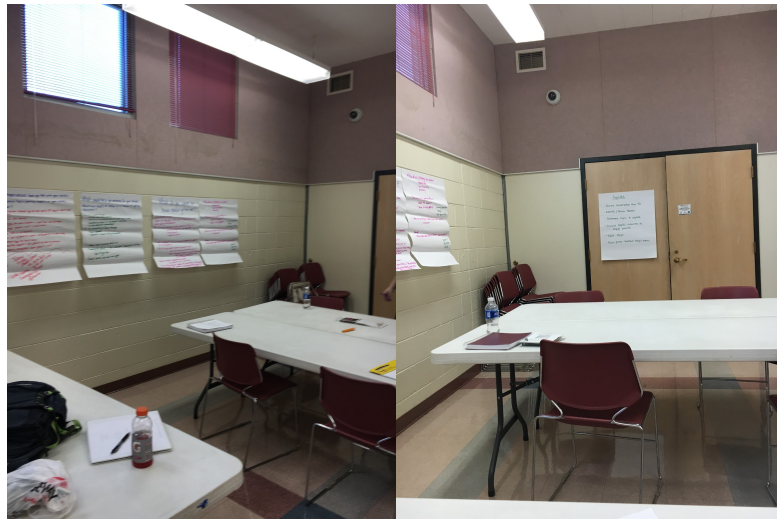


Figure 4. Recreation Center, Community Room, Denver, CO, (2016).

When reflecting on the choice of location for the study, David stated, “I don’t know how the venue could have been better...I don’t know how it could have been better to have a more neutral space” (Individual Interview, 2016). He went on to state the neutral nature of the space helped “...engender conversation...which is hard unless you have a research facility set up for that” (David, Individual Interview, 2016). David

continued to discuss the ideal setting for authentic conversations to occur when he stated, “For the conversation, as you're sitting in chairs around the living room type setting [that] would have been great, but at the same time that changes the dynamics and not everyone is comfortable in that setting (David, Individual Interview, 2016).

The intentional use of a community center rather than a school setting was well received by the research participants. The location was a neutral setting for both participants and facilitators, which as David mentioned provided a level of comfort for participants who may or may not be comfortable in a traditional school setting. African American parents have long been disenfranchised by the school system in America.

Crozier (1996) states,

Moreover, with regard to black parents, one might argue that there is a particular urgency in getting them more involved in the light of the research demonstrating the disadvantage and discrimination experienced by black children, particularly in terms of academic achievement and school exclusions (Policy Studies Institute, 1994).

Study participants. Five Black parents or caregivers participated in the research study. Four participants were female and one participant was male. Participants in this study had students in a variety of school districts and school types near the metro Denver area. Two participants had experience with their children being served in both private and public school settings.

Participants for the research study were recruited through snowball sampling. This method of recruitment aligned with the data gathered during this study which

indicated the need for parents to have a relationship and trust in order to engage in a meaningful way. Recruitment at churches and recreations centers yielded no study participants. Educational levels varied among participants, from high school diplomas to doctorates. This data was not intentionally solicited but participants shared this information over the course of the conversations had during the conversations. Only one participant was able to attend all four conversations. The other four participants attended between one and three conversations each. This was unexpected but given the circular nature of how the conversations evolved, participants were able to easily re-engage after having missed a conversation. Each participant has been assigned a pseudonym for the purposes of this study to maintain their anonymity. The pseudonyms used for the participants of this study are David, Ruth, Beth, Sally and Jane. All identifiable statements and information have been redacted from the data to ensure participants may remain anonymous. It is important to note all participants shared personal stories of both their experiences as well as that of their children. As this is a phenomenological study, this data cannot be generalized to the larger population but may be used to inform practice and future research.

The community partners for this research study participated in the recruitment of participants by sharing information about the study with other parents. Another role was providing the researcher with parent's perspective on the needs of parents and caregivers of Black gifted learners. In discussions with the community partners, the researcher heard about the challenges of raising Black children. This was especially valuable given the mother's experiences as a white female navigating the educational system but also her

experience with the school system as a parent of children who are seen as Black. While the community partners children are bi-racial, the mother shared that the children identify as Black. They are treated as Black by society due to the color of their skin. Additionally, the community partners role highlighted the research findings. It was due to an existing relationship with the researcher, which led to a level of trust that the community partners agreed to support this research. The candor and openness of the community partners assisted the researcher in setting up a framework for the project which allowed for the phenomenon to be such that participants could openly share their experiences and needs.

Facilitator role. The facilitators for this research study were selected based on their understanding of gifted education and their experience working with diverse parents and caregivers. The research also intentionally identified two white facilitators for this research study. This was done to allow the phenomenon to capture the realities which exist when a racial mismatch is present. The phenomenon would have looked different had the facilitators been the same race as the participants. The racial mismatch between educators and the families they serve is a growing challenge facing schools in the United States (Kurtzleben, 2011). Mahatmya et al. (2016) state

With the United States' teaching force representing predominantly white, middle-class females (Causey et al. 2000) and classrooms becoming increasingly diverse, more research on teachers' cultural awareness seems necessary to bolster their relationships and perceptions of youths' educational attainment, especially for students of color (p. 430-431).

The field of gifted education is not immune to these challenges. The intention of the researcher was to explore how to build effective parent education which in many cases must be done when a racial mismatch exists. Throughout this study, the facilitators will be identified as Facilitator One and Facilitator Two. Prior to each conversation, the primary researcher shared the agenda for the time together with the facilitators. The agendas were intentionally open-ended to allow the parents or caregivers opportunity to be heard and guide the conversation based on their needs. The primary researcher created the agenda for the first conversation, and all subsequent agendas were developed organically based on the previous conversation.

The importance of skilled facilitators was critical to the phenomenon. According to David

Part of it is the process; you don't get to the work unless you get to the stories. Then you have to have someone that is really skilled at pulling out the connecting part of the different stories to be able to say, 'okay here's the connection', because you can get lost in the individual stories unless you can bring it up and say here's the connection across (David, Individual Interview, 2016).

The facilitators should be able to make connections for participants while demonstrating value of the experiences and expertise of the participants. Brookfield (1986) states,

teachers of adults cannot simply function as process managers, resource persons, and technicians of learning. What teachers must strive to do, and what is perhaps

the most difficult of all pedagogic balances to strike, is to prompt adults to consider alternatives and to their own values and behaviors, without making this scrutiny such a disturbing and personally threatening experience as to become a block to learning (p. 136).

One of the facilitators spoke to this challenge during her individual interview.

Facilitator One stated,

It was really great to have a co-facilitator in the room to bounce some ideas off of as well because she was able to help us focus on their topic. They [parents] had made different comments... and so we were writing some of those down as we were talking and going off on tangents on each of these points. When I would come back and say, 'how are we going to deliver this to other parents, what is most important, and what do we need to tell them?' Then, they were able to narrow it down to a few talking points. So to be able to have a co-facilitator there who was able to say 'whoa, this is your theme' and help them point that out was helpful. At one point, I was worried I wouldn't be able to do that because I would be telling them what to focus on, and then she said 'Isn't that your theme? Isn't that what you would talk to your parents about?' To have that other voice in there was nice. For her to be able to point out connections and have them say 'yes that is our theme and topic' was helpful (Facilitator One, Individual Interview, 2016).

The intent of the facilitator role was to create an open environment in which participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences where they didn't have to hold

back their comments. Only by creating this type of environment, would the research truly capture a collaborative process and allow the researcher to truly understand the needs of Black parents. In order to create a comfortable, open environment, the facilitators consciously shifted from the typical presenter model of standing at the front of the room to sitting with participants around a table. This developed to a more conversational experience. An example of the open environment created by the facilitators was noted during the observations when the discussion turned to how the information should be delivered to parents. The facilitator suggested a presentation method such as a Power Point and David stated, “That’s the white way of doing things” (David, 2016, Conversation 3). Since the facilitators were skilled and did not take offense to or get upset by the openness of the participants, they were able to probe the participant which allowed him to articulate in Black communities, learning is cyclical, which he described as different from learning in White communities. The visual created by the participants to explain the cyclical learning needs of African American/ Black adults is found in *Figure 5*.

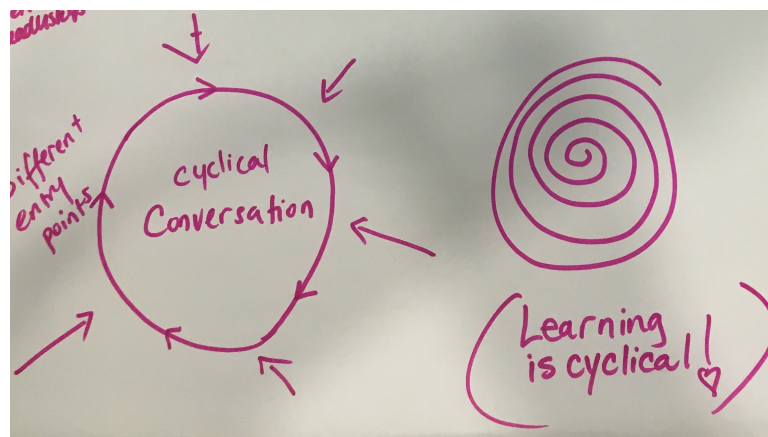


Figure 5 Visual Representation of Cyclical Conversation, Conversation 4, Denver, CO, (2016)

Gay (2002) states “the communicative styles of most ethnic groups of color in the United States are more active, participatory, dialectic, and multi- modal. Speakers expect listeners to engage with them as they speak by providing prompts, feedback, and commentary” (p.111). Gay (2002) continues, “the roles of speaker and listener are fluid and interchangeable. Among African Americans, this interactive communicative style is referred to as ‘call-response’ (Baber, 1987; Smitherman, 1977)” (p. 111). “The thinking of these speakers appears to be circular, and their communication sounds like storytelling. To one who is unfamiliar with it, this communication style ‘sounds rambling, disjointed, and as if the speaker never ends a thought before going on to something else’ ” (Gay, 2000, p. 96 as cited in Gay, 2002, p. 112).

During the individual interviews, additional data was collected, which lends insight into the participant’s feelings about how the conversations were facilitated. Sally stated,

I appreciated the fact that you all were open to embracing what we were saying and didn’t get feelings hurt and upset with us. Oftentimes when I talk about issues or things around the treatment of African American children in schools, oftentimes what can happen depending on the person, and I guess their personality type or whatever, it seems like they get upset because I’m saying what my experience is. That’s all I can really do is talk about my experience from my perspective. And so I appreciated those things (Sally, Individual Interview, 2016).

Sally further reflected on the openness of the facilitators, when she stated if the facilitators had been defensive,

...it really would have changed things for me because I would have left. If you're going to get defensive with me and you're asking me 'how can things change, or how can we fix things' that's not going to work out. I'll walk away and I'll figure out a different way to get it done and to get all of our children looked at from a space of what they need (Sally, 2016, Individual interview).

David spoke of the opportunity the conversations provided for him to reflect and think about things in a new way. He stated,

I think that the way the overall experience was facilitated help to me to kind of think through things that I hadn't thought through as a parent... The idea of saying this is more of a conversation versus this is a session or anything like that I hadn't really thought through that. And to really be able to talk through that was helpful for me (David, 2016, Individual interview).

The role of the facilitators became a critical component of the parent conversations. As the themes, which emerged during this study are explored, more information will be shared about this component as it relates to the themes.

Researcher Bracketing

Bracketing is a discussion of personal experiences the researcher may have with the phenomenon so the researcher can attend to the experiences of the participants of the study (Creswell, 2013). Bracketing provides the reader with the opportunity to “judge for themselves whether the researcher focused solely on the participants’ experiences in

the description without bringing himself or herself into the picture” (Creswell, 2013, p. 79).

The researcher’s numerous prior experiences participating in training series designed to provide a foundational skill set to both parents and educators is important to note. The majority of these prior experiences were geared toward educators, not parents. These training opportunities varied and were not all framed in the components of adult learning theory. Most of the researcher’s experience with parent education is in the delivery of content to parents in a more traditional model where the educator is the conveyor of knowledge to the parents.

As a parent of gifted learners, the researcher has attended several trainings geared toward parents. These trainings typically use a traditional model where the facilitator stands in the front of the room providing content to the participants. In most instances, predominantly white parents and caregivers attend these sessions.

As a white female, the researcher had never considered the impact of facilitation styles on different cultural sub groups of parents and caregivers. The traditional linear presentation style has worked for the researcher as a method for gaining information.

In an attempt to extract critical components of effective training for parents of Black school aged students, the researcher took steps to limit the influence of the researcher’s past experiences on the data analysis process. The data collected through the use of predetermined intentional interview questions was critical to allow participants to share their experiences and for the researcher to support the themes which were initially identified in reviewing the data from observations and the final product. The researcher

intentionally used participant's own words to describe the phenomenon as much as possible. This will ensure that researcher bias is not clouding the description of the phenomenon. This approach also values the voices of the participants.

However, as an observer of the phenomenon, the researcher's experiences cannot fully be set aside (Creswell, 2013). The researcher's personal reflections as an observer of the four conversations demonstrate the impact of this experience on the researcher. During the first conversation, the researcher felt anxious excitement and trepidation in not knowing exactly what to expect. The first conversation was more structured with set questions, which the researcher developed independently and was developed with a linear structure. As the facilitator asked the first question to open the study, the researcher observed a little reservation in the participants. The first question, "What do you want to know about gifted education?" was very specific to gifted education and assumed prior knowledge by participants. As the participants began to share, the observer worried the responses were pretty general and not as specific to the needs of African American parents as the researcher would have hoped. Ruth responded, "Is it supposed to be a structured program? What would they get in the gifted ed program that they aren't getting in the regular classroom?" (Ruth, Conversation Observation, 2016). David wondered, "How do we get principals to really understand gifted ed?" (David, Conversation Observation, 2016). The participants also asked about resources, the difference between high achievers and gifted learners, and how to challenge gifted learners both academically and socially.

As the researcher reflected on this first attempt to gather information from parents, much of what was mentioned was information commonly included in most parent education based on the researcher's own personal experience. However, the conversation began to shift as participants began to share about their experiences and the experiences of their children. The researcher observed a change in the dynamics of the conversation when this happened. Their comments built off of each other, sharing similar experiences despite the various backgrounds and age of their children. In reflecting on this initial approach, the researcher would likely begin any future research or application of this approach in professional roles with having participants share about their children first before asking specifically about gifted education. This would allow parents and caregivers to speak from a place of knowledge first before tackling topics, which they may not be as familiar with such as, gifted education.

As the conversation developed, the parents quickly formed a bond. Over the course of the remaining conversations, this bond grew and the depth of conversation allowed for the participants to express their needs in an open and honest manner. Observing participants come to revelations about how their experiences impact their parenting style and how they interact with the school system was exciting for the researcher. It was also observed the conversations were nonlinear, with parents often circling back to previous questions or comments.

This nonlinear approach to the phenomenon caused the researcher to feel anxious. The researcher, a white female, was cognizant of the limited time for the study and had planned a general outline of the conversation agendas in order to leave the final

conversation with a product. As the participants revisited previous topics and conversations during the course of the time spent together, the researcher found it difficult to navigate planning and worried a product would not be developed. The circular communication style of the study participants which Gay (2002) states “are more active, participatory, dialectic, and multi- modal. Speakers expect listeners to engage with them as they speak by providing prompts, feedback, and commentary” was in contrast to the researchers own communication style (p.111). Thus resulting in a level of discomfort for the researcher. In reflecting on this anxiety which was felt during the process and reviewing the literature and data collected, the researcher was able to see how her own preference for approaching tasks or learning, was in contrast to the participants preferred mode. This contrast is important to note as one critical consideration when educators and parents or caregivers are working collaboratively. The researcher had to understand the cause of the anxiety, be willing to embrace the anxiety, and trust the participants. Trust of educators, therefore, must exist for Black parents. Additionally, educators must trust Black parents. This sentiment was echoed in conversations with the community partners for this research study.

The overall experience as an observer of the phenomenon was energizing for the researcher. As a leader of gifted in a large district, the researcher saw implications for practice in how to engage parents. The observations provided the researcher with renewed excitement for this research to impact practice. This will be explored in more depth in Chapter Five.

Data Sources

This research study gathered data through a variety of methods: observation, interview, focus group and product analysis. This section will provide an overall explanation of each of the data sources collected in this research study. These four data sources will then be analyzed and the themes, which emerge from each data source will be used to tell the story of the phenomenon. Creswell (2003) states, “Phenomenological research uses the analysis of significant statements, the generation of meaning units, and the development of an ‘essence’ description (Moustakas, 1994)” (p. 191).

Conversation observation. The observation provided data about the overall phenomenon, which consisted of the four conversations in which Black parents and facilitators came together to develop a relevant parent education approach for Black families and caregivers. The experience of the participants and facilitators during the four conversations will be described through the themes later in this chapter. The term conversation was chosen to describe this process as it was a term used by participants when defining what parent engagement should look like for Black parents.

Prior to the beginning of the first conversation, the primary researcher, facilitators, and research participants gathered in the community room to share a meal. The meal involved small talk and a short time for the study participants to get to know one another as well as the research team. No formal data was gathered during this time but it served to set the stage for the upcoming conversation.

It was after this meal and before the conversation began, the researcher reviewed the research study expectations and provided time for participants to ask any questions

they may have about participation in the study. Participants had individually met with the researcher to complete the paperwork prior to the first conversation.

Upon completion of the meal and the overview of the study by the researcher, the facilitator stood and shared the agenda with the research participants. Prior to the conversation, the researcher developed the agenda for this conversation without input from the participants. General topics and timing were identified for the remaining three conversations but were adjusted based on participant needs. The goal of the first conversation was to have research participants begin to identify what they would like in parent education targeted specifically to their needs. The agenda created for the first conversation can be found below.

Conversation One Agenda

Welcome

Purpose

The purpose of the first meeting was to learn about the needs of the participants and identify potential topics to explore including in the final product to be developed by the final meeting.

Question and Answer

The facilitators began by asking participants the following questions:

- What do you want to know about gifted education?
 - What would help you advocate for your child's educational needs at school as it relates to gifted education?
-

-What experiences have you had with your child's school, which had a positive impact on your child's education?

Participants will also be provided with opportunities to share any additional information they wish to address during this training.

The facilitators will share information about possible topics to be explored. These topics will be: characteristics of giftedness, social and emotional needs of gifted learners, and parenting a gifted child or children.

The parents and caregivers will decide on which topics are most relevant for them to include in parent education they will be developing over the course of the remaining three conversations.

The facilitators captured the ideas and responses of the participants on chart paper on which the researcher had written the guiding questions. During the first conversation, the facilitators assisted the participants in identifying key themes in the ideas expressed. The process for this part of the meeting included participants and facilitators reviewing comments from what was captured on the chart paper and identifying any groupings of comments that share a similar overarching idea or topic. The goal of this portion of the meeting was to target the most relevant topics to begin exploring for possible inclusion in the product to be created by the last conversation of this research study.

Once the topics had been identified the facilitators and the participants worked to decide how they intended to gather the information needed to address the topics. The facilitators captured this on chart paper and helped to define next steps.

The remaining facilitator agendas for the other three conversations were created organically. Each subsequent agenda appears to be shorter in length and less prescriptive to allow for the facilitators to be led by the study participants based on what the participants identified as relevant to include in these conversations.

Conversation Two-Four Facilitator Agendas

Conversation 2 Welcome participants

Review conversation from last week, themes identified from the conversation and work to identify themes beyond those identified last week. (Researcher will bring the charts from last week.)

15-20 minutes

Once the topics have clearly been identified, one topic will be selected to develop parent education for other parents. Facilitators will ask participants: “Which topic do you feel would be the most valuable for other parents as a starting point?”

*Other topics will not be ignored but will be topics for future conversations. Given the limited time of this project the focus will be on developing parent education focused on one topic.

5-10 minutes

The facilitators and the participants will work to decide how they

intend to gather the information needed to address the topics identified. “What do we need to be sure we include in our training for other parents related to the topic? What resources on this topic might be helpful for parents?

Possible resource gathering methods: Internet research, book study, articles, videos, etc.

The facilitators will capture this on chart paper and will help to define next steps-What resources will be gathered for next

Thursday’s conversation? And by who? (The facilitators/

Researcher will be responsible for gathering the necessary resources unless the participants choose to take on some of this as part of how they wish to engage)

20 minutes

Next conversation information-We will explore possible delivery methods for the parent conversation and begin to create the final product. Other examples of gifted parent education will be shared with participants.

5 minutes

Focus Group Led by Researcher 15 minutes

Conversation 3 Welcome participants and introduce any new participants

Review conversation from last week, (Researcher will bring the

charts from last week.)

10 minutes

Content Development- Start putting together the session

(conversation- is how it was described last conversation so they may be putting together talking points rather than a format for a larger group parent session)

Audience, Objectives, Activities/Talking Points,

We will wrap up next session so this does not need to be complete by tonight.

30-45 minutes

Next session information-We will complete the product next session. It will be our final conversation together as a group. Researcher will conduct individual interviews with several participants about their experience over the course of these conversations in the next few weeks.

Focus Group Led by PI

15 minutes

Conversation 4 Welcome participants and introduce any new participants

Review conversation from previous weeks, (The researcher will bring the charts from last week.)

10 minutes

Content Development/Completion- Put together the session

(conversation- is how it was described last session so they may be putting together talking points rather than a format for a larger group parent session)

Audience, Objectives, Activities/Talking Points, Conversation starters

This should result in a product of some kind.

45 minutes

Individual interview information- The researcher will conduct individual interviews with several participants about their experience over the course of these conversations in the next few weeks.

Focus Group Led by Researcher

15 minutes

As mentioned above, the remaining three conversation agendas were created after the previous conversation and adjusted based on feedback from the group. These conversations were intentionally more organic and driven by the participants, which align to the principles of adult learning theory. One principle of adult learning theory addresses the need for learning to be problem-centered and allow for immediate application of knowledge (Merriam, 2008, p. 5). The adult learning principle of having a reservoir of life experiences providing a rich resource for learning is why conversation agendas were intentionally developed to invoke open-ended responses in which participants could draw from their life experiences (Merriam, 2008, p. 5).

During the first conversation, participants were seated around a table with the facilitator standing for much of the conversation to capture the comments of participants on the charts placed on the walls of the community room. In remaining conversations, the facilitator sat with participants, rather than standing. This simple adjustment helped the conversations become more conversational in nature. Once the facilitator intentionally sat to begin the second conversation, the researcher noticed a shift in the dynamics. In the first conversation, there was an observed divide between the facilitator and the participants with the facilitator in more of an authoritative role.

The researcher originally thought the facilitators would need to spend more time speaking in the first conversation and as the group became more comfortable, facilitator talk time would decrease. The observation data showed the amount of facilitator talk time did not decrease but there was a shift in the focus of the facilitator's talk. During the initial conversation, the facilitator asked mainly guiding questions whereas in the remaining conversations, the facilitator's questions were about making connections, probing, and clarifying participant statements.

Focus groups. After each conversation, a short focus group was led by the researcher to gather information on the effectiveness of the conversation and see if any adjustments were needed for future conversations. The data collected from the focus groups was triangulated with the other data collected as part of this research study. By including a focus group after each of the four conversations, the researcher was able to gather an additional perspective of the phenomenon being studied. Krueger & Casey (2000) state, "The focus group presents a more natural environment than that of an

individual interview because participants are influencing and influenced by others-just as they are in life” (p. 11).

The guiding questions for the focus group were:

1. What did you like about the session today?
2. What didn't work during today's session?
3. What else would you like to tell us?

All of the participants participated in the focus group after the conversations they attended. *Table 2* below outlines the feedback collected over the course of the four focus groups.

Table 2

Focus Group Data

Guiding Questions	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
What did you like about the session today?	Facilitator 1- “The relationship building” David- “Talking to other parents and understanding common experiences.”	David-“I liked the conversation.”	Sally-“I like that the truth comes out in these conversations. It is not easy or pretty but we get to the rainbow.” David- “Facilitators are good.”	Sally- “more relaxed, laid back conversation.” Jane- “Telling a story, you have a story and I want to hear it.”
What didn't	NA	David- “I don't know.”	Sally- “It is always good for me.”	NA

work during today's session?				
What else would you like to tell us?	NA	David- "I am really enjoying the conversation."	NA	NA

While participant feedback was limited during these focus group conversation, several of the themes identified in other data also emerged in this data. Krueger & Casey (2000) state, "the intent of the focus group is to promote self-disclosure among participants" (p. 7). These fifteen-minute focus groups, which followed each of the hour-long conversations provided participants with an opportunity to express their needs and allowed for the researcher to adjust and plan for the remaining conversations.

Participant interviews. Individual interviews were conducted with two of the participants and one of the facilitators. The two participants selected for individual interviews were the parents who attended the most conversations during the course of the study. The participants for the individual interviews consisted of one male and one female. The facilitator was randomly selected from the two facilitators. Each of the interviews was conducted using a standardized open-ended interview technique. The researcher conducted the participant interviews to capture " 'what' they experienced and 'how' they experienced it" (Moustakas, 1994 as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 76). In each of the interviews, the researcher used the same questions, which can be found in *Appendix C*. Each individual interview was conducted in one sitting rather than over the course of two sittings. The three interviews, in which the participants and facilitator

share about the phenomenon of developing parent education, yielded data which will help to describe the overall phenomenon.

Product. Over the course of the four conversations, a framework was developed to support African American parents and caregivers in having conversations with other African American parents and caregivers. Parents and caregivers who want to have conversations to share information about gifted education could use this framework. The overarching topic of the conversation was identified as, “How do I get the most for my kids and help them succeed?” While the goal is to increase awareness about gifted education benefits and opportunities, the term gifted was intentionally left off because participants felt the topic should be general enough to attract all parents. Jane notes the conversation should be about “telling your story” and being heard.

The identified talking points defined guiding principles for parents and caregivers when having conversations about how to get the most for their children and help them succeed. Three key guiding principles of the conversation(s) as identified by the participants were:

African American or Black parents and caregivers should:

- Stand in their truth
- Know you don’t have to accept what is being told to you
- Question everything

Participants identified the need for other parents to know they can stand in their truth. Participants’ defined standing in your truth as African American parents and caregivers knowing it is okay for them to share their experiences, speak their truth, and

expect to be heard. African American parents and caregivers should not let their experiences be negated because these experiences impact how they interact with the school system.

The second guiding principle is parents and caregivers should understand they can question what they are told and push against the system in order to advocate for their children. Participants mentioned many African American parents or caregivers, especially mothers, do not question the system because they do not want to appear to be “an angry Black woman” (Sally, 2016). Yet, participants identified this as a key principle, noting parents and caregivers must not let possible perceptions impact their advocacy for their children.

The third principle is related to the second in that it pushes parents to seek clarification and not be afraid to ask questions. Participants shared that many parents feel concern with questioning educators feeling they are not as educated and might not have anything to add (Sally, 2016). Participants who have questioned the school system shared the positive outcomes of this questioning which included adjustments to school practices related to their children, more positive interaction with the school and increased communication between parents and the school.

The result of the collaborative process was talking points for beginning conversations with other parents. *Appendix F* contains the image of the talking points developed for the conversation. Themes emerged in the final product, which will be used to describe the overall phenomenon.

Data Analysis Procedures

The first step in the data analysis process was the application of codes to the observation data, interview data, focus group data and product. “The process of coding involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in the study, and then assigning a label to the code” (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). The researcher used Dedoose, an online platform used to analyze a variety of qualitative and mixed- method research data, to assist with the coding of the study data. (Dedoose, 2016). Two levels of codes were used, parent codes and child codes. Parent codes are more general overarching topics with child codes identifying related topics with greater specificity.

The researcher used a systematic approach to identifying codes for this study. First, the researcher reviewed all the data collected for this study multiple times. Several thorough readings of the data and a review of the literature as it relates to African American parents and caregivers was the initial step to identifying codes. Notes were taken during the reading of the data. These notes included questions, insights, topics and reflections on the framework (Ely, 1994). Ely (1994) states this is the “free think” process (p. 87). The data was then broken into meaning units and these meaning units were then labeled (Ely, 1994). These labels became the codes for this study.

Each code was identified and then defined within the Dedoose (2016) system. The code descriptions were developed using common definitions of the terms from Merriam Webster Dictionary (n.d.). The parent codes used in this research study were trust, conversation, and experience. Experience was coded to include both the parent or

caregiver's personal experience with school and parent or caregiver experience related to their children and the school system. These different experiences were further coded as individual child codes to allow for greater specificity. This approach allowed the researcher to capture all forms of experience but be able to review data as it relates to specific types of participant experience. The relationship code was similarly identified as a child code to trust. Participants saw relationships as foundational to building trust, which is why the researcher identified it as a child code. Parent or caregiver advocacy for his or her children and the need to be heard were child codes linked to the parent code, conversation.

Table 3

Codes and Descriptions

Code	Description
Trust	The idea that parents and educators must have a firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of each other as relates to supporting children.
Relationship (child code)	The way in which two or more people or organizations regard and behave toward each other, which builds trust.
Conversation	The informal exchange of ideas by spoken words as a means of sharing information with parents.
Being heard (child code)	The knowledge that you are being listened to and valued.
Advocating for their children (child code)	Black parents and caregivers identifying their desires for their children when it comes to education.
Experience	The events or interactions, which individual parents have had with the educational system.
Personal	Parent and caregiver personal experiences with educational system.

Experience
(child code)

Experience with
children (child
code)

Experiences of Black parents and caregivers with the school system
when dealing with their children.

(Dictionary and Thesaurus, n.d.)

Emerging Themes and Assertions

Themes and assertions emerged from the data collected from observations, focus groups, interviews and the overall product developed as a result of the collaboration during the four conversations. Themes emerged as the researcher reviewed the codes, grouped the codes, and reviewed participant statements linked to each code. After codes were grouped and supporting data identified, themes were developed. Creswell (2013) defines themes as “broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated for form a common idea” (p. 186). *Table 4* displays the themes, theme-related components and assertions.

Table 4

Themes, Theme Related Components and Assertions

Theme	Theme-related components	Assertions
Relationships lead to trust	African American or Black parents and caregiver’s experiences with school systems impact their ability to trust.	Trust is critical for African American parents and caregivers.

The feeling of not being heard or valued by the school system causes African American or Black parents and caregivers to disengage.

Relationships, which lead to trust, are built through conversation.

African American or Black families can feel negated by the school system when their culture is not visible.

A conversational approach is necessary

Conversations are cyclical.

Parent education should be a conversation, not a contrived session similar to traditional parent education where the facilitator is the one with the knowledge and parents are there to listen.

African American or Black parents and caregivers must know they can stand in their truth.

Being heard and sharing personal experiences is critical for parents and caregivers of African American students.

Conversations are most likely to happen between those with whom there is already a connection or relationship. Leveraging African American or Black parents to share information with other African American or Black parents with whom they have a connection is a way to get information into the hands of parents.

The value of parent and caregiver experience is critical.	Personal experiences in the educational system impact how African American or Black parents approach the school system today.	Being heard and sharing personal experiences is critical for parents and caregivers of African American students.
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Parent's experiences with their children guide how they approach interactions with the school system.

The three major themes, which emerged from this research study, which will be used to describe the phenomenon, are (a) relationships lead to trust, (b) the value of parent and caregiver experiences, and (c) the need for a conversational approach. Several

sub- themes for the theme “relationships lead to trust” emerged. These themes include “being heard,” “the value of parents’ knowledge” and the “influence of experiences.” Parents and caregivers’ experiences played a pivotal role in the phenomenon. The theme of “conversation” as a way of engaging African American or Black parents emerged in what the research participants communicated as well as being observed over the course of the four conversations. These themes will be used as a framework for describing the phenomenon being studied. Figure 6 shows a visual representation of the themes which emerged over the course of this research study. Conversations being the foundational component to building trust. Through conversations where parents are able to share their experiences and be valued for these experiences relationships emerge which then lead to trust.

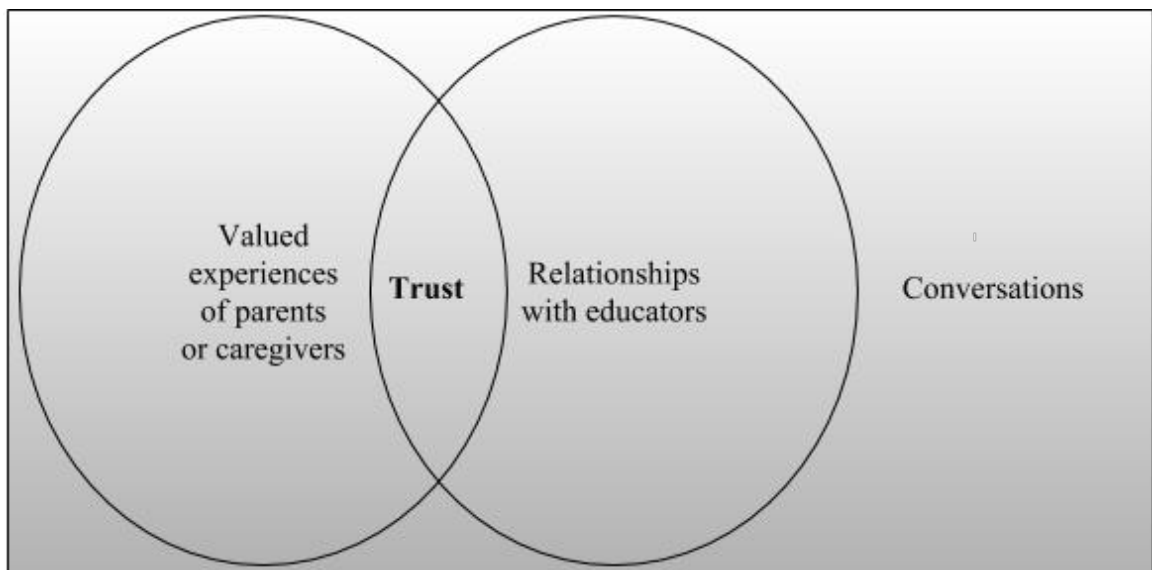


Figure 6. Visual representation of themes which emerged in study, 2016

Relationships lead to trust. The overarching need for participants to trust one another was a theme, which emerged through the course of this study. Participants spoke about the need for relationships in order to develop trust. “Fordham and Ogbu (1986) maintain that because African-Americans collectively have been shunned and oppressed economically, politically, socially, and psychologically, they have developed a sense of collective identity that is in opposition to the social identity of Whites” (Bass, 2009, p. 44). Beth raised a concern related to this theme when she stated,

A lot of parents don't have relationships with the schools, and are we taking an additional step to have those conversations with those parents? Because I don't necessarily think that I would take the initiative to have the conversation. I think more parents are on that side and not necessarily taking the initiative then there are those that are on the side of taking the initiative to have the conversation (Beth, Conversation Observation, 2016).

When relationships do not exist, assumptions can drive actions. Sally reflected on an experience she had with an educational professional whom she felt allowed micro aggressions to drive actions. Sally stated, “when you say that, it's a micro aggression” in response to a comment she had heard an education professional make at a meeting about Black children being more violent. She further stated, “It gives you permission to not deal with it because I [the educator] keep establishing there's something scary about you [Black children] because there's something innate in it [Black children] so I [the educator] don't have to deal with myself” (Sally, 2016, Conversation Observation).

Assumptions around parent engagement may also stem from a lack of relationship and trust between parents and the school. David stated,

If the school is not supporting my child I'm going to find other organizations that are going to support my child and that is where I put my energy. I'm not going to put my energy in school and so then you're wondering why I'm not there. [It's] because I'm in a place where I feel I'm going to get the support for my child (David, 2016, Conversation Observation).

When relationships and trust are nonexistent it is difficult for information to be shared, “because when you always put it in a space of well this is a nice person. That's great, they may be a nice person all day long but ... I may not feel safe around that person so I'm not going to talk to you about [anything]” (Sally, 2016, Conversation Observation).

When a relationship exists with a school, “those things made it more positive because they [educators] understood how to interact and they weren't making assumptions... If you can get that out of the way, if it is more positive for me [the parent] then it is going to be more positive for my child” (David, 2016, Conversation Observation). David went on to state,

If I can trust someone in the administration and I can say you are going to take care of my kid, that you're going to protect my kid, that you're going to try and get to know and understand my kid, and that you are going to know and understand my expectations as a parent, it's better when I feel like the whole system is a group of people I feel like I can trust (David, 2016, Conversation Observation).

Regarding “relationships leading to trust,” Facilitator One indicated understanding culture is imperative to building trust when she stated, “Let's say you are going to deliver this [parent sessions] or engage in a parent conversation... what would be some helpful resources that are culturally responsive that are not coming from necessarily a mainstream middle-class white female teacher's perspective to help engage parents in diving in or creating these relationships?” (Facilitator One, 2016, Conversation Observation).

In order to build relationships according to study participants, it is important to consider how information is delivered. Critical to this delivery is a relationship, which allows for all participants to be in a comfortable space. Sally stated,

Getting people access to the information, at the same time making sure it's a space where they're comfortable because I know in having conversations about race in the schools with the teachers and the administrators, a lot of them talk about being uncomfortable but the thing people have to understand is that for Black people we've never really been comfortable. So how is that comfortable space made possible for Black people? You know, where they feel they don't have to look over their shoulder all the time (Sally, 2016, Individual interview).

During the individual interview, Facilitator One shared her concern about being a barrier to the participants. She stated, “I was concerned that with me being a White female leading and my co-facilitator being a White female, I was concerned that they may not open up. I was concerned that I was a barrier to them...” (Facilitator, Individual Interview, 2016).

Study participants spoke of leveraging existing relationships to begin to establish a channel for information to flow to Black parents and caregivers. “Of course there are the churches that you would have more of an opportunity to be able to get in and have those conversations, but it has to be about how you are supporting the organizations that parents already trust to support their kids. Those are the organizations you have to go to” (David, 2016, Conversation Observation). Ochoa & Rhodes (2005) state, “To better understand the possible cultural and social perspectives of parents, consultants should seek assistance from persons knowledgeable of the culture (i.e., cultural brokers), as necessary” (p.89). Participants mentioned such cultural brokers such as Jack and Jill of America, Inc. The mission of Jack and Jill of America, Inc., “is a membership organization of mothers with children ages 2 – 19, dedicated to nurturing future African American leaders by strengthening children through leadership development, volunteer service, philanthropic giving and civic duty” (Jack and Jill, 2017). This organization and others support Black families and are places where relationships are already established and trust is present.

This theme of “relationships leading to trust” was observed and noted as a critical component of the phenomenon being studied. During the focus group, Facilitator One mentioned, “the relationship building” during the conversations as something she felt worked well. This theme also emerged in the individual interviews. In her individual interview, Sally commented on how quickly the participants were able to establish a relationship despite their varying backgrounds. The study participants were able to

develop a relationship and trust with one another through the sharing of experiences and stories, which allowed them to see connections with other participants.

The value of parent and caregiver experience is critical. Parent and caregivers' experiences with the educational system impact how they interact with their children's school. This is true for all parents and caregivers but in the case of African American parents and caregivers it is especially critical. Jolly et al. (2012) states

African American parents clearly exert a positive impact on their children's achievement, but we know less about the specific practices through which this influence occurs. More work clearly needs to be done to learn about parents of gifted and high-achieving learners from non-majority backgrounds... (p. 273).

This theme emerged from the data gathered through observation, focus groups, individual interviews and the product. The four conversations provided a space in which participants could share personal stories about their own experiences with the educational system and the experiences they have had with their children. It was through these stories participants came to the realization while they may have come from different backgrounds, socioeconomic levels, and educational levels they all shared similar experiences of being African American. When reflecting on her experience during the conversations, Sally stated in her individual interview,

I also really enjoy the fact that even though I don't feel like I am as educated as a lot of the people; there I felt we had a kind of common understanding. We may have been from different walks of life educationally but from a life experience

standpoint we had very similar experiences. I really appreciated that piece
(Individual Interview, 2016).

Similarly, during the first conversation, David shared with another participant,

So your experiences are not so different than my experiences, and I think if we are talking about parents of Black gifted students, it doesn't matter that you went to college for a little bit and I have a Ph.D. You still have the same experiences when we walk in the school and they don't know the difference because they are still treating us the same (Conversation Observation, 2016).

Throughout the four conversations personal experiences of participants, both their own experiences growing up, as well as the experiences they have had as parents or caregivers of Black children provided the foundation or grounding for the conversations. These grounding experiences led to the product and outcomes, which were designed. A participant shared their personal experience of being identified for gifted services, going once to the gifted class and then never going again. The participant didn't know if she just slipped through the cracks or whether her mother intentionally pulled her out because of social pressures from the community. Ruth stated,

I don't know if my mom pulled my out of the program because of what church folks told her or if they just didn't care anymore, I just feel like somebody should have tied up loose ends with my mom and said hey what's going on or my mom should have talked to the teacher more instead of them just sending a paper saying you child has been selected to be in the program. Why not have a one on one and

a face to face to really tell them what this program is about? (Conversation Observation, 2016).

Other experiences highlighted underlying biases, such as the assumption by an educator that one participant was a single mother. Another participant was put into special education for most of her early education because a teacher did not believe she was capable of the level of work she had done on a project. Only after several years, did another teacher finally see that she did not need special education but at that point, she had missed out on critical content to allow her to be successful in higher-level classes. This experience has shaped how she advocates for her children. During her individual interview, she was reflecting on the phenomenon and made a telling statement about how she typically feels when interacting with the school system. Sally stated, “Even though I put my boxing gloves to the side [for this study], I still have them right there because I have to be ready” (Individual Interview, 2016).

During the focus group, Facilitator One mentioned relationship building as one of the things she liked about the first conversation. David mentioned, “Talking to other parents and understanding common experiences” as one of the things he enjoyed about the conversation. Jane stated, “Telling a story. You have a story, and I want to hear it” is another thing she found powerful about the session.” Both of these statements connect to this theme, which emerged as a critical piece of this phenomenon.

The individual interviews ask participants to explain their experiences during the four conversations. All three interviewees expressed surprise or an “ah-ha” related to their experience during this research study. Sally stated, “All I can say about the

experience I had and the perception I got from it, was I felt welcomed. I was definitely surprised that we were able to get to the meat of some of the issues fairly quickly” (Individual Interview, 2016). Facilitator One also echoed this statement during her interview when she stated,

I felt like they were pretty honest and open, very comfortable with the process. So that was very nice to see; because like I said, I was worried that they weren’t going to talk and they were going to say things on the surface level that they thought I wanted to hear because I am so entrenched in the education system and a white female. But you know a couple of the participants, they just told it how it was and they didn’t hold anything back, which was really nice. They saw that we were doing this [outreach] even though we are entrenched in the system. We want to make that change for them and their families and make changes for those families that we aren’t reaching and so that was an ah-ha (Facilitator One, Individual Interview, 2016).

David described the effect of the experience when he stated,

So I think the biggest ah-ha for the experience was seeing that other parents are going through the same thing and that as far as how do we support our children and it confirms all the other things that we know like my level of education, my SES or anything like that does not mitigate the issues of being Black” (Individual Interview, 2016).

In her interview, Facilitator One stated, “The things that came out of the conversations really hit home about the experiences of African American families” (Facilitator, Individual Interview, 2016).

Facilitator One spoke of reflecting on her practice as a facilitator and practitioner. She expressed the moment of realization when the participants offered up a way of connecting with parents of Black families, which was nothing like she would have anticipated. Facilitator One stated,

Going through this process, it made me think about how I approach work with parents. In the past, I've always done a more traditional presentation to parents. I would get up, I would do a PowerPoint, give a presentation and they would ask questions. And really what I was doing was trying to educate them and that was not necessarily always my purpose. But that is how it came across, at least that is what the parents in this study said. They really just want to have a conversation, that was a huge ah-ha moment for me (Facilitator, Individual Interview, 2016).

The talking points, which emerged as the final product of the four collaborative conversations, also highlighted the theme of “valuing experiences.” These identified talking points or guiding principles for Black parents and caregivers encourage other parents and caregivers to:

- Stand in their truth
- Know you don't have to accept what is being told to you
- Question everything

Participants' defined "standing in your truth" as African American parents and caregivers sharing their experiences, speak their truth, and expecting to be heard. According to participants, African American parents and caregivers should not let their experiences be negated. It is those experiences which impact how they interact with the school system.

Additionally participants noted, parents and caregivers should understand they can question what they are told and push against the system in order to advocate for their children. Participants mentioned the concern of many African American parents or caregivers, especially mothers, of appearing to be "an angry Black woman" (Sally, 2016). Despite this concern, participants identified this as a key principle. Participants noted parents and caregivers must not let possible perceptions impact their advocacy for their children.

The third guiding principle pushes parents to seek clarification and not be afraid to ask questions. Participants shared many parents feel concern with questioning educators feeling they are not as educated and might not have anything to add (Sally, 2016). Participants who have questioned the school system shared the positive outcomes of this questioning which included adjustments to school practices related to their children, more positive interaction with the school and increased communication between parents and the school. By engaging in questioning, participants are able to share their thoughts and experiences with the educators charged with supporting their children.

When reflecting on these outcomes and the entire process, David stated, "I think of this as a more organic approach, so the white way of doing it is to say start here, then

[the next step is] here... where there is more a circular conversation with many different entry points [needed for Black parents]" (Individual Interview, 2016). The various points of entry include (a) where and who to go to, (b) a short list of characteristics, (c) examples of children's work and (d) supporting young children as they enter school.

This list of characteristics was developed out of the conversation in which participants shared their own experiences and things they wish they had known. The research participants identified several characteristics of Black gifted learners to use as starting points for beginning a conversation with other parents. Participants intentionally chose a short list, which was easy to remember and included behaviors parents can easily notice within their child. The identified characteristics were sensitivity, advanced language or highly verbal, natural leadership ability, and asynchronous learning. Sally defined asynchronous learners as, "more sensitive, more knowledgeable about certain things" (Conversation Observation, 2016). Natural leadership ability and advanced language are two other characteristics participants felt would be valuable for parents to understand as signs of giftedness. Many parents don't always recognize advanced language in their own children according to David. David states, "the hard thing is that what I always say is the kids you have are the kids you have. So you don't have a comparison point to be able to say that. So we don't really realize it until other people are talking about our kids and they're saying his language is up here" (Conversation Observation, 2016). Similarly, natural leadership ability might go unnoticed or be seen by educators as a negative trait (Sally, 2016).

When working to identify characteristics which they felt applied to gifted African American children, participants choose to focus on a small number of characteristics rather than using a long list. Jane states,

You know maybe three things that pop out that said this kid should be looked at and maybe you can come up with three things and maybe they're stronger on some and teetering on others but this child deserves an opportunity or a once-over to just see where this kiddo is.

The research participants intentionally chose positive characteristics and wanted to avoid any of the negative characteristics. Sally stated, “the reason why you have to be so careful is because ... Black children tend to be labeled as a problem more often than it being something deeper and so you have to be critically careful of that piece.” The participants insisted focusing on positive aspects of giftedness was critical because so often Black parents or caregivers are only hearing negative things about their children.

Parents shared a common theme of not knowing about services or the steps needed to access gifted education for their children when they entered preschool. They also noted conversations would be different based on identification status of their children. Those parents or caregivers with children already identified might need more information about which schools have culturally relevant gifted programming. Those parents or caregivers with children who have not been identified might need more information about what giftedness looks like and therefore the short list of characteristics might be most helpful.

As parents and caregivers, Sally states, “I am my child's first line of education. I am their first educator because I'm the one that teaches them how to function in the world” (Conversation Observation, 2016). As the first educator, African American parents and caregivers must know that they have the right to question what they are being told and ask for what their child needs. Their experiences have shaped how they interact with their children’s schools and impact how they advocate.

A conversational approach is necessary. Throughout the four conversations, another theme, which became evident, was the idea the product would not be a contrived session but rather a conversation. David reflected during his individual interview about the idea of a conversation stating, “It honored the cultural relevance of the group” (Individual Interview, 2016). Facilitator Two summarized the thinking of the group in relation to the final product the participants wanted to develop when she stated, “Black parents aren’t necessarily going to come out for a session, they want a conversation with someone they know” (Conversation Observation, 2016).

When reflecting on the idea of approaching parents through conversation, Beth stated,

I think that's really good because a lot of times GT is so exclusive and it tends to have the stigma attached to only a certain classification fall into the GT category so I think that even if we're able to infiltrate those communities that are not likely to think about their kids as GT, then we are getting more of that information out there. Unfortunately, at that point, they may reject it because they're just not used to hearing the language or hearing that information or being considered for that

information. So it will take them seeing that [information] several times and then the additional conversations that we need to have (Beth, Conversation Observation, 2016).

This statement ties closely to the final product, which incorporates the idea that for African American parents or caregivers, learning is cyclical and should involve conversations which circle back and go deeper each time. This approach is similar to spiral curricular models used in many school systems. These spiral models introduce a topic then circle back reintroducing the topic and going deeper.

David echoed sentiments about the need for a conversational approach to engaging African American or Black parents. David stated during the focus group, “I am really enjoying the conversation” (Focus Group, 2016). As the time together became more conversational, participants expressed satisfaction with the conversations. Sally stated, “I like that the truth comes out in these conversations. It is not easy or pretty but we get to the rainbow” (Focus Group, 2016). This focus group data aligns with the conversation theme, which is visible in the other data collected as part of this research study.

During the individual interviews, the theme of information sharing through a conversation was also present. The challenges faced when attempting to engage adults are addressed when Sally states,

So if we can get adults that are in our children of color’s lives to get past themselves, if we can get them past that, then what I believe begins to happen is people look at things from a very logical and rational standpoint. Because people

that are in a state of chaos and disrepair all the time, they really can't, and I hate to use the word can't, but they really can't open themselves to being educated and seeing things from a different space and understanding what giftedness or asynchronous learning really is because they're on the defense all the time” (Individual interview, 2016).

She goes on:

It's sometimes all about this assimilation piece. People have to be able to be who they are; and when they're not, that's what puts people on the defense.... If people want to come somewhere and have access to free food and dinner, take their shoes off and just kick back, sometimes we have to allow folks to do that because it's really about meeting people where they're at. If we can meet people where they're at, we can be in a much better space because what begins to happen is people begin to see their own value (Sally, Individual interview, 2016).

By creating a list of talking points with multiple entry points as a final product, the participants respected their culture. Sally states,

I'll just put it this way in terms of most people of color, specifically Black people, we tend to learn and do things in a more cyclical way, things and life move in cycles. Like an ebb and flow, as opposed to we're going to do it this way today. Life doesn't work like that” (Conversation Observation, 2016).

David further speaks to the conversational style used by African Americans. He states, “It's a spiral upward but it also has spiraled downward so you keep coming back

and you keep going deeper and deeper until you hit that point, but you still have to keep coming back” (Conversation Observation, 2016).

Jane spoke of the need to have conversations with parents so they are aware of the opportunities for their children. Jane states, “I think that's where the training comes in because if they have not had any conversation or talk to anybody about gifted, the only thing they are getting to talk about is about their child being expelled or suspended or this or that.”

The final product honored the culture of African American parents and provided a framework for having conversations, which African American parents could use. Sally reflected on the product during her individual interview,

I do think we could all use that formula. But I do think what needs to happen throughout this is almost constant consultation. [Such as] okay how are we doing with this, do we need to go back to this, do we need to go back to that. You know constantly checking in because until you get to a space where truly things are comfortable and the people, I mean all of us are open, to the process we have to do constant checks and balances (Individual interview, 2016).

The conversational theme helped define the phenomenon. As the researcher observed the conversations, the more conversational the sessions became the more open participants were to sharing. As the participants defined the need for a conversation rather than a session as a way to approach parent education, a paradigm shift occurred for the facilitators and the researcher. African American parents having conversations with

someone they trust is the approach which participants identified as the most effective way of sharing information about giftedness.

Conclusion

Chapter Four shares the data gathered over the course of this research study through observation, focus groups, individual interviews and product analysis. Themes, which emerged from the four data sources, were used to describe the phenomenology of collaboratively developing parent education. The three overarching themes identified in this study are:

- Relationships lead to trust;
- A conversational approach is necessary;
- The value of parent and caregiver experience is critical.

This data provided insight into how parent education efforts can be developed and sustained with African American parents and caregivers. Chapter Five will explore the research questions and theoretical frame in relation to the data collected. Limitations and implications of this research will also be provided in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the process of collaboratively developing gifted education conversations for parents and caregivers of Black students in the Denver metro area. Chapter Five will connect data collected throughout this study to the research questions and theoretical frame as well as address personal and practical lessons learned, limitations, and implications for practice and future research. The themes, which emerged from the data collected in this study, will be explored in relation to the following primary and secondary research questions: How is a community-based parent gifted education series effectively developed and implemented.

Sub questions:

1. How do parents of Black gifted learners describe the impacts of their own educational experiences on their relationship with their children's school?
2. What do parents of Black gifted learners identify as relevant topics for parent education series on gifted education?
3. How do parents of Black gifted learners describe characteristics of giftedness to other parents within their community?
4. What strategies do parents of Black gifted learners identify as appropriate for the delivery of the parent education series within their community?

Themes will also be shared in relation to the Adult Learning Theory theoretical frame. This theoretical frame was selected due to its relevance to working with adult learners, and it is grounded in the concept of andragogy, which is defined as "the art and

science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). As mentioned in previous chapters, the five pillars of andragogy identify the adult learner as someone who:

- (1) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning,
- (2) has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for Learning,
- (3) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles.
- (4) is problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge,
- (5) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (Merriam, 2008, p.5)

All of these pillars align with the foundational beliefs of the researcher around adult learning and community engagement. This lens was used as the framework for the first session agenda to allow participants and facilitators to begin developing trusting relationships. The remaining conversations were more open ended and organic in nature thus allowing for participants to learn in a relevant manner, aligning with the theoretical frame of this study.

Additionally, connections to the literature review specific to the needs of African American gifted students will be embedded throughout this chapter. The literature regarding African American parent and caregivers will also be revisited in light of the research findings. The relevance of the study findings to improve practice which attempts to address the inequities for CLD gifted learners, specifically African American gifted learners will also be explored throughout this chapter.

Connection to the Research Questions

The themes, which emerged from the data collected through observations, focus groups, individual interviews and the final product, provided complementarity data, which helped to answer the research questions, which guided this study. Buss & Zambo (2014) state, “complementarity refers to the extent to which each type of data complements the other” (p.67). The importance of the research questions in capturing the phenomenon, or essence of the lived experience will allow for the findings to be applied in other settings with similar parent or caregiver groups (Creswell, 2013). The in-depth look at the study findings in relation to the research questions will allow readers to make connections and allow for findings to impact practice.

As the data was synthesized to answer the research questions, both complementary and conflicting data were explored. Each research question and supporting data will be addressed below.

Research question: How is a community-based parent gifted education series effectively developed and implemented?

The foundation of an effective parent education opportunity targeted to Black parents and caregivers develops out of relationships. Relationships must be established as a foundation on which trust can be built in order for parent engagement efforts to effectively value the culture of African American parents. Once trust is established, it is critical to create ongoing opportunities for parents and caregivers to share experiences in which they feel heard and valued for what they bring to the table.

Study findings indicate African American parents and caregivers prefer a conversational approach to parent education. The conversations should be developed organically with parents or caregivers sharing their experiences and then offering support. These conversations should be grounded in individual parent or caregiver and therefore “one-size fits all” approach should not be used. In order to develop opportunities for these conversations to evolve, relationships must be established between the parties having the conversation. Relationships develop when a level of understanding exists between participants. By sharing experiences, participants are able to identify similarities in experiences. It is these similarities, which allow for a level of trust to develop. David highlighted this when he stated,

the biggest ah ha for the experience was seeing that other parents are going through the same thing and... it confirms all the other things that we know like my level of education, my SES or anything like that does not mitigate the issues of being Black (Individual Interview, 2016).

Implementation needs to begin in communities where Black parents and caregivers already have established connections. “Fordham and Ogbu (1986) maintain that because African-Americans collectively have been shunned and oppressed economically, politically, socially, and psychologically, they have developed a sense of collective identity that is in opposition to the social identity of Whites” (Bass, 2009, p. 44). Therefore, beginning in settings where parents and caregivers are already comfortable and have trust is critical. These communities include churches, recreation centers, and other organizations. Marion Stubbs Thomas started one such organization,

specifically mentioned during the course of this research study, Jack and Jill of America. Jack and Jill of America, Inc., “is a membership organization of mothers...dedicated to nurturing future African American...” (Jack and Jill, 2017).

Based on the researcher's professional experience, many schools begin outreach from the school itself and as a result may struggle to engage parents of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Therefore, this study was conducted outside of the school setting to begin to establish a relationship with parents in a neutral setting. According to research participants, if school is going to be used as a starting point for outreach, it is critical to connect the opportunity to an event in which parents will attend, such as a student music program. This is important when thinking about Black families because according to Beth “some parents have had a really negative experience at schools, it’s a place where they don't have connection. However attaching it to talent show or student concert, I can see that could be a safer place potentially for them.” David concurred parents would be more willing to attend an event such as a music program stating, “Because that is where their students are shining” (Conversation Observation, 2016). Sally states, “It's about meeting people where they're at, the people are afraid because their experiences in school weren't as positive as somebody else's (Sally, 2016, Individual interview).

Implications for gifted educators-Development and implementation. As gifted educators attempt to address underrepresentation of culturally, linguistically diverse gifted learners, it is critical to consider the role parents and caregivers play (Schader, 2008). The findings of this study provide a lens into the learning needs of

African American parents and caregivers which can be applied when gifted educators attempt to engage families in conversation about giftedness and gifted education. Gifted educators should consider how culture may impact how other diverse groups also engage with parent education efforts. By approaching parent education as a collaborative process in which the educator and the parents and caregivers are working together to identify and develop a plan, more effective parent engagement and education can be created. This parent engagement effort can lead to more CLD and low income families understanding giftedness and being able to advocate for the needs of their gifted children. With increased voice from parents and caregivers, inequities in existing identification and programming options will need to be addressed.

Research sub-question 1: How do parents of Black gifted learners describe the impacts of their own educational experiences on their relationship with their children's school?

Participants' experiences with school systems impact how they choose to interact with schools. One participant, Sally, feels like she must advocate every step of the way for her children so they are not subjected to the treatment she received as a youth growing up in the South (Sally, 2016, Observation). She states,

I'm always in kind of battle mode because I'm, like, okay; somebody's trying to do us in again. I've got to be ready to battle... I thought I was going to have to fight for this, you know, because that's the mode I'm in often times with the school system...A lot of times parents do what they do because they think they're

protecting their child. I'm not going to have them experience this [like I did] (Sally, Individual interview, 2016).

Another participant had a parent who was well ingrained in the community and school system growing up, and watched her advocate successfully for the needs of her children. Now, his approach mirrors that of his mother, in his willingness to advocate and not feel uncomfortable pushing against the system. David stated, "My experience was different because my mom did advocate" and now he is comfortable in the advocate role (Conversation Observation, 2016).

Another participant, whose experience was being identified for gifted services but never really receiving services, had wonderings about what the program is? How it is supposed to function? Who is accountable for ensuring parents know the benefits? Ruth wondered,

I don't know if my mom pulled me out of the program because of what church folks told her or if they just didn't care anymore, I just feel like somebody should have tied up loose ends with my mom and said 'hey what's going on?' or my mom should have talked to the teacher more instead of them just sending a paper saying your child has been selected to be in the program. Why not have a one on one and a face to face to really tell them what this program is about? So the choice is not being made for them (Observation, 2016).

Individual experiences of participants highlight the need for educators to listen to and build relationships with parents to understand their personal experiences with the

school system. Through this understanding, schools can meet parents where they are and bridge the gap, which exists between their past and their students' futures.

Implications for gifted educators-Experiences and school connection. When working with African American Parents or caregivers, gifted educators must understand the history many of these parents and caregivers have with the school system. Negative assumptions by educators, such as a belief that African American parents or caregivers lack of interest in their child's schooling because they are not at school often, can cloud opportunities to gain valuable insights about the needs of the student. In many cases, these families have found other means of support where they feel valued (David, 2016). Gifted educators must take additional steps to build positive relationships with parents and caregivers of CLD gifted children. Gifted educators must be willing to tackle their own biases and reflect on their instructional practices to ensure they are providing rigorous, culturally relevant programming with high expectations for all gifted students.

Research sub-question 2: What do parents of Black gifted learners identify as relevant topics for parent education series on gifted education?

Several relevant topics were identified as key to supporting Black parents understanding of gifted education. These include resources, such as whom can I go to and where can I get my child's needs met and what does giftedness look like, especially in young gifted children.

African American parents need to know about the resources available to their children. These resources include whom to speak to about your children, programming options, and benefits of participation in gifted services. Characteristics of giftedness in

African American children were also identified as something important for parents and caregivers. These characteristics will be explored in more depth in the next section.

Finally, understanding the system is a topic relevant for parents. David states, the resources [are important] but it is also you have to know the system. So where the accountability comes in is that you know the system and the rules don't change when you walk up to the door because of the color of your skin. Which happens way too often” (Conversation Observation, 2016).

Relevant topics for African American parent conversations move beyond just understanding giftedness to understanding one's rights as a parent.

Implications for gifted educators-Topics for parent or caregiver education.

Gifted educators should be aware of the needs of the parents and caregivers in the community in which they work. Understanding the varying needs based on identification status, age of children, familiarity with the U.S. educational system is critical when working with families to develop conversations about giftedness and gifted education. By targeting specific topics which are relevant to parents and caregivers, gifted educators will be able to increase the impact of their work with parents and caregivers. When working with groups of parents who have been disenfranchised, gifted educators should also include conversations which address how to advocate for your child's needs (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Research sub-question 3: How do parents of Black gifted learners describe characteristics of giftedness to other parents within their community?

The research participants identified several characteristics of Black gifted learners to use as starting points for beginning a conversation with other parents. Participants intentionally chose a short list, which was easy to remember and included behaviors parents can easily notice within their child.

The identified characteristics were (a) sensitivity, (b) advanced language or highly verbal, (c) natural leadership ability, and (d) asynchronous learning. Sally defined asynchronous learners as, “more sensitive, more knowledgeable about certain things” (Conversation Observation, 2016). David also addresses asynchronous learning,

So I think another thing is to be sensitive to the asynchronous learning is that although they may be really interested in math, they may not be as interested in Reading. I think sometimes people latch on to that and then say no obviously not gifted because you have this issue and they believe that you have to be high across the board (Conversation Observation, 2016).

Natural leadership ability and advanced language are two other characteristics participants felt would be valuable for parents to understand as signs of giftedness. Many parents don't always recognize advanced language in their own children according to David. David states, “the hard thing is that what I always say is the kids you have are the kids you have. So you don't have a comparison point to be able to say that. So we don't really realize it until other people are talking about our kids and they're saying his language is up here” (Conversation Observation, 2016). Similarly, natural leadership ability might go unnoticed or be seen by educators as a negative trait. Sally speaks to the challenges of untapped leadership potential stating,

If we don't recognize those behaviors and those things that happen for children [who] are clearly doing things from a different space. At a different level, what we do is overlook their potential. What it does is it negates that child's potential and that child's intelligence. Often times, what I see with are children of color is instead of them looking that is a trait of a child that's gifted, they get labeled as a troublemaker or they get labeled as being overly aggressive... I think that aggressiveness maybe a sign that they're bored. It may be a sign that they need some attention or any of those different characteristics that can deem a child gifted. When we're overlooked, we're not only doing that child a disservice, were doing the community a disservice. Because the community doesn't get to see that child's full and complete potential (Conversation Observation, 2016).

When working to identify characteristics, participants choose to focus on a small number rather than using a long list. Participants wanted a few things, which could easily be remembered which they felt applied to gifted African American children. Jane states, You know maybe three things that pop out that said this kid should be looked at and maybe you can come up with three things and maybe they're stronger on some and teetering on others but this child deserves an opportunity or a once-over to just see where this kiddo is.

The research participants intentionally chose positive characteristics and wanted to avoid any of the negative characteristics. Sally stated, "the reason why you have to be so careful is because ... Black children tend to be labeled as a problem more often than it being something deeper and so you have to be critically careful of that piece." The

participants insisted focusing on positive aspects of giftedness was critical because so often Black parents or caregivers are only hearing negative things about their children. Jane stated, “the only thing they are getting to talk about is about their child being expelled or suspended or this or that.” David speaks to this point in his interview when he states, “I think that's just so important we understand the resistance of our kids in general but then there is a bigger resistance when you are navigating the gifted world.” Jane furthers David’s statement when she states, “they're focusing on the negative and if they're focusing on the negative you are not going to get past that point...”

Implications for gifted educators-Characteristics of African American gifted learners. Many barriers exist for African American students to be identified for gifted services (Ford & Russo, 2014). If gifted educators are to begin to tackle this persistent problem of practice, the findings of this study shed light on one approach which parents see as a way to look for talent among African American gifted children. In this study, participants intentionally selected a small number of positive traits. Participants felt these characteristics were broad enough for parents and caregivers to see them manifested in their children rather than beginning with a long list which might be overwhelming. As gifted educators it is important to consider intentionality in how you are communicating about giftedness and gifted education with parents. Gifted educators should ask themselves if they are sharing characteristics that are broad enough to capture gifted characteristics across cultures, socioeconomic status and language level. Carefully embedding in characteristics which meet this expectation will increase opportunities for

typically underserved gifted youth to be recognized for the talents and gifted they possess.

Research sub-question 4: What strategies do parents of Black gifted learners identify as appropriate for the delivery of the parent education series within their community?

According to participants in this study, conversations are the identified delivery method for parent education within Black communities. It is critical for these conversations not to feel contrived and to be organic in nature. David stated, “ I think it's how do you do life together, to get close enough to someone to do that and you do that maybe over a meal, not a contrived meal or a contrived meeting but a real meal. We're sitting down having time to get to the meat of the story of what's going on” (David, Conversation Observation, 2016).

Facilitator One, likewise, spoke to the need for these conversations to be organic in nature. She stated,

I keep coming back to this is a organic process. Talking about your kids should not be prescribed. Talking about their needs should not be prescribed, it is an organic process. I can have a starting point and I can have what I want to say but I need to be able to follow the conversation and go with it and understand that is what these parents in this community need as well (Facilitator One, Individual Interview, 2016).

Facilitators must be prepared to both lead and follow during such conversations to allow for the organic conversations to occur while still helping all participants dig deeper into issues.

The passing along of information should be done through a conversation with someone with whom you have a connection or relationship. These connections are formed out of trust. David stated, “I need to make the connection with the person so that I can say this is how I can help you and here's the information that's going to help you get through what you need to get through” (David, Conversation Observation, 2016). Facilitator One spoke about the need for a connection during her individual interview. Facilitator One stated,

they [the participants] talked about not only do you attach this type of work to something parents are already coming to but you do it with a person who has a relationship already with that adult in the room. So it is not going to be me from the gifted department having a conversation with parents who don't know me (Facilitator One, Individual Interview, 2016).

According to Pearl (1997), “the parent educator’s rapport with the parents is critical to his or her effectiveness as an educator” (p. 45). Given the literature on African American parents which highlight the effects of cultural differences among parents and caregivers, parent educators would be well served by approaching parent education in a collaborative approach with parents and caregivers (Schader, 2008). This approach would help to address the need for “comprehensive, proactive, aggressive, and systematic efforts to recruit and retain Black and Hispanic students in gifted education...” , a long

standing persistent problem of practice in the field of gifted education (Ford & Russo, 2014).

It is important to consider cyclical conversation styles when working with African American parents and caregivers. Cyclical conversation styles involve multiple entry points to conversations with opportunities to revisit and go deeper with topics. Study participants addressed the linear process often used by educators as not valuing their culture. The more linear approach was seen as “the white way of doing things” (David, Conversation Observation, 2016). African American parents and caregivers spoke of the need for cyclical conversations where there are multiple entry points and where opportunities to revisit and go deeper with topics are present. *Figure 7* shares the participant’s visual image of this process.

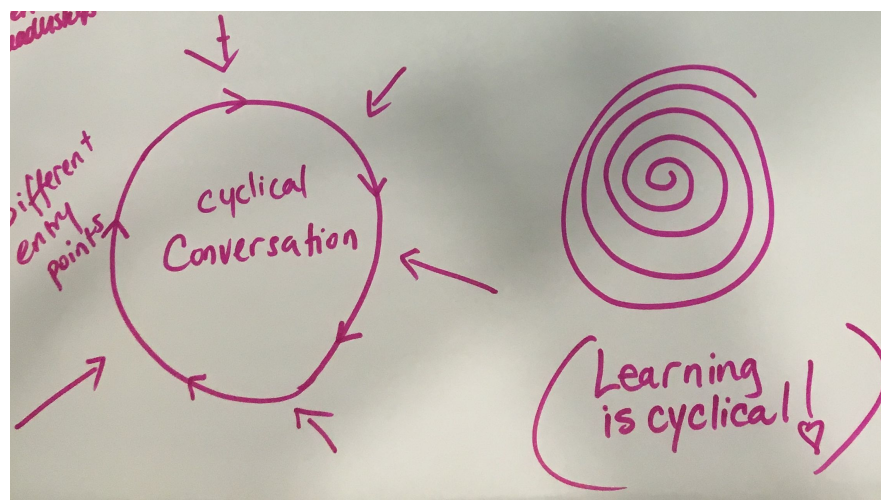


Figure 7. Cyclical Conversation Image, Conversation Observation, 2016

Implications for gifted educators-Delivery method for parent education.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of gifted educators understanding communication styles among different cultures both for parent education efforts as well

as classroom practices. Lack of understanding can lead to frustration and mistrust. Gay (2002) states “the communicative styles of most ethnic groups of color in the United States are more active, participatory, dialectic, and multi-modal. Speakers expect listeners to engage with them as they speak by providing prompts, feedback, and commentary” (p.111). Delpit (1995) highlighted the difference in communication styles between White and Black cultures stating white children’s narratives during story time were more “topic-centered” focusing on one event where as Black children shared longer, more “episodic” narratives in which scenes shifted (p.55). Delpit (1995) goes on to note adult reactions to the narratives depended on the race of the adult. White adults responded negatively to Black children’s narratives, noting concern for the child’s academic abilities (Delpit, 1995). They also expressed concern about possible language problems, reading difficulties, family problems or emotional problems based on the perceived incoherent nature of the narrative (Delpit, 1995). The reactions of Black adults were surprisingly different. Delpit (1995) states, “They found this child’s story ‘well informed, easy to understand, and interesting with lots of detail and description.’ Even though all ...mentioned the ‘shifts’ and ‘associations’ or ‘nonlinear’ quality of the story, they did not find these features districting” (p. 55). Similarly, participants in this research study noted the need for a nonlinear approach in engaging Black families when they articulated the need for cyclical conversations with multiple entry points.

Overall importance of connection to research questions. By answering the research questions which guided this study, the researcher is able to gain a fuller picture of how to support African American parents and caregivers in gaining understanding of

gifted characteristics and programming options. These questions help to pinpoint areas of challenge which still exist as barriers to equitable identification and programming for African American gifted students. One such barrier is the cultural mismatch which exists between students and teachers in many classrooms. Delpit (1995) found drastically different perceptions of performance by adults when reviewing student work. Equity in gifted programming will not be realized unless the impacts of cultural mismatches are acknowledged and extensive educator training is provided.

Connection to Theoretical Frame

The data collected as part of this research study links to the principles of adult learning theory and will be discussed below. The data collected and themes, which emerged are reviewed using each of the principles of adult learning theory. The five pillars of andragogy will each be used to connect research data to the theoretical frame.

The five pillars are:

- (1) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning,
- (2) has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning,
- (3) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles.
- (4) is problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge,
- (5) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (Merriam, 2008, p. 5).

The theoretical frame will help to explain the data in the context of the principles of adult learning. This will also be connected to literature related to gifted African American students.

Independent self-concept and self directed learning (Merriam, 2008, p. 5)

Creating a loose framework for the conversations allowed for ideas and topics to emerge organically based on the participants thoughts. The study was able to engage participants by quickly allowing them to “get to the meat of the topic” (Sally, 2016, Individual interview). By allowing participant experiences to provide the foundation, relevant topics provided motivation to the participants. Sally liked that the conversations allowed the “truth [to] come out in these conversations. It is not easy or pretty but we get to the rainbow” (Individual Interview, 2016). The “rainbow” is effective advocacy and culturally relevant supports for the needs of gifted African American children. Since participants identified the topic for conversation, the resources and talking points, they were motivated to engage in the process.

Independent self-concept and self-directed learning align with the characteristics of African American gifted students who often need less supervision (Gay, 1978). They tend to follow their talents which may include interests outside of the school setting (Gay, 1978). This information is critical for educators who may see underachievement in gifted African American students.

A reservoir of life experiences providing a rich resource for learning (Merriam, 2008, p.5)

By creating a space for participants to share their life experiences and be heard, those experiences were able to provide the foundational component of the conversation framework created during this phenomenon. Participants in this research study shared their many experiences with the school system, which Sally believes is an important aspect of understanding the needs of parents. She states, “when you find out about what the parents experiences were in school, then you see exactly how the child is going to function in school because we are the ones who teach them how to function in this world” (Sally, Conversation Observation, 2016). The experiences of the participants as shared in Chapter Four highlight the importance of this component of Adult Learning Theory as it applies to working with African American parents. Those working with African American parents should create as many opportunities as possible to listen and learn from these parents’ experiences. It is important to remember David’s words, “it doesn’t matter that you went to college for a little bit and I have a Ph.D. you still have the same experiences when we walk in the school and they [educators] don’t know the difference because they are still treating us the same” (Conversation Observation, 2016).

African American gifted children often “feel alienated by school at an early age” and therefore develop interests and talents in activities which are not necessarily school related (Gay, 1978, p 354). This creates a challenge in finding and nurturing academic talent because these students have not been well supported by the school system. They have a wealth of life experiences which could provide a window into their giftedness if only educators took the time to listen and learn. The findings of this study echo this need

to listen and learn from parents and caregivers whose wealth of life experiences provides the rich foundation for their children.

Learning needs closely related to changing social roles (Merriam, 2008, p. 5)

Participants identified the need for different conversations based on the needs of the audience such as those with identified gifted children need different information than parents and caregivers whose children aren't already identified. This was also highlighted in the realization that conversations would be stronger with those whom one already has a connection. By leveraging connections within your social group, these conversations can be richer and deeper because there is already a level of trust.

Problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge (Merriam, 2008, p. 5)

The nature of this study attracted participants who were interested in gifted education and were looking for a way to gain knowledge to help, not only themselves, but others. Participants engaged in this study in order to impact change. Sally states,

I think we forget that all of our children deserve to be invested in, every last one of them. If we don't, not only are we doing a disservice to them but we are crippling ourselves as a society and that has to change. So I hope even if I'm on the tail end of the change that I can be a driving force for it (Individual Interview, 2016).

David reflected on how to help other parents by, “coming alongside to say how do I help you with this” (Conversation Observation, 2016). Participants looked beyond

helping themselves and their own children by reflecting on how to make things better for all African American children.

Given the long-standing persistent problem of practice, which was the focus of this study, participants and facilitators did not need additional motivation to design a product they felt would positively impact the current educational climate (Merriam, 2008). The long-standing disenfranchisement of African American families by the educational system has created barriers for families and their children (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Sally states, “it's about meeting people where they're at. People are afraid because their experiences in school weren't as positive as somebody else's. A lot of times parents do what they do because they think they're protecting their child” (Conversation Observation, 2016). In order to move past these previous experiences, relationships must be built in order to create trust. Only when trust is developed can the persistent problem of practice be changed.

The importance of understanding intra-cultural groups was a finding of this study worth exploring deeper. Based on the researcher's personal experience, many parent education efforts target groups of parents and caregivers yet fail to address the differences which exist among those groups. While holding a parent session for Spanish speaking families is a step toward inclusion, it is important to consider possible cultural differences between Spanish speaking families and work collaboratively with those families to develop relevant content.

Motivation to learn by internal rather than external factors (Merriam, 2008, p. 5)

This principle of Adult Learning Theory related to motivation was inherent with this study because participants self-selected into participation. The opportunity to share personal experiences made the work personal for participants because they were able to see how this work connects to their own experience and could lead to positive outcomes for their children.

Overall, the themes, which emerged in this research study, align with Adult Learning Theory, "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). By allowing the participants to take ownership of the process, the five principles of adult learning theory were seen in the data collected. Adult Learning Theory principles should act as touchstones when working to collaboratively develop a process for parent education.

Additionally, Merriam (2008) recognizes, "sociocultural context of adult learning... as a key component in understanding the nature of adult learning" (p. 94). Sociocultural context is the intersection of social and cultural events (Merriam, 2008). The themes of this study highlight the importance of social and cultural context, which varies not only across culture but within it. David spoke of the need to be cognizant of networks within cultures when attempting to create effective parent conversations even within similar cultures. Therefore, it is also important to consider intra-cultural differences when working with parents.

Personal Lessons Learned

The process of conducting action research can develop leadership skills and often provides a transformational experience (Furman, 2011). As a result of this study, the

researcher has learned several lessons which can be implemented into daily practice. The most valuable lessons learned over the course of this action research project include: (a) the importance of addressing a persistent problem of practice, which resonates with both personal and professional goals and (b) the importance of being self reflective throughout the process.

The importance of finding a topic, which resonates with personal and professional goals, allows the researcher to fully engage in the process and maintain focus throughout the process. As additional data is collected and the action research project moves forward, new energy and excitement emerge for the researcher. After each of the four conversations, the researcher felt a wave of anticipation for the next step of the process. Each conversation provided opportunities to grapple with new ways of thinking about working with parents, how to build relationships across cultures, race, and socioeconomic status and what additional steps need to be taken to make this a sustainable process. Since the topic was a deep passion for the researcher, it was easy to maintain focus throughout the action research process.

As the project developed, it took an unexpected turn when the parents and caregivers brought up the idea of a engaging in a conversation rather than “conducting a session.” This paradigm shift was an “ah-ha” moment for the researcher. Typically, educators approach parent education as just that, education, where facilitators serve as the person with the knowledge, who is there to pass that knowledge along to parents. In the conversation approach, it values both parties as having knowledge worth sharing. This approach is especially critical when working with populations of parents who have been

disenfranchised by the educational system. Cobb (2012) explains “the intensified, and/or additional, barriers CLD parents face are not unlike the speed bumps, roadblocks and tollbooths drivers, encounter on a highway or byway” (p. 12). In setting up conversations, these roadblocks, speed bumps, and tollbooths are removed allowing parents to share their experiences, be heard and find out about resources to help their children get what they need to reach their potential.

Self-reflection throughout the process is also an important aspect of the learning cycle as a result of leading this action research project. In the initial stages of developing the doctoral research proposal, taking time to reflect on the process and the expected outcomes, allows for adjustments to be made which increase the likelihood of a successful research project. The willingness to make adjustments based on the reflection and to be able to clearly articulate the rationale for the changes to the IRB board is essential. Additionally, as the project progressed and data was gathered through observation and focus groups, it was important to reflect on the phenomenon so agendas for the next conversation could be developed in alignment with the needs, both implicit and explicit, of the research participants. This intentional reflection is shown in the data collected from the focus groups where feedback on things that did not work during conversations was very limited and did not raise any concerns. Participants either stated it was all-good or that they didn't know what should be changed. Reflection on the observation data collected, allowed for adjustments to the facilitation approach, such as the shift from standing to sitting from the first conversation to the second

conversation. The ability to critically reflect on the action research project throughout the process is an important lesson learned.

Lessons Learned Through Implementation

As the research project was implemented, there were several key learnings, which will inform future research project development by the researcher. Recruitment proved much more challenging than originally anticipated by the researcher. Upon reflection, leveraging existing connections or relationships to share about the opportunity for participation in a research study might ease the recruitment process. This may be especially helpful with research projects where the researcher does have existing connections. This project was intentionally not tied to a specific school district, given the researcher's role within a district and the desire to not have that role influence the research project. Future proposed studies may indeed tie to a school district specifically, which would provide the researcher with a wide audience and communication platform for recruitment.

Another lesson learned grew out of the observation tool developed to capture data from the four parent conversations. The tool, which was designed by the researcher and guided by the principles of Adult Learning Theory, served to capture some of the key elements of the phenomenon but the researcher found the need to capture most notes and explanations in the “notes” section. Ensuring a tool fully captures the phenomenon and is able to guide the researcher in grouping emerging themes is invaluable.

Finally, one of the most impactful lessons learned was expected outcomes and anticipated results of the researcher may not be realized. The actual results may yield

much more powerful and impactful outcomes than ever expected. The lesson, to expect the unexpected and be open to going where the data takes you, allows for a rich and impactful research study. Gupta & Awasty (2015) address the advantage of expecting the unexpected when they state, “what seems overwhelming and chaotic is often the source of new knowledge” (p. 243).

Limitations of Outcome

Several limitations exist with the outcomes of this research study. Limitations of this phenomenological research study included small sample size. While phenomenological research typically targets a range of participants “from 1 (Dukes, 1894) to up to 325 (Polkinghorne, 1989)” (Creswell, 2013, p.157), this study focused on five participants, which is within the range of Dukes (1984) recommendation of three to ten subjects for a phenomenological research study (Creswell, 2013, p.157). Unlike quantitative studies where small numbers limits the ability of the study to be generalizable, if robust qualitative methods are used and data collected across multiple methods, then results may be generalizable to “other people, settings, and times to the degree that they are similar to the people, settings, and times in this study” (Stake, 1990 as cited in Johnson, 1997, p. 290). This naturalistic generalization allows for study results of even small qualitative studies to be generalized to other like groups. Given the small size of this study and the population targeted by this study, the ability to generalize from the data collected from this study will be limited to other similar groups.

In order to assist in determining if the study is generalizable to a group, the researcher chose to use rich description so that readers may identify “shared

characteristics” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p 32. as cited in Creswell, 2013, p 252). The use of low inference descriptors, using verbiage similar to that of participant’s accounts added to the validity of this research study (Johnson, 1997, p.283). The choice to use as many verbatim statements, low inference descriptors, as possible for this study also allowed for participants’ own words to tell the story of the phenomenon.

In order to limit internal validity threats in this phenomenological research study, member checking was employed to check the credibility and interpretations of the interview data (Creswell, 2013). Member checking involved providing participants the opportunity to review the analysis of the data to ensure accuracy and credibility (Creswell, 2013).

Since this study was based on a collaboratively developed parent education series, there was a risk to reliability. The nature and variability of personal experiences will present a challenge with replicating this study. In order to increase the reliability, detailed notes and audio recordings were used to capture the information from the interviews, focus groups and observations. The audio recordings were transcribed to ensure accurate representation on participant statements.

The limitations of the data collected for this study should be considered when using the findings of this study to inform practice.

Implications for Practice

While this study had a small sample size, findings can be used to inform practice for educators looking to develop parent education opportunities for Black parents and caregivers. The first step for educators would be to find ways to leverage existing

individual relationships. Educators should look to build relationships with community organizations which Black parents and caregivers already have trust. Other possible resources to leverage are parent school home visit programs, which may already exist in the school system.

Critical to the replication and future implementation of the findings of this research study is the need for skilled facilitators. Sally mentioned the importance of the facilitators during her individual interview. She stated,

I appreciated the fact that you all were open to embracing what we were saying and didn't get feelings hurt and upset with us because oftentimes when I talk about issues or things around the treatment of African American children in schools oftentimes what can happen depending on the person, and I guess their personality type or whatever, it seems like they get upset because I'm saying what my experience is and that's all I can really do is talk about my experience from my perspective (Sally, Individual Interview, 2016).

Later in Sally's individual interview, she followed up stating had the facilitators reacted differently,

it really would have changed things for me because I would have left. If you're going to get defensive with me and you're asking me how can things change or how can we fix things that's not going to work out. I'll walk away and I'll figure out a different way to get it done and to get all of our children looked at from a space of what they need (Sally, Individual Interview, 2016).

Gifted educators must consider the methods they are using to reach culturally, linguistically diverse parents within the communities they support. These efforts to engage families in a way, which honors their culture, can support the work to identify and serve more students from typically underserved populations.

Application of study findings in the field of gifted education. Based on the personal learning and the data gathered for this study, the researcher has identified several next steps for application of this work, which include developing a new framework for parent education. The need for a systematic approach to parent education with a specific focus on low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse families is essential if a district is to begin to address the current inequities in gifted programming that exist. This systematic approach must allow for enough flexibility to address individual parent or caregiver needs. This model must address “the complexity of needs, the roles that ethnic minority parents are playing, [and] the constraints that impede their involvement...” (Crozier, 2001, p. 330).

Individual experiences of participants highlight the need for educators to listen to and build relationships with parents to understand their personal experiences with the school system. By creating intentional parent education guiding principles, which build around the idea of having a conversation, educators can work more collaboratively with parents to support the needs of gifted learners, especially those from diverse backgrounds.

The results of this research study have informed practice in the researchers current professional role. As a leader of gifted education in a large Colorado district, the

researcher has used the findings of this research to make adjustments to existing parent education efforts. Instead of planning presentations for parent education sessions, as had been the practice in the past, the researcher supported gifted coordinators in engaging in conversations with parents who showed up to the district-wide parent event. The response of parents to this new approach was well received. This approach provided an opportunity for parents to share about their children and make connections with other parents of gifted children. The remaining parent education events for this year will be handled in similar fashion.

Future planning for parent education will include training of gifted teachers at the school level to follow a similar process, as was followed for this research study, for collaborating with parents and caregivers in their school communities. This training will address how to engage parents and caregivers in conversations about giftedness. Critical to this plan will be training gifted teachers in the principles of adult learning and characteristics of giftedness in culturally, linguistically diverse gifted children.

Another way this study has informed practice for the researcher is the need for educators to be trained in supporting culturally diverse learners. Ford et al. (2014) state, “Culturally incompetent educators- educators who are ill-prepared for or uncommitted to working with Black students- risk compromising or sabotaging the educational experiences of Black students, and thereby contribute to the segregated gifted education programs” (p. 308). Sadly, “students who are out of “cultural sync” with their teachers will go unidentified, regardless of their intellectual abilities” (Bonner, 2000, p. 647). Bonner (2010) highlights the importance of teacher training by stating, “Without proper

training, teachers will continue to refer only those students who fit their preconceived ideas of how a gifted student behaves; this misconception immediately rules out many students who, by current definition, show gifted potential” (p. 655).

Further opportunities to use the findings of this study to inform practice include cross collaboration with other departments who also support parents and caregivers to develop a district wide approach to parent engagement. Beyond district level opportunities, the researcher intends to share finding at local, state and national conferences. By engaging parents and caregivers of diverse gifted learners, districts can begin to address the need for “comprehensive, proactive, aggressive, and systematic efforts to recruit and retain Black and Hispanic students in gifted education...” which is a long standing persistent problem of practice in the field of gifted education (Ford & Russo, 2014).

Implications of this research reach beyond the field of gifted education. The challenges, which exist in the field of gifted education, are also facing the larger field of education. Achievement gaps and opportunity gaps plague the United States as the country struggles to educate an increasingly diverse population. Mahatmya et al. (2016) state

With the United States’ teaching force representing predominantly white, middle-class females (Causey et al. 2000) and classrooms becoming increasingly diverse, more research on teachers’ cultural awareness seems necessary to bolster their relationships and perceptions of youths’ educational attainment, especially for students of color (p. 430-431).

Therefore, opportunities for educators to work collaboratively and build relationships with parents and caregivers, is a critical step in moving the educational system toward equity.

Areas for Further Research

Areas for future research identified as a result of this research study include: (a) additional studies with other culturally, linguistically diverse (CLD) parents such as Hispanic or low income parents or caregivers collaboratively developing parent education to address their unique needs, (b) other pathways to engage underrepresented populations, and (c) exploring the impacts of engaging African American or Black parents through parent conversations on student outcomes is another area for future research.

Intentionality in targeting CLD parents and caregivers. As the population of Hispanics grows in this country, the field of gifted education must find effective ways of engaging this parent population. In the United States, the Hispanic population will grow from 53.3 million in 2012 to 128.8 million in 2060 resulting in nearly one in three residents being Hispanic. According to Ford & Russo (2014),

most of the past and current efforts to redress the status of gifted students generally and the underrepresentation of minority children specifically have been inadequate, resulting in what may be the most segregated and elitist programs in American public schools (p. 233).

Much like Hispanic parents, the parents from low-income households need to be strategically engaged in school. Parents of low-income and culturally and linguistically

diverse (CLD) students have long been disenfranchised by the American educational system.

Re-examination of current education practices and parent engagement. The nation's excellence gaps demonstrate a critical demand for re-examination of current education practices including parent engagement. Research demonstrates the importance of parent engagement in tackling these gaps. “If success at school and in life begins at home, then all parents need knowledge about what they can do to fulfill their critical roles in the home, in academics, and in providing talent development opportunities and support” (Schader, 2008, p. 481). Further research into the area of parent engagement and typically underserved populations could have positive impacts on the challenges facing the nation's schools. One of the research participants aptly stated,

We just have a lot of work to do and its long-standing work. I don't think it'll ever end. I think the moment that and please don't take offense to this, but the moment you take it all to your people and make sure you hold your people's feet to the fire and we can take it to our people and say look this is what we have to do if you want to change. We have to be a part of that process ... sometimes you need to separate in order to be able to know how to come back together and that's just what it is. You have to get into the minutiae; segregate things so you can synthesize and bring it back (Sally, 2016, Individual interview).

Culturally responsive teaching practices are grounded in “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2002, p. 106-107). According to Gay (2002),

culturally responsive teaching “is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly” (Gay, 2000 as cited by Gay, 2002, p. 107). Parents play a critical role in helping educators know and understand the lived experience of their children. By building the capacity to effectively communicate across cultures, educators will be able to better serve their students and begin to close the achievement gap. This cross-cultural communication between educators and parents or caregivers is essential to developing effective systems for supporting culturally, linguistically diverse learners.

Gay (2002) states,

Effective cross-cultural communication is a fourth pivotal element of preparing for culturally responsive teaching. Porter and Samovar (1991) state culture impacts “what we talk about; how we talk about it; what we see, attend to, or ignore; how we think; and what we think about” (p. 21). Montagu and Watson (1979) added that communication is the “ground of meeting and the foundation of community” (p. vii) among human beings (p. 110).

Gay (2002) continues,

Building community among diverse learners is another essential element of culturally responsive teaching. Many students of color grow up in cultural environments where the welfare of the group takes precedence over the individual and where individuals are taught to pool their resources to solve problems (p. 110).

In order to effectively engage African American or Black parents, a level of trust must be created in order to have the necessary conversations to support parents and caregivers in understanding how to get the most for their kids and help them succeed. Trust is grounded in relationships which are built through communication.

Impacts of parent engagement on student outcomes. Exploring the impacts of engaging African American or Black parents through parent conversations on student outcomes is another area for future research. Student outcomes include levels of academic achievement as measured by state and national assessment, on track to graduation, and graduation rates as well as others which may be defined by individual school districts. Future research is needed in this area as few studies exist about how parent and caregiver engagement with schools impacts gifted African American students specifically.

Additional areas for future research include possible expansion of the study to other cultural groups. This could include parents or caregivers of second language learners for example. Further exploration of the research findings could include how connections with existing organizations with which parents and caregivers already have strong relationships could aid in the development of relationships and trust with parents. By leveraging existing organizations, school systems may be able to reach parents and caregivers whose energy in supporting their children is focused in these other organizations.

Future research opportunities in the area of Black parent education could also consider using the theoretical frames of Radical Pedagogy or Culturally Relevant

Pedagogy. Both of these themes focus more heavily on the role of the teacher as the advocate for change. The added lens of change theory could inform future applications of the research findings by allowing for systematic approaches to implementing changes to parent education practices.

Conclusion

Parents are a critical, yet often neglected, component of effective educational systems (Crozier, 2011). This is particularly true for CLD and low-income parents and caregivers. Grantham, Frasier, Roberts & Bridges (2005) state “to reverse underrepresentation among culturally diverse students in gifted education, the role of parents as advocates is critical” (p. 138).

In school districts, like Denver Public schools, educators and Black parents and caregivers must work to build relationships in order to create the trust needed to allow collaboration to support all children to reach their potential. Black parents and caregivers deserve to be heard and their experiences valued, and they want to know how to get what their children need on a daily basis within schools. However, the educational system has a long history of neglecting their needs, which many of these parents have experienced, and these parents and caregivers want to protect their children from suffering the same fate.

Current research has highlighted the untapped potential across the United States. Finn (2014) states:

There are more potential high achievers among our 55 million students than are currently getting the opportunity to thrive. And plenty of them are hiding in plain

sight in neighborhoods and schools where adults are unaccustomed to recognizing such potential and are ill equipped to challenge such students (p. 61-62).

The key to “our nation’s success depends on our ability to develop the talents of high-ability students in every community” (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012, p. 8). Only when we come together, listen, learn and value one another will, all students regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status be able to reach their potential and impact society in positive ways.

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Appendix A

Introduction to study and criteria for participation

Dear parents/ caregivers,

My name is Rebecca McKinney. I am pursuing my doctoral dissertation at the University of Denver. My research focus is on the collaborative development of parent education on the topic of gifted education. I am currently looking for study participants who are willing to participate in four training sessions to collaboratively develop a parent education series. You will be able to deliver this parent education series to other parents/caregivers in your community.

Study participants must be parents or caregivers of Black school age children. School age, for the purpose of this study, is any child who is in three-year-old preschool through high school. Participants should be interested in learning about gifted education. There is not a requirement to have gifted identified children. Study participants must be willing to be interviewed about their experiences during the training.

If you are interested in participating in this research project, please reach out via my phone number [REDACTED]. All participants will receive a \$25 gift card for participating in the study.

Thank you for your interest in this study,

Rebecca A. McKinney

Doctoral Student

University of Denver

[REDACTED]

Appendix B

University of Denver Consent Form for Participation in Research

Title of Research Study: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY: PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS OF BLACK STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATE IN COLLABORATIVELY DEVELOPING A PARENT EDUCATION SERIES

Researcher(s): Rebecca McKinney, Doctoral Student, University of Denver

Study Site: Community Center

Purpose

You are being asked to participate in a research study. By doing this research we hope to learn about the process of collaboratively developing parent education session(s).

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete the following tasks:

- Agree to participate in four training sessions with a focus on collaboratively developing a training series, which you may facilitate within your community.
- As part of this study, there is no requirement to facilitate a parent session prior to the completion of this study.
- Participants will agree to being observed during the four training sessions.
- Participants will agree to be interviewed at least twice by the researcher.

Voluntary Participation

Participating in this research study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to participate in interviews for any reason without penalty. You may still participate in the training sessions even if you do not wish to participate in the research study interviews. If you choose to participate in the study, you do not have to answer any question during the interview if you do not want to answer. You will be audio recorded during the interview process. If you do not want to be audio/video recorded, please inform the researcher, and only hand-written notes will be taken during the interview/focus group.

Risks or Discomforts

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; inconvenience associated with this study would be the time involved in participation in four trainings and up to 90 minutes of interviews.

The researcher will keep all study records locked in a secure location. At the conclusion of this study, findings will be published and participants will not be identified in any publications or presentations.

Benefits

Participants will benefit from the training series. It is the hope that this training will allow participants to provide parent education within their communities.

Incentives to participate

You will receive a \$25 gift card for participating in this research project. Gift cards will be provided to participants upon completion of the interview process. Participants who complete the four sessions and interview are eligible for the full \$25 gift card. Other participants will receive a pro-rated if they do not complete all the sessions.

Confidentiality

The researcher will securely store all identifiable data collected (participant names and contact information) to keep your information safe throughout this study. Your individual identity will be kept private when information is presented or published about this study. Audio recordings of interviews will have identifiable data removed before storage and will be destroyed three years after completion of the study.

The research records are held by researchers at an academic institution; therefore, the records may be subject to disclosure if required by law. The research information may be shared with federal agencies or local committees who are responsible for protecting research participants, including individuals on behalf the University of Denver.

Questions

If you have any questions about this project or your participation, please feel free to ask questions now or contact Rebecca McKinney at 303-995-9486 at any time. The faculty advisor for this research study, Norma Hafenstein, PhD., can be reached at Norma.hafenstein@du.edu or 303-871-2527.

If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the DU Human Research Protections Program by emailing

IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researchers.

Options for Participation

Please initial your choice for the options below:

The researchers may audio record or photograph me during the interview process of this study.

The researchers may NOT audio record or photograph me during the interview process of this study.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Participant Signature

Date

Appendix C

Interview Questions

I want to talk to you about your experiences during the recent training in which you participated. I am interested in your perception of the training process. The interview will focus on the process, the content, and your personal experiences during this training.

The main questions will be:

- Would you please describe in as much detail as possible your experience during the training sessions?
- What effect did this experience have on you?

Additional questions based on participant responses will include:

- What did you expect when you agreed to participate in collaboratively developing parent-training session(s)?
- How did your prior experiences with school systems effect how you approached the process?
- Can you tell me more about how topics were selected to be included in the training you developed?
- Tell me about how characteristics of giftedness were selected to include in the training?
- Tell me about the product you developed?
- Overall, how would you describe this experience?
- Do you have anything else you would like to share?

Appendix D

Existing Parent Training Models

Supporting the Emotional Needs of Gifted (SENG)

SENG's mission: "To empower families and communities to guide gifted and talented individuals to reach their goals: intellectually, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually" (SENG, n.d).

Content covered in 8-10 week SENEG program

- Characteristics of Gifted Children
- Communication: The key to relationships
- Motivation, Enthusiasm, and Underachievement
- Establishing discipline and Teaching Self-Management
- Intensity, Perfectionism, and Stress
- Idealism, Unhappiness, and Depression
- Acquaintances, Friends, and Peers
- Only Children and Siblings
- Values, Traditions, and Uniqueness
- Complexities of Successful Parenting (SENG, n.d).

Gifted Program Advocacy Model (G-PAM)

Purpose: "The model allows parents to co-advocate for equity and excellence within educational programming" (Wiskow, Fowler, & Christopher, 2011, p. 22).

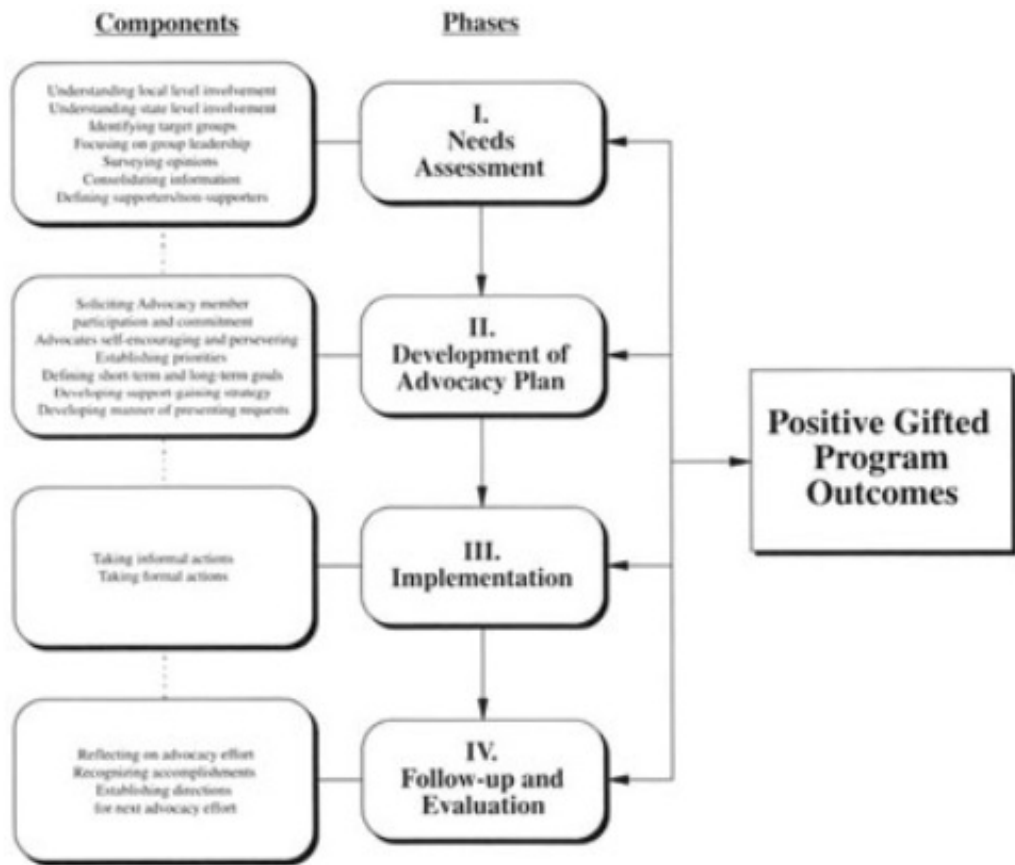


Figure 8. Gifted Program Advocacy Model (G-PAM). Image from the National Association for Gifted Children (NACG, n.d.).

Appendix E

Framework for Observations

<p>Setting: Description of room.</p>	<p>Detailed notes:</p>
<p>Experiences as basis for learning: document prior experiences shared by participants</p>	<p>Seating chart: Drawing of room arrangement and participants selected seats.</p>
<p>Facilitator lead: Document the amount of time the facilitators are speaking</p>	<p>Participant Engagement: Document the number of times each participant shares a thought or idea</p>
<p>Parent/ Caregiver Lead: Document the amount of time the parents/ caregivers are speaking</p>	
<p>Session Outcomes/Next Steps: Problem Centered What will participants do with the information from this session?</p>	

Focus Group					
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
What did you like about the session today?					
What didn't work during today's session?					
What else would you like to tell us?					

Appendix F

Conversation Talking Points

Post-it SUPERSTICKY EASEL/PAD
TABLEAU A FEUILLES MOBILES SUPERCOLLANTES
SUPERADHESIVO BLOQUE DE HOJAS REPOSICIONABLES

30 63,5 cm x 76,2 cm
5.2 SQ FT/PP (0.48 m²) 3M

Topics: How do I get the Most for my Kids & Help them succeed.?

Topics for parents to share w/ other parents

- Start thinking about giftedness early.
 - early in the school year
 - early in the educational career (2yrs/3yrs)
- Where & who to go to.
 - Which schools have the programming that is specific for gifted that is culturally responsive.
- Have you noticed the following things:
 - sensitivity
 - language
 - verbal
 - natural leadership ability
 - asynchronous learning
 - highly
- Have examples of children's work available at certain ages

Attach the conversation to an event like a student concert or talent show.

get a person you know to have the conversation with parents need to know/have relationship w/.

mindset?

parent leadership

Different entry points

cyclical Conversation

(Learning is cyclical!)

Figure 9. Conversation Framework, Conversation Observation, 2016