A MULTICASE STUDY ON AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS:

THE LEAST IDENTIFIED AND REPRESENTED IN THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

EDUCATION PROGRAM AT THE UPPER ELEMENTARY LEVEL

by

Nicole Angella Clarke

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

Gail Collins, EdD, Committee Chair

Kathy Keafer, EdD, Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this multicase study was to develop an understanding of educators' perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented in the gifted and talented program at two elementary schools. The theories that guided this study were the expectancy-value theory and the social cognitive theory. Given the purpose of this study, the following central research question framed this study: What are educators' perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in the gifted and talented program at the elementary level? The participants who took part in this study were 10 teachers who have taught or were currently teaching fourth or fifth grade. The three data collection methods included interviews, focus groups, and educators' letters to other educators sharing their approach to how they motivated and inspired African American male students to rise above stereotype and perform to their ability. The data were analyzed using cross-case analysis methodology; the analysis employed member checking, peer review, triangulation, and an audit trail to ensure trustworthy findings. Four major themes emerged: systemic issues, hindrances, commitments and responsibilities, and self-efficacy. It is perceived that African American male students lack representation in gifted and talented programs because some educators refuse to acknowledge their own biases and negative attitudes toward African American male students. The identification process is heavily flawed, relying on standardized assessments, and favors students with a middle-class background. The study concluded with recommendations to school divisions, policymakers, and educators.

Keywords: gifted, gifted education, African American, underrepresented

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Dedication

The dedication of my dissertation is to my mother. My mother never got the opportunity to complete her high school education, but she knew the value of education and encouraged me to achieve more and be more. I learned very early what hard work and dedication mean by watching her doing all it takes to make sure I never needed anything. She found time to take me to church, prayed with me, and prayed for me. She taught me how to trust God and believe that with God, all things are possible. She lived Philippians 4:13 (KJV), "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Mom, I hope my accomplishments make you proud.

Acknowledgments

First, I must give my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ the glory for carrying me thus far. This doctoral process has been a journey, but my successful completion is nothing but by the grace of God.

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I want to extend my gratitude to the participants of this study. Thank you for your willingness to participate and provide your perspectives on the topic. This study would not exist without your valuable contribution.

Completing this doctorate would also not have been possible without the support of my family and good friends Rhonda Pittman and Patricia Russell. Thanks for your support and words of encouragement throughout my doctoral journey.

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List of Abbreviations

American Association of Gifted Children (AAGC)

American College Test (ACT)

Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)

Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence, Second Edition (CTONI-2)

English Language Learners (ELL)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Gifted and Talented Education (GATE)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Institutional Revenue Board (IRB)

Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children, Second Edition (KABC-11)

Naglieri Nonverbal Abilities Test (NNAT)

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)

Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)

School Involved in Gifted Needs in Education Today (SIGNET)

Standard of Learning (SOL)

Strategies Teaching and Reaching for Talent (START)

Students with disabilities (SWD)

Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test, Second Edition (UNIT2)

Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Fifth Edition (WISC-V)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

African American male students have been the least represented in gifted and talented programs throughout the United States (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Grantham, 2013; Henfield et al., 2014; Mills, 2015; Winsler et al., 2013; Zhbanova et al., 2015). In addition to African American students being the least represented in gifted and talented programs, their academic performance is poorer than that of any other group (Henfield et al., 2014). This chapter provides an overview of gifted and talented programs and how students are generally identified for the program. It includes the background and my personal connection with African American male students being the least represented in gifted and talented programs and addresses my motivation, which led to proposing this study. Also included are the problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, and research questions. The definition and summary are the final two areas addressed in this chapter.

Background

Throughout the United States of America, schools have implemented gifted and talented programs to accommodate those students who are academically more advanced than their peers. To be identified as academically advanced and be included in gifted and talented programs, students must take various cognitive ability assessments as well as other assessments used in their school division. It was recommended that multiple assessments be used to identify students' academic needs and for making instructional plans. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) 2008–2009 State of the States Report (as cited in McBee et al., 2014), as well as many other professional organizations and researchers, made strong recommendations for the use of multiple measures, especially when high stakes, test-based decisions made, such as

classroom assignment (Lakin, 2018, p. 210). The criteria to be included in gifted and talented programs varies from state to state and school divisions.

Even with the different criteria used to identify students to be included in gifted and talented programs in schools, African American male students are the least identified, recommended, and represented in gifted and talented programs. Black males have been overlooked frequently for the gifted education referral, screening, and placement (Whiting, 2006), and as a result, they do not have the same opportunities to achieve academic success as any other student (Henfield et al., 2014). Some African American students are referred less because they do not achieve the cut score on standardized tests and, as a result, are not referred for further screening to be considered for inclusion in gifted and talented programs. In cases where students do not meet the cut score criteria, teachers should ensure students go through the identification process. Teachers in most elementary schools have the same group of students throughout the school day and are in a unique position to be able to recognize "students' potential and competence in different areas throughout the curriculum, across time, and compared to other students of the same age" (Hernandez-Torrano & Tursunbayeva, 2016, p. 165).

Historical Context

Educational institutions seeking to cater to the needs of gifted and talented students are not a new phenomenon. Various organizations were advocating for students that were considered gifted and talented during the 1940s and 1950s. Some of these organizations include the Metropolitan Association for the Study of Gifted, the Ohio Association for Gifted Children, and the Pennsylvania Association for the Study of Mentally Gifted Children and Youth (Robins & Jolly, 2013). Even though these organizations were mentioned as being advocates for the

gifted and talented, two emerged as the leading advocates for gifted children. These two organizations are the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and the American Association of Gifted Children (AAGC).

Later, in 1957 American educators began to embrace the idea to identify and challenge those gifted and talented students (VanTassel-Baska, 2018), and this resulted in schools across the United States offering various accelerated courses. According to VanTassel-Baska (2018), "By about 1990, both the federal government and the governments of all 50 states had some form of legislation regarding gifted education" (p. 99). It was further noted that gifted education policy at the state level is tied to the rules, statutes, codes, and regulations adopted by state legislatures, interpreted by state school boards of education, and implemented by local school districts (VanTassel-Baska, 2018).

In 1990, the NAGC was established at the University of Connecticut. It included researchers at the University of Virginia, Yale University, and the University of Georgia. NAGC published Pre-K to Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards in 1998. It provides guidance in seven critical areas for programs serving gifted and talented students, and in 2010, the standards were revised as Pre-K to Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards. This standard is used in teacher preparation programs in the acquisition of knowledge and skill in gifted education for all teachers and was revised in 2013.

While special education is federally mandated and schools are required to monitor and report on the progress of students with special needs, this is not the case for gifted education. Federal law acknowledges that children with gifts and talents have unique needs that are not traditionally offered in the general educational settings; however, it provides no specific provisions, mandates (Vegas & Moore, 2018), or requirements for serving these children.

Currently, gifted education is a purely local responsibility and is dependent on local leadership (VanTassel-Baska, 2018). Gifted education varies widely across the United States.

A series of studies (Bryan & Ford, 2014; Card & Giuliano, 2016; Gill, 2014; Mills, 2015; Mills et al., 2017; Sewell & Goings, 2019; Vegas & Moore, 2018) have highlighted the underrepresentation of African American male students in gifted and talented programs. Students in the White and Asian subgroups are expected to be more academically advanced than African American students. Research shows that especially Black male students are known to be underrepresented in the gifted program (Winsler et al., 2013).

Since African American male students are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs across the United States, it is essential to study the perspectives of educators as to why this is the case. It is also imperative to take a closer look at the identification process to garner a clear picture of the reason for the underrepresentation of the African American male students in gifted and talented programs. It is recommended that multiple assessments should be used in the identification process (Lakin, 2018) to ensure that the identification process is fair for all students. However, when multiple assessments are used, many coordinators and educators are not sure what to make of the result taken from different assessments or how the result should be interpreted (Lakin, 2018). The NAGC pointed out an important reason to use multiple assessments and how the information can be used to inform educators. Lakin (2018) stated:

> While the NAGC advocates for the use of multiple assessments in the identification of gifted students, NAGC also believes the combining disparate data from multiple assessments must be done in such a way to identify not only those students who are in immediate need of instruction beyond the regular curriculum but also those students who display the potential for high-level learning beyond the regular curriculum. (p. 1)

Social Context

A study of this nature will benefit all educators. Educators play an essential role in the identification and recommendation of African American male students to gifted and talented programs in schools. There is a national outcry for educators to address the low representation of African American male students in gifted and talented programs (Hargrove & Seay, 2011) because, if they are indeed gifted and are not provided with the services they need, they will not achieve their academic potential, and in many cases they will underperform (Hodges et al., 2018); in some cases, they may eventually drop out of school.

A study of this nature will also have an impact on society because many studies have revealed that African American students perform lower academically than any other subgroup in schools across the United States (Henfield et al., 2014). African American male students are also more likely to withdraw from formal education than White male students (Hargrove & Seay, 2011), and as a result, the trajectory of their life opportunities is seriously compromised (Ford & King, 2014).

Theoretical Context

Two fundamental theories that have shaped the understanding of this topic are the expectancy-value theory and the social cognitive theory. Bergey et al. (2018) stated, "Expectancy-value theory offers a broad theoretical framework for understanding the development of motivation and its influence on choices, persistence, and achievement in academic settings" (p. 41). Educators should be motivated to perform their tasks effectively to assess, identify, and recommend African American male students for gifted and talented programs if they are indeed gifted. African American male students should also show an interest and exhibit self-efficacy to rise above the stereotype of being underperformers and be included in

gifted and talented programs. This is important since interest and self-efficacy predict actual recruitment and retention of gifted students (Shin et al., 2016). Once they are in the program, they need to persist in staying in the program to achieve academic excellence and realize their true potential.

According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010), "Based on social cognitive theory, teacher self-efficacy may be conceptualized as individual teachers' beliefs in their own ability to plan, organize, and carry out activities that are required to attain given educational goals" (p. 1059). This social cognitive theory emphasizes the notion that teachers and students will learn from their environment because they can observe others and acquire knowledge and skills (Schunk, 2016). For this reason, it is vital that teachers exhibit strong self-efficacy; in addition, research shows that self-efficacy is closely related to teachers' well-being, their professional practices, and educational outcomes for the students in general (Vieluf et al., 2013).

For all teachers to be effective and to effect change in their educational institutions and on students, they need to have strong self-efficacy. In reference to teachers, self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief about their capabilities to carry out their duties successfully (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Students in second and third grade in the United States are required to take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) and Naglieri Nonverbal Abilities Test (NNAT). General education teachers in most states administer these two assessments. Therefore, if teachers find it challenging to believe in their ability to teach (Bryan et al., 2016), administer standardized test appropriately, and interpret the scores (Lakin, 2018), then African American male students will not be identified for gifted and talented programs. In addition to not being able to appropriately administer standardized assessments and interpret test scores, if teachers find it challenging to perform alternative assessments and complete gifted reports so that African American male

students can be identified for gifted and talented programs, then the Black male students will continue to be the most underrepresented subgroup (Ford & King, 2014) which will eventually lead to missed opportunities to reach their full potential (Vegas & Moore, 2018) and a waste of potential talent and future leadership (Zhbanova et al., 2015) in education.

Situation to Self

I became motivated to conduct this study after having taught third grade for 10 years and having administered both the CogAT and NNAT as well as writing reports that included recommending students from all races for gifted and talented programs. In my 10 years carrying out the process, only three African American male students were identified and accepted in gifted and talented programs based on scoring between the 96th–99th percentile on the CogAT. All other African American male students that I have recommended based on their performance on other assessments were not accepted in gifted and talented programs when the gifted committee reviewed their packets. The gifted committee consists of a group of general education teachers, gifted education resource teacher, school counselor and principal or principal designee. They are responsible for reviewing the gifted packets submitted for each student by their general education teachers. Once the gifted committee finishes reviewing the packets, they make recommendations about who should be included in the gifted program. The gifted education resource teacher then takes the students' packets and the gifted committee recommendations to the district level identification/placement committee for final review and placements of students.

As an educator who has an endorsement in gifted education and has taken several courses in the identification and assessments of gifted students, I believe that I have a sound knowledge of identifying those students who are gifted but for some reason do not score in the 96th–99th

percentile on the cognitive ability assessment. Therefore, carrying out this study is very personal because I seek to find out if most African American male students are not included in gifted and talented education (GATE) programs simply because they did not attain the cut score on either of the cognitive ability assessments. It is also imperative to find out if the representation of African American male students in GATE programs who do not meet the cut score on the cognitive ability assessments increases through other means of identifying students or using multiple assessments.

Philosophical Assumptions

The philosophical assumption that led to my choice of research is ontological. As the researcher, I reported on different perspectives of the participants as themes develop in the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and gathered the necessary information required to complete the study. Ontological research also allows researchers to conduct a study with the intent of reporting these multiple realities, which include the use of various forms of evidence in themes using the actual words of different individuals and presenting diverse perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The second philosophical assumption that led to the choice of research was epistemological. As the researcher, I worked closely with all educators who participated in the study to gather the necessary information that was needed to answer the central research question and sub-questions and report on the findings (Creswell, 2013). This closeness was achieved when I conducted interviews and focus group discussions. I heard the participants' personal experiences of African American male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs. To get close to the participants, I conducted the focus group

discussion in the field where the participants work so that I collected firsthand information from the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Paradigm

The research paradigm in this qualitative case study is social constructivism. Social constructivism theories are grounded in the pioneering work of Vygotsky (Knapp, 2019) and allow the researcher to focus on complex views rather than narrowing the meaning into a few categories or ideas; they rely primarily on the participants' views of the situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I sought the participants' perspectives in the school in which they work to develop the meaning or understanding of their experience of African American male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs.

Since social constructivism has a social rather than individual focus (Ageeva, 2015), it is imperative that African American male students be in an environment where they can interact with others so that they can learn and develop socially and intellectually. When they are able to interact with others in an educational setting, they will be able to acquire the product of social interaction, interpretation, and understanding which is identified as knowledge (Adams, 2006). Most African American students across the United States are taught by White educators, and most White teachers are often not prepared on how to become culturally responsive to the needs of these students (Bryan et al., 2016). It will, therefore, be difficult for White educators to foster an environment in which the students can develop socially when they do not understand the needs of African American students.

When African American students are referred to be a part of gifted and talented programs, they are least likely to remain in the program because of the underrepresentation of Black students (Bryan et al., 2016) with whom that can collaborate, interact, and share ideas.

Without the social interaction with other students of their culture, African American male students might find it challenging to achieve the external stage of social constructivism which is based on the idea that student learning is most effective when educators allow students to design artifacts and share with others (Karahan & Roehrig, 2015).

Problem Statement

The problem is African American students have been the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs in public schools across the United States. The African American students have been underrepresented in gifted and talented programs in the United States (Mills, 2015) and have been disproportionately low (Gunderson, 2017) when compared to the students in the White and Asian subgroups. African Americans make up 16.7% of the total student population in the United States, but only make up 9.8% of the students enrolled in the gifted programs (Kellogg, 2016). According to Henfield et al. (2014), "Black and Hispanic students were the only students found to be disproportionately represented among those enrolled in gifted and talented programs" (p. 148). The representation is even lower for African American male students. Data from federal and state agencies have highlighted the low percentage of African American male students who have participated in gifted and talented programs in public schools. Data retrieved from the National Center for Education Statistics revealed that 3.1% of African American male and female students combined (Hargrove & Seay, 2011) are represented in gifted and talented programs. Also, based on students attending all schools, the data from the U.S. Department of Education identified the Black male subgroup as the most underrepresented among the students participating in gifted and talented programs (Henfield et al., 2014).

Since the amendment of the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), all states are required to include the students with disabilities (SWD) subgroup in their accountability reporting system (Bouck, 2013) and report yearly on the progress of the students. Students with disabilities are expected to meet federal and state benchmarks. Hence, great emphasis has been placed on providing quality services for these students. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 has ignored the need to concentrate on those students who fall in the gifted or high achievers' category, and as a result, the brightest young students have gone unrecognized and underdeveloped, and therefore, they often fail to reach their full potential (Hodges et al., 2018; Sheffield, 2017).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 was signed into law to replace the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (Fusarelli & Ayscue, 2019; Saultz et al., 2019) and gives states greater flexibility in meeting the demands of standards-based accountability (Edgerton, 2019). When the ESSA was passed, it included provisions to support gifted and talented learners but only require states to directly address the inclusion of gifted education (Kaul & Davis, 2018). The inclusion of gifted education was examined in all 52 states and territories that submitted the ESSA plan. This examination revealed 16 states identified how educators would be supported in identifying and providing gifted learners with effective instruction, 15 states described the support that will be given to educators in order to meet the need of multiple groups of students, and three state plans were completed without including which services would be provided for gifted learners (Kaul & Davis, 2018). While the ESSA makes provision for gifted and talented learners, many states are still not providing the gifted students with the services they need or ensuring that educators are adequately trained.

Gifted students in gifted and talented programs have been widely researched. Ford (2014) looked at the segregation and the underrepresentation of Blacks and Hispanics in gifted education, Henfield et al. (2008) highlighted the hidden challenges for African American students in gifted and talented programs, and Zhbanova et al. (2015) focused on the identification of gifted African American primary grade students through leadership, creativity, and academic performance. However, few research studies have focused on stakeholders' perspectives of African American male students being least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs in schools. Therefore, the problem this study sought to address is the stakeholders' perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented and well as their perception of the factors that cause African American male students to be the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multicase study was to develop an understanding of educators' perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented in the gifted and talented program at two elementary schools. For this study, gifted students are defined as "those who are exhibiting superior performance in a particular domain relative to peers" (Worrell et al., 2019, p. 552). The theories guiding this study are the expectancy-value theory and the social cognitive theory. This expectancy-value theory is based on the idea that behavior depends on one's expectancy of attaining a particular outcome as a result of performing given behaviors and on how much one values the outcome (Schunk, 2016). The social cognitive theory proposes that the environment and one's characteristics often determine an individual's behavior, one's characteristics are further shaped by action, and ultimately one's behavior and personality can influence their environment (Font et al., 2016). The theories connect to the idea

that African American male students are the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs in school because teachers and other stakeholders consider them less intelligent (Bryan et al., 2016) and academically unmotivated (Ford et al., 2018; Henfield et al., 2008; Zhbanova et al., 2015) than students in the White subgroup.

Significance of the Study

This qualitative case study seeks to investigate the phenomenon (Yin, 2018) of providing an in-depth understanding of teachers and other stakeholders' perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs. This study allowed educators who assess, identify, and place students in gifted and talented programs to take a closer look at the African American male subgroup to ensure that they are identified and represented based on the multiple assessment criteria rather than on one cognitive assessment. Educators were made aware of the challenges educators, administrators, and parents of African American male students face when they are recommended for the gifted program based on multiple assessments but are denied acceptance by the gifted committee.

Empirical Significance

For many years African American male students have been the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs. Educators have struggled to eliminate the achievement gap in which Asian and White students achieve at higher levels than African American students (Gill, 2014), leaving them at risk, especially the African American male students. Underrepresented groups tend to score lower on ability achievement and other cognitive tests than their overrepresented peers, and this can result in them being excluded from gifted and talented programs (Carman et al., 2018).

Theoretical Significance

Social cognitive theory is centered around the idea that human learning occurs in a social environment. Many educators acquire skills and develop attitudes based on what they observe in their schools. If educators believe that all students can learn regardless of their social class or subgroup, this belief will be fostered and modeled in their environment. Self-efficacy refers to individual beliefs about one's capabilities to learn or perform actions at designed levels (Schunk, 2016). This theory links to the idea that some African American male students are not included in GATE programs because they do not believe they are as academically advanced as students in the White and Asian subgroups (Hargrove & Seay, 2011).

The expectancy-value theory focuses on behavior which depends on an individual's expectancy of accomplishing a certain outcome because of performing given behaviors and on how much one values that outcome (Schunk, 2016). The expectancy-value theory links to this study because many African American male students do not believe they are as smart as other students, and as a result, they do not put forth a great deal of effort in their academic performance.

Practical Significance

Gaining the perspectives of teachers who work with gifted and talented students and African American male students will provide valuable insight into policymakers regarding the challenge they face when only standardized assessments are used to identify and include African American male students in GATE programs. The perspectives of the stakeholders will also allow the policymakers to make modifications and adjustments to the identification and assessment process of gifted and talented students.

Research Questions

The purpose of this multicase study was to develop an understanding of educators' perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs at two elementary schools. Expectancy-value theory and social cognitive theory are two theories that are aligned with the sub-questions two and three, respectively, and have been highlighted in this section. The following central research question and three sub-questions guided this study.

Central Question

What are the educators' perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

Many teachers rely on standardized test scores to recognize African American male students as gifted and talented. Once students do not meet the cut score, they are omitted from the GATE programs (Hargrove & Seay, 2011). In addition to not meeting the scores to be included in the program, the media sometimes paint Black males as violent, disrespectful, and unintelligent (Hargrove & Seay, 2011); this image is carried over in the school and results in the students being treated differently from their peers. Teachers should believe that all students can learn and that regardless of income, educational background, race, and environment, every child has not only the ability but also the right to learn (Jessie, 2008) and deserves to be educated.

Sub-Questions

The following three sub-questions guided this study.

1. What are educators' perspectives on the factors that cause African American male students to be the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

Many research studies have identified factors that cause African American male students to be the least identified and represented in GATE programs. Factors such as child rearing practices (Bryan & Ford, 2014), racial discrimination (Wang & Huguley, 2012), peer influences, and disengagement have been identified as barriers for African American male students reaping academic success (Hargrove & Seay, 2011). It is, therefore, essential to get the views of educators on the factors they see as the cause of African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs since they work with them daily.

2. How can educators motivate African American male students to engage and persist toward being represented in gifted and talented programs?

In 2013, there were 75% White female teachers, 10% White male teachers, 6% Black female teachers and 1% Black male teachers represented nationally (Bryan & Ford, 2014). Based on the small number of Black teachers represented in the teaching profession, it is possible that most African American male students will go through their 13 years in school and never have an African American teacher (Bryan & Ford, 2014). It is imperative that African American male students make a connection with teachers or mentors who are also African American. When they can identify with their teacher or mentor, they will develop the idea that they, too, can achieve academically and work toward achieving academic success. Hughes (2010) quoted a professor in his research and stated:

> Students of color are often out of touch with the faculty of color. Since they don't see us, it is easy for them to believe that we do not exist. It is up to us to be more visible and available to students of color. (p. 56)

Most White teachers do not see African American male students as gifted students (Bryan et al., 2016), and as a result, they do not recommend them to be included in GATE

programs which resulted in the negative impact on culturally and linguistically diverse students in the gifted program (Mills, 2015). All educators regardless of race should believe in their ability to educate and inspire all students, including African American male students, since self-concepts of ability about one's competency plays a vital role in educators' decision-making (Diemer et al., 2016).

The expectancy-value theory supports the idea that humans will engage and persist in a particular behavior if they are motivated (McCourt et al., 2017). Educators who work with African American male students should ensure that they can identify what motivates them to learn and how to keep them actively engaged enough to persist toward being represented in GATE programs. Educators should also be motivated and have a desire to develop a positive relationship with African American male students. A positive relationship with students has beneficial effects on educational outcomes (Bieg et al., 2013; Henry & Thorsen, 2018; Zhbanova et al., 2015) and often serves as a facilitator of students' feelings of belongingness that has a significant influence on motivational outcomes and academic engagement (Maulana et al., 2015).

Educators need to acquire the skills and strategies they need to teach and reach African American male students. Most White educators lack the appropriate training in cultural responsiveness in identifying the characteristics of gifted students (Vegas & Moore, 2018), and as a result, they need to utilize effective teaching practices such as taking the students' perspectives, creating opportunities for students' input and initiative, and accepting students' expressions of negative affect as both understandable and acceptable (Cheon et al., 2018). Some White educators lack the skills necessary to teach African American male students because they enter the K–12 classroom with a deficit mindset (Bryan et al., 2016) such as decreased academic

expectations and lack of knowledge pertaining to the implementation of culturally relevant curriculum (Logan et al., 2018).

When educators acquire the skills and strategies to work with African American male students, they will develop a level of confidence in their ability to teach, motivate and inspire the students to achieve academic success and ultimately strive to be a part of GATE programs. If educators lack the confidence in their ability to teach African American male students, then eventually, the African American male subgroup will continue to have a low representation in GATE programs. Therefore, if educators believe in their ability to work with African American male students and acquire the training and skill necessary to reach them, they will be intrinsically motivated to motivate and inspire them to be a part of GATE programs.

3. What are educators' perspectives on African American male students' self-efficacy, scholar identity, and the gifted and talented programs?

This question was included because most African American male students find their identity on the athletic field rather than having a scholar identity. Whiting (2006) defined a scholar identity as "one in which culturally diverse males view themselves as academicians, as studious, as competent and capable, and intelligent or talented" (p. 48). It is, therefore, vital that educators find a way to encourage and motivate African American male students to see themselves as confident and resilient students that can achieve academic success.

Many African American male students do not believe they are smart enough to be in the GATE programs and those who are in the program do not want to stay because the program lacks racial diversity (Bryan & Ford, 2014). Most African American male students are not empowered to be a part of GATE programs because when schools continue to mischaracterize them, they often feel vulnerable in self-efficacy and academic self-concept (Bryan & Ford, 2014)

and as a result, perform at a lower level than their peers (Gill, 2014), even when they possess the required knowledge (Oqvist & Malmstrom, 2018).

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to complete tasks and attain goals in schoolwork (Diemer et al., 2016; Oqvist & Malmstrom, 2018); as a result, all educators should make an effort to motivate and inspire African American male students to believe in themselves since motivation is an essential prerequisite for learning (Stroet et al., 2015). It is challenging for educators to motivate and inspire African American male students to be a part of GATE programs if they do not believe they are smart enough. When educators believe in African American male students' intellectual ability, it influences students' achievement (Diemer et al., 2016; Schenke et al., 2018) and serves as a facilitator of students' feeling of belongingness (Maulana et al., 2015). Eventually, these positive educators' beliefs can result in African American males' ability to develop a positive attitude and a higher sense of competence in learning.

Definitions

1. *Educational gap* – The differential achievement or academic performance of students from two groups, with Black students often lagging behind White students (Henfield et al., 2014).

2. *Gifted students* – Gifted students are those who are exhibiting superior performance in a particular domain relative to peers (Worrell et al., 2019).

3. *Scholar identity* – An identity in which culturally diverse males view themselves as academicians, as studious, as competent and capable, and intelligent or talented (Whiting, 2006).

4. *Self-efficacy* – An individual's beliefs in their own ability to plan, organize, and carry out activities that are required to attain educational goals (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

Summary

African American male students are the least identified and represented in GATE programs. Data from the federal and state government have put the spotlight on the low percentage of African American male students enrolled in GATE programs. It is, therefore, essential to develop an understanding of teachers', administrators', and central office representatives' perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs. While efforts have been made by various researchers to highlight the phenomenon, more research is needed to determine if the lack of representation of African American male students in the gifted program is as a result of failure to meet the cut score on standardized cognitive ability tests. This chapter included the overview and the background of the study. It also consisted of the situation to self, problem statement, purpose statement, and the significance of the study. The final two areas included in this chapter were the research questions and definitions.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework which consists of the expectancy-value theory and social cognitive theory that guide this paper, and the literature related to the topic of this study. The related literature section begins with the history of gifted education in the United States, federal and state mandates, characteristics of gifted students, assessments, and identification. This section also includes a discussion of the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted and talented education (GATE) programs, perceptions of African American students, possible solutions to bias in assessment, teacher referral and training, cultural and environmental factors, lack of professional development, and the dropout rate of African American males students.

Theoretical Framework

This study incorporates the expectancy-value theory of achievement and motivation developed by John Atkinson and social cognitive theory in the theoretical framework. The expectancy-value theory is based on the idea that behavior depends on one's expectancy to achieve a particular outcome. The theoretical framework begins with a discussion of the expectancy-value theory that guides this study because it helps to explain why African American students are underrepresented in GATE programs based on educators' perspectives. The social cognitive theory is the second theory discussed in this section. It focuses on the idea that humans learn from others in their social environment (Schunk, 2016). Social cognitive theory is included because it is considered one of the most compelling theories of human behavior and explains the importance of ensuring African American male students are place in an environment that is conducive to learning.

Expectancy-Value Theory

Atkinson established the expectancy-value theory and formulated it into a mathematical model (May, 2017). This theory was first used in the education field, specifically to explain middle school girls' choices to pursue and persist in advanced mathematical courses. Since then, it has been expanded in engineering education research (McCourt et al., 2017). Later, it was further developed by Wigfield and distinguishes four task-value components: attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and cost (Domenech-Betoret et al., 2017; McCourt et al., 2017). According to Dever (2016), "Attainment value is the importance that the student places on the academic task or domain personally and is tied to personal identity" (p. 419). Utility value is how useful individuals perceive what they learn in school about their own goals or plan outside of school. Intrinsic value includes individuals (Dever, 2016). It speaks to an individual's interest in completing a task, and cost is the amount of perceived sacrifice involved in carrying out the required activity (McCourt et al., 2017).

In an academic setting, the expectancy-value theory offers a broad theoretical framework in which individuals gain an understanding of the development of motivation and its influence on choices, persistence, and achievement (Bergey et al., 2018). It is also considered a dominant theory of behavior motivation (Li & Hu, 2017) and a framework that motivates humans to engage and persist in a particular behavior (McCourt et al., 2017). There are benefits to be derived from using expectancy-value theory because it precisely characterized several different attributes of academic tasks that students evaluate to inform their achievement-related decision (Galla et al., 2018).

The expectancy-value theory has informed the idea that African American male students have been the least identified and represented in GATE programs. Many African American male

students have been underrepresented because they believe that they are not capable (Storage et al., 2016) of performing academically compared to their peers (Peters et al., 2016). Many of these students lack the motivation to be a part of GATE programs (Bryan et al., 2016). The expectancy-value theory highlights that students are more likely to participate in learning activities and persist in their program even when they face challenges when they have a high perception of their chance of being successful (Galla et al., 2018).

The perception that educators have about African American male students being represented in GATE programs plays a crucial role in their identification process (Grissom et al., 2017). The expectancy-value theory embraces the notion that when educators expect the students to be successful at tasks, the students are more likely to choose to engage in the task and persist at it longer to achieve a better outcome (Bergey et al., 2018). When students are motivated to complete academic tasks, they will also be driven by the expectation for success. Therefore, for African American students to be identified and represented in GATE programs, they must be motivated (Mullet et al., 2018). Expectancies and task-value are indeed linked to students' achievement. When students are motivated, they will be willing to take the risk of completing tasks. For African American students to be identified and represented in GATE programs at the same rate as their White and Asian peers, a great deal of motivation (Ford & Moore, 2013) must exist which will encourage them to engage and persevere in the program (Dubeau et al., 2017).

The expectancy-value theory relates to the topic that African American male students are the least identified and underrepresented in GATE programs. It is perceived that most African American male students are not capable of attaining the cut score required to be recommended for GATE programs. While studies have shown that many have not achieved the cut score, there

are those students who are capable of being identified and represented to be in the GATE programs, but they are not motivated. When students are academically motivated, it pushes them to engage and persevere in school (Dubeau et al., 2017).

In some educational settings, educators do not use alternative assessments to aid in the identification process once students do not attain the cut score on standardized assessments. In some schools, educators perceive that since the African American male students did not score in the 9th stanine on their standardized assessment, they should not be included in GATE programs. However, in other schools across the county, students are given an opportunity to qualify in other areas such as achievement tests, and classroom grades but must be scored in the superior or far exceed range on a rating scale. Educators often have preconceived expectations and values that strongly influenced their decisions (May, 2017) in recommending African American male students for GATE programs. The expectancy-value theory, in this case, assesses the perceived worth of the educators' experience in evaluating and recommending African American male students for GATE programs.

From as early as age 10, African American male students must build self-efficacy via social persuasion (Flowers & Banda, 2019) to be successful and represented in GATE programs. Insights, encouragement, and support from influential people such as teachers and parents are referred to as social persuasion. If students lack self-efficacy, it will be challenging for them to perform academically well in school. Lack of self-efficacy is considered a predictor of the expectancy-value theory task value (Domenech-Betoret et al., 2017; McCourt et al., 2017). The theory "emphasized tasks need to contain high perceived utility value or usefulness" (Vansteenkiste & Mouratidis, 2016, p. 320) for students to perform academically to be included in GATE programs. The expectancy-value theory is also linked to the topic because it can be

used to assess how African American male students perceived or self-reflect on their worth

(Bandura, 2018) of being a part of GATE programs by accessing their value and expectation of

the tasks that will be assigned for them to complete (May, 2017).

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory is considered the best vehicle for influencing human behavior

(Bandura, 2015) and has been widely applied to the fields of education, health, clinical disorder,

athletics, the corporate world, and social and political change (Bandura, 2019), probably because

it "provides an integrated theory of personality that addresses the complexity of human self-

development, adaption, and change from an agentic perspectives" (Bandura, 2015, p. 1041).

Social cognitive theory has been described as a triadic codetermination theory of causation

(Bandura, 1989a, 2018). Bandura (2018) highlighted the three codeterminations that are

included in the triadic when he stated, "In this three-way interplay, human functioning is a

product of intrapersonal influences, the behavior individuals engage in, and the environmental

forces that impinge on them" (p. 130).

Bandura (2015) further stated, "In social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is assessed by

domain-linked measures scaled in terms of different levels of performance demands individuals

believe they can realize" (p. 1028). In self-efficacy, beliefs have been seen as a critical

component of proximal determinants of human motivation (Bandura, 1989a, 1989b) because it is

developed and strengthened by the mastery experience, social modeling, and persuasive forms of

social influences (Bandura et al., 2003).

This theory has been employed in this study because it is a widely accepted theory in

explaining individual behavior (Bandura, 2015). It also supports the narrative that African

American male students are capable to being included in GATE programs if they are in an

environment that is conducive to learning so they can be motivated and realize change (Bandura, 2019) since they will be provided with the resources they need to be successful. When African American male students are in an environment that fosters collaboration, it will enable African American male students and students from other cultures to collectively use their power to produce the desired result (Bandura, 2000) when they can share their beliefs, talents, and gifts in their learning environment. It can be challenging for all students to achieve some tasks because they do not live their lives in individual autonomy (Bandura, 2001), and as a result, they must work with other students from different races and backgrounds to accomplish what might be challenging or cannot be accomplished on their own.

African American male students must be placed in an environment that consists of educators who are supportive because the physical and social environment influences their course of action (Bandura, 2012). Therefore, if African American male students are surrounded by educators who see them as capable students of being included in GATE programs and treat them as students who have the intellectual ability to achieve at high levels, they are more likely to perform academically and develop self-belief, which is the foundation of human aspiration, motivation, and accomplishment (Bandura, 2018).

Related Literature

This related literature section begins with the history of GATE program in the United States. A history of gifted education is addressed since it creates a clear picture of how gifted children are defined over the years (Ford & King, 2014) and how different states define giftedness differently, which resulted in how they assess and identify students for their GATE programs. This section also includes a discussion of an educator's perception of African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs.

History of GATE Programs in the United States

During the 1940s and 1950s, the American Association of Gifted Children (AAGC) and the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) emerged as leading advocates for gifted children and their education (Robins & Jolly, 2013). On September 6, 1946, the AAGC was established in New York City by Ruth Strang and Pauline Brooks Williamson, who believed that gifted children were the "most neglected children in our democracy" (Robins & Jolly, 2013, p. 139). The organization was founded because there was a need to help teachers and other educators understand that gifted children were not receiving services that cater to their needs, especially the minority group. Robins and Jolly (2013) placed emphasis on the need to ensure minority children are represented in the gifted program when they stated, "This new association felt that in a real sense here was minority group that should be identified, understood, and worked with in such a way as to enable them to contribute most effectively to themselves and to society" (p. 139).

In 1954, the NAGC was founded as a nonprofit organization with the following three goals: "the formation of an association, the publication of a journal, and the establishment of a fund for gifted with which to sponsor research and aid school systems who wished to embark on programs for their gifted" (Robins & Jolly, 2013, p. 140). There was a need to increase and expand the objectives to four because teachers and educators noticed that students who were identified as exceptional abilities in preschool were not able to maintain that high level of performance in school (Robins & Jolly, 2013). Robins and Jolly (2013) identified the following expanded four objectives as:

to aid schools in providing more effective programs and practices for the gifted; to help parents see the need to give understanding and encouragement to their children and to

plan program designed for their benefit; to reach the gifted themselves and to provide

them with insight into their potentialities and the need to use these for the general good;

to educate the public to appreciate the gifted and the contributions that are capable of

making. (p. 140)

Federal Definition of Gifted Students

The definition of gifted students has shifted over time at the federal and state level. The

Education Amendments of 1969 contained one of the first federal definitions of giftedness

(McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012). The first federal definition was considered to be poorly

conceptualized because it mentioned only intellectual and creative giftedness (Ford & King,

2014). By 1972, the definition was modified and broadened in a report which was submitted to

Congress and is now known as the Marland definition (McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012). Marland's

definition eventually became the standard used in establishing state and local definitions of

giftedness for decades (Gallagher, 2015). Jolly and Robins (2016) presented the 1972 modified

definition, which stated:

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who,

by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are children

who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally

provided by the regular school program to realize their contributions to self and society.

(p. 140)

This definition was narrow and listed six types of giftedness; general intellectual, specific

academic, creative or productive thinking, leadership, visual and performing arts, and

psychomotor (Ford & King, 2014; Jolly & Robins, 2016; Matthews, 2015; Plucker & Callahan,

2014). In 1993, this federal definition was revised by the U.S. Department of Education. Lo and

Porath (2017) highlighted the modified definition:

> Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing
> at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age,
> experience, or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance
> capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership
> capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services and activities not
> ordinarily provided by the schools. Outstanding talents are present in children and youth
> from all cultural groups, across all economic strata and in all areas of human endeavor.
> (p. 347)

The State of Virginia Definition of Gifted Students

Every state developed its definition for gifted and talented students. These definitions

shape how students are identified and assessed to be included in GATE programs. Multiple states

have either adopted the federal definition or altered it to make the definition of their state. The

Virginia Department of Education (2012) defined gifted students as "students who demonstrated

high levels of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or

environment. Their aptitudes and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they

require special programs to meet their educational needs" (p. 4).

This definition is necessary because it serves as a crucial aspect of the gifted program

since it guides in determining which student will receive services, the type of services that will

be offered, and why students need to be provided with these services (Callahan et al., 2017).

Federal and State Mandate and the Gifted Program

Special education is mandated at the federal level, and schools are required to monitor and report on the progress of students with special needs. Gifted education is not federally mandated (VanTassel-Baska, 2018; Worrell et al., 2019), and Congress has never passed a law requiring identification or services of gifted students (Zirkel, 2016, pp. 319–320). It is left up to the states to implement programs that will meet the requirement of students who are identified as gifted and talented. Gifted education varies widely across the United States. Although federal law acknowledges that children with gifts and talents have unique needs that are not traditionally offered in general school settings, it provides no specific provisions, mandates, or requirements for serving these children. Gifted education is a purely local responsibility and is dependent on local leadership (VanTassel-Baska, 2018).

While gifted education is left up to the state to implement programs and is dependent on local leadership, the impact of not providing gifted services to students have a national effect. When compared to other developed nations, the United States has been lagging in overall academic achievement and identifying high performing students (McClarty, 2015) for GATE programs.

The Every Student Succeeds Act was passed in 2015 (Kaul & Davis, 2018). Included in this act is the provision to support students who are considered gifted and talented learners. This act allows states to put the necessary plans in place to cater to the need of gifted students. However, there is no strong federal policy in place for gifted and talented students, even though there have been numerous national reports of individual and societal consequences for neglecting the nation's brightest and most talented children (Brown & Garland, 2015). If gifted children are not nurtured, then eventually, society will lose human capital (Brown & Garland, 2015).

According to Ambrose (2013), "Until our societies become more egalitarian and stop harming the life chances of gifted children who were not born into affluence, we must create ways to ameliorate the damage" (p. 89).

Since GATE programs are not federally mandated (VanTassel-Baska, 2018; Worrell et al., 2019) and less than 0.5% of the federal education budget is spent on gifted education, it is left up to the states and district to provide services to gifted students (Callahan et al., 2017) using local funds (Worrell et al., 2019). It is the responsibility of the states and districts to ensure that there is a GATE program in schools to cater to the needs of those students who have been identified as gifted and talented children based on the standardized assessments only (Luria et al., 2016; Valler et al., 2017) or multiple assessments (Lakin, 2018; Welter et al., 2018).

Characteristics of Gifted Students

When compared to their peers, gifted students often demonstrate outstanding performance for their superior performance in academic, creative, leadership, or artistic ability (Renzulli, 2012). Renzulli (2012) identified two types of giftedness as follows:

> The first is called high achieving or schoolhouse giftedness, referring to students who are good lesson learners in traditional school achievement. The second is creative productive giftedness referring to the traits that inventors, designers, authors, artists and others apply to selected areas of economic, cultural and social capital. (p. 151)

Giftedness can be identified at any stage in students' development. At the early childhood level, students display "advanced development in memory, attention, language, inquiry, and curiosity, maturation, social and emotional development, imagination, and abstract thinking" (T. Kettler et al., 2017, p. 119).

Gifted and talented students display various characteristics and in different areas such as cognitive, affective, and social areas (Koksal et al., 2017). They also display outstanding performance in academics, creative, leadership, or artistic domains (J. Lu et al., 2017). Some academically gifted students can demonstrate high mathematical abilities and mathematical creativity (Leikin et al., 2017). From teachers' perspectives, mathematical giftedness is more frequently observed in male students when compared to female students (Gucyeter, 2015).

Standardized Assessments

Historically, IQ derived from general cognitive ability assessments has been the hallmark for identifying students for GATE programs (Worrell et al., 2019); however, this method has failed to identify minority students as being gifted (Luria et al., 2016). In most cases, when standardized assessments are used in the identification process, African American students are underrepresented because they often perform lower than their White and Asian peers (Henfield et al., 2014; Mayes, 2018; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). On nonverbal ability assessments, African American students showed a vast score difference of up to more than a full standard deviation (Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Warne et al., 2013) when compared to their White counterparts. While White students perform 1 standard deviation above the African American students, they are 7.0 times more likely to be included in GATE programs (Warne et al., 2013). However, when multiple assessments are used in the identification process, the African American students show a marginal increase in meeting the requirements, and there is a decrease in the representation of their White peers (Lakin, 2018).

Many school districts across the United States have chosen to and continue to utilize the traditional model for students to gain entrance into their GATE programs. This traditional model

includes students who exhibit high intellectual prowess, exceptional academic achievements, and extraordinary potential to demonstrate superior performance (Valler et al., 2017).

In the educational field, assessments of students to be included or not included in GATE programs are considered fundamentally important (McBee et al., 2016). Warne et al. (2013) defined identification as "the process that school personnel uses to decide which children are eligible for gifted services and which are not" (p. 487). One of the most controversial issues (Acar et al., 2016) and discussed topics that have been studied in the field of education is the identification of gifted students (Callahan et al., 2017) for GATE programs because it is perceived that the assessments used are highly biased and favor students from some demographic groups over others (Plucker & Callahan, 2014). The assessments used are considered fundamental components of any education system (Cao et al., 2017) and play a vital role in the selection process primarily because they are used to determine who is and who is not identified (Carman et al., 2018) for GATE programs.

Since these assessments appear to be used mostly in the identification of gifted students (Cao et al., 2017), researchers have sought to find out the type of procedures and instruments suitable to use in the identification of gifted and talented children (Warne, 2014; Warne et al., 2013; Worrell et al., 2019). Cognitive ability tests (Callahan et al., 2017; Card & Giuliano, 2016), academic achievement and aptitude tests (DeNisco, 2015), teacher ratings and nominations (Card & Giuliano, 2016), and other techniques have been used as methods in the identification process. When cognitive ability scores are used in the identification process, they should be psychometrically sound (Y. Lu & Weinberg, 2016), technically accurate and reliable for the population being tested (Worrell et al., 2019).

For years, students have been required to attain a cut score, typically in the 90th or 95th percentile (Worrell et al., 2019), on standardized tests to be considered a gifted student as well as to be referred to be a part of GATE programs in schools. These tests may include the Cognitive Ability Test (CogAT); Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT; Worrell et al., 2019); the Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence, Second Edition (CTONI-2); Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test, Second Edition (UNIT2); Raven's Progressive Matrices, Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children, Second Edition (KABC-11); and nonverbal index found on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Fifth Edition (WISC-V; Cao et al., 2017). The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT) have also been used to admit students into the talent search program (Warne, 2014). Research has shown that today, over 300,000 elementary and middle school students have taken the SAT and ACT for admission in the Talent Search program (Warne, 2014).

How several of the assessments have been used to solicit students to be a part of GATE programs has been a major contributing factor to the underrepresentation of minority students (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017; Warne et al., 2013). Students from underrepresented groups tend to score lower on ability, achievement, and other cognitively based tests than their peers who fall in the White and Asian subgroups (Carman et al., 2018), and this result is the most consistent finding in the body of research conducted on cognitive and academic testing (Warne et al., 2013). For minority students, the WISC-IV has yielded lower scores than students in the White and Asian subgroup. Three combinations of rules can be considered when identifying students for GATE programs. These rules are (a) the AND rule, where the students must meet the prescribed cut-score on all assessments; (b) the OR rule, where students may meet the cut-

score on any one assessment; and (c) the AVERAGE rule, where the students' average across available assessments must meet the cut-score (Lakin, 2018).

One of the many contributing factors for the score gaps of African American students on standardized assessments is instigated by an inherent bias that exists in the test, which has a negative impact on students of color (Warne et al., 2013). Warne et al. (2013) defined a bias test as "a technical term that refers to tests and/or items that function differently for members of different groups" (p. 490).

The traditional screening tools and method often fail to identify minority students as gifted and talented (Acar et al., 2016), mainly when the identification process focuses on a single intelligence test (Luria et al., 2016; Welter et al., 2018). African American students and English Language Learners (ELL) do not consistently perform well on the standardized tests, and as a result, they are not identified early for GATE programs (Zhbanova et al., 2015). The lack of representation for diverse students in GATE programs can produce a strong and convincing case against the use of standardized assessments in the identification process of gifted students due to the unfavorable consequences the test may have on students of color (Warne, 2014) and issues that are linked to assessment practices (Cao et al., 2017).

Solutions to Bias in Assessments

It is recommended that instruments and procedures that are used in the identification process ensure the equitability of assessing students across diverse populations (Callahan et al., 2017). The use of local norms is also recommended for identifying underrepresented students because local norms help to identify children with the most significant potential in various schools who can benefit from a more rigorous curriculum (Worrell et al., 2019). In addition to the use of local norms, employing a more diverse teaching force ("News Briefs," 2019) is

another way of ensuring African American male students participate in GATE programs. A policy that is recommended to be used by principals to influence minority students in GATE programs is to allow gifted nominations from non-teachers and allow them to use multiple measures to evaluate giftedness (Grissom et al., 2017).

Identification

It has been perceived that when African American male students or students from minority groups are not properly identified and provided with the services that are available for gifted and talented students, they will not achieve their academic potential, and on many occasions they underperform in school. They also run the risk of being stuck in classes that fail to challenge their minds, which results in underachievement (Grantham, 2013). However, if educators correctly identify students for GATE programs and ensure that they are provided with the differentiated instruction that caters to their needs (Hodges et al., 2018), African American male students or minority groups will be able to perform to their full academic potential and will not be afraid of being identified as a student in GATE programs.

Several states identify students for their GATE programs based on their definition of giftedness. Hodges et al. (2018) pointed out that 43 of the 50 states placed emphasis on intellectual and academic abilities, but only half considered the potential abilities as part of the definition of giftedness. Hodges et al. (2018) further stated:

> A state that had adopted a definition of giftedness focused on intellectual and cognitive abilities is more likely to have an identification process using standardized achievement tests and other forms of verbal assessments. Conversely, if a state has a definition of giftedness that accounts for gifted potential, creativity, and/or implication from

socioeconomic differences, the identification process is likely to include nonverbal

assessments and other potentially more inclusive methods of identification. (p. 148)

It is recommended that to ensure African American male students and other minority

groups who are considered educationally vulnerable are represented in GATE programs, schools

must reexamine how the decision is made (Coleman, 2016) to tackle the issue of

underidentification and underrepresentation of these students so that inequalities can be

minimized or eliminated (Bonner & Jennings, 2007). The current definition used by many states

does not take into account the unique attributes, learning styles, and cultural backgrounds of

African American male students (Bonner & Jennings, 2007), which is vital in developing

leadership skills as early as elementary school.

To ensure that minority and African American male students, in particular, are a part of

GATE programs, multiple assessments, including both standardized and performance-based

assessments, must be used in the identification process (Lakin, 2018). When multiple

assessments were used in the identification process, it was found that African American students

were more likely to meet the criteria to be included in GATE programs (Lakin, 2018). The use

of multiple assessments in the identification process of gifted and talented students is also

necessary because the assessments will capture a wide range of talent across diverse cultures

(Salisbury et al., 2016), open the doors for the most underrepresented students to be identified,

gain a more complete understanding of the giftedness of students, and provide multiple

opportunities for students to demonstrate competency (Cao et al., 2017). Warne et al. (2013)

stated:

No matter how gifted children are identified, multiple methods of gathering information

about a child should be consulted, and the decision to label a child gifted should never be

made on the basis of one test score or one source of information alone. (p. 488)

Sometimes African American male students are not given the opportunities to be

included in GATE programs not only because of low test scores on standardized assessments but

also because they lack prior opportunity to learn (Worrell et al., 2019). If educators fail to tackle

the underrepresentation and underidentification of African American male students for GATE

programs, then there will continue to be inequalities (Bonner & Jennings, 2007). All students

should be given the opportunity to be included in GATE programs because gifted and talented

students are considered students with the "greatest potential resources for advancing the nation in

a globally competitive market" (Siegle, 2016).

Teacher Referral and Training

Another explanation for the underrepresentation and underidentification of African

American male students in GATE programs is lack of teacher referral (Bonner & Jennings, 2007;

Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017). A lot of weight is placed on teachers referring students for

GATE programs; however, their perspectives on who should be included in the program can be

subjective. Data have shown that from 1971 to 2008, teachers have consistently underreferred

African American students for screening and placement (Mills, 2015) in GATE programs.

White teachers often rate African American students lower than White and Asian students across

several dimensions (Irizarry, 2015; Peters et al., 2019) and write them lukewarm letters of

recommendation (Ford & Whiting, 2016). Nationally, 85% of White teachers are seen as gate

openers for White students (Ford & Whiting, 2016). In addition, Grissom et al. (2017) noted that

a teacher's racial and ethnic diversity has been linked to placements in GATE programs. This

suggests that African American male students are more likely to be referred to GATE programs by African American teachers.

There have been significant concerns with regard to teachers referring students for GATE programs mainly because they lack training in appropriate identification of the various manifestations of giftedness (Cao et al., 2017). As a result of lack of training, many teachers hold unrealistic expectations from gifted students, such as gifted students who are socially desirable, have a strong love for reading, and conform to their established rules (Acar et al., 2016). When teachers receive the necessary training, they will be able to acquire essential skills, which include but are not limited to the ability to analyze the students' interests and learning styles (Miedijensky, 2018).

Culture and Environmental Factors

Many experienced gifted education teachers are not aware of how culture and environmental factors play a role in the expression of giftedness in the minority group and among economically disadvantaged students. It is difficult for students in this subgroup to demonstrate how academically capable they are on assessments when they live in homes where food is scarce and often worry about how, when, and where they will get their next meal (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017). When some students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, they also often lack the nutrition and educational resources (Ambrose, 2013) that would provide them with the educational opportunities to aspire to be a part of GATE programs.

Even at times when African American male students have been identified and included in GATE programs, they still face numerous challenges in school about their culture, and on many occasions, their culture is not represented in the school environment (Mayes, 2018). Some students from low socioeconomic backgrounds will not be able to perform academically to their

true potential because their family financial situation and other challenges at home consume them. Most African American families want their sons to perform academically well in school, but they sometimes lack social, cultural, educational, and financial assets to support them (Ford & Moore, 2013). When African American male students are faced with cultural, social, and educational challenges, sometimes they will not be able to focus in school, and as a result, their ability and potential remain untapped (Hodges et al., 2018). Many African American male students' socioeconomic and cultural factors may mask their high ability and potential that will eventually result in their ability to remain undiscovered and underdeveloped by schools (Hodges et al., 2018) and lead to their talents and abilities being neglected which will be to everyone's detriment (Warne et al., 2013).

Lack of Professional Development

It has been noted that many educators are often unprepared for gifted education because there is no continuous professional development in their school districts after they have completed the required courses or degree programs (Ford & King, 2014). Professional development is vital in equipping teachers with the necessary skills they need to be able to identify African American male students for GATE programs and is "critical to the development and advancement of the cultural competence and responsiveness for educators" (p. 244). In some states, there are no individualized educator development programs stated in their state's plan that would equip educators with the necessary skills and strategies to meet the needs of gifted students (Kaul & Davis, 2018). It is important to note that when educators are not trained or receive only minimal training in gifted education, it limits the chances of African American male students being identified for GATE programs (Ford & Whiting, 2016). These teachers will

eventually be unprepared to carry out the identification process for GATE programs for African

American male students, other minority students, or students in general.

As a result, many experts have recommended training for school personnel to recognize

how giftedness is manifested in certain cultures to ensure that underserved students can be

represented in the gifted program (Warne et al., 2013). Providing training for educators goes

beyond ensuring that students are represented in GATE programs or improving test scores;

rather, the training should help teachers prepare African American male students for life after

formal education (Hinton & Osler, 2015). Therefore, policymakers and educators must ensure

that gifted students' talents and abilities are nurtured so they can realize their potential

(McClarty, 2015). All teachers who provide education for gifted and talented students should

receive the necessary training to become effective teachers because researchers in the field of

gifted education consider teacher effectiveness as pertinent to the success of students

(Miedijensky, 2018).

Underrepresentation of African American Students

Since the 1970s, students from certain racial, ethnic, and cultural groups have been

underidentified and underrepresented in GATE programs (Peters & Gentry, 2012). In gifted and

talented and advanced programs in public schools, African American male students have always

been underrepresented and no data can be found to indicate otherwise in the history of the gifted

education (Grantham, 2013). It is therefore evident that the lowest-performing students in our

nation's schools are considered to be African American male students (Bryan & Ford, 2014).

The literature has revealed the copious challenges African American students face as they

journey on the road to success in gifted education (Mayes, 2018). For years, African American

male students have been experiencing negative outcomes (Ford & Moore, 2013) which include

academic failure, high dropout rates (Bryan & Williams, 2017; Winsler et al., 2013), low

graduation rates (Bryan & Ford, 2014), low test scores (Worrell et al., 2019), and drastically low

representation in GATE programs throughout the United States (Ford & Moore, 2013; Peters &

Engerrand, 2016). This underrepresentation of African American male and other minority

students has been an ongoing concern of many scholars in the field of gifted education (Carman

et al., 2018; Hodges et al., 2018; Warne et al., 2013; Worrell et al., 2019). When African

American male students do not receive the educational support they need, there will be negative

long-term effects on their lives as a whole. Some of these effects will be unemployment and

health disparities (Hinton & Osler, 2015).

For nearly 100 years, the Institute of Higher Education and K–12 schools have attempted

to balance equity and excellence within a specific domain (Peters & Engerrand, 2016); however,

this attempt has not yielded much fruit because it is still an issue today. When the African

American and other minority students are underrepresented in GATE programs even though

there is merit for them to be there, this often deters their development of ability, achievement,

and social and economic progress (Ford & King, 2014), which is troubling to many educators

because capable students are being denied a rigorous and challenging education due to race,

ethnic heritage, or economic standing (Warne et al., 2013).

Data retrieved from federal and state agencies highlight the low percentage of African

American male students participating in GATE programs in public schools. Based on a survey

taken in 2002, only 3.1% of African American male and female students combined are a part of

GATE programs nationally (Hargrove & Seay, 2011) and in 2006 the Office of Civil Rights

reported that Black students represented 17.13% of the public-school population, but only 9.15%

in GATE programs. This resulted in more than 250,000 African American students who are

neither identified nor participating in GATE programs (Ford & King, 2014; Ford et al., 2011).

This number warrants the call to action for all schools to ensure that students' cultural,

linguistical, and economically diverse educational needs are met (Hodges et al., 2018), regardless

of their race, so that the brightest students receive an education that will permit them to thrive in

higher education (Luria et al., 2016). Culturally and linguistically diverse students deserve the

opportunity to be included in GATE programs, but too often, educators' perspectives toward

students of color have been negative, and as a result, their recruitment and retention have been

impacted (Mills, 2015).

According to the Grantham (2011), "Black males are underrepresented by 58% in the

gifted education, a loss for some 150,000 Black males" (p. 263). It is socially unjust for nearly

150,000 Black male students to remain unidentified for gifted services, and as a result, there is a

call for all educators to be "upstanders" rather than just bystanders to the lack of proportional

representation in GATE programs (Hodges et al., 2018). If educators continue to be bystanders,

then African American male students will not receive the academic rigor they need (Grantham,

2013) to thrive in school, and there will always be an excellence gap between African American

male students and their White and Asian peers.

The National Center for Education Statistics performs continuous assessments of student

progress, and the results continuously show a significant educational excellence gap of Black,

Latino, and American Indian students when compared with students in the White and Asian

subgroups (Pitre, 2014). Various accountability measures also revealed that Black males

frequently perform academically less than any other group of students (Henfield et al., 2014). It

is, therefore, a challenge for educators to eliminate the excellence gap in which the White and

Asian subgroups continue to perform academically at a higher level than Latinos and African American students (Gill, 2014).

However, systems and strategies must be in place to provide the African American and other minority groups as well as their parents and teachers with the support that is needed to improve their overall representation in GATE programs. It is vital that there be a change in educators' global approaches, expectations, and mindset when identifying and referring African American students for GATE programs (Hopkins & Garrett, 2014).

Perceptions of African American Students

Some educators perceive that African American male students are underrepresented in GATE programs because they lack the intellectual ability to perform as well academically as their peers in the White and Asian subgroups. Peters and Engerrand (2016) mentioned in their research that African American students may perceive that they can achieve academically as well as their peers but are afraid of being singled out for their intellectual ability. Because of such a mindset, they may choose not to be a part of GATE programs. As a result, African American students have been the least identified and represented in GATE programs in public schools throughout the United States.

Black students are not only underrepresented in the GATE programs but they are also underreferred (Zhbanova et al., 2015). Being underrepresented and underreferred can sometimes be attributed to low teacher expectations (Irizarry, 2015). African American students are perceived and sometimes treated differently in schools than students in the White and Asian subgroups because White teachers often attribute the challenges African American students encountered to personal and dispositional factors while attributing White students' behaviors and problems to external and situational factors (Irizarry, 2015). Students' values, achievement, and

academic beliefs may also be affected due to teachers' racial discrimination towards African American male students (Diemer et al., 2016). Sometimes how they are perceived has adverse effects on their academic performance in schools. Winsler et al. (2013) stated, "Teacher expectations and differential treatment based on race directed toward Black males and adverse school climate have also been shown to impact Black students' academic achievement" (p. 418).

In addition to low teacher expectations, race, gender, and social class have also disrupted the academic performance of African American students because some White teachers have developed negative expectations of them before they have an opportunity to demonstrate their academic ability (Ford et al., 2018). African American male students must work to prove their peers and teachers wrong when they encounter stereotypical views. However, at times, working to prove them wrong has had a negative impact on them emotionally and psychologically (Vegas & Moore, 2018).

African American male students are often seen as incompetent students who are lacking in self-efficacy because schools continue to mischaracterize them, and as a result, they are confronted with roadblocks, which prevent them from either being included or continuing to be included in GATE programs (Bryan & Ford, 2014). It is believed that recruiting and retaining African American male teachers to teach African American students will increase their chances of being included in GATE programs since Black teachers are more likely to be attuned to their cultural needs (L. Scott & Anderson, 2019) and know the importance of building positive relationships with Black students (Bryan et al., 2016). According to Bryan and Williams (2017), "Culturally relevant teachers are those who are able to center Black cultural knowledge as part of official school knowledge and to draw from it to support the academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical awareness of Black students" (p. 210).

Black male teachers are also familiar with their background and are in a better position to form positive relationships to enhance student learning (Evans & Leonard, 2013). African American male teachers believe that their identity will allow them to relate to other African American male students and act as change agents who are in a position to provide mentorship for their students (Goings & Bianco, 2016). In addition to providing mentorship to the male students, they are also able to help them develop skills to navigate and circumnavigate a racialized society and help them to achieve academic success and develop cultural competence and critical consciousness (Bryan et al., 2016). It is challenging for African American male students to remain in GATE programs and perform to their true potential if they do not have a connection with their teachers. Students are motivated and feel respected and accepted by their teachers when a positive relationship is in place (Mullet et al., 2018). A positive teacher-student relationship also leads to a well-supportive learning environment (Bieg et al., 2013), which will create a classroom that is conducive to learning.

Some educators believe that African American students are underrepresented in GATE programs because they are thought of as less capable owing to genetic, cultural, or economical disadvantages (Zhbanova et al., 2015). However, no race and/or low-income group is genetically or culturally superior or inferior to another (Ford & Moore, 2013) because gifted people can belong to any demographic or economic group (Warne et al., 2013). When educators perceived that African American male students are academically inferior to White students, they deny them access to various educational opportunities (Ford & Moore, 2013) in schools such as being a part of the gifted program in elementary and being prepared for advanced courses in middle and high school. These opportunities could drastically advance the educational,

economic, vocational, and social status of gifted and highly capable African American males (Ford & Moore, 2013) who can achieve academic greatness as well as their White counterparts.

African American students are also viewed as at risk because of their economic status. To be labeled "at-risk" is seen to have damaging implications for their current achievement and an adverse prognosis for their future endeavors (Coleman, 2016). African American male students face many challenges and struggle in schools because they are more likely to live in poor neighborhoods and attend some of the most inferior schools in their districts where there are limited resources (Winsler et al., 2013) and less qualified teachers to cater to their academic needs. African American students are also considered "at-promise" for academic achievement (Mills, 2015), and as a result, they should be provided with the support they need not only for their personal development but also for the good of the nation (Shayshon et al., 2014).

African American student often encounter challenges, which cause them to lack interest in being a part of the GATE programs in public schools. They often face pressure for being intelligent, obtaining good grades, speaking mainstream English, and having White friends (Zhbanova et al., 2015). Another reason that has been identified for the exception of minority and ethnically and linguistically diverse students to be omitted from GATE programs in the public school is that many states have excluded or undervalued creativity in their identification process (Luria et al., 2016).

The use of multiple criteria is recommended to increase the chances of more African American students being included in GATE programs in schools across the United States. However, research has shown that with the inclusion of multiple criteria in the identification process, the overall inclusion of the overrepresentation of White students in GATE programs

decreases, but there was only a marginal increase in the representation of the African American subgroup (Lakin, 2018).

The school environment should be one that is stimulating and conducive to learning but can be restrictive and stressful for some students (J. Lu et al., 2017). African American male and female students who are gifted often experience loneliness and fear of rejection from their peers. As a result, they do not want to be a part of GATE programs and often underperform in school so that they do not seem different or separate from their peers. For this reason, they are underrepresented in GATE programs (Hargrove & Seay, 2011).

Many African American students believe their teachers' perception of them is that they can never get anything right, or they do not want them to succeed. They are also treated differently from their peers and are sometimes portrayed negatively, which often leads to African American male students becoming less motivated and performing at a lower level in school than their peers. Ford and Moore (2013) posited, "When school achievement is disparaged among peers, many gifted and high potential African American males become discouraged and less motivated" (p. 403). When students are less motivated, they lack the aspiration to develop their talent and skills that are needed to achieve long-term goals. Ambrose (2013) highlighted the importance of students developing strong aspirations when he stated, "When individuals discover aspirations, they begin to discover their own innate talents that align with those aspirations and then take steps to develop those talents" (p. 88).

Portrayal and Dropout Rate of African American Male Students

The media often portrays Black males as violent, disrespectful, and unintelligent. This image is usually carried over into schools, which causes the Black male students to be treated differently by many stakeholders (Hargrove & Seay, 2011) and sometimes drop out of school.

For the academic year 2012–2013, the national graduation rate for African American male students was 59% while it was 80% for White male students (Vegas & Moore, 2018). More African American boys tend to be suspended or drop out of school than students in the White and Asian subgroups. The research shows that from October 2002 to October 2003, 4.8% of Black students dropped out of secondary education when compared to 3.2% of White students (Hargrove & Seay, 2011). Data from the U.S. Department of Justice also showed that 51% of all Black homicides were performed by African American males ages 17–29 (Hargrove & Seay, 2011).

Students from the White and Asian subgroups make up nearly three fourths of students enrolled in GATE programs compared to Hispanic and African American students who are disproportionately represented (Sermon, 2016). African American students comprised only 3.6% of children in the gifted program in 2006 (Winsler et al., 2013).

African American Students and the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Program

There has been a prevailing stereotype regarding the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) program because it is perceived that the STEM career is for certain social groups (Shin et al., 2016), and as a result African American male students are often overlooked (Riegle-Crumb & King, 2010). Estrada et al. (2017) found that fewer Black students are capable of completing advanced coursework in mathematics and science when compared to their Asian and White peers. Fewer Black students are likely to persist in STEM programs.

It is also perceived that students from underrepresented groups such as African American male students are at higher risk for leaving a STEM program (Andersen & Ward, 2014), which eventually results in their underrepresentation in STEM research careers (Estrada et al., 2017). It is believed that the STEM program is only for a certain race or subgroup and as a result, it might

be a signal to African American male students that they do not belong or might not be successful in the program (Shin et al., 2016). If African American male students are underrepresented in the STEM program from an early age, they run the risk of missing out on the highest-paying STEM jobs when they complete their formal education, which has the most significant potential for growth over the next century (Falco, 2017). Students who have the potential should have equal opportunity to be included in GATE programs and take part in the STEM programs offered in schools because they are capable of making a substantial contribution to the field (McClarty, 2015). McClarty (2015) further highlighted the competent contribution STEM students can make to society: "On average, they produce 5.3 creative written works, 20.6 fine arts accomplishments, 6.6 STEM publications, seven software development contributions or patents, and nearly a million dollars in grant funding per person all before the age of 40 years" (p. 3).

Summary

African American male students have been faced with many challenges that are considered barriers to their inclusion in GATE programs. Some of these barriers are not related to their intellectual ability (Vegas & Moore, 2018). As a result, there is a national outcry to close the excellence gap between African American students and their White and Asian peers. This national outcry exists because, for years, African American male students have been the least identified and represented in GATE programs in public schools throughout the United States. To be identified and recommended for GATE programs, all students must take various standardized tests and attain a cut score established by the state. African American students have performed lower than White and Asian students on these standardized assessments, which has resulted in that subgroup being underrepresented in GATE programs.

It is recommended that to close the excellent gap, schools must use multiple assessments to aid in the identification and assessment process rather than only a single standardized test. A critical component of the identification process is to ensure that African American male students are identified and represented in GATE programs. To ensure that this occurs, educators must be adequately trained to assess and identify students for GATE programs, recruit African American male teachers, develop a positive relationship with students, as well as changing their perception that African American students are not capable of meeting the required cut score needed to be included in the program. Educators should also make an effort to be upstanders who will not sit back and allow African American male students who have the potential to remain in their classroom without being exposed to a rigorous curriculum and provided with the services they deserve as gifted students.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this multicase study was to develop an understanding of educators' perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented education (GATE) programs at two elementary schools. The setting for this study was two public schools in a large school district in northern Virginia. The participants were 10–15 educators who have taught or are currently teaching fourth or fifth grade, selected through purposeful sampling. The data were collected through one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and teachers writing letters to other teachers sharing the strategies they use to motivate and encourage African American male students to perform to the best of their ability and rise above stereotype. The data were analyzed using cross-case analysis methodology and employed member checking, peer review, triangulation, and an audit trail to ensure the findings were trustworthy.

Design

This research was a qualitative multicase study. A qualitative research design allowed me to get a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives on the issue of African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs in public schools. Qualitative research lends itself to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied because it involves making new significant distinctions, decisions, mistakes (Kalman, 2019) and having the patience to clarify information collected from the interviews, focus groups, and letters. A qualitative multicase study was selected because it allowed me to garner the perspectives of the participants on African American male students in GATE programs in two different elementary schools. I was able to glean the perspectives of the educators by talking to

participants directly and allowing them to give their views on the issue being studied in their current setting (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning the participants bring to them (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study was a multicase study. It was geared toward studying educators who have taught or are currently teaching fourth and fifth grade to garner their perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs in two different elementary schools in northern Virginia. For multicase study researchers, one of the most important tasks is to show how educators' perspectives appear in different contexts (Stake, 2006). A multicase study allowed me to facilitate the exploration of a phenomenon within the different settings (Stake, 2006) using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008) and calls for careful craftwork (Yin, 2018). According to Yin (2018), "The evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall multiple-case study is therefore regarded as being more robust" (p. 54). A multicase study design should follow an analogous logic. Yin (2018) stated the following logic: "Each case must be carefully selected so that the individual case studies either (a) predict similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predict contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons (a theoretical replication)" (p. 55).

The selection of a case plays a pivotal role in a case study (Elman et al., 2016) because it identifies the case that needs to be studied (Yin, 2018). When considering the case, it is essential to contemplate at least two steps: defining the case and bounding the case (Yin, 2018). A case usually focuses on a person but can also be some event or entity other than a single person. Once the researcher has selected and defined a case, additional clarifications become essential. Providing clarification about the case is called bounding the case (Yin, 2018). For this case

study, there were two sites, two elementary schools in northern Virginia. The case was

educators' perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and

represented in GATE programs at each site. When conducting a multicase study, there is a need

for "a word representing the collective target" (Stake, 2006). For this case study, the words that

connect the two cases are gifted, African American male students, and least identified and

represented.

This research was conducted at two elementary schools where there are strong GATE

programs. I was able to study what was similar and different about each case to better

understand the phenomenon. The time frame in which this study was conducted was one year.

A multicase study was appropriate for this study not only because it uses multiple forms of data

collection such as interviews, focus groups, and letters from participants, but because it allowed

me to examine how GATE programs were different in each environment (Stake, 2006). It also

created a path to conduct research in two settings where there was an opportunity to do a cross-

case analysis of the data collected that was eventually more powerful than conducting research in

one setting (Yin, 2018).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of educators' perspectives on

African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs at

two elementary schools in a school district in northern Virginia. Expectancy-value theory and

social cognitive theory are two theories that are connected with the sub-questions. Given the

purpose of this study, the following central research question guided this case study:

What are the educators' perspectives on African American male students being the least

identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

The sub-questions are as follows:

1. What are educators' perspectives on the factors that cause African American male students to be the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

2. How can educators motivate African American male students to engage and persist toward being represented in gifted and talented programs?

3. What are educators' perspectives on African American male students' self-efficacy, scholar identity and the gifted and talented programs?

Settings

The setting for this multi-site case study was Clarke Town County Public School (pseudonym), a large school district in the northern Virginia area. The school division has a student population of 90, 203 students enrolled in 61 elementary, 16 middle, 13 high, and three K–8 traditional schools and has over 11,541 full-time employees. The school division has a very diverse student breakdown by race and ethnicity as follows: Hispanic (34.39%), American Indians/Alaskan (0.22%), Asian (9.03%), Black/African American (20.34%), Hawaiian/Pacific Island (0.20%), and White (30%). In all elementary schools, there are two specialty programs: Strategies Teaching and Reaching for Talent (START) Program (gifted education for Grades K–3 and School Involved in Gifted Needs in Education Today (SIGNET) program (gifted education for Grades 4–5); selected schools also include a special education self-contained autism program.

In this school division, students in second and third grade systematically sit for the CogAT and NNAT assessments in November each year. These assessments are the primary assessments used in the identification process for students to be included in GATE programs. Other assessments are used in the identification process when the students do not score in the 96th percentile or above. This school division was selected because it has gifted programs in

elementary, middle, and high schools. Since there are gifted programs in all elementary schools, I was able to collect the data and report on the findings. The schools that were selected were governed by one principal and one assistant principal in each school. The principals have served in their capacities between 10–25 years.

This study used two elementary schools from Clarke Town County Public Schools: John Peters Elementary and Prince George Elementary (pseudonyms). Both elementary schools are in the same region but vary in demographics, race, and percentage in the gifted program. Both schools have a high percentage of students in their GATE programs when compared to other schools in the same region. Still, John Peters Elementary has more gifted students enrolled in their program than Prince George Elementary. John Peters Elementary has one gifted resource teacher who provides gifted services for all students in K–5. In contrast, the Prince George gifted resource teacher only provides gifted services for students in K–3 in two elementary schools. The resource teacher who supervises the gifted program at Prince George does not provide gifted services for the students in the fourth- and fifth-grade SIGNET program. The students are bussed to another school where they meet with other students who are also in the SIGNET program and receive gifted services from the gifted resource teacher assigned to that school.

Site One: John Peters Elementary School

John Peters Elementary school houses kindergarten to fifth-grade students. The age range is 5 to 11 years. It has a population of 481 students and a school breakdown by race and ethnicity as follows: Hispanic (34.3%), American Indians/Alaskan (0.4%), Asian (8.4%), Black/African American (15%), Hawaiian/Pacific Island (0.3%), and White (33.9%). There are two specialty programs in this school: gifted education through the START program and the SIGNET program, and special education through an autism program. The teacher/student ratio in

the general education setting is 18:1 teacher. This site was selected because it has a gifted

education program from kindergarten to fifth grade and has a high number of students in the

program when compared to other GATE programs in schools in the same area.

One principal and one assistant principal govern this school. The principal and assistant

principal have served in their capacities between 10 and 21 years. Under the leadership of the

principal, the school has received numerous School of Excellence Awards for high student

achievement on the state's summative assessment, Standard of Learning (SOL) exams. The

School of Excellence Award is the highest award given out by the school division. In addition to

the principal and assistant principal leading the school to achieve and maintain high scores on the

state's summative assessment, each grade level has a team lead that makes up the school

leadership team. This leadership team meets monthly to address concerns of the teachers as well

as to plan and prepare for students' remediation and enrichment programs to ensure that all

students are learning and meeting the state's and school district's benchmark.

Site Two: Prince George Elementary

Prince George Elementary School provides educational services for students in

kindergarten through fifth-grade students. It has a population of 656 students and a school

breakdown by race and ethnicity as follows: Hispanic (25%), American Indians/Alaskan (0.7%),

Asian (15%), Black/African American (25%), Hawaiian/Pacific Island (0.9%), and White (26%).

This site also has two specialty programs: gifted education through the START program for

Grades K–3 and the and SIGNET program for Grades 4–5. However, as noted above, only the

students in the START program receive gifted services at this site. The students in the SIGNET

program receive gifted services at another location. There is also a special education autism

program. The teacher/student ratio in the general education setting is 22:1 teacher. This school

has also received numerous School of Excellence awards for high student performance on the

state's SOL exams.

Both sites were selected because they use multiple selection criteria when recommending

and selecting students for GATE programs. Students in second and third grade systematically sit

for the CogAT and NNAT assessments in November each year. These assessments are the

primary assessments that are used in the identification process to be included in the GATE

program. There are other assessments used in the identification process when students do not

gain a score in the 96th percentile.

Participants

The participants in this multicase study were selected through purposeful sampling.

When the researcher uses purposeful sampling, it means the participants and sites chosen for this

study were chosen purposefully to inform an understanding of the research problem and central

phenomenon in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is also essential that the researcher

purposefully selects the sample for this research since it is assumed that the participants can

provide an in-depth understanding of the case to be discovered and a great deal about the issue of

central importance (Patton, 2015).

Participants in this study included 10 teachers who were selected based on age, gender,

years of experience, and grade level. The fourth- and fifth-grade past and current teachers who

were selected had at least five years of experience teaching students who have been identified

and/or received services as gifted and talented students. All the teachers who had at least five

years of teaching experience were selected because they have experience in providing services,

administering the standardized assessments, and recommending students for GATE programs

based on test scores and/or multiple assessments. Below are the participants for each case presented in a table, including their gender, range of experience, and ethnicity.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Site	Participants	Gender	Teaching Experience (Range)	Ethnicity
1	Kathy	F	5 – 10	Caucasian
1	Deon	F	more than 10	Caucasian
1	Karen	F	more than 10	Caucasian
1	Michelle	F	more than 10	Caucasian
1	Marlon	M	more than 10	Caucasian
2	Janice	F	0 – 5	Caucasian
2	Angella	F	5 – 10	African American
2	Marie	F	5 – 10	Caucasian
2	Kenzey	F	more than 10	Caucasian
2	Daniese	F	more than 10	Caucasian

Procedures

A letter requesting permission to carry out the study in two elementary schools was submitted to the superintendent's office, and that request was approved. These two letters were placed temporarily in Appendix A but were replaced with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval letter in my final dissertation to preserve this school district's confidentiality.

After receiving IRB approval, I conducted a pilot study at a different elementary school with three participants using all three data collection tools. A pilot study guided the development of my research plan because it gave me valuable feedback that enabled me to make the necessary adjustments as well as refine my research methods before attempting my actual study (Kinchin &

Edwards, 2018). This pilot study is essential because it allowed me to make sure my data

collection tools answered the research questions, practice my interviewing and focus group

facilitator skills, and tweak anything that needed to be changed before I embarked on my actual

study. Since I conducted the pilot study in an elementary school that was different from the two

schools selected for this study, none of the participants in the pilot study were included in my

actual study and none of the data collected for the pilot study were used in my data analysis.

In this qualitative research study, I was the primary instrument that was used in collecting

the data. It was, therefore, imperative that I gain experience in carrying out interviews. To

collect the data, this study used interviews, focus group discussion, and letters participants wrote

to educators sharing strategies they used to motivate African American male students to rise

above stereotype and perform to the best of their ability to be included in GATE programs.

Once I received IRB approval, I sent a recruitment letter (Appendix B) to the potential

participants via email and asked them to complete a screening survey (Appendix C) to ensure

those who agreed to participate met the criteria. Once the screening process was complete, an

email was sent to those participants selected to participate and those not chosen to participate in

the study (Appendix D). The email to those participants selected to participate contained a link

to access the IRB Consent Form (Appendix E). The potential participants were asked to sign and

return the consent form via email. The correspondence included an explanation of how the data

were collected and kept private. Upon receipt of the signed consent to participate in the study,

the data collection process began. The three data collection methods used to collect the data for

this study included interviews, focus group discussions, and letters written to other educators.

The Researcher's Role

I am an African American female instructional coach at two elementary schools in a large school district in northern Virginia. Since this research was a qualitative study, my role was to serve as the human instrument in developing an in-depth understanding of the participants' perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs. It is my view that African American male students are the least identified and represented in GATE programs. I hold firm to this view because I have administered the CogAT and NNAT assessments, prepared reports and recommended students for the gifted program for 10 years. During this period, I have gathered enough data to show that all races and subgroups have more students represented in GATE programs than African American male students. The data that I have collected, therefore, support my view. For this research, I collected data by interviewing participants (Creswell, 2013) and conducting focus group discussions and document review. The documents that were reviewed were letters the educators wrote to other educators sharing the strategies and methodology they used in their educational setting to ensure African American male students are encouraged and motivated to realize their full potential and rise above stereotype to be included in GATE programs.

All the participants in this study were educators who work in one of the two elementary schools included in the study. I previously taught in one school where I conducted the study. While I had taught in this school prior to conducting the research, the student and teacher population were not the same. A new school was built close to this school to accommodate the overcrowding of the schools in the same zone. Since a new school was built, there was a need for a new school zone. As a result of the new school zone, many teachers were de-staffed and were placed in another school because the student population decreased. Some teachers

voluntarily transferred to another school or a new position within the same school district. The participants who participated in this study were individuals I did not know on a personal level.

It was my responsibility to report multiple realities from the participants' perspectives as themes developed from the data collected, to get close to the participants in the study, and to use quotations from the participants as evidence of my findings. I spent time with the participants while collecting the data so that the data could be interpreted accurately. It was also my responsibility to create a comfortable, supportive environment so that the participants felt at ease when expressing their thoughts and feelings in their interviews or the focus group discussions. It was also imperative to remind participants that their responses to the interview questions would be kept in confidence to secure more honest responses to the interview or focus group questions.

Since I have taught at the elementary level in this school district for 10 years, administered the CogAT and NNAT test, identified and recommended students of all races to GATE programs using multiple criteria, I brought personal assumptions and biases to the process. I created a reflective journal to set aside these assumptions and biases (Appendix I). During my 10 years tenure, I have seen a few African American male students referred for GATE programs. I have observed that African American teachers mostly recommended the African American male students who were accepted into the program. Therefore, one assumption I brought to the study is that African American teachers are more likely to refer African American male students who do not score in the 96th percentile on a standardized test but are referred to the program using other criteria such as teacher recommendations and performance-based assessments.

Data Collection

For this research, the data collection methods included interviews, focus groups, and letters from participants who shared their strategies for motivating and inspiring African American male students. I chose this order because in a one-on-one interview setting with the participants, they were a little more relaxed and comfortable to speak freely since there were no other participants around. The next data collection method was the focus group. The participants spoke freely about the issue discussed when they heard other educators giving their perspectives in the focus group. I conducted two focus groups: one for each site. The participants selected for each focus group were the same participants who took part in the interviews. Each focus group consisted of five participants. The third method of data collection was the letters from the participants. I decided to collect the letters last because the participants had heard the views of the other participants in their school during the focus group discussion and realized that they all have different ideas to share that can benefit them as well as educators in other schools.

Interviews

Creswell (2013) shared that interviews are one of the most important sources of case study data. Conducting interviews with educators allowed me to understand the perspectives of the participants. Patton (2015) stated, "The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspectives. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful and knowable and can be made explicit" (p. 426). The following comprise the interview questions:

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions (Appendix F)

1. How do you feel about the gifted program in your school?

2. Research has shown that African American male students are the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs in schools across the United States. What are your perspectives on African American male students and gifted and talented programs?

3. What are your perspectives on African American male students' intellectual ability to be included in gifted and talented programs?

4. How do your coworkers view African American male students and gifted and talented programs?

5. Based on your experience administering assessments and recommending students for gifted and talented programs, what are your perspectives on the identification process?

6. What are your views on elementary educators being gifted certified by the school division or state before being able to teach, identify, and assess students for gifted and talented programs?

7. What factors do you believe contribute to the African American male subgroup being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

8. In your teacher preparation program, what training did you receive to prepare you to teach gifted and talented students?

9. What training did you receive in college or through professional developments in your schools to prepare you for the identification and assessment process of gifted students?

10. What are your views on African American male students being intrinsically motivated to perform academically?

11. What are some strategies you use in your classes to motivate and encourage African American male students to perform to the best of their ability and rise above stereotype to be included in the gifted and talented program?

12. Based on your experience working with gifted students, how can educators ensure that more African American male students are identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

13. What can educators do to ensure African American male students are motivated to engage and persist toward being represented in gifted and talented programs?

14. Having taught and recommended African American male students and administered assessments for gifted and talented programs, what are your perspectives on how they view themselves to be included in the program?

15. What training did you receive in cultural responsiveness in your teacher preparation program?

16. To what extent did your teacher preparation program prepare you to respond to different cultures you encountered in your classroom?

Question 1 served as a general question that was asked to get the participants to feel relaxed. This question is a straightforward question that also allowed me to understand how the participants feel about gifted programs in their schools. Educators often have their own beliefs about the gifted program and gifted children. One such belief is that gifted students can be successful on their own (Gomez-Arizaga et al., 2016), and as a result, they do not need additional support or to be a part of the gifted programs. According to Stephens (2019), "If a teacher's perception of gifted students is influenced by some of the prevailing myths about gifted students, it is likely they will be resistant or disinclined to accommodate the educational needs of gifted students in their practice" (p. 192)

Questions 2–4 answered the central research question where educators gave their perspective of African American male students being identified and represented in GATE

programs. Educators can effect change with those with whom they come in contact because they are an essential determinant of competence of belief, values, and achievement (Diemer et al., 2016). Therefore, their perspectives of African American male students can have a positive or negative effect on students since they play an important factor in the development of a student's competence beliefs (Diemer et al., 2016). Some educators viewed Black students through a deficit lens as troublemakers (Gill, 2014) and genetically inferior (Ford et al., 2018; Zhbanova et al., 2015) rather than academicians with potential and ability (Sewell & Going, 2019). It is, therefore, vital to gather the perspectives of educators on African American male students and their underrepresentation in GATE programs because educators play a pivotal role in the decision-making process (Mills, 2015).

Questions 5–7 answered Sub-question 1. They focused on gathering educators' perspectives on the factors that cause African American male students to be the least identified and represented in GATE programs. It is believed that traditional assessments used to identify students for GATE programs are biased (Card & Giuliano, 2016). The assessments place Black students at a disadvantage because they are culturally skewed (Mills, 2015; Sewell & Going, 2019) and do not illuminate the linguistic strengths of African American children (Mills et al., 2017).

Most African American children have only experienced White educators as their teachers who lack confidence in the students' ability to be included in GATE programs (Henfield et al., 2008). It is indeed possible for African American students to go through their elementary, middle, and high school education without having the experience of being taught by an African American male teacher (Bryan & Ford, 2014). The absence of African American male teachers

can be attributed to system failure in the public-school system. S. Scott and Rodriguez (2015) stated:

> The African American male pipeline to the teaching profession is ultimately controlled by low high school graduation rate and inadequate college preparation. Thus, opportunities to increase African American male representation within the teaching profession are lost even before college begins. Equally, the lack of African American male representation as role models decreases the likelihood for minority male students to pursue higher education or seek careers in education. (p. 692)

It is imperative that African American male students have the opportunity to be taught by African American male teachers because they possess the appropriate pedagogical performance style that can encourage male students to place a value on their education and educational experiences (Bryan et al., 2016). Bryan et al. (2016) further stated:

> Moreover, Black teachers know how to engage in "purposeful teaching" to ensure the collective academic and social uplift of Black students. Purposeful teaching is rooted in the notion that most Black teachers know the importance of building positive relationships with Black male and female students, centering race and community in teaching and learning, and helping Black students plan for the future. (p. 492)

To be able to identify and cater to the needs of gifted students, all educators must be adequately prepared (Fraser-Seeto, Howard & Woodcock, 2013) because they need a particular combination of knowledge, dispositions, and skills to be able to effectively work with gifted students (Rowan & Townend, 2016). Many teacher education programs have failed to prepare competent professionals as highly qualified teachers (Kaplan, 2012), and many staff members do not have knowledge of gifted education or gifted children (Carpenter & Hayden, 2018), which

makes it challenging for them to be able to identify students for gifted programs accurately. Quality teacher preparation is essential (Gomez-Arizaga et al., 2016) because gifted students need support to reach their potential.

Questions 8–13 answered Sub-question 2. Educators gave their perspectives on how to motivate African American male students to engage and persist towards being in GATE programs. Many African American male students find it challenging to function effectively in their educational setting, not necessary because they do not have the cognitive ability or intrinsically motivated, but because they do not have a relationship with their teachers. Teacher-student relationship plays a critical role in the educational outcome of students. When there is a positive relationship, students are more generally motivated to learn (Henry & Thorsen, 2018) and will more likely view the teaching and learning environment to be motivationally supportive (Bartholomew et al., 2018). When a teacher-student relationship is established, students perceived their teachers to be more involved, which resulted in students being more engaged in their schoolwork (Stroet et al., 2015), giving learning task extra attention (O'Connor, 2018) and retain what they have learned.

The final three interview questions answered Sub-question 3 and provided educators perspectives on African American male students' self-efficacy and scholarly identity. Most Black male students do not acknowledge their scholarly identity because their White teachers do not see them as gifted, and some general education gifted educators continue to mischaracterize them, which allows Black male students to develop poor academic performance self-concept and to lack self-efficacy (Bryan et al., 2016).

Focus Group

The focus group is one of the data collection methods selected for this qualitative study. Two focus groups were conducted virtually with the participants in this study. One focus group was conducted in each school. This method was chosen because it allowed me to meet with multiple participants at the same time and allowed those participants who might have been hesitant to speak freely in the one-on-one interview to provide the information needed in a focus group setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018) because they heard other participants speaking freely. During the focus groups, I encouraged all participants to talk openly and was careful to monitor those individuals who may want to dominate the discussion (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The following is a list of the discussion questions used in the focus groups:

Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Discussion Questions (Appendix G)

1. What are your perspectives on the identification and assessment process of gifted and talented programs for all students?

2. What are your perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

3. To what extent were you adequately prepared to identify, assess, and recommend students for gifted and talented programs?

4. What are your views on the identification process of African American male students for gifted and talented programs?

5. What are your perspectives on recommending African American male students for the gifted and talented programs?

6. Based on researchers' findings, the use of multiple assessments is recommended to increase the representation of African American male students in gifted and talented programs. To what extent do you agree with the finding? Why do you feel this way?

7. What are your views on the relationship between the socioeconomic status of African American male students and gifted and talented programs?

8. Based on your experience, what are the factors that contribute to African American male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

9. How do you believe African American students' scholarly identity influences their perception of and access to gifted and talented programs?

10. What can educators do to motivate and inspire African American male students to engage and persist toward being represented in gifted and talented programs?

11. What can the school division do to ensure educators are adequately trained to identify and recommend students for gifted and talented programs?

12. What are your views on standardized assessments, the primary assessments used to identify students for the gifted program?

13. African American male students do not often attain the score on the CogAT and NNAT assessments for automatic identification in gifted and talented programs. What do you believe are some of the factors for their low performance on these standardized assessments?

14. What are your views on the use of multiple assessments in the identification process of African American male students to be identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

Questions 1 and 2 invited the participants to reflect on their perspectives on the identification and assessment process of GATE programs in their schools and on African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs. Many educators who enter the classrooms are aware that some form of gifted programs exist in their schools but might not be aware of the identification and assessment process to ensure that genuinely gifted students are included in the programs. However, other educators enter the classrooms having no knowledge of giftedness, gifted children, or gifted education (Carpenter & Hayden, 2018), which puts them at a disadvantage in being able to identify and assess students for GATE programs in their schools. They will also not be knowledgeable of the data that showed that African American, Hispanic, Native American and low-income families are underrepresented, sometimes dramatically, in the gifted and talented population (Peters & Engerrand, 2016) and also that more than 50% of Black students who have high abilities are not being developed because they are underrepresented in GATE programs (Andersen & Ward, 2014). These two questions were designed to answer the central question.

Questions 3–6 invited participants to reflect on how adequately prepared they are to be able to identify, recommend, and assess students for GATE programs. Lack of professional development has been a contributing factor for educators lacking the understanding of gifted education (Johnsen, 2013) and becoming progressively competent (Gomez-Arizaga et al., 2016) in being able to identify African American male students for GATE programs. Johnsen (2013) further stated:

Given the lack of understanding of gifted education, professional development is key. However, as reported by the NAGC and the National Council of Directors of Programs for the Gifted (2009), 65% of teachers reported that teacher preparation programs did not

equip them to teach academically advanced students, 58% of teachers had had no

professional development over the past few years that focused on teaching academically

advanced students, and only five states require all teachers to receive preservice training

in gifted and talented education. (p. 5)

Many African American male students tend to underperform on standardized assessments

(Henfield et al., 2014; Mayes, 2018; Peters & Engerrand, 2016) and, as a result, are not identified

and recommended for GATE programs. The use of multiple assessments should be utilized

whenever possible for the identification or assessment purpose (McBee et al., 2014) because it is

"important for identifying gifted students who are minorities, economically disadvantaged, or

English-language learners—all of whom are underrepresented in gifted courses" (DeNisco, 2015,

p. 43).

Questions 7–9 answered Sub-questions 1 and 3. Participants gave their perspectives on

the factors contributing to African American male students being the least identified and

represented in GATE programs. Teacher bias in referrals (Peters & Engerrand, 2016),

identification practices (Worrell et al., 2019), and standardized test scores (Valler et al., 2017)

are some of the factors that have been identified as barriers for African American male students

being included in GATE programs. Some African American male students have met the

minimum academic qualifications and have been referred for GATE programs, but they choose

not to take part (Henfield et al., 2008) because of stereotype threats that undermine their

achievement (Diemer et al., 2016) and the concept of acting White (Sewell & Goings, 2019;

Zhbanova et al., 2015). African American male students are not acknowledged for their

scholarly identity or ability (Bryan et al., 2016), and as a result, many are not identified and

recommended for GATE programs. Some African American male students display hostility.

When they exhibit this kind of behavior, some educators do not see them as being capable of achieving academic success in GATE programs (Zhbanova et al., 2015), and as a result, they are left out of gifted education and miss out on opportunities to reach their full academic potential (Vegas & Moore, 2018).

Questions 10–14 gathered responses from the participants to answer Sub-question 2. The participants were invited to give their perspectives on how the school division can restructure professional development for GATE programs to ensure that educators are trained to identify and recommend African American male students for GATE programs using multiple assessments. Lack of teacher preparation (Bryan et al., 2016), variation in the implementation of policy (Grissom et al., 2017), and the use of standardized assessments (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017; Valler et al., 2017) have contributed to the underrepresentation of African American male students in GATE programs.

Review of Letters

Reviewing letters written by participants to other educators sharing the strategies they use in their classes to motivate and inspire African American Males students to rise above stereotype and perform academically to the best of their ability is an excellent qualitative research data collection method. When the participants in this study shared their practices regarding African American male students, it provided an opportunity for other educators to learn from these experiences, as well as affirm or refute whether their own practices are beneficial to their African American male students. A review of letters individually written by the participants was selected as one of the data collection methods because I was able to review the letters the educators wrote to other educators in this study to gather additional information that might identify common themes. Specific instructions for this data collection tool were provided in a stimulus letter

(Appendix H). Also included in this stimulus letter were six questions participants needed to consider as they wrote their letters. Participants were required to choose at least three questions to answer but could use all six if they wished to do so.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process is one of the most essential steps in research (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, 2008) because it is more than analyzing text and image (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the data analysis process also involves "organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation of them" (p. 181). For this case study, I chose to use Stake's (2006) cross-case analysis, which is defined as identifying what is "common across the cases" (p 39).

Individual Case and Cross-Case Analysis

The data collected from the two cases during the individual interviews, focus groups, and letters from teachers were analyzed. Each school was considered a case and was first examined as an independent study. I first transcribed the data collected from the participants and then looked at the participants' responses from each case individually to identify any relevant information that was needed to answer the research questions. I then transcribed verbatim the responses to the questions from the participants. Once the data were transcribed, the participants were asked to review their own responses. After a review of the transcripts by the participants, the data were then analyzed by me. To analyze the data, I used the transcribed responses from the interviews, focus groups, and letters so that the data could be coded. I analyzed the data manually to ensure that information was conveyed precisely as the participants intended. The transcripts were reviewed multiple times to remove those statements that were similar or

overlapping. This process is called coding. From the remaining statements, keywords and/or phrases were identified and then organized into common themes. Direct quotations and/or examples from the text were determined to support themes generated from analyzing the data (Appendix K). This procedure was followed for each data collection tool in both cases. The next step was to use Worksheet One (Appendix L) to record only the themes generated. All three data collection tools were used to develop the codes needed to identify the themes that emerged from the data so that the cross-case analysis could begin.

A cross-case analysis was used to find common relationships across cases (Stake, 2006). Using the themes generated on Worksheet One, I surveyed all the evidence and analyzed the data collected by "making marginal comments and adding post-it notes on special pages of the report" (Stake, 2006, p. 42). I used the comments and post-it notes to complete Worksheet Two (Appendix M) because it provided essential information such as case findings and relevant themes needed from each case for the cross-case analysis. I used one worksheet for each case. Stake (2006) stated, "The multicase research director starts with a quintain, arranges to study cases in terms of their own situational issues, interprets patterns within cases, and then analyzes cross-case findings to make assertions about the binding" (p. 10). Using both the information from Worksheet Two, I identified and interpreted patterns in the data within cases. Then, there was an analysis of cross-case finding to make assertations about the binding. Stake (2006) recommended using Worksheet Three (Appendix N) for a cross-case analysis. Worksheet Three was used to generate themes based on assertations from each case. To generate themes based on assertations, I used the information gathered from Worksheet Two to merge findings from the two cases.

Once the initial merged findings were completed, I formed another focus group that consisted of six of the participants, three from each site, to review the initial merged findings. Each participant was presented with a copy of Worksheets One, Two, and Three from their site to review the contents. A focus group discussion was facilitated by me to develop new meanings or provide clarity of the information. Once the participants finish examining the data, I was tasked with revising Worksheets Two and Three using the new information gathered. Allowing these focus group participants to review the data was a form of member checking of the study that aided in the credibility of the data collected.

Then, I assembled all the data collected from the interviews, focus groups, and letters to create the final assertations. Stake (2006) recommended the use of Worksheet Four (Appendix O) to complete the final assertion. This worksheet is one that helped in the development of theme-based assertations from the merged findings and to identify relationships that are common across the cases. To complete this process, it was imperative for me to identify common themes across both cases and arrange them by order of importance and match with the research questions.

Final Assertations

To create a final list of findings, I used Worksheet Five (Appendix P), which is suggested in Stake (2006). Worksheet Five is a multicase assertion sheet used for final reporting. To carry out this process, I reviewed the identified common themes across both cases, the order in which they were arranged, and how they matched the research questions. Once that review was complete, I made sure my assertations or findings in the cross-case report were based on evidence and the evidence that persuaded me supported each assertation (Stake, 2006).

Once the final analysis was complete, I compiled all the data and select two participants from each site to do a peer review of the data. I selected two participants from each site whom I felt were able to give me feedback and offer advice on the data compiled. By allowing the participants to do the peer review, it provided another perspective and I was able to identify any inaccuracies represented in the data. Once I was presented with feedback from the peer review, I took another look at my findings to ensure the final assertions corresponded with the participants' perspectives. The final step in my data analysis process was to explain the final research themes. Worksheet Six (Appendix Q) was used for the explanation of the final research themes. I took the assertations acquired from the cross-case analysis and used them to explain the themes.

Trustworthiness

The nature of qualitative inquiry has been transformed by Lincoln and Guba (1986), who developed criteria to ensure rigor exists during qualitative inquiry (Morse, 2015). The criteria were put in place to evaluate credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Connelly, 2016; Koch, 2006; Morse, 2015) and also used as a more appropriate framework for evaluating qualitative research (Kline, 2008). These criteria are intended to respond to those concerned with truth, value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). A second focus group was formed so that participants could review the data collected as a form of member checking to ensure the credibility of the data collected.

Credibility

Member checking and triangulation were used to established credibility for this study. For member checking Creswell (2013) stated, "This approach, writ large in most qualitative studies, involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusion back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (p. 252). Kornbluh (2015)

highlighted, "Engaging in member checks is the most crucial tactic for assessing trustworthiness" (p. 397). Lincoln and Guba (1986) defined member checks as "the process of continuous, informal testing of information by soliciting reactions of respondents or sources, and a terminal, formal testing of the final case report with a representative sample of stakeholders" (p. 19).

Once the data were collected and transcribed, the participants performed member checks of the raw data to verify their accuracy. A second focus group was formed to give participants the opportunity to review the data as a form of member checking of the study and aided the credibility of the data collected. By making use of member checking, I ensured that the transcriptions were accurately recorded and, as a result, are credible (Casey & Murphy, 2013).

Triangulation is generally referred to as the use of two or more sets of data methods to answer one question (Morse, 2015). To provide corroborating evidence, the researcher ensured that triangulation existed. When there is triangulation, the researcher makes use of multiple sources and methods to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2013). In this study, to ensure that I used triangulation, I used the data collected from interviews, focus groups, and letters from the participants. When member checks and triangulation are done, the researcher provides legitimacy to the findings.

Dependability and Confirmability

Every researcher should strive to ensure their findings in a study can be replicated. Dependability and confirmability are an essential aspect of trustworthiness because all researchers want to ensure their research findings can not only be replicated but that they are also consistent. The stability of the data over time and conditions of one's study is referred to as dependability (Connelly, 2016). Dependability requires that the project records be reviewed to

determine the extent to which the procedures and changes are documented (C. Phillips et al., 2015). According to T. Phillips and de Wet (2017), "The criterion of dependability refers to the consistency, coherence, logic and stability of the study process and data analysis over time and across researchers and methods" (p. 115). The pilot study and peer review were used to established dependability. A pilot study was conducted in a different elementary school with three participants using all three data collection tools. This process was necessary because it provided valuable feedback on whether my data collection tools were able to answer my research questions. To perform a peer review of the data, two participants from each site were selected. They reviewed the data collected from the interviews, focus groups, and letters to provide feedback so that I was able to report on the finding and draw a conclusion.

Confirmability was achieved when the researcher recorded the time and date of the data collection, features of the context, and the physical setting where the data collection took place (Betriana & Kongsuwan, 2019). Another technique that was used to establish confirmability is the use of a reflective journal. A reflective journal (Appendix I) is a type of diary where I made entries frequently during the research process. In these entries, I ensured that I record methodological decisions and the reasons for them, the logistics of the study and reflection upon what is happening in terms of one's own values and interests (Amankwaa, 2016). The use of a reflective journal allowed me to record my opinions and biases and maintain detailed notes of all key decisions and analyses throughout the research process. By keeping a self-reflective journal, I facilitated reflexivity to examine my personal assumptions and biases as well as clarify my individual belief systems and subjectivities (Ortlipp, 2008).

Transferability

As the researcher, I should desire to ensure the transferability of the findings be applicable in other contexts. Therefore, the focus should be on providing the original context of the research and must be sufficiently described so that judgments can be made (Casey & Murphy, 2013). I used direct quotations when reporting on the findings from the focus group discussions and interviews where and when appropriate to ensure transferability is possible in other contexts. Providing a "thick" rich or detailed description of the phenomenon was also used to established transferability (Betriana & Kongsuwan, 2019). Thick, rich data are described as a narrative developed about the context so that judgments about the degree of fit or similarity may be made by others who may wish to apply all or part of the findings elsewhere (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). An audit trail was also kept to ensure transferability by maintaining detailed notes of all key decisions and analyses that were made throughout the process. It was necessary for me as the researcher to maintain an audit trail of analysis and a methodological memo of logs (Appendix J) because it is one of the methods of transferability (Connelly, 2016).

Ethical Considerations

It is imperative that the researcher ensure that ethical consideration is carried out throughout the study. I ensured that the IRB granted permission before the participants were contacted. Each participant signed the consent form to participate in the study. The consent form consisted of the purpose of the study as well as an agreement that their participation in the study would be voluntary. Original names of individuals and schools that participated in the study were not used. Instead, only pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants and the schools. Permission was sought from the superintendent of the school division through his representative before the schools and the participants were contacted to

participate in the study. The data collected from interviews and focus groups were recorded on my computer, which is password protected. It is vital to secure the data to safeguard the confidentiality of the information obtained from the participants (Cypress, 2018). All data collected may be used for future presentations and will be stored for three years. After three years, all data that are stored electronically will be deleted.

Summary

This qualitative multicase study allowed me to garner the participants' perspectives regarding African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs. The researcher conducted this study at two elementary public schools in a large school district in the northern Virginia area. Purposeful sampling was used in selecting the 10 participants in this study after a pilot study was carried out. Once all permission was given from the relevant authorities, the data collection process began. For this research, three data collection methods were utilized: interviews, focus group, and document review in the form of letters from educators. To ensure that the study can be replicated and the findings were consistent, the researcher ensured that trustworthiness existed and appropriate strategies were used in the process.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

African American male students have been the least identified and represented in gifted and talented education (GATE) programs across the United States (Card & Giuliano, 2016). Efforts have been made to increase the representation of minority students, but African American male students still have limited representation in GATE programs (Sewell & Goings, 2019). The purpose of this multicase study was to develop an understanding of educators' perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented in the GATE program at two elementary schools. Data were collected from participants in the two schools through 10 interviews, two focus groups, and 10 letters written by participants. Each school was treated as an individual case, and then the cases were cross-analyzed to identify common themes, and final assertations were made. Four major themes and 10 subthemes were established and organized in the order in which they answered the central question and three sub-questions.

A central research question and three sub-questions guided this multicase study. The central research question asked, What are the educators' perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs? This chapter includes a portrait of each participant and a discussion of the results that include themes and answers to the research questions. All quotations from participants are presented verbatim, including verbal tics and grammatical errors in speech and writing, to accurately depict the participants' voices. Finally, I provide a summary of this chapter.

Participants

The 10 participants in this study have a wide range of experience and have taught kindergarten to fifth grade in the general education setting for more than five years. All

participants completed the screening survey and provided personal information that helped identify if they met the requirements to participate in this study. On the screening survey, participants were asked to identify the range of approximately how many African American male students they have referred and have had accepted in the GATE program. Nine participants selected the range 0–5, and one participant selected 10–15. It was, therefore, necessary for me to contact all participants to provide further clarification on the exact number of African American male students they have referred for the gifted program, and they got accepted to receive gifted and talented services. The participants provided the information, and it is documented in Chapter Three.

All participants have been certified by the school division to teach students who have been identified as gifted students. However, only one participant was certified by the state. To be certified by the state, the participant had to complete four graduate-level gifted courses and 40 hours of experience working with students identified as gifted.

The following teachers all taught at Site 1 (John Peters Elementary School): Deon, Karen, Kathy, Michelle, and Marlon. They are described below:

Deon

Deon is a White general education female teacher who has been a fifth-grade teacher for more than 10 years but has more than 20 years of total teaching experience. She has a gifted education endorsement from the state. This certification allowed her to meet the requirement to have students identified as gifted and talented in her class. For the academic year 2019–2020, she had 11 students who have been identified as gifted and received pull-out services for the SIGNET teachers. Of the 11 students identified as gifted and receiving services, one was identified as an African American male student. After having more than 20 years of experience

in the classroom, Deon has had two African American male students referred to and accepted for the GATE program.

Deon believes that teachers should have high expectations for all students regardless of their race, culture, or socioeconomic status. She made this statement during the individual interview:

I think we have to set high expectations for all students and believe that all students can succeed at high levels. We have to start early to get students motivated and enjoy being in school. We have to get them motivated to come to school and be excited about learning. The earlier we can do that, the better off we will be in identifying African American students later for gifted programs. Then, there will be no need to say that these kids can't do the work, or these kids can't learn. All students can learn and learn at high levels so let's have high expectations for all students.

Karen

Karen is a White female fourth-grade teacher who has taught at the same school for more than five years. All her teaching experience has been in her current school. She is not gifted certified by the state or the school division but has completed several professional development courses offered by the school division and has been a member of her school's gifted committee for more than two years. For the academic year 2019–2020, 12 of her students were identified and received gifted and talented services from the SIGNET teacher. None of these students who received gifted services were African American. She has only referred three African American male students who got accepted in the GATE program throughout her teaching career.

Karen is viewed as the teacher who goes above and beyond to get to know her students and make personal connections with them. She explained:

If you want students to learn, you have to form connections. That is what I do. That is, I think, the only way you're going to make a difference. You have to connect with the students and their families. Students will trust you when they know you care about them, and their families will trust you when the students share with them how they are treated at school by their teachers. You just have to make those personal connections. They must know that you will be interested in their academic performance and out-of-school activities. I learn a lot about my students when I visit one of their games on a Saturday morning or afternoon than I learn in a quarter of being at school with them.

Kathy

Kathy is a White female fourth-grade general education teacher who has more than 10 years of teaching experience. She has previously taught in other school divisions in different states and was also a teacher of English Language Learners. For the academic year 2019–2020, nine students in her class were identified and received services as gifted and talented students. The students who received gifted services fall into the White and Asian subgroups. Kathy has referred African American male students for GATE, but only two students have been accepted in the GATE program throughout her career.

During Kathy's interview, it was evident that she fosters of sense of belief in African American male students. She explained:

Educators need to make connections with kids and foster a sense of belief that they can achieve the goals they set for themselves. Some of those goals will be sports-related, and that is okay. With that being said, educators need to expose students to what success looks like academically, sports-related, and any other areas that are of interest to them. Finding individuals who are successful in their careers to talk with students is a place to

start. Students need to see others who are successful and look like them in terms of race and ethnicity. Exposing students to successful people who look like them will help foster a belief that they can succeed.

Michelle

Michelle is a White educator with more than 20 years of teaching experience. She is currently teaching fifth-grade in the same school at which she has taught for more than 10 years. Michelle has attended gifted professional development offers by the school division and received 18 credit hours to be certified to teach students identified as gifted and talented. For the academic year 2019–2020, she had seven students who received gifted services from the SIGNET teacher. None of the students who receive gifted and talented services were African American students. She has had one African American male student whom she referred to and got accepted into the GATE program throughout her teaching career.

Michelle stood out as that participant who was a proactive educator. She implemented a program to encourage and motivate students that were considered problematic or at risk for failure. She also taught a group of students for three consecutive years to ensure that there was not a large achievement gap when the students got to fifth grade. She made the following statement:

> I have been teaching for 22 years, and my biggest fear was always becoming that stereotypical older White woman teaching in the classroom. And there have been many times for sure, in my teaching, I know I've not connected with my African American students, and it's been a struggle. I do have to say that by the time they get to fifth grade, I feel like, especially in our school, that a concerted effort must be made to look at the African American male students since the subgroup is underrepresented.

But it is important on my end to be able to find those students and help make them shine by identifying the gifts they possess so they can use them. But usually, by the time they do get to fifth grade, most students have been placed, and those African American students who are not placed feel defeated. Since some students do not show that they are gifted based on the county's criteria, there are other ways that the students can shine. The two most significant accomplishments or things that I've done in my teaching career were to loop with my students for three years and implemented a program called "Dudes in the Kitchen" for African American students who were considered problematic students.

I realized that by the time the students got to me in fifth grade most minority students were below grade level, and I feel there was not much I could do in one year to close the achievement gap, so I asked my principal if I could move to third grade and then looped with my students to fourth grade. I ended up looping with my student to fifth grade. I know I might never be able to replicate that process again, but it was the three greatest years of my teaching. So that's one thing in my career that I'll always look back at and be like, that was a family working together. The students made a lot of progress, they did well on the state exams, and their parents were pleased.

The other greatest accomplishment was when I got together with the students, we knew would need the most support when they came into fifth grade. And it was just that you could see it coming up through the grade levels. There were a lot of referrals in fourth grade at that time. So, the fifth-grade teachers put ideas together before the students got to us in fifth grade to find what we can do with them. If they were not going to be in the gifted program, then there must be some other things that we can do with

them so that at some point during the day when the gifted kids are called to go to their

program that there's something else they could do and that's when we implemented the

Dudes in the Kitchen program.

That was a way to sort of look for students that might be at risk. And then be able

to find things that they could do and do very well at that. Maybe it just wasn't straight

academics , it wasn't a sports-related thing, but we cooked with them and we found that

was something that a lot of the boys enjoyed. And it was a way that they could shine and

in a way that they could be set apart in a good light. They were good at cooking, but we

would not figure that out if we only focused on their behavior and hold that against them.

All students need ways to shine in their way, and it is up to teachers to provide that

avenue for them.

Marlon

Marlon is a White male teacher who has been teaching for more than 20 years. He is

currently a fifth-grade teacher and has taught that grade for more than 10 years. He previously

worked as a SIGNET/START resource teacher, where he provided gifted and talented services to

students in Grades K–5. He also served as a member of the gifted committee for more than five

years. For the academic year 2004–2005, he co-created an alternative student report for

identifying underserved groups of students in the county for the gifted program. He is certified

by the state to teach students who are identified as gifted and talented. For the academic year

2019–2020, he had 12 students identified as gifted and talented, and three of the 12 students were

African American male students. Marlon has referred approximately 15 African American male

students for the GATE program, and they have all been accepted into the program.

Marlon is a key participant because he was the only teacher who referred more significant numbers of African American male students to the GATE program. He believed that building a relationship and being able to forgive were major factors contributing to the number of students he referred. He noted:

No matter who you are as a teacher, show respect to all students. If you need to talk to students about something, try to find the time when you can speak to them in a de-escalated way in private. There are times when you have to separate them or say what you mean and mean what you say, but you have to do so with love and respect. If, for some reason, African American males cannot work collaboratively or cooperatively with the group, they just become a group of one at that moment or get to watch the activity. It doesn't mean that they are bad kids, they might desire to work alone at that moment, and they should be allowed to work individually. We can then find out what's the matter with them at the appropriate time, so they don't feel disrespected. Sometimes teachers have confrontations with African American male students, and they cannot move on from it or be quick to forgive. It's okay to correct behavior. But at the same time, that was 20 minutes ago that's in the past, let it go. We should not hold grudges because they will not learn from us as teachers, and students do not learn from teachers they do not like.

I've seen a lot of teachers make that mistake and almost give up on a Black male student before the first quarter ends over a discipline problem. Everything, every past transgression can be forgiven, and kids should know that too. Sometimes teachers think that relationship is beyond repair, but usually, you can repair it with an apology. Students need our guidance, and we owe it to the students to provide that to them regardless of their race.

The following teachers all taught at Site 2 (Prince George Elementary School): Angella, Marie, Kenzie, Daniese, and Janice. They are described below:

Angella

Angella is a White female teacher who has 10 years of teaching experience. During her 10-year career, she taught third grade for five years and fifth grade for one year in a Title 1 school before transferring to her current school as a third-grade teacher for four years. For the academic year 2019–2020, Angella had five students (two White, one Asian, and one African American female) who were identified and received pull-out services as gifted students from the gifted resource teacher. Angella has completed numerous gifted professional development courses offered by the school division and is certified by the school division to teach students who have been identified as gifted.

Angella is an educator who is persistent in her role in educating students of all races. However, she knows African American male students are disadvantaged in being educated, especially when they have behavior issues. She sets personal goals each year, including that all students in her class will learn and pass the state's exams. Her state exam results show that all students in her class learn and learn at high levels. Her African American male students often score in the pass advanced range on their exams. She attributed her success to not focusing on their behaviors and providing before and after school sessions. She emphasized:

> I think teachers need to quit looking at just behaviors and look at the students and what they are capable of doing. Sometimes their behaviors result from just being bored, and if we focus on just the behavior, we will miss how smart and intelligent they are. I provide before and after school programs for my students free of cost, but most of the students who really benefitted from me having the programs are African American male students.

I get to meet their needs and close the achievement gaps as early as the first quarter. Overall, they are excellent students who can and will learn if we do not give up on them because of their behaviors.

Marie

Marie is an African American female general education educator who has been teaching at the elementary level for more than five years. She is currently a third-grade teacher, but she previously taught kindergarten through fourth grade. She is certified by the school division to have students identified and gifted in her class. For the academic year 2019–2020, no African American male students were identified as gifted and talented in her class. Since she started her teaching career, she has referred three African American male students for the GATE program.

Marie viewed herself as an advocate for all students but especially African American males because they are usually seen as less capable academically and have various behavior issues. The following statements support her view of being seen as an advocate for African American male students. She stated:

I am an advocate for African American students, especially males. It is crucial for me to be seen as that African American teacher who will make a difference in students' lives for the 180 school days because I might be the only African American teacher they will encounter in their 12 years of school life. I usually have one-on-one conferences to let them know that they are more than capable of doing well in school and that it is ok to let others know that they are smart students. I've gotten a few students into SIGNET because I let them know that I care about what they do, when they do it, and how they perform in school. One of the things that I have noticed is that African American male students will rise above any stereotype if they have somebody who can let them know

that they are capable and support them to prove to people who doubt them that they are
wrong.

Kenzey

Kenzey, a White female educator, has taught second to fifth grade during her 13 years as a general education teacher in three elementary schools. Currently, she is teaching third grade. She is certified by the school division to have students identified as gifted placed in her class. There were three gifted students in her class for the last academic year. None of the gifted students in her class were African American male students. Throughout her 13 years of experience, she has referred two African American male students for the gifted program, but only one student got accepted.

Kenzey seems to be that educator who is reflective. She talked about her strengths as an educator and what she thought were her weaknesses. Those weaknesses impacted her ability to get more African American male students she believed were gifted in the program. As she reflected, she mentioned:

> I worked in a Title One school for seven years, where the population was more African
> American than other ethnicities. For my seven years there, I can recall one student I put
> up who was African American, and he was a male. As I reflect on the questions, you
> asked and the responses I gave, I believe the low number of African American male
> students I recommended was partly my fault. I was inexperienced with the whole gifted
> program, and looking and spotting those signs of giftedness in African American male
> students was not my focus. I mean, I did not just focus on that one child or a particular
> race. I concentrated on everybody and ensured that they were learning to do well on their
> state exam, not whether they were gifted. So, I may have missed opportunities to see the

African American male students and their giftedness. I have had smart African American male students in my class that I believe should have been in the program, but I didn't advocate for them enough. Now that I am aware of the statistics, I will pay close attention to the African American males in my class and ensure that they are accepted in the gifted program if they are indeed gifted.

Daniese

Daniese is a White fifth-grade teacher who has more than 20 years of teaching experience. She has taught fifth grade in her current school for more than 10 years. Daniese attended various gifted professional development sessions offered by the school district and received 18 credit hours, which is required for certification to teach students who are identified as gifted and talented. She had seven students (four White, one Asian, and two African American females) who were identified and received services as gifted and talented students. Throughout her teaching career, she has recommended no African American male students who have been accepted in the GATE program. While she has had African American male gifted students in her class, she did not recommend them. They were screened and got accepted into the gifted program at the end of third grade.

Daniese firmly believes African American male students can perform academically well in school as other students, but other factors affect their performance. She stated:

I think African American male students have the same ability as students from other races. I've had African American male students who perform as a typical gifted student and others who don't. I think socioeconomic status and culture play a role in African American male students' academic performance. As educators, we should always try to understand the African American culture. Understanding the culture will help us build

relationships with students and bridge the gap between school and home. Sometimes we will be successful in bridging those gaps, and sometimes, we will not. The important thing is for us to make an effort to reach them so that they can receive the services they need to be successful.

Janice

Janice is a White general education teacher who has been teaching fourth grade for 10 years in the same school. She is certified by the school district to teach students who have been identified as gifted. For the last academic year, six gifted students were in her class. During her 10-year teaching career, she has not referred any African American male students who were accepted into the GATE program. She believes that training is necessary, but the focus should be more on educators understanding the curriculum to deliver it effectively.

<div align="center">Results</div>

The interviews and focus group questions, as well as the stimulus letter, were designed in such a way to allow participants to freely speak and express their perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs. All data collection methods were also related to the research questions that guided this study. The themes from the study emerged in correlation to the study's guided questions. The analysis of all three data collection methods is listed in each case's order and related to the guiding questions.

Theme Development

The table below shows how the themes were developed (see Table 2). The table consists of four major themes and their respective subthemes. Following the table is the discussion of the themes with narratives and data from the three data collection methods with quotations from participants.

Table 2

Theme Development

Keywords/Phrases	Subthemes
Major Theme: Systemic Issues	
identification process, heavily flawed standardize assessments, assessments favor middle-class families, lots of paperwork, criteria, bias process, bias assessment	Biases in Identification and Assessment Process
bias system/teachers, identifying African American male students, bias assessments criteria	Bias of Teachers and Assessments
Major Theme: Hindrances	
low socioeconomic background, culture, overlooked, lack of understanding of the process, gifted process, parents lack awareness, assessment, underrepresented identification process, GATE programs	Lack of Parental Understanding
encounter peer pressure, intellectually capable, hindered, underrepresented	Peer Pressure Hinders Intellectual Capability
troublemakers, problematic students, difficult to deal with in class, stereotypes, Black males	Stereotypes of Black Males
lack of African American teachers, never encounter African American teachers, representation matters, male teachers	Representation of African American Male Teachers
Major Theme: Commitments and Responsibilities	
training, gifted education, cultural responsiveness, diverse cultures in the classrooms	Training and Cultural Responsiveness
curriculum design, curriculum delivery make content interesting and based on needs, show ability and mastery of content, connect content with real-world experience	Curriculum Design and Delivery

Keywords/Phrases	Subthemes
Major Theme: Self-Efficacy	
establishing, teacher/students, building relationships, motivation/motivate students home challenges, connections	Building Relationships and Establishing Connections
intellectually capable, teacher expectations smart and intelligent, stereotype as less capable, student expectations, efficacy scholarly identity	Teacher Expectations and Student Efficacy

Based on Table 2, four major themes and 10 subthemes were developed. Each major theme and its corresponding subthemes are discussed below. Embedded in the discussion of each major theme and corresponding subthemes are participants' responses supporting the themes.

Major Themes 1: Systemic Issues

The first major theme emerged from the interviews and focus groups. "Systemic Issues" explained educators' perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs. The educators' perspectives were explained through the two subthemes, the biases in the identification and assessment process and bias of teachers and assessments.

Biases in Identification and Assessments Process. The subtheme "Biases in the Identification and Assessments Process" was evident under the major theme of "Systemic Issues." The identification process of gifted and talented students is heavily flawed, relies on standardized assessments, favors middle-class families, and requires teachers to complete paperwork for each student recommended for the program. Marlon from John Peters Elementary School was the educator who had the most experience administering standardized assessments to students of all races, cultures, and grade levels. He previously worked as a gifted resource

educator for several years. In his letter, he acknowledged that it had been a challenge to identify

underserved students in GATE programs. He explained, "The identification of underserved

students in gifted programs has been a challenge for many years with very little progress made in

my experience." During his interview, he identified standardized assessments as a major cause

of why African American male students are excluded from the gifted and talented elementary

school programs. He stated, "The IQ tests have come a long way with removing some cultural

bias, but they're not there yet. These tests have a strong cultural bias towards minority students

but favor middle-class students and their values." Daniese is a fourth-grade teacher at Prince

George Elementary School. She has the least number of years working with gifted students

compared to the other participants who have been working with students identified as gifted and

talented for seven or more years. Even though she has less experience, she was the only

participant who identified a specific standardized assessment content skill that African American

students find challenging. She asserted:

> I think the identification process is heavily reliant on standardized testing. If they don't do
>
> all the standardized testing in third grade, they don't get screened, and they don't get in. It
>
> takes either a motivated teacher or a motivated parent to ensure that they get screened for
>
> the program. Sometimes, when they get screened for the program, they do not do well
>
> because they do not understand its content. The White and Asian students are more
>
> familiar with the test analogies, so they normally perform better on these assessments.

One participant from John Peters Elementary and two participants from Prince George

Elementary School mentioned that the identification process is too much for teachers to complete

while focusing on the other students in their class. They believe the process could be better and

less stressful for teachers. Kenzey acknowledged:

I think the process could be better. There is just a lot that teachers have to do to

recommend students and complete the forms. I don't know if someone else could come

in and sit in, and that way, they're like focusing more on the individual student and their

work, whereas I'm focusing on the whole class. Or maybe I need to be given more

training in what to look for related to giftedness. When it comes to student's work

samples, I don't know if it's like, I need to look at the quality of their work sample for

their independent practice to show their giftedness or give time to complete work. I'm

not sure, but I just feel like the process is too much and could be better. Maybe I could

be trained better. I don't know.

Daniese, in her interview session, agreed that the identification process poses a challenge

for many teachers because of the amount of time teachers spend completing the paperwork for

each student. She declared:

As it relates to the screening and identification process, I don't think it's great because it

takes a lot of work on someone else's part. And if they're not willing to do it, those kids

just kind of slide through the cracks. If they aren't picked up on the first round of

screening, they will most likely miss their chance of getting into the program.

Deon, in her interview, highlighted the entire gifted process to be too much for educators.

She proclaimed, "The whole gifted process, I think, is too much to complete. There is too much

paperwork; it is crazy. To be honest, I don't know where they come up with this stuff."

Bias of Teachers and Assessments. The second subtheme within the major theme of

systemic issues was a bias of teachers and assessments. Teacher bias poses a challenge in

identifying African American male students for the GATE program. Two participants from John

Peters Elementary School believed that teacher bias is a factor that contributes to African

American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs. The two educators made the following statements during the focus group. Marlon explained, "I think teachers' inherent biases are huge. One of the things that stand in the way of identifying more Black male students is our own inherent biases that we're simply not willing to admit. We have blinders on." Karen supported Marlon's point of view and commented on how African American males are treated nationally in the United States. She emphasized:

The world of education is changing around us rapidly; however, the minds of attitudes of many of us are not. We are currently faced with a difficult time in our society. We are being forced to acknowledge our own personal biases in the wake of the death of George Floyd. The Black Lives Matter campaign has shown us that our American society has negative attitudes towards African Americans, which needs to be changed now. Doing so can be very challenging. We, as human beings, do not want to admit our flaws, prejudices, and stereotypes. As educators, we especially do not want to believe that we see skin color when we look at the twenty-four children sitting in our classroom.

I also think there's just bias when it comes down to African Americans that we see now with this whole Black Lives Matter movement. It's causing people to see more systemic racism in places that weren't necessarily there. We have to think about us as human beings and our beliefs and how it impacts how we look at our students in our classroom. You know, why is it that some teachers might assume a Black student more likely to have gotten closer to a 400 and on the SOL exam than a 600 compared to a White student?

Major Theme 2: Hindrances

The second major theme was "Hindrances." This major theme represented the factor that impeded African American male students from being referred, identified, and represented in GATE programs. The hindrances identified were lack of parental understanding of the gifted process, peer pressure, stereotypes of Black male students, and representation of African American male teachers.

Parental Understanding. One of the four subthemes revealed within the theme "Hindrances" was "Parental Understanding of the Gifted Process." Most African American male students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are often overlooked for GATE programs because their parents do not understand the identification and assessment process. The following participants gave their perspectives on African American male students being the least identified for the GATE program. During the interview, Daniese pointed out that sometimes, the parents are not able to advocate for their child:

> Maybe they don't understand the process or have an education. It's a lot of work to complete the forms. I mean, you have to write, you have to give examples of things that they've done and how they think differently. And you've got to write-up this whole parent report.

Deon agreed with Daniese's view that some parents are not knowledgeable about the process and that the parent report carries a lot of weight in the identification process. In her interview, she stated:

> I feel like, especially for maybe some African American students, their parents don't understand all that packet and all that language either. So, I think they fill out paperwork,

especially if they want to initiate their children getting tested for the gifted program. I

think it's challenging in that way.

In her interview, Kenzey also supported how challenging it is for parents to complete the forms

and provide the information needed about their children to begin the gifted process. She stated:

I think the identification process is too cumbersome for low-income families. They do

not understand the complicated process, nor do they understand how to complete the

forms with the depth of information needed to get their children identified for the gifted

program.

Peer Pressure. The second subtheme that evolved within the major theme "Hindrances"

was "Peer Pressure." Peer pressure hinders African American male students' intellectual

capability. Some African American male students encounter peer pressure in schools. As a

result, they choose not to show how smart they are to be included in GATE programs. Marie and

Angella both teach at Prince George Elementary School. They believe some African American

male students are intellectually capable of being in the gifted program but choose not to be

because they do not want to be perceived as smart students or they want to fit in with their peers.

During the focus group and in the written letter, they made the following statements to support

the theme. Marie, in the focus group, professed:

As far as identification, I know many young African American males do what they think

their peers think they should do. So, a lot of times, gifted students are not identified

because they're more worried about whether or not they look cool, whether or not

somebody will think they're too smart or if they're a nerd.

Angella, in her letter, also agreed that some African American male students want to fit in, and

as a result, they appear as not being smart or capable of being in GATE programs. She

mentioned, "African American male students often experience peer pressure in school. They want to fit in with their peers, so they act as if they are not smart."

Stereotypes of Black Males. The third subtheme that came from participant interviews within the major theme of "Hindrances" was "Stereotypes of Black Male Students." African American male students are viewed as troublemakers or problematic students. Educators from both John Peters Elementary and Prince George Elementary identified African American students as being stereotyped as a factor contributing to African American male students not being recommended to be included in GATE programs in elementary schools. Four participants highlighted African American male students being problematic students during their interviews. Kenzey stated, "I think there's a stereotype of African American males that they are not interested in school or they're troublemakers." Daniese reinforced this view when she stated, "I think they don't perform to their ability. I think sometimes there's just the expectation that they are going to be more active, or maybe they're more of a behavior problem." Marie reinforced this perspective when she proclaimed, "I think there's a stereotype of African American males that they are not interested in school and that they are troublemakers." Karen strengthened this view when she emphasized:

> I feel like Black males, for some reason, are just left behind. I don't know if it's because they're viewed as strong. I don't know if it's because they're viewed as behaviorally just problematic. I think that it's just that one group.

Kenzey, in her letter, also identified the stereotype of African American male students as a factor that contributed to their lack of representation in GATE programs. She pointed out, "Another factor that caused African American male students not to be included in gifted programs is not being pushed to do more in school due to being stereotyped by their teachers."

Representation of African American Male Teachers. The fourth subtheme within the major theme "Hindrances" was the "Representation of African American Male Teachers." African American male students can go through their entire school life without being taught by an African American teacher because there is a lack of African American teachers, especially males. Two participants from John Peter Elementary School thought that it was important for African American male students to have the experience of being taught by a teacher of the same race. They made the following statements during their interviews. Marlon declared during his interview:

Schools lack African American teachers. It needs to be a Black male, not even a Black woman. They need to see a Black male teacher at some point, ideally in their elementary career. But it's just not a reality. So, you know, I think we need to find ways in the teacher preparation program to make this thing called teaching attractive, maybe even to minority males.

Kathy supported the point Marlon made about Black male students having a Black male teacher in elementary school. She highlighted:

Certainly, every Black male should have at least one Black male teacher in their elementary career in a perfect world, or at least 13% of their teachers should be African American. However, we know that we do not have many Black male teachers in elementary schools.

Major Theme 3: Commitments and Responsibilities

The third major theme was "Commitments and Responsibilities." Educators must be committed to carrying out their assigned roles and responsibilities to effectively meet all

students' needs. "Training and Cultural Responsibilities" and "Curriculum and Design" are the two subthemes that emerged within the major theme "Commitments and Responsibilities."

Training and Cultural Responsiveness. Within the major theme "Commitments and Responsibilities," the first subtheme "Training and Cultural Responsiveness" emerged. Training in gifted education and cultural responsiveness are necessary for all teachers to understand the gifted identification process and diverse cultures in their classrooms. Not all teacher preparation programs include courses that relate to gifted education. Therefore, the school division should offer gifted training at the beginning of the school year, especially for new teachers. This early training is necessary because some new teachers might have gifted students in their class in their first year in the classroom and before they would receive the 18 hours of training to meet the requirements of having gifted students in their class. During their interviews, the following statements from the participants supported the theme that training should be provided in gifted education. Dawn stated, "I did not get any training in my teacher preparation program. I did not get training until I had started teaching, and then the county provided it." Kathy reinforced this view:

> I didn't receive any training in my teacher preparation program. I had been teaching for six years before I received training from the county. And then it was like one of those things that you're required to do it. I mean, not that I mind doing it, but it's one that I feel because it's a requirement and checklist sort of thing. So, I still feel that's my biggest weaknesses with gifted. I'm comfortable working with them in the classroom, but I feel like my understanding of the program is probably my biggest weakness.

Michelle strengthened this view of lack of training:

I didn't receive any training to teach gifted students in my teacher preparation program. I receive some training from the county, but I don't think that's enough. I still need some training. It is embarrassing to say that I wasn't sure if I was gifted certified by the state or the county, and I can't say exactly what I took to be certified now. But I think that training is needed to be able to identify and find different ways to identify my students that are gifted or that can shine differently.

Angella reinforced the need for training. She stated:

I think teachers should have some sort of certification in the understanding of gifted intelligence in students. So many kids who are underidentified are in the minority groups because teachers aren't trained. So, I do think they should have some training.

While there were participants who stated they did not receive training, Daniese and Kenzey did not remember if they received training in gifted education during their teacher education program but believe training is necessary. Daniese declared:

Honestly, I don't remember receiving any training in my actual teacher prep program. I mean, since then, we've had to get trained so that we're certified to have gifted students in the class. And it's more training on what it looks like, the characteristics of gifted. I do believe training is necessary.

Kenzey highlighted:

I honestly don't know if I even recall a class where it was training. I think most of my training has been through the county. And that's when I began teaching. I don't believe I was given any training when I was in college.

Most participants in this study did not receive training in gifted education in their teacher preparation program. This is also the case with most participants and cultural responsiveness

training. Some participants did not receive cultural responsiveness training in their teacher preparation program but believed that cultural responsiveness training is necessary because of how African American male students are treated nationally. Karen explained:

> I'm thinking through the different classes I had to take, like 36 credit hours. And I don't remember having a class on anything that focused on cultural responsiveness. The only class I received as a teacher was through the online module when someone in the county made a very inappropriate comment.

Michelle pointed out:

> I think I receive some sort of training on a surface level. It was because it was a multicultural class. And it was kind of like, a little bit of this, here's a little bit of what you might see in this culture, a little bit what you might see with this race, but not enough to make me feel like I was ready for the classroom, especially now in the way that the world is right now to make me feel like I've had enough training.

> Marlon also agreed that in the current climate and the national outcry for African American males to be treated differently, cultural responsiveness training is necessary. He responded, "I received none. But I would advocate right now for training. The climate is right to have even more training in cultural responsiveness." Melissa, in her letter, identified a specific area in which she would like more training to support students in her class. She stated, "Many teachers at the elementary level, myself included, could benefit from further training on how to provide opportunities in the classroom that would lead to strong work samples to submit to a gifted committee."

Curriculum Design and Delivery. The second subtheme that emerged in the major theme "Commitments and Responsibilities" was "Curriculum Design and Delivery." Teachers

should deliver the curriculum content so that students can find it interesting, make connections, and provide an opportunity for them to show their ability and mastery of content. Participants highlighted the importance of ensuring that the curriculum is delivered in a meaningful way in their letters to educators. They provided strategies that educators can use to ensure that African American male students learn and master the content taught. Marlon explained:

> Giftedness presents in a myriad of ways. Some students could be verbally gifted but need math support, whereas others are quantitatively gifted but avoid reading and writing. It is our job as teachers to design meaningful lessons that approximate the work of real historians, scientists, and the like so that we open up the world to our students, such that they find what they are motivated to work on and pursue.

Deon presented a different strategy than the strategy Marlon gave to get African American male students to learn. She stated, "Using read-aloud with students is a powerful literacy strategy. I have made a conscious effort to have books with diverse characters. Characters that students can relate to with themselves, especially if they look like them." Michelle's strategy offered a different approach that educators can take to motivate and inspire African American male students. Michelle posited:

> The way that we deliver our content and what requirements we have of our students to show mastery may also contribute to the low representation of African American males in gifted programs. Teacher-centered classrooms, where we dispense the information and have one way for students to demonstrate understanding, will not allow opportunities for giftedness in African American male students to shine in our students. The classroom must be student-centered, and we should plan and deliver instruction based on the needs and interest of our African American male students.

Angella supported the idea of creating and delivering lessons based on students' needs to ensure that African American male students have an opportunity to be represented in GATE programs. She explained:

> We must teach what is in the curriculum. However, if the students do not learn what we teach, we have not done our jobs to get students to learn. We must plan our lessons to meet all students' needs, ensuring that African American students can connect what they learn to real-life experiences. Then and only then will they begin to learn and show mastery of content.

Major Theme 4: Self-Efficacy

The fourth and final major theme was "Self-Efficacy." Self-efficacy is widely used in explaining human behavior (Bandura, 2015). Educators must believe in their ability to build relationships and have high expectations for African American male students to ensure that they can create an environment that is nurturing, motivating, and conducive to learning. "Building Relationships and Establishing Connections" and "Teacher Expectations and Student Efficacy" were two subthemes that emerged within the major theme of self-efficacy.

Building Relationships and Establishing Connections. The first subtheme that emerged from the major theme of "Self-Efficacy" is "Building Relationships and Establishing Connections." To reach African American male students, educators should try to connect and build a relationship with them to motivate them to reach their full potential. Many White teachers find it challenging to make a connection with African American male students. As a result of not connecting with African American male students, they are referred more for special education services than GATE programs. Most participants believed that making a connection with African American male students is essential to their academic success. Marie, in her letter,

stated, "Many young African American males feel that most educators, especially some White teachers, do not care about them, so it is hard to get to know or make a connection with them." Michelle, in her letter, explained, "Our students need to be invested in the learning through the connection we make with them. Unfortunately, some White teachers are unable to make those connections with African American students." Michelle reflected on her experiences working with African American male students and acknowledged during her interview that there were times when she could not make personal connections with her students. She explained:

> Well, it is obvious with everything going on in the country right now that African American males are treated differently. In fact, it is more blatant, and it is important that these differences be addressed right now. I have been teaching for 23 years, and my biggest fear was always becoming that stereotypical older White woman teaching a classroom. There are many times for sure in my teaching career that I've not connected with my African American students because I don't live the life they live. That has been a struggle.

When educators can make a personal connection with African American male students, they will positively impact them and their academic performance. According to Frelin (2015), "The quality of teacher-student relationships and the closeness of cooperation has proven especially beneficial for students' well-being, self-confidence, motivation, and academic outcomes" (p. 591). During the focus group, the participants shared their views on building relationships and making connections with students. Marie acknowledged, "Actually, get to know your students so you can relate to them is a keyway to motivated African American male students and to ensure that they are successful in school." Kenzey asserted, "I think educators also need to make them feel like they are doing what they need to do and that they're capable.

Then I think that plays into their mindset and past relationships with educators and their home," and Angella emphasized, "They can make connections with them and find out their interest. Making connections make them feel like they are worthy and deserve to be there so they can continue with the gifted education."

Teacher Expectations and Student Efficacy. The second and final subtheme that emerged within the major theme of "Self-Efficacy" was "Teacher Expectations and Self-Efficacy." African American male students have the intellectual ability to be included in the GATE program as students of other races. Still, they are often viewed as less capable by some educators who have low expectations of them. During the focus group, Karen shared her personal experience and view of some African American male students and their scholarly identity. She shared:

> Based on my own experience, I realized there's a difference between African American male students who are Americans and African American male students from other countries. My students from Ethiopia, their parents from Nigeria or Ghana, my kids from African countries, or had parents with strong African roots had high expectations for themselves and believe they are just as smart or smarter than the other students in the class. Their parents knew how to advocate for their children and were writing to me about the gifted program. I do not see the same kind of drive and determination in most African American male students born in America.

Angella, during her interview, spoke about her experience working with African American male students and their ability to be included in the GATE program. While she did not distinguish between African American male students born in America and those born in another country, she agreed with Karen. She stated, "African American male students are

capable of being included in GATE programs." Kenzey, during her interview, also

acknowledged, "I think they're intellectually capable. They could do it. I've had African

American male students who were extremely smart and could easily be in the program. Not

because we think they should but because they are intellectually capable."

Some educators hold African American male students to the same standard as students of

other races. However, other educators set low expectations for African American male students.

The following participants gave their view on how they believe some educators perceive some

African American male students. Marlon, during the focus group, explained:

Sometimes it boils down to having developmentally appropriate expectations or high

expectations. Sometimes, what we think are developmentally appropriate expectations

for African American males in our class is low expectations. They see that they're not

getting the same rigor and challenging creative stuff the other students are getting, even

at a subconscious level. They perceive that something is not fair, or you're not fair.

Daniese believed that African American male students behave the way some educators expect

them. During her interview, she stated, "There is just a certain way that African American boys

are expected to behave. They are expected to perform at a low level. And so, they live up to that

expectation."

Some educators hold African American male students accountable and set high

expectations for them. Two of those educators shared their views during their interviews. Kathy

emphasized:

Well, I'm a firm believer in high expectations and pushing them along, teach them that

they might experience failure. And if they do fail, that's okay. However, because that's

how you learn, let them know that you will be supporting them all the way. We have to

help them see that they can bring out the best in them academically. When this is the

expectation, they perform. Reminding students that they are never alone and that

educators will support them is one way of motivating African American male students.

Deon, in her interview, also supported the view that some educators had high expectations for

African American male students when she stated:

Everybody can do the work, and let's have high expectations for everybody. And let's

start encouraging them early and let them know they can do and achieve anything they

set out to do. They need to know that we'll be right there. We'll get through it together.

Participants made the following statements. They did not fit in the themes developed but

were suitable to answer the central question. These participants agreed that African American

male students are the least identified and represented in GATE programs. Marlon, in his

interview, stated:

I believe personally that giftedness occurs at exactly the same rate in all ethnicities, races,

and cultures. So, if we say giftedness occurs, this to say 7% of the time in the White

culture, it occurs at the same time in the American Indian culture. So, anytime you have

a program where 20% of the gifted population is one ethnicity, and only 2% is another,

that's a problem unless they only make up 2%. . . . In an article in the Washington Post,

Thomas Jefferson, one of the top premier high schools in Fairfax, welcome about 450

new students. The African American students entering is so small. Less than 10 total

students that they don't even make the survey matrix for the racial demographic. Yet,

African American students make up 10% of the county. Basically, 10 out of 450 students

are Black. That's woefully low. TJ is a great school, but they have never been able to

increase the diversity at that school outside of the White and Asian population.

During Karen's interview, she also agreed that there is a lack of African American male students in gifted programs. She added:

African American male students' struggle could have been fixed earlier in their educational careers with more strategic interventions and extra support. A lot of these students have shown strengths in their way of thinking and at different skill levels. It is shocking that there is such a disproportionate number of African American students in the program when they have the skills and creative ways of thinking to be included in the program. But we are not doing enough early on to enhance those skills and decrease the academic struggles.

In acknowledging the African American male students are underrepresented in GATE programs, Deon, in her interview, reflected on the last five years of her teaching career. She stated:

I was trying to think over the last five years, like how many African American boys I've actually had in the gifted and talented program. I think I've only had two over the last five years, which definitely supports that research. I find it unfortunate that more African American boys are identified as students with a learning disability than gifted students. I have seen African American boys labeled LD [learning disabled], but they were really smart. They just show their intelligence in other ways rather than on a standardized test.

In her response, during her interview, Kathy also supported the other participants' view that African American male students are the least represented in GATE programs. She explained:

In my experience, that is definitely true. I have been trying to find out why this is happening. I see that the African American male gifted students in the classroom, so why are they not identified. So, I don't know whether it's teachers not having enough training

to identify students, just training in different cultural aspects, or the actual testing itself. I

don't know much about the testing process because that is done in the second and third

grade, and I am a fourth-grade teacher.

A table was used to show how the themes and subthemes were developed. Four major

themes and 10 subthemes were derived from the participants' data collected during the

interviews, focus groups, and letters. Each major theme and its respective subthemes were

discussed, and narratives from all three data collection methods through direct quotations from

the participants were used to support the themes and subthemes.

Research Question Responses

The participants responded to the questions during the interviews and when writing their

letters. The data collected from the participants provided the information needed to answer the

central research question and the three sub-questions in this section. Statements from the

participants' letters and interviews were selected to support the responses to the research

questions.

Central Research Question

What are the educators' perspectives on African American male students being the least

identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

The participants' perspectives on African American male students being the least

identified and represented in GATE programs in their schools differ, but they all agreed that they

are underrepresented. In Kenzey's interview, she stated, "I totally agree that the African

American male students are the least represented in the gifted programs." Angella also agreed

they are underrepresented but are intellectually capable of being included in GATE programs.

She stated, "I have had African American male students who have been extremely smart.

Sometimes, they are smarter than the other students and deserve to be included in the program."

Marlon believed that more African American male students should be represented in GATE

programs since "giftedness occurs at exactly the same rate in all ethnicities, races, and cultures."

Karen highlighted in her interview and letter that she feels that African American male students'

representation can be increased in GATE programs if "earlier in their educational careers" they

are provided with "more strategic interventions and extra support" they need to show how

capable they are to be represented in GATE programs.

Sub-question 1. What are educators' perspectives on the factors that cause African

American male students to be the least identified and represented in gifted and talented

programs?

Participants presented many factors that cause African American male students to be the

least identified and represented in GATE programs at the elementary level. Lack of parental

understanding of the gifted process was one such factor. Marlon compared the college-educated

and noncollege-educated parents' understanding of the gifted process and their ability to navigate

the gifted process in his interview. He stated, "White college-educated middle-class parents are

more savvy with navigating the school system and writing gifted reports, but less-educated

parents find it challenging to complete gifted reports, especially if they're doing it for the first

time" and do not have a rapport with teachers to ask for assistance.

Another factor contributing to the lack of representation of African American male

students in GATE programs is stereotypes of Black male students. Participants in their

interviews believed that teachers often perceived that "most African American male students

don't have a solid home life" (Marie) or "maybe their home lives are not as stable as others"

(Deon). As a result, "they behave in a problematic way" (Angella) and are "overlooked for

GATE programs" (Angella and Marie). In the focus group, Karen identified a "lack of African

American male teachers in elementary schools" as a factor that contributed to the

underrepresentation of male students in GATE programs.

Sub-question 2. How can educators motivate African American male students to engage

and persist toward being represented in gifted and talented programs?

For participants to motivate African American male students to engage and persist toward

being included in GATE programs, they need to reflect on their personal biases. Marlon, in his

letter, stated, "I encourage all of us to look critically at ourselves, our biases when we supported

or unwittingly supported a program that perpetuated inequality, and what we can do about it."

To ensure that educators are equipped with the necessary skills to motivate African American

male students, training is necessary. Kenzey acknowledged in her letter that she would like to

receive more training to identify and motivate African American male students. She stated, "I

would like to take more training on African American male students and gifted programs. It will

help me to identify students for gifted services or ways to motivate students to show off their

talents in the classroom."

Participants suggested that to get African American male students motivated to engage

and persist toward being included in GATE programs, teachers must be a part of the solution and

not a part of the problem. Hence, educators must try to get to know their African American male

students and encourage them to rise above stereotypes. Marie highlighted in her letter, "To

reduce this stigma and increase the number of young African American boys identified as gifted

and talented, something must change. The first step to achieving this is to motivate your

students." Angella agreed that the first step to increasing African American male students'

representation in the GATE program is to motivate them. She offered educators some

suggestions to encourage and motivate African American male students. She stated in her letter, "We should help them to understand that they are above the stereotypes and can be included in the gifted and talented program, provide encouragement, give them leadership roles, and ensure that they have access to rigorous instruction." Kenzey also believed that motivating African American male students is important. She stated in her letter, "Motivation is everything!" She also shared a strategy she used to motivate the African American male students in her class. She explained, "I invite friends to come and spend time with my students as special guests. My 'special guests' ranged from different races and occupations because I felt my students would enjoy being exposed to people of different cultures." Kenzey ensured that African American male guests were included because she believed that "African American males need to know that other African American males in the world are successful at what they do."

Sub-question 3. What are educators' perspectives on African American male students' self-efficacy, scholar identity, and the gifted and talented programs?

African American male students possess the knowledge, skill, and intellectual ability to be included in GATE programs. However, modifications to the screening process should be made so that they can be represented. In her letter, Deon stated, "We need to do better in identifying African American male students for gifted and talented programs. They are as intelligent and capable as other students. We need to be flexible with the identification process and seek out their strengths." Marlon agreed that there need to be modifications to the identification process to ensure that African American male students are represented in GATE programs. In his letter, he stated:

A way to act in an antiracist way would be to call out and change this screening process for Black Males. If a Black Male scored far exceeding his peers in just one battery of a

child-friendly aptitude test, then they should qualify for gifted services. We don't need a

far exceeds in any other area.

African American male students are intellectually capable of being in GATE programs,

according to Angella, and educators should ensure they provided them with the opportunity to

show how capable they are to be included. Michelle supported this idea in her letter. She stated,

"African American male students have the intellectual ability to be included in the gifted and

talented programs. It is our duty to make sure that we help them reach and surpass their potential

and academic goals." Angella acknowledged educators have a responsibility to ensure they

receive the education they need. In her letter, she stated, "Our job as educators is to recognize

these students' abilities and give them the education they deserve."

Summary

This study was carried out at two elementary schools. Ten educators took part in this

study and gave their perspectives on African American male students being the least identified

and represented in GATE programs in two elementary schools. A description of each participant

who participated in the study was provided. All participants in this study have a wide range of

experience and have taught kindergarten to fifth grade in the general education setting for more

than five years. Interviews, focus groups, and letters from participants were used to collect data

for this study. The analyzed data led to 10 themes. Table 2 was provided to show how the 10

themes were developed. Direct quotations from the participants were used to support the

discussion of the themes and answers to the research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this multicase study was to develop an understanding of educators'

perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented in

GATE programs at two elementary schools. This chapter consists of five sections, beginning

with a brief overview of the findings for each of the study's research questions. Next comes a

discussion of the findings and the implications in light of the relevant literature and theory.

Expectancy-value theory and social cognitive theory are the two theories that will be discussed in

this chapter. The study's implications are then presented based on evidence from this study,

followed by the delimitations and limitations of this study. Finally, recommendations for future

research are presented.

Summary of Findings

This study focused on one central question and three sub-questions to develop an

understanding of educators' perspectives of African American male students being the least

identified and represented in gifted and talented education (GATE) programs in two elementary

schools. The data were collected through interviews, focus groups, and letters from the 10

participants and then analyzed. Based on the analyzed data collected from the participants who

gave their perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and

represented in GATE programs, four major themes and 10 subthemes were developed and then

arranged to answer the one central question and three sub-questions. A summary of the findings

for the one central and three sub-questions is as follows.

The central question asked: What are the educators' perspectives on African American

male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

Students of all races, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds can be included in GATE

programs since giftedness occurs at the same rate for all students, leaving no reason why African

American male students should not be included in GATE programs. However, the African

American subgroup has been the least identified and represented in GATE programs across the

United States (Card & Giuliano, 2016; Goings & Sewell, 2019; Grantham, 2013; Henfield et al.,

2014). Biases in the identification and assessment process and bias of teachers and assessments

have contributed to the lack of representation of African American male students in GATE

programs. Daniese asserted, "African American male students have the same ability as anyone."

Marlon has not seen "any difference intellectually between African American male students and

other aggregates of students but has seen teachers' inherent biases," which contribute to their

lack of representation in GATE programs.

Sub-question 1 queried: What are educators' perspectives on the factors that cause

African American male students to be the least identified and represented in gifted and talented

programs? It is perceived that African American male students have been the least identified and

represented in GATE programs because parents lack an understanding of the gifted identification

process. African American male students are often stereotyped as problematic students and

experience peer pressure, which hinders their intellectual capability of being included. In

addition to these factors, it is also believed that the lack of African American male teachers as

role models also limits African American male students' chances of being included in GATE

programs. Representation matters and Kathy believes that "every Black male student should

have at least one Black male teacher in their elementary career" who understands their culture

and can relate to them.

Sub-question 2 inquired: How can educators motivate African American male students to engage and persist toward being represented in gifted and talented programs?

There are many ways to motivate African American male students to engage and persist toward being represented in GATE programs. Being trained in gifted education and cultural responsiveness and how to deliver the curriculum were two findings identified by participants that could equip them with the knowledge, skills, and expertise they need to motivate African American male students. Dawn believes that training in "characteristics of gifted education and how giftedness presents itself differently in students will enable teachers to learn strategies" that will help them in the identification process. Marlon also believes that training would assist teachers in the planning and integration of "real-world and bodily-kinesthetic" in their daily activities. Educators must deliver the curriculum content so that students can find it interesting, make connections, and provide an opportunity for them to show mastery of content to show that they are intellectually capable of being included in gifted programs. Educators must also make an effort to use the strategies necessary to ensure students are engaged in the lessons and incorporate their culture into learning.

Sub-question 3 inquired: What are educators' perspectives on African American male students' self-efficacy, scholar identity, and the gifted and talented programs?

Some educators see African American male students as intellectually capable who can be included in GATE programs as students of other races. Angella stated, "African American males have the intellectual ability to be included in gifted and talented programs," and Deon believes "they are just as intelligent and capable as every other student" in elementary schools. Karen also agreed that African American male students are as intellectually capable as other students. She explained, "All our students are equally brilliant, but it may appear in different forms."

However, others see them as less academically capable because of their skin color and often find ways to keep them out of the gifted programs instead of including them. Some African American male students believe they can be included in GATE programs, while others do not believe they are intellectually capable. Deon claimed it is the teachers' responsibility to "identify the students' strengths and use their strengths to teach" and motivate them.

Educators believe it is difficult for students to learn from teachers they feel do not care much about them, especially when they are from different races and cultures. Marlon explained, "When you are of different gender, race, or culture than African American male students, you need to let them know you care. You need them to believe that you think that they are smarter than they think they are." Before educators can teach and motivate students to learn and excel academically, they must find a way to build relationships and establish connections with them. Students who learn and excel in school are students who have a connection with their teachers. Therefore, it should be all educators' goal to get to know the African American male students to motivate them to engage and persist toward being included in GATE programs if they are indeed gifted.

Discussion

In this section, I discuss the study's findings in relation to the empirical literature and theoretical literature found in Chapter Two. The empirical literature is discussed first, followed by the theoretical literature. Under the theoretical literature heading, the two theoretical frameworks that are addressed are the expectancy-value theory and social cognitive theory. Quotations from the participants are used to confirm previous research.

Empirical Literature

This study confirms previous research that focused on standardized assessment bias used in the identification process and the underrepresentation of African American male students in GATE programs. All the participants in this study agreed that African American male students are the least identified and represented in GATE programs in their class and school. The assessments used in the identification process are biased (Goings & Sewell, 2019) and favor students with a middle-class background. As a result, many African American male students receive lower scores than their peers, causing them to be overlooked for the GATE programs. Marlon, in his letter, supported the view that many African American male students receive low scores on standardized assessments because they are biased. He stated, "Statistically, these standardized assessments are culturally biased aptitude tests that Black males usually don't get to score in the 97th percentile. Because they do not score in the 97th percentile, that doesn't mean they don't have a high aptitude." Winsler et al. (2013) supported this view on bias assessments:

> Many standardized tests used for gifted identification are inappropriate or suboptimal for use with children from culturally diverse groups, due to cultural/language bias, differential predictive validity for Black students, and stereotype threat and anxiety that are invoked from the tests among Black students. (p. 418)

Standardized assessments, such as the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) and the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT), are two assessments used in elementary schools to identify students for GATE programs, and they are the two most commonly used nonverbal measures (Carman et al., 2020). The NNAT, which is a completely nonverbal assessment, is believed to be the assessment that is not culturally biased. According to Manos (2016), "Critics of broad battery cognitive ability tests have often promoted nonverbal cognitive ability tests as more

'culturally fair' for the assessment of low income and minority students" (p. 253). However, some African American students do not score in the 96th percentile because they are not familiar with this content and the assessment format. Marlon, in his interview, highlighted, "The IQ tests have come a long way with removing some cultural bias, but they're not there yet." This assessment is also timed, and students in elementary schools are not used to taking a timed assessment. Hence, they are not adequately prepared for the assessments and still perform lower than their peers on a non-culturally biased assessment. Karen believed that a timed test could negatively affect a student's performance on a standardized assessment. She explained, "I don't like that the test is timed because there's so many things that can go bad on the day of testing. Students can experience testing anxiety or not feeling well, and they still have to take the test."

Participants believe that a factor such as lack of representation of African American male teachers contributes to the African American male subgroup being underrepresented in GATE programs. This lack of representation of African American male teachers means that some African American male students will go through their entire K–12 education and never encounter or experience having an African American male as their teacher. Representation matters and African American male students need to see teachers of their race in the classroom who understand their culture and relate to them. The African American male teachers in the school system used culturally relevant, social justice, and hip-hop-based instructional approaches to engage students (Davis, 2018) and ensure that they learn the content. The teachers can use these practices to modify the curriculum and engage students because they can relate to their culture and daily challenges. Michelle explained, "We don't have many African American male teachers in elementary schools, so African American boys don't get to see what males of their culture have done, or what success looks like for them."

Teachers' perceptions of African American male students were another factor the participants believed contributes to the lack of representation of African American male students in GATE programs. African American male students experience being victims of stereotypes, biases, low expectations, and racial and gendered microaggressions (Bryan & Williams, 2017). Participants in this study highlighted the low expectations of African American male students. Kathy stated, "Some teachers do not believe that most African American male students are gifted because they cannot linguistically show their teachers they are gifted." Angella explained, "Some teachers view African American male students as having a learning disability if they cannot complete their work on time when they are sometimes bored because they are not being challenged." These factors identified by the participants in this study also confirm factor identified in other studies in the literature review.

Teacher referral carries significant weight in the identification and assessment process of African American male students in GATE programs. Educators who have served as committee members have learned the language they need to use in their gifted report, to get students they referred recommended for gifted service as gifted and talented students in either reading or math. They can also provide the evidence in student work samples, anecdotal records, or self-initiated projects the students completed as supporting documents for their gifted reports. Since some teachers are familiar with what the gifted committee members are looking for, they can get more students they recommend identified for the gifted program, irrespective of whether they meet the standardized assessments' required score. However, some teachers are not familiar with the gifted process but must complete the same report and produce work samples. Since they do not know what the committee members are looking for and have not yet been trained on gifted children's characteristics, the African American male students are least likely to be referred by

them for GATE programs. Karen felt that most teachers who have never served on a gifted committee are at a disadvantage because "they have no idea what the gifted committee members are looking for" in the identification process. Even when some African American male students score in the 96th percentile on the standardized assessments, they are still unlikely to be accepted in GATE programs because the teacher reports and work samples do not provide the evidence needed to show that they are gifted.

Multiple assessments are recommended to be used in the identification process for minority and African American male students to have a chance of being included in GATE programs (Lakin, 2018). In the schools where this study was conducted, multiple documents are generally submitted to the gifted committee to review to identify if students are eligible for gifted services. These documents include standardized assessment results, teacher reports, work samples, parent reports, and results from a math assessment given to students by the gifted resource teacher. Students are expected to score a "far exceed" on these documents to be recommended for gifted services. Based on this study's findings, participants believe that if African American male students meet the criteria in one area, that should be enough to qualify them for GATE programs. They should be provided with gifted services in that area. They should not have to prove that they are gifted in language arts if they meet the criteria or gain the cut score in math. They also should not have to prove they are gifted in math if they meet the language arts requirements because students can be gifted in one area but perform at an average level in other areas. Marlon supported this view. He stated, "since multiple documents are submitted for review, if a student gains a far exceed in one area that should be enough, it should not be supplemented with a lot of other areas."

While training in gifted education and cultural responsiveness might not be the only response to solving the underrepresentation of African American male students in GATE programs, all educators must receive training. Participants in this study acknowledged that they need more training even though they have been teaching for five or more years. Some educators feel their biases and certain stereotypes toward African American male students might have contributed to them not recommending more African American male students for GATE programs. They also feel there are African American students who have the intellectual ability to be in the GATE program. This finding also supports the literature that lack of training allows teachers to hold unrealistic expectations about gifted students (Acar et al., 2016). Giftedness presents itself differently in students. As a result, educators should not use established rules such as a love for reading to determine if students are gifted because not all students who are gifted love to read.

Recruiting, training, and retaining African American teachers, especially males, is imperative to ensure that African American male students can experience being taught by someone of their race, gender, and understanding of their culture. Too many African American male students have been stereotyped as being troublemakers or problematic students. Having this label puts them at a disadvantage before they even enter the classroom. Some African American male students behave in a problematic way because they are fully aware of how their teachers perceive them. The research has shown that when African American male teachers are of the same race as their students, they will relate to their students and act as change agents who can provide mentorship for their students (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Michelle, in her letter, pointed out the need for more Black male teachers in the classroom. She stated, "We truly need

more Black male teachers in the classroom who can relate to Black male students so that they can connect with them and motivate them to strive to achieve greatness."

It is vital for educators to feel confident in identifying and recommending African American male students for GATE programs if they are indeed gifted. If educators are not adequately trained, African American male students will likely continue to be underrepresented in GATE programs even though they have the intellectual ability to be included because giftedness is not unique to a particular race, culture, or subgroup. It is also necessary to ensure that an African American male teacher teaches African American male students. They will be able to integrate their Black cultural knowledge into the school curriculum to ensure that they can support academic success and the sociopolitical awareness of Black students (Bryan & Williams, 2017).

Many educators see African American male students as intellectually capable and can be included in GATE programs as students of other races. However, others see them as less academically capable because of their skin color and often find ways to keep them out of the gifted programs instead of including them. Henfield et al. (2014) stated:

> In essence, the literature seems to suggest that educators are oftentimes guilty of trying to figure out ways to keep students out of advanced programming instead of truly exploring the possibility whether all students have the capability to do well in more rigorous learning programs. (p. 148)

Many teachers also treat African American male students differently from students from other races. Some teachers intentionally treat them differently and others unintentionally and refuse to acknowledge their own biases and negative attitudes toward African American male students. Winsler et al. (2013) explained, "Teacher expectations and differential treatment based

on race directed toward Black males, negative peer pressure and adverse school climate have also been shown to impact Black students' academic achievement" (p. 418). Michelle, in her letter, stated, "We need to be aware of any cultural biases we harbor that might alter our expectations of African American male students. If teachers have low expectations, that will negatively impact the view a student has of his scholarly ability." African American male students will continue to be underrepresented in GATE programs unless teachers acknowledge their own biases toward African American students. They also need to begin to see African American male students as intellectually capable students. They should be included in GATE programs not because there is a national outcry for them to be represented but because of their intellectual ability to be included in GATE programs and achieve academically as students of other races.

Theoretical Literature

The expectancy-value theory is the dominant theory of motivation (Bergey et al., 2018; Li & Hu, 2017). It is also a framework that motivates humans to engage and persist in a particular behavior (McCourt et al., 2017). Students will succeed in school and GATE programs if they are motivated and can build self-efficacy via social persuasion. African American male students will struggle in school if they lack self-efficacy and if teachers set low expectations for them. The findings from this study confirm the idea of this theory. The results revealed that many African American male students are overlooked for the GATE program not because they are not intellectually capable but because some educators set low expectations for them and treat them differently from students of other races. Angella explained in her letter, "African American male students don't realize their full potential and are overlooked for gifted programs because

some teachers set the achievement standards low for African American male students. It is our responsibility to help every student reach their potential."

Henfield et al. (2014) explained, "Teachers were less likely to recommend Black students be considered for possible inclusion than other students." If African American male students are less likely to be recommended by their teachers for GATE programs, they will continue to be underrepresented unless changes are put in place. Some educators in this study believed that African American male students do not need any special motivation to learn. As a result, they do not motivate African American male students to succeed, build relationships, or connect with them differently from students of other races. Deon, in her letter, stated, "I don't feel African American male students need any special motivation to learn. But I do believe that all students need to be motivated." Angella believes that making a connection with African American male students is an important part of the learning process. She stated in her letter, "African American male students need to be encouraged and motivated differently for their peers especially when their teacher is from another race. Teachers must find a way to connect with African American male students before they can teach them." Karen, in her letter, encouraged teachers to acknowledge the African American culture and use it to connect with students. She stated,

> Teachers should stop saying they don't see color. If they have eyes, they will see it. By ignoring the color of their skin, you are ignoring their heritage. Make culture something to celebrate and use it to connect with students.

For African American male students to be successful and be included in GATE programs in elementary schools, educators must encourage and motivate them and build self-efficacy via social persuasion so that it will not become a barrier for them to be included in the GATE

program. Social persuasion comes from the influence of teachers, guidance counselors, and parents. Henfield et al. (2014) explained:

> A significant component of school counselors' responsibilities is the alleviation of barriers that interfere with students' ability to thrive and flourish. For gifted Black male students, these barriers exist in the form of lowered teacher expectations, teachers' disinclination to nominate Black male students to gifted programs, and socio-emotionally unwelcoming gifted classrooms. (p. 149)

Angelle believes that building African American students' self-confidence is important to their success in school. She stated:

> We need to cater to the needs of our African American male students. If they are exposed to a rigorous curriculum on their level, they will be able to complete it successfully. We need to help them to grow and build their confidence. As we encourage and celebrate their successes, they will become more confident in their ability to achieve at a high level. Then we would help them change their mindset about their education and their ability to be included in the gifted programs.

> Educators also need to ensure that they build relationships with parents to work together

to achieve a common goal: to ensure that all students are learning to their fullest potential. African American parents from low socioeconomic status are sometimes not available to attend parent-teacher conferences because they are at work. While the parents are at work, the students are at home taking care of themselves and their siblings. Kenzey, in her interview, stated, "

> Many of my African American parents have to work, and sometimes they are not available to attend parent/teacher conferences. When this happens, I make arrangements

to meet with the parents whenever they are available because I need to connect with parents.

Marie also believed that it is necessary to build a relationship with parents to understand the students' responsibility at home better. She explained, **"Some African American male students just want to get enough work done at school so that they can go home and take care of their siblings because their parents are at work."** Many teachers view parents' absence from conferences as an indication that they devalue education or lack understanding of the educational system (Henfield et al., 2014). This assumption is far from the truth for many African American parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Henfield et al. (2014) stated:

> Black parents living in poverty and those living in middle-class circumstances have been found to have similar degrees of appreciation for education; however, those from middle-class backgrounds have the ability to be involved in more traditional ways as a function of their financial circumstances. (p. 148)

While there are parents who might lack the understanding of the educational system, awareness could have been made if some educators took the time to communicate the process to become knowledgeable. Karen supported the view that some educators do not make African American parents aware of the education process. She explained:

> I think a lot of teachers in the school kind of wrote off their families as not wanting to be part of the education process. And so, we didn't help these families understand more of what's going on. Some of my more affluent White families and I talk about the gifted process; we walk them through it rather than telling them this form needs to be turned in. I don't think the same level of effort was given to our African American families.

If parents and teachers can establish a relationship, there will be a clear understanding that some parents' absences from school activities do not mean they do not care but rather that they might have to work, and other arrangements can be made to connect with them.

Parental involvement is an essential element of effective education for children of all ages (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). Therefore, all educators should remember that the students benefit from the collaboration when all stakeholders work together. Students' attitude influences self-efficacy, goal valuation, and environment perceptions (Siegle et al., 2020) when students, parents, and teachers can build a relationship and communicate frequently. Kenzey acknowledged in her interview that parent/teacher relationships are necessary for students to be successful in school. She explained:

   We must make it a priority to build relationships with parents from the beginning of the

   school year if we want African American male students to succeed in school. When I get

   to know my parents, they understand that I care about their children, and they will do

   what they can to support me as the teacher.

The social cognitive theory is widely used in explaining human behavior (Bandura, 2015), and it supports the idea that when individuals are in an environment that is stimulating, motivating, and conducive to learning, changes will occur. This study confirms the idea of social cognitive theory. The results from the data collected and analyzed confirm that when African American male students are placed in an environment where they encounter biased teachers who do not believe in their intellectual ability to be included in GATE programs, face peer pressure from their peers to fit it, and are not perceived as being smart students, they underperform in school. Angella, in her letter, explained, "We must ensure that students are comfortable in our classroom if we want them to learn. Students will not learn from teachers they do not like, nor

will they learn in an environment where they are uncomfortable." For African American male students to be successful in school and to be included in GATE programs because they are intellectually capable, they must be surrounded by educators who can provide an environment that is stimulating and conducive to learning. They also need to be in an environment where they feel valued and know they have teachers who care about them and want them to succeed.

Implications

The underrepresentation of African American male students in GATE programs has gained national attention. The lack of representation of African American male students also prompted researchers to conduct studies investigating the root causes of their underrepresentation. This qualitative multicase study attempts to fill the gap by adding to the literature educators' perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs. The theoretical, empirical, and practical implications for this study are intended to explain the rationale of their underrepresentation and what can be done to increase their representation in GATE programs.

Theoretical Implications

Bandura's (2012) social cognitive theory focuses on the idea that human learning occurs in the environment. Humans, therefore, learn from the environment in which they are placed directly and indirectly. However, for them to learn, they must believe that they can perform given tasks. The belief in one's capabilities to learn or perform actions at a designed level is referred to as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989b). Educators and students learn, acquire certain skills, and develop attitudes based on what they see and hear in their environment. The lack of African American male students in GATE programs is not a result of their inability to perform

academically at as high a level as their peers but because some African American male students lack self-efficacy. Kenzey, in her letter, pointed out:

> Some African American male students do not believe they are capable of being in gifted programs. As their teacher, I want to make every effort to make sure all my students know they have the ability to do anything they set their minds to and that they know I'm doing everything I can to help them along the way.

It is also because some teachers lack confidence in their ability to teach students of a different race, lack training in gifted education and cultural responsiveness, and lack good teacher/student relationships. All these factors can be enhanced by the things they see and hear in their environment. Karen, in her interview, explained:

> Many teachers do not believe they can teach African American students. It is like they encounter a wall when they have African American male students. When African American students enter their classes, the first thing they do is check their SOL scores. They do not do that for students of other races, and I think that's sad. If a Black student is struggling, they send him to the reading specialist to work with him. If a White student is struggling, they provide remediation for them in the classroom.

When teachers do not receive the necessary training in gifted education and cultural responsiveness, it becomes challenging for them to gain confidence in working with African American male students to determine if they are gifted. If they are not confident in their ability to work with African American male students, it also becomes challenging for them to develop a positive teacher/student relationship. Before teachers can teach students, they must be able to connect with them. The importance of training and building relationships with African

American male students emerged as subthemes within the major themes of commitments and responsibilities and self-efficacy.

The expectancy-value theory provides a framework for understanding the development of motivation and its influences in various academic settings (Bergey et al., 2018). This theory supports the idea that for African American male students to perform to the best of their ability, educators must find a way to motivate them. The participants in this study acknowledged that they found it challenging to motivate African American male students to perform academically. Some African American male students do not believe that they are intellectually capable of completing given tasks teachers require to show that they are gifted. The findings also revealed that some African American male students underperformed in school due to stereotypes: they are perceived as being problematic students who are hard to control in class, and as a result, they are treated differently from their peers. Characterizing African American male students also shape teachers' views, beliefs, and perspectives (Davis et al., 2019) of how they relate to them. In addition to being considered problematic students, teachers have low expectations for African American male students. Most African American male students are aware of their teachers' expectations, and as a result, they behave and perform academically as their teachers expect.

This study also revealed that some participants had taught African American male students who are intellectually capable of being in GATE programs. They believe in their ability to complete given tasks and have done so successfully, mainly because of their teachers' expectations. These teachers motivate and inspire them to rise above stereotypes and plan engaging lessons that include their culture to get them interested. African American male students will learn and strive in an environment where they are expected to perform, and they are not seen or treated differently because of the color of their skin. The importance of stereotypes

of African American male students emerged as subthemes within the major themes of hindrances that contribute to African American male students being underrepresented in GATE programs.

Empirical Implications

The results of this study confirmed the related literature about African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs. The participants all agreed that African American male students are the least identified and represented in GATE programs in their schools. African American male students are not underrepresented because they lack the intellectual ability to be included in GATE programs. They are underrepresented because of teacher biases (Irizarry, 2015) and biased assessments (Plucker & Callahan, 2014), peer pressure, being stereotyped as problematic or less capable than their peers (Zhbanova et al., 2015), and a lack of African American male teachers who could serve as their mentor. These factors emerged as subthemes within the major theme of hindrances. This study fills the gap because it provides educators' perspectives on factors contributing to African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs.

The educators in this study gave their perspectives on the identification, recommendation, and assessment of the GATE programs' process. In their comments, they mentioned that giftedness presents itself differently in students, and as a result, all students will not show their giftedness in the same way. The participants in this study acknowledged that they had African American male students in their class who were indeed gifted but did not get referred for the GATE program. They did not attain the cut score on a standardized assessment, and their giftedness or creativity could not be captured on a piece of paper to show as evidence to support the teacher report. The findings also revealed some African American male students were not referred for GATE programs because some teachers were biased. They relate to them differently

than they relate to students of other races. Some participants acknowledged their own biases during the interviews and focus groups but made it known that they were not intentionally biased toward African American male students. They did not realize they were biased until they reflected and responded to the interview and focus group questions. Karen, in her interview, stated, "We, as teachers as a whole in education, have our own internal bias that stops us from allowing the African American male students to reach their potential fully, but we don't often recognize or acknowledged it."

Two participants from Prince George Elementary School identified peer pressure as one factor contributing to the lack of represented African American male students in GATE programs. This subtheme supported the literature and made it known that students in elementary schools encounter peer pressure from their peers, which can hinder their representation in GATE programs and how they behave and perform academically. They prefer to fit in with their peers rather than standing out as smart or being considered a nerd. Marie, in her letter, expounded, "I have found that many young African American males feel that they must uphold a certain reputation amongst their peers such as being cool, funny and not that smart so that they can fit in rather than stand out." The literature also discusses how some African American male students prefer to be perceived by their peers. Winsler et al. (2013) stated, "Black males often wish to avoid labels and are fearful of being teased for 'acting White' or not being 'Black enough' if they exhibit stereotypical intellectual behavior" (p. 418).

The lack of representation of African American teachers, especially males, puts African American male students at a disadvantage to be included in GATE programs and denies them the opportunity to be taught by a teacher of the same race. In the focus group, Michelle explained the importance of African American male teachers' presence in the classroom. She highlighted:

African American male students need the experience of being taught by an African American male teacher. When African American teachers teach African American male students, they will get the opportunity to interact with someone from their culture and help them to see what they can achieve when they finish their school career.

Being provided with the opportunity of being taught by an African American male teacher will provide them with the experience of seeing and encountering an educator who looks like them and can relate to their culture. According to Lewis and Toldson (2013), "Increasing the presence of Black male teachers in US classrooms can provide validation for students of color and expose ALL students to varying perspectives of education, culture and human interactions" (p. 201).

The literature pointed out that teachers' racial and ethnic diversity has been connected to GATE programs' placements (Grissom et al., 2017). It can then be perceived that African American teachers are more likely to advocate for African American male students to be included in GATE programs if they are indeed gifted. The data retrieved from the participants at Prince George Elementary School support the literature. Four White female teachers and one African American female teacher participated in this study. The African American teacher recommended and got the most African American male students accepted in GATE programs. However, at John Peters Elementary School, the findings were different. All participants were White teachers. The White male teacher recommended and got 15 African American male students accepted into GATE programs. He was the only participant who had experience being both a general education and gifted education teacher. He was also the only participant who had served on a gifted committee at both the school and division level.

The results from the data also revealed three findings that were not identified in the literature I retrieved. The three findings that emerged but were not supported by the literature

are challenges at home, curriculum design, and lack of support for low-income families with the gifted process. These three findings are addressed in this section.

Many African American male students encounter various challenges at home that hinder their ability to perform well academically in school or show how smart they are to be included in GATE programs. African American male students are tasked with taking care of or caring for their younger siblings while their parents are at work. While parents are at work, the children are often home by themselves, in the care of older siblings or other family members. Since students are often home alone, they sometimes spend their time playing or doing unrelated educational activities. These and other factors impact students' academic performance in school. Marie stated, "Some young African American males have so much going on at home that they are not able to focus at school." According to Henfield et al. (2014), "It was found that most families care about their children's academic success, but factors such as family and community socioeconomic status, number of parents in the household, and students' age were found to hinder families' involvement level" (p. 148).

The curriculum that educators are tasked with delivering is not designed so that African American students can relate to it. Educators will need to make modifications and adjustments to the curriculum to meet the needs of their students. The curriculum content must also be delivered to show mastery of content in diverse ways so that African American male students can demonstrate mastery of content.

The final finding not supported by the literature is the lack of support for low-income families within the gifted process. Most parents from low-income backgrounds do not understand the gifted process, but they must complete parent reports to identify students for

GATE programs. This process often becomes complicated for the parent since they are not provided with additional support from teachers to complete the various forms.

Practical Implications

This study provided practical implications for all stakeholders who work in the education system. The participants shared their perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs. They also shared the factors contributing to their lack of representation and how educators can motivate African American male students to persist toward being included in GATE programs in two elementary schools.

This study's findings can provide valuable insights to teachers, administrators, and policymakers connected with recommending and identifying African American male students for GATE programs. The process undertaken by educators and policymakers has resulted in the African American male students' subgroup being underrepresented. The African American male students' subgroup will continue to be underrepresented in GATE programs unless changes are made to the identification and assessment process and how African American male students are perceived.

The participants believe that many African American male students are capable of being included in GATE programs, but they cannot attain the cut score on the standardized assessments. The standardized assessments' results play a significant role in identifying a student to receive gifted services. If African American male students in this school division continue to score below the 96th percentile on standardized assessments, they will continue to be underrepresented in GATE programs. At times, even when African American male students attain the 96th percentile on standardized assessments, this does not guarantee that they will be accepted into the GATE program. To ensure African American male students can attain ratings

of "exceeds" or "far exceeds" on teacher and parent reports, the gifted resource teachers can provide teachers and parents with professional development or additional support when completing these reports. By providing teachers and parents with the additional support they need to complete the reports, gifted resource teachers will ensure that the forms will be completed accurately. The gifted committee will then review the forms' information and make their decisions based on all the accurately completed documents supplied.

The data collected from the participants revealed that most parents from low socioeconomic status do not understand the gifted process, which puts African American male students at a disadvantage at times. Parents do not understand that certain documents must be completed and submitted within a specific timeframe along with their standardized assessment results and teacher report for gifted committee members to review. At these times, teachers would have to contact parents to remind them to submit these parent reports. Many parents would quickly complete the forms without putting much thought into the information they put on the forms. Since the goal is to ensure that African American male students are included in GATE programs if they are indeed gifted, educators should ensure that parents have a clear understanding of the gifted process. Parents should also be given enough time to complete the forms and submit them to educators to review. Based on educators' review, if additional information is needed, adequate time for the parents to make modifications should be allotted before the forms are submitted to the gifted committee.

In addition, participants recommended that students should not have to gain "exceeds" or "far exceeds" scores on all documents to be accepted in GATE programs. If students score a "far exceeds" in one area, that should be enough to be included in the gifted program. Finally, it was noted by the participants that educators should use multiple assessments during the criteria

process and allow African American male students to demonstrate their giftedness in untraditional ways.

Delimitations and Limitations

In qualitative research, the researcher makes decisions that define the study's boundaries; these are termed as the delimitations of the study. There are also limitations within the study over which the researcher has no control. For this study, the delimitations, or the decisions that I made to define the study's boundaries, were the type of research design selected and the specific criteria for selecting participants to participate in this study. Two limitations were also identified. As the researcher, I was not able to choose the participants for this study. As a result, there was a lack of diversity in participants who participated, and there was also a lack of African American male teachers. The delimitations and limitations of this study are further explained in the following three paragraphs.

To address the delimitations, a multicase study was selected for this study because it allowed me to garner the perspectives of the participants on African American male students in GATE programs in two different elementary schools in the same school zone and district. Both elementary schools were high-performing schools that have a robust GATE program. Participants from both schools allowed me to gather their perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs in their schools by talking to them directly and reviewing their letters.

For this study, I decided to set specific criteria that participants must meet to be selected to participate. The participants had to be fourth- and fifth-grade past and current teachers who had at least five years of experience teaching students who have been identified and/or receive services as gifted and talented students. It was necessary to ensure that participants have at least

five years of experience because they would have gained the expertise in providing services and

recommending students for GATE programs over that period. That decision also allowed me to

gather the data needed to answer the central question and sub-questions. This study included 10

educators. Five educators participated from each school. All the participants were contacted via

email with a request to participate in this study. The participants who responded and met the

criteria were selected, and the participants who responded but did not meet the criteria were not

selected. Even with the delimitations outlined above, I was still able to conduct a robust study

that allowed me to garner a great deal of valuable data on African American male students being

the least identified and represented in GATE programs.

This study included two limitations. Ten participants took part in this study. Nine

participants were White, and one was Black. I would have liked to have had a more diverse

group of participants from both schools. Unfortunately, I was only able to secure those

participants because they were the ones who met the criteria and were willing to participate in

the study. I also would have liked to have had at least one African American male teacher

participate in this study. I quickly realized that would not be impossible. John Peters

Elementary School only had one White male teacher on staff, and Prince George Elementary

School had no male teachers. Before selecting the schools and requesting permission from the

school division to conduct the study in those schools, I should have done an investigation to

determine if their schools had African American male teachers. That investigation would have

revealed that there were no African American male teachers. I would have then been able to

select other schools with African American male teachers to conduct the study. While I would

have liked to have had an African American male teacher in each school participating in this

study, I have no regrets not doing an investigation to ensure that there were African American

male teachers in both schools before seeking permission from the school division. The participants in this study were forthcoming in their responses to the research questions and reflective in their practices in recommending African American male students for GATE programs. I was, therefore, able to gather the data needed to report on the findings of this study.

<div align="center">**Recommendations for Future Research**</div>

The African American male subgroup has been the least identified and represented in GATE programs across the United States. Several studies (Davis et al., 2019; Hodges et al., 2018; Johnson & Larwin, 2020) have been conducted that put the spotlight on and bring awareness of this issue. Irrespective of the various studies, my findings revealed that the African American male subgroup continues to be unidentified and underrepresented in GATE programs, and many educators were not aware of this information. By gaining other educators' perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs in other schools by conducting interviews and focus groups, a greater understanding of the lack of representation would be gained. Conducting the study in other schools with a more diverse teacher population will allow the researcher to gain insights into whether teachers' perspectives with diverse teacher populations will be different from teachers' perspectives in schools with less diverse populations. The findings of those studies on African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs could then be compared with this study to determine similar and different characteristics.

This study was carried out with 10 participants. There were nine White teachers and one African American teacher. Further research is needed in other elementary schools with a higher representation of African American male teachers to gain their perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs. It will also allow all

stakeholders to compare both studies' findings to see if race contributes to the lack of representation of African American male students in GATE programs across the United States.

There was only one male White teacher who participated in this study. There was no way to solicit more male teachers to participate in this study because only one male White teacher was employed between both schools. Therefore, policies must be in place to recruit more males in the teaching profession. Particular emphasis should be made on recruiting African American males to teach at the elementary level. Once African American male teachers are recruited and placed in elementary schools, administrators should ensure that they are placed at the lower and upper elementary school levels. It is also necessary for school divisions to put measures in place to recruit and retain African American male teachers in the teaching profession and especially in elementary schools. This will ensure that more African American male students will experience being taught by someone who shares their culture and to whom they can look as a role model.

Two high-performing elementary schools in the same school district were studied. Four major themes emerged: systemic issues, hindrances, commitments and responsibilities, and self-efficacy. Further study should be conducted in low-performing and Title 1 schools in the different school divisions where the GATE programs are structured differently, and the criteria for acceptance in the program are different. A multicase study design should be employed so the data can be studied. The data can be compared to see if more or less African American male students are represented in their GATE programs and factors contributing to the African American male subgroups being under- or overrepresented in one school.

Summary

African American male students have been the least identified and represented in GATE programs throughout the United States. Data from the federal and state government and studies conducted by researchers have spotlighted the underrepresentation of African American male students enrolled in GATE programs. This is a problem for African American male students because they run the risk of not realizing their full potential when they are not exposed to a rigorous curriculum when they have the intellectual ability to manage. As a result, there is a national outcry to close the achievement gap and excellence gap between African American students and students of other races. The purpose of this multicase study was to develop an understanding of educators' perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented in GATE programs. Ten participants from two elementary schools participated in this study, and data were collected through 10 interviews, two focus groups, and 10 letters written by participants. Four major themes and 10 subthemes were established and organized in the order in which they answer the central question and three sub-questions.

Based on the findings, students of all races, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds can be included in GATE programs since giftedness occurs at the same rate for all students. Since gifted occurs at the same rate for all students, there should be no reason why African American male students should not be included in the gifted program. It is perceived that African American male students have been the least identified and represented in GATE programs because some educators refuse to acknowledge their own biases and negative attitudes. In addition to teachers' biases and negative attitudes, the identification process is heavily flawed, relies on standardized assessments, and favors students with a middle-class background.

In this study, many participating educators believe that African American male students are the least identified and represented in GATE programs because the assessments favor students with a White middle-class background and the lack of African American teachers, especially males, negatively impacts student motivation. African American male students are also viewed as being troublemakers or problematic. This stereotype poses a challenge because they are often overlooked for the gifted program because of behavior rather than academic abilities.

My findings suggested that educators must connect with African American male students and plan lessons to cater to their needs rather than delivering content to which students cannot relate. For educators to meet African American male students' needs, they need to receive cultural responsiveness training. African American male students also experience challenges at home, which often affects how they perform academically in school. Therefore, educators need to find a way to bridge the gap between home and school to ensure that parents are provided with the support they need to help their children achieve academically at a high level and be included in the gifted program if they are indeed gifted. Educators should not see African American male students as less academically capable because of their skin color. African American male students have the intellectual ability to be included in GATE programs as students of other races. However, educators must have high expectations for all students, which includes African American male students.

There are two crucial takeaways from this study that are important for all stakeholders to consider. The first takeaway is that giftedness is not unique to a particular race, culture, or subgroup. The second takeaway is that African American male students do have the intellectual

ability to be included in GATE programs and should be provided with every opportunity to be represented.

Educators should focus on eliminating or minimizing the hindrances that impede African American male students from being included in GATE programs. If educators succeed in doing so, it can be concluded that African American male representation will be increased because they do possess the intellectual ability to manage a rigorous curriculum and be included. If educators do not focus on eliminating or minimizing the hindrances, or if policymakers refuse to modify and adjust the identification process, African American male students will continue to be underrepresented in GATE programs compared to students of other races.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 22, 2020

Nicole Clarke
Gail Collins

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY19-20-346 A Multi Case Study on African American Male Students: The Least Identified and Represented in the Gifted and Talented Education Program at the Upper Elementary Level

Dear Nicole Clarke, Gail Collins:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the date of the IRB meeting at which the protocol was approved: June 22, 2020. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make modifications in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update submission to the IRB. These submissions can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

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

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter to Prospective Participants

June 23, 2020

Dear Prospective Participant,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education. The purpose of my research is to develop an understanding of educators' perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented in the gifted and talented program at two elementary schools.

If you are an educator who teaches or has taught fourth or fifth grade, has at least five years of experience teaching students who are gifted, administers the standardized assessments designed to identify a student as gifted, and recommends students for the gifted and talented program based on test scores and/or multiple assessments, you are invited to participate in this study. If you are willing to participate, you will be asked to sit for an individual interview, take part in a focus group discussion, and write a letter to educators sharing the strategies you use in your class to motivate and inspire African American male students to rise above stereotype and perform academically to the best of their ability. You will also be asked to review the transcript from the interview and your contribution to the focus group discussion for accuracy. The focus group discussions and individual interviews will be conducted on separate days. Each focus group session will take one hour, and interview sessions will take 30 – 45 minutes to complete. The written letter to other educators should take approximately 30 minutes, and the review of the transcripts should take about 15 minutes.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please complete the screening survey attached via the share drive that consists of questions about your background, teaching experience, and educational level. After reviewing your responses, I will contact you to let you know if you have been selected as a participant. If you have, I will provide you with a consent form that contains additional information about this study and schedule a time for your interview.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

…………………………
Nicole Clarke
Liberty University
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C: Screening Survey

Name: _____

Position: _____

Gender: Male   Female

This question is given to ensure that I have a diversified participant pool.

Race: Hispanic   Caucasian   Black/African American   Other/Multi-Racial

Answer the following questions.

1. How long have you been an educator?

    0 – 5 years   5 – 10 years   more than 10 years

2. Are you currently teaching or have taught 4th or 5th Grade?   Yes   No

3. Did you teach for the entire time frame in your current school?

    Yes   No

4. Do you teach in a general education classroom or gifted classroom setting?

    General Education Teacher   Gifted Resource Teacher

5. Are you certified to teach gifted students?

    School District   By the State

6. Do you know the ethnicity breakdown in your school?   Yes   No

    If yes, please provide a breakdown.

    Caucasian ____%   Asian ____%   Black/African American ____%

7. If you teach in a general education classroom, how many gifted students are in your

    class? _____ gifted students

8. What is the ethnicity breakdown and gender of the gifted students in your class?

    Males _____   Female_____

Caucasian ____%   Asian ____%   Black/African American ____%

Complete this section

9. If you teach in a gifted classroom setting, what is the ethnicity breakdown and gender of

the gifted students?

Male _____   Female _____

Caucasian ____%   Asian ____%   Black/African American ___%

Complete this section

10. How many African American male students in your class are identified as gifted and

talented and receive services from a gifted resource teacher?

_____ African American male students

11. Approximately how many African American male students have you referred, and they

got accepted in the gifted and talented? Circle the one that applies.

0 – 5   6 – 10   11-15

12. Which is the best method to contact you?   ☐ Email   ☐ phone

Based on the preferred method of contact selected, please write your email address or phone

number.

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

13. What is the best time of the day to contact you?

☐   Morning   ☐   Afternoon   ☐   Evening

14. Please write a time and day you will be available for the focus group discussion and the

individual interview.

Focus Group Discussion: _____Time   _____Day

Individual Interview: _____Time   _____Day

Appendix D: Email to Educators Selected/Rejected as Participants

July 23, 2020

Dear Participant,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education. The purpose of my research is to develop an understanding of educators' perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented in the gifted and talented program at the elementary level.

You have been selected to take part in this study. You will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion and an individual interview and write a letter to educators sharing the strategies you use in your class to motivate and inspire African American male students to rise above stereotype and perform academically. You will also be asked to review the transcript from the interview and your contribution to the focus group discussion for accuracy.

Please click on the link provided to read the consent form, place a checkmark on the form indicating that you have given permission to be video recorded during the sessions, sign and date it, and return a copy to me by email.

[Consent link]

Thank you are making yourself available to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

N. Clarke

………………
Nicole Clarke
Doctoral Candidate

EMAIL TO EDUCATORS NOT SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

June 23, 2020

Dear Participant,

Thank you for completing the attached screening survey via the school district's share drive. You were not selected as one of the participants to take part in this study. Again, thank you for taking the time to complete the survey and for your willingness to take part in this study.

Sincerely,
……………………..
Nicole Clarke
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix E: Consent Form to Participants

CONSENT FORM

A Multi-Case Study on African American Male Students: The Least Identified and Represented
in the Gifted and Talented Program
Nicole Angella Clarke
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study that seeks to develop an understanding of educators'
perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and represented in the
gifted and talented program at the elementary school level. You were selected as a possible
participant because you are a male or female educator who has taught or currently teaching
fourth or fifth grade, has at least five years of experience teaching students who are gifted,
administered standardized assessments designed to identify a student as gifted, and
recommended students for the gifted and talented program based on test scores and/or multiple
assessments. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in
the study.

Nicole Angella Clarke, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is
conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of
educators' perspectives of African American male students being the least identified and
represented in the gifted and talented program at the elementary level. The following central
research question and research sub-questions will guide this study: What are the educators'
perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in the
gifted and talented program? What are educators' perspectives of the factors that cause African
American male students to be the least identified and represented in the gifted and talented
program? How can educators motivate African American male students to engage and persist
toward being represented in the gifted and talented program? What are educators' perspectives
on African American male students' self-efficacy, scholar identity, and the gifted and talented
program?

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in one-on-one interview session. I will ask you questions about your
   perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and
   represented in the gifted and talented program. Each interview session will be video
   recorded, and note-taking will be utilized. Each session will last approximately 30
   minutes.
2. Participate in a focus group discussion. I will ask questions that will guide and direct the
   conversations during the discussion. The sessions will be videotaped and should last
   about an hour.

3. Write a letter to other educators sharing the strategies you use in your class to motivate and inspire African American male students to rise above stereotype and perform academically to the best of their ability.
4. Review the transcript from the interview and your part in the focus group discussion for accuracy. This process should take approximately 15 minutes.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal. However, there is a possibility that the participants will know each other. There are no other risks anticipated in this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits from participating in this study. However, you may benefit from taking part in a collaborative conversation with other educators who are discussing best practices, strategies and success they experienced working with and referring African American male students for the gifted and talented program.

Benefits to society: When African American male students do not receive the educational support they need to realize their full potential, they are more likely to withdraw from formal education and as a result, the trajectory of their life opportunities is seriously compromised and their ability to contribute to society will be minimized. A study of this nature may make a difference for educators and school divisions concerned about the achievement gap and dropout rate of African American male students.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. All data collected from the focus group discussion, interview sessions and letters from teachers will be confidential and the study will be conducted in an ethical and professional manner. In any report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the documents. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- All data collected from participants will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Data collected during interviews and focus group discussion will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Nicole Angella Clarke You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at (571) 288-4814 or **nicoleaclarke@yahoo.com**. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Gail Collins, at **glcollins2@liberty.edu**.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at **irb@liberty.edu**.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix F: Individual Interview Questions

1. How do you feel about the gifted programs in your school?

2. Research has shown that African American male students are the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs in schools across the United States. What are your perspectives on African American male students and gifted and talented programs?

3. What are your perspectives on African American male students' intellectual ability to be included in gifted and talented programs?

4. How do your coworkers view African American male students and gifted and talented programs?

5. Based on your experience administering assessments and recommending students for gifted and talented programs, what are your perspectives on the identification process?

6. What are your views on elementary educators being gifted certified by the school division or state before being able to teach, identify, and assess students for gifted and talented programs?

7. What factors do you believe contribute to the African American male subgroup being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

8. In your teacher preparation program, what training did you receive to prepare you to identify and teach gifted and talented students?

9. What training did you receive in college or through professional developments in your schools to prepare you for the identification and assessment process of gifted students?

10. What are your views on African American male students being intrinsically motivated to perform academically?

11. What are some strategies you use in your classes to motivate and encourage African American male students to perform to the best of their ability and rise above stereotype to be included in the gifted and talented program?

12. Based on your experience working with gifted students, how can educators ensure that more African American male students are identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

13. What can educators do to ensure African American male students are motivated to engage and persist toward being represented in gifted and talented programs?

14. Having taught and recommended African American male students and administered assessments for gifted and talented programs, what are your perspectives on how they view themselves to be included in the program?

15. What training did you receive in cultural responsiveness in your teacher preparation program?

16. To what extent did your teacher preparation program prepare you to respond to different cultures you encountered in your classroom?

Appendix G: Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. What are your perspectives on the identification and assessment process of gifted and talented programs for all students?

2. What are your perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

3. To what extent were you adequately prepared to identify, assess and recommend students for gifted and talented programs?

4. What are your views on the identification process of African American male students for gifted and talented programs?

5. What are your perspectives on recommending African American male students for the gifted and talented programs?

6. Based on researchers' findings, the use of multiple assessments is recommended to increase the representation of African American male students in gifted and talented programs. To what extent do you agree with the finding?

7. What are your views on the relationship between the socio-economic status of African American male students and gifted and talented programs?

8. Based on your experience, what are the factors that contribute to African American male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

9. How do you believe African American students' scholarly identity influences their perception of and access to gifted and talented programs?

10. What can educators do to motivate and inspire African American male students to engage and persist toward being represented in gifted and talented programs?

11. What can the school division do to ensure educators are adequately trained to identify and recommend students for gifted and talented programs?

12. What are your views on standardized assessments, the primary assessments used to identify students for the gifted program?

13. African American male students do not often attain the score on the CogAT and NNAT assessments for automatic identification in gifted and talented programs. What do you believe are some of the factors for their low performance on these standardized assessments?

14. What are your views on the use of multiple assessments in the identification process of African American male students to be identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

Appendix H: Written Letter Stimulus

Dear Participants,

One of the data collection tools is for the participants to write a fictitious letter to other

elementary educators who may have African American males in their classrooms. When you are

writing your letter, please use the following questions as a guide. Please choose at least three of

these questions to be included in your letter but you may include all six if you wish to do so.

- What are your perspectives on African American male students being the least identified

  and represented in the gifted and talented program?

- What do you believe contributes to the African American male subgroup being the least

  identified and represented in the gifted and talented program?

- Do you think African American male students need to be motivated to perform

  academically?

- How do you motivate African American male students in your classroom?

- What are some strategies you use in your classes to motivate and encourage African

  American male students to perform to the best of their ability and rise above stereotype to

  be included in the gifted and talented program?

- Do you believe African American male students have the intellectual ability to be

  included in the gifted and talented program?

Appendix I: Reflective Journal

Dates	Entries
October 18, 2019	Having taught in this school district for 10 years and having had the opportunity to recommend students for gifted and talented programs, I bring my personal experiences and assumptions to this study. One assumption is that African American male students who did not score in the 96th percentile on standardized tests would more likely be recommended to gifted and talented programs using other criteria only if African American teachers teach them.
July 16, 2020	Once I got IRB approval, I reached out to several teachers to participate in the pilot study. I ensured that I reached out to participants of different races because getting the teachers' perspectives of all races is essential. I did not want to get all participants of one race because I wanted to get feedback from participants of different ethnicities so that if I needed to make modifications and adjustments, all views would be taken into consideration.
August 7, 2020	After the screening process was completed for site one, I realized that all the participants who met the criteria were White. At first, I was concerned that the participants would not speak freely or give their perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs because I am an African American. My fears quickly went away when the participants spoke openly and passionately about the topic, and I felt at ease during the interview process.
September 1, 2020	Once the screening process was completed at site two, four participants were White and one Black. I was no longer concerned about not having a diverse background of participants because of the experience I gained from the data collection process from site one. All the participants gave their perspectives openly. I also had to remember that I had no control over who decided to participate in the study since participating was voluntary and based on who met the criteria for participating in the study.
October 21, 2020	While reviewing the data that answer sub-question one, I realized that the factors I had in mind that cause the lack of representation of African American male students in GATE programs were different from those identified by the participants. It was vital for me to focus on the participants' perspectives and be careful not to include my views in the data representation.
November 30, 2020	The review of the participant's contribution to the study was completed. The participants were allowed to review their contributions because I wanted to correctly represent their responses to the questions asked during the interviews and focus groups. It was necessary to take this step because I ensured that my biases and opinions were not represented when reporting the findings.

Appendix J: Audit Trail

August 1, 2019	I dropped off a letter to the superintendent's office requesting permission to conduct research and forward a copy via email to the secretary.
August 9, 2019	I received an email with a link to complete the application process online.
August 26, 2019	I completed and submitted the application online to the school district.
September 17, 2019	I received an email requesting additional information about the research.
September 18, 2019	I submitted the additional information requested by the school district.
October 1 & 2, 2019	I received two approval letters from the superintendent's office to conduct research in two elementary schools.
October 26, 2019	I send an email to Gilford Publishing requesting permission to modify and use some of Stake's (2006) worksheets.
November 8, 2019	Received an email from Angela Whalen requesting additional information.
November 10, 2019	Responded to the email by sending the additional information needed.
November 11, 2019	Received permission from Guilford Press to use the worksheets
April 24, 2020	Defended proposal
April 28, 2020	Completed and submitted IRB Application
June 22, 2020	Received IRB Approval
July 6, 2020	Completed the first individual interview for pilot study (Participant one)
July 7, 2020	Completed the second individual interview for pilot study (Participant two)
July 10, 2020	Completed the third individual interview for pilot study (Participant three)
July 13, 2020	Completed the Focus Group Interview for Pilot Study
July 14, 2020	Received stimulus letter for Pilot Study (Participant one)
July 16, 2020	Received stimulus letter for Pilot Study (Participant two)
July 16, 2020	Received stimulus letter for Pilot Study (Participant three)

July 17, 2020	Emailed principal at site 1 requesting permission to contact perspective participants.
July 17, 2020	Permission was granted to email perspective participants from site one.
July 20, 2020	Emailed principal at site 1 requesting permission to contact perspective participants.
July 22, 2020	Permission was granted to email perspective participants from site one.
August 6, 2020	Collected all the data from site one.
August 31, 2020	Collected all the data from site two
Sept. 1 – Oct. 19, 2020	Data transcription and analysis.
October 19, 2020	Focus group review of the initial merged findings for site one
October 22, 2020	Focus group review of the initial merged findings for site two
November 5, 2020	Peer review of the data for site one.
November 6, 2020	Peer review of the data for site two.
November 9, 2020	Explanation of the final research themes
January 31, 2021	I submitted chapters four and five to my supervisor for review.
February 4, 2021	Received feedback manuscript from Dissertation Chair
February 20, 20201	Resubmitted chapters four and five for review.
March 13, 2021	Resubmitted chapters four and five for review
March 18, 2021	Received feedback on chapters four and five from Dissertation Chair
March 25, 2021	Resubmitted chapters four and five for review
March 30, 2021	Received feedback from Dissertation Chair
March 31, 2021	The entire manuscript was submitted to my committee member Dr. Keafer for review.
April 18, 2021	Dr. Keafer reviewed the entire manuscript and provided feedback.
May 4, 2021	I reviewed the feedback from Dr. Keafer and made corrections to the manuscripts, then resubmitted to Dr. Collins for review.
May 7, 2021	Dr. Collins reviewed the edits I made to the manuscript then submitted the manuscript to Dr. Parks at the School of Education for review.

| May 17, 2021 | Received feedback from Dr. Parks. My manuscript was reviewed and approved to move to my defense. |
| June 7, 2021 | Defended Dissertation. |

Appendix K: Themes Generated

Keywords/Phrases Themes	Common Themes	Direct Quotes and/or Examples from the text
Assessment	**Central Question** **Systemic Issues**	Yeah, it favors White middle-class culture. We've got a long way to go. We have not successfully been able to identify minority students, Black and Brown students. We haven't been able to identify students who are low income at the same rate.
Criteria	**Central Question** **Systemic Issues**	My school district and others have moved to a multi-criteria screening process for gifted education. This, on its surface, is good, but the problem remains that now a student needs to score or be assessed far exceeding their peers in multiple categories.
Bias Criteria/Assessments	**Central Question** **Systemic Issues**	These tests have a strong cultural bias towards African Americans and favor middle-class values.
Teacher Bias	**Central Question** **Systemic Issues**	I think there's just bias when it comes down to African Americans that we see now with this whole Black Lives Matter movement. It's causing people to see more systematic racism in place that wasn't necessarily there. We really have to think about us as human beings and our beliefs and how it impacts how we look at our students in our classroom. You know, why is it that some teachers might assume a Black student more likely to have gotten closer to a 400 and on the SOL exam than a 600 compared to a White student?
Stereotypes/ Prejudices	**Sub questions 2** **Hinderances**	Why do we see a Black male and think, oh, he's probably good at basketball, but we don't think the same about a White male? It's just that there are stereotypes in place that need to be broken.
Training	**Sub questions 3** **Commitments and Responsibilities**	I did not get any training in my teacher preparation program. I did not get it until I had started teaching, and then the county provided it.

Culture	**Sub questions 3** **Commitments and Responsibilities**	More importantly, it has stressed to me the need to learn about others' cultural norms, represent various ethnicities in my teaching on a routine basis, and that all students are capable of learning and succeeding despite their background.
Lack of Black Teachers	**Sub questions 2** **Hinderances**	And for an African American male, it really needs to be a Black male, not even a Black woman. They need to see a Black male teacher at some point, ideally in their elementary career. But it's just not a reality. So, you know, I think we need to find ways in the teacher preparation program to make this thing called teaching attractive, maybe even to minority males.
Expectations	**Sub-question 4** **Self-Efficacy**	Everybody can do the work, and let's have high expectations for everybody. And let's start them early. Let's get them going. And let's say you can do it. Maybe it's hard, but I'll help you. We'll be right there. But we'll get through it together.
Relationship	**Sub-question 4** **Self-Efficacy**	It's just that connection that you make with the kids. If you don't have that connection with your students, they're not going to give you anything.
Problematic Students	**Sub questions 2** **Hinderances**	I feel like Black males, for some reason, are just left behind. I don't know if it's because they're viewed as strong. I don't know if it's because they're viewed as behaviorally just problematic. I think that it's just that one group.
Motivation	**Sub-question 4** **Self-Efficacy**	I think we have to start early. We've got to get them motivated to want to come to school, be excited about learning, learn how to read, learn how to do those things, and show that they are all good positive traits to have. And I think the earlier we can do that, the better off we can identify them and not say that these kids can't do the work.
Curriculum Design	**Sub questions 3** **Commitments and Responsibilities**	I would argue that we all have a dense curriculum, and teaching can be very stressful.

Scholarly Identity	**Sub-question 4** **Self-Efficacy**	Oh, I'm just going based on my own experience; I realized there's a difference. We're talking about African Americans. And again, this is my experience and their scholarly identity. My students who came from Ethiopia, who had parents that were from Nigeria or Ghana, or had parents with strong African roots, have high expectations for themselves. They believe they are academically capable of achieving at high levels. Those are the parents who were writing to me about the gifted program.
Identification Process	**Central Question** **Systemic Issues**	I think it is heavily flawed in how we identify students; we do it a lot based on academics and grades, which to me, I didn't think was necessarily what the program is designed for.
Early Failures	**Sub-question 4** **Self-Efficacy**	In my many years of teaching, I have had very few African American male students enrolled in the gifted and talented program. Why is that? I think we need to get African American male students excited about school from an early age, kindergarten.

Appendix L: Worksheet One

Worksheet Two – The Themes

Theme 1: Systemic Issues
Theme 2: Hindrances
Theme 3: Commitments and Responsibilities
Theme 4: Self-Efficacy

Note. Adapted from *Multiple Case Study Analysis* by Robert E. Stake, 2006, Worksheet 2, p. 43. Copyright 2006 by Guilford Press. Reprinted with permission of Guilford Press (see Appendix R).

Appendix M: Worksheet Two

Worksheet Three - Analysis of Notes

<u>Overall Impression of the Case:</u>

All participants have worked in the same school for more than seven years. Three participants have taught fifth-grade together for more than fifteen years, and two have taught fourth-grade together for eight years. As a result of working together for a length of time, they have a good rapport and have worked on several school projects together. They also shared similar thoughts and ideas about African American male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs. All participants identified Marlon as the teacher they believe has the most experience working with and supporting students identified as gifted and talented. He has worked as a SIGNET resource teacher for many years before returning to the classroom as a general education teacher. They all believe that giftedness occurs in all students simultaneously regardless of race; therefore, African American male students should have more students represented in the gifted and talented program once teachers remove their biases and build relationships with them.

<u>Case Findings:</u>
1. The identification process of gifted and talented students is heavily flawed and favors middle-class families. (**Central Question)**
2. The assessments used in the identification process favors students with middle-class backgrounds. (**Central Question)**
3. Teacher biases pose a challenge in identifying African American male students for gifted and talented programs. (**Central Question)**
4. African American male students are viewed as problematic and more likely to receive special education services rather than gifted services. **(Sub-question 1)**
5. Many White teachers cannot make a connection with African American male students and are least likely to develop a relationship with them. **(Sub-question 1)**
6. The curriculum is not designed in a way that African American students can relate it. **(Sub-question 2)**
7. There is a lack of African American teachers, especially males. **(Sub-question 1)**
8. Most teachers did not receive training in their teacher preparation program to identify students as gifted and talented. **(Sub-question 2)**
9. Challenges at home affect the performance of some African American male students at school. **(Sub-question 2)**
10. Most African American parents from low socio-economic backgrounds do not understand the identification process. **(Sub-question 2)**
11. Teacher expectations of African American male students are lower than students of other races. **(Sub-question 3)**
12. African American male students have the intellectual ability to be included in gifted and talented programs as students of other races. **(Sub-question 3)**

Relevance to Themes:
Theme 1 __X___　　　　Theme 2 _X____　　　　Theme 3 __X____　　　　Theme 4 __X___
Uniqueness of Case: After teaching in the same school with a diverse population for many years, all participants have mentioned that they have only identified and recommended one or two African American male students for the gifted and talented program. They believe that their own bias and perceptions of African American male students have contributed to them not recommending more African American male students for the program.
Commentary All teachers acknowledged that they are aware that African American male students are the least identified and represented in their school's gifted and talented programs. They also pointed out that there are flaws in the identification process and flaws in the assessments used to identify African American male students for the gifted and talented program. They believe teacher biases and low expectations of African American male students are major factors of the low representations of gifted and talented programs.

Note. Adapted from *Multiple Case Study Analysis* by Robert E. Stake, 2006, Worksheet 3, p. 45. Copyright 2006 by Guilford Press. Reprinted with permission of Guilford Press (see Appendix R).

Appendix N: Worksheet Three

Worksheet 5A – A Matrix for Generating Theme-Based Assertations
from Case Findings Rated Importance

John Peters Elementary School	THEMES			
Findings	1	2	3	4
The identification process of gifted and talented students is heavily flawed and favors middle class family	X			
The assessments used in the identification process favor students with middle class background.	X			
Teacher biases pose a challenge in identifying African American male students for gifted and talented program.	X			
African American male students are viewed as problematic and are more likely to be recommended to receive special education services rather than gifted services.		X		
Many White teachers are not able to make a connection with African American male students and are least likely to develop a relationship with them				X
The curriculum is not designed in a way that African American students can relate.			X	
There is a lack of African American teachers especially males.		X		
Most teachers did not receive training in their teacher preparation program in cultural responsiveness.			X	
Most teachers did not receive training in their teacher preparation program on how to identify students as gifted and talented.			X	
Challenges at home affect the performance of some African American male students at school.		X		
Most African American parents from low socio-economic background do not understand the identification process.		X		
Teacher expectations of African American male students are lower than students in the other races				X
African American male students have the intellectual ability to be included in gifted and talented program as students of other races.				X
Prince George Elementary School	1	2	3	4
African American male students are underrepresented	X			
The identification process is too much for teachers.	X			
The application process is complicated for low income parents.		X		
African American male students often encounter peer pressure in schools.	X	X		
Bias assessment process	X			

African American male students are seen as troublemakers or have behavior issues.		X		
Teachers lack training on the identification process			X	
Most teachers are not able to develop relationships with African American male students			X	
The curriculum is not designed to cater to students who think differently.			X	
Parents lack support from teachers with the completion of forms for the gifted program.		X		
African American male students are often stereotyped as being less capable academically.		X		
Low expectations of African American male students				X
Students of all races are intellectually capable of performing well academically				X

Note. Adapted from *Multiple Case Study Analysis* by Robert E. Stake, 2006, Worksheet 5A, p. 51. Copyright Guilford Press. Reprinted with permission of Guilford Press (see Appendix R).

Appendix O: Worksheet Four

Worksheet 5B – A Matrix for Generating Theme-Based Assertions from Merged Findings Rated Important

Merged Findings	From Which Case?	Themes
Most African American parents from low socio-economic backgrounds do not understand the identification process.	Both	Theme 2
The identification process of gifted and talented students is heavily flawed and relies on standardized assessments and favors middle-class families.	Both	Theme 1
The identification process is too much for teachers.	Site 2	Theme 1
African American male students often encounter peer pressure in schools.	Site 2	Theme 2
The assessments used in the identification process favor students with middle-class backgrounds.	Site 1	Theme 1
Teacher biases pose a challenge in identifying African American male students for gifted and talented programs.	Both	Theme 1
African American male students are viewed as troublemakers or problematic students.	Both	Theme 2
There is a lack of African American teachers, especially males.	Site 1	Theme 2
Challenges at home affect the performance of some African American male students at school.	Site 2	Theme 2
Connect and build relationships with students	Both	Theme 4
Teachers should deliver the curriculum content so that students can find it interesting, make connections, and provide an opportunity for them to show their ability and mastery of content.	Both	Theme 3
Provide training in gifted education	Both	Theme 3
Teachers can support parents with the completion of forms for the gifted program.	Site 2	Theme 2
Most teachers did not receive training in their teacher preparation program in cultural responsiveness.	Both	Theme 3
Expectations of African American male students	Both	Theme 4
African American male students have the intellectual ability to be included in gifted and talented programs as students of other races.	Both	Theme 4
African American male students are often stereotyped as being less capable academically.	Site 2	Theme 4

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Appendix P: Worksheet Five

Worksheet Six: Multicase Assertations for the Final Report

Assertations	Related to Which Theme	Evidence From Which Case
The identification process of gifted and talented students is heavily flawed, relies on standardized assessments and favors middle-class families.	Theme 1	**Marlon**: The IQ tests have come a long way with removing some cultural bias, but they're not there yet. **Marlon:** These tests have a strong cultural bias towards minority students but favor middle-class students and their values. **Daniese:** I think the identification process is heavily reliant on standardized testing. If they don't do all the standardized testing in third grade, they don't get screened, and they don't get in. It takes either a motivated teacher or a motivated parent to ensure that they get screened for the program. Sometimes, when they do get screened for the program, they do not do well because they do not understand the test's content. The White and Asian students are more familiar with the test analogies, so they normally perform better on these assessments.
The identification process is too much for teachers.	Theme 1	**Piazza:** I think the process could be better. There is just a lot that teachers have to do to recommend students and complete the forms. I don't know if someone else could come in and sit in, and that way, they're like focusing more on individuals and their work, whereas I'm focusing on the whole class. Or maybe I need to be given more training on what to look for giftedness. When it comes to students' work samples, I don't know if it's like, I need to look at the quality of their work sample for their independent practice to show their giftedness or give time to complete work. I'm not sure, but I just feel like the process is too much and could be better. Maybe I could be trained better. I don't know. **Daniese:** So, the screening and identification process, I don't think it's great because it takes a lot of work on someone else's part. And if they're not willing to do it, those kids just kind of slide through the cracks if they aren't picked up on the first round of screening. **Deon:** The whole gifted process, I think, is too much to complete. Too much paperwork it is crazy. To be honest, I don't know where they come up with this stuff.

The assessments used in the identification process favors students with a middle-class background.	Theme 1	**Marlon:** The IQ tests have come a long way with removing some cultural bias, but they're not there yet. They still favor the middle-class. **Marlon:** Yeah, it favors White middle-class culture. We've got a long way to go; we have not successfully been able to identify minority students, Black and Brown students. We haven't been able to identify students who are low income at the same rate.
Teacher biases pose a challenge in identifying African American male students for gifted and talented programs.	Theme 1	**Marlon:** I think teachers' inherent biases are huge. I think that is one of the things that stand in the way of identifying more Black male students our own inherent biases that we're simply not willing to admit. You know that we have blinders on. **Karen:** I think there's just bias when it comes down to African Americans that we see now with this whole Black Lives Matter movement. It's causing people to see more systemic racism in place that wasn't necessarily there. We really have to think about us as human beings and our beliefs and how it impacts how we look at our students in our classroom. You know, why is it that some teachers might assume a Black student more likely to have gotten closer to a 400 and on the SOL exam than a 600 compared to a White student? **Karen:** The world of education is changing around us rapidly. However, the minds and attitudes of many of us are not. We are currently faced with a difficult time in our society. We are being forced to acknowledge our own personal biases in the wake of the death of George Floyd. The Black Lives Matter campaign has shown us that our American society has negative attitudes towards African Americans, which needs to be changed now. Doing so can be very challenging. We, as human beings, do not want to admit our flaws, prejudices, and stereotypes. As educators, we especially do not want to believe that we see skin color when we look at the 24 children sitting in our classroom.
Most African American parents from low socio-economic backgrounds do not understand the identification process.	Theme 2	**Daniese:** Sometimes, the parents cannot advocate for their child; maybe they don't understand the process or have an education. It's a lot of work to complete the forms. I mean, you have to write, you have to give examples of things that they've done and how they think differently. And you've got a write-up this whole parent report. **Deon:** I feel like, especially for maybe some African American students, their parents don't understand all that

		packet and all that language either. So, I think for them filling out paperwork, especially if they want to initiate it. I think it's challenging in that way. **Kenzey:** I think the identification process is too cumbersome for low-income families. They do not understand the complicated process, nor do they understand how to complete the forms with the depth of information needed to get their children identified for the gifted program.
African American male students often encounter peer pressure in schools.	Theme 2	**Marie:** As far as identification, I know a lot of times, many young African American males do what they think their peers think they should do. So, a lot of times, students that are gifted are not identified because they're more worried about whether or not they look cool, whether or not somebody is going to think they're too smart or if they're a nerd. **Angella:** African American male students often experience peer pressure in school. They want to fit in with their peers, so they act as if they are not smart.
African American male students are viewed as troublemakers or problematic students.	Theme 2	**Kenzey:** I think there's a stereotype of African American males that they are not interested in school or they're troublemakers. **Daniese:** I think they just don't perform to their ability. Sometimes, there's just the expectation that they will be more active, or maybe they're more of a behavior problem. **Marie:** I think there's a stereotype of African American males that they are not interested in school and are troublemakers. **Karen:** I feel like Black males; for some reason, they are just left behind. I don't know if it's because they're viewed as strong. I don't know if it's because they're viewed as behaviorally just problematic. I think that it's just that one group.
There is a lack of African American teachers, especially males.	Theme 2	**Marlon:** Schools lack African American teachers. It really needs to be a Black male, not even a Black woman. They need to see a Black male teacher at some point, ideally in their elementary career. But it's just not a reality. So, you know, I think we need to find ways in the teacher preparation program to make this thing called teaching attractive, maybe even to minority males. **Kathy:** Certainly, every Black male should have at least one Black male teacher in their elementary career in a perfect world, or at least 13% of their teachers should be African American. However, we know that we do not have many Black male teachers in elementary schools.

Parents lack support from teachers with the completion of forms for the gifted program.	Theme 2	**Marlon:** Many of the parents who do not have a relationship with teachers might not ask for help writing the report and, in the end, is detrimental to the children. **Deon:** I have parents who come to me and say, "this form is ridiculous." They just find it challenging to complete. **Kathy:** A lot of students fell through the cracks because it is really hard for them to send in their piece because it was hard for them to complete.
Challenges at home affect the performance of some African American male students at school	Theme 2	**Marie:** A lot of our young African American males don't have a solid home life. And don't get me wrong. There are many who do. But within our county that I work in, there is a lot that doesn't have solid home lives where it might be one parent who works multiple jobs, and they don't have that home support, to try to get things done or try to stay motivated to get work done. Oftentimes, they have to take care of their younger sibling while their parents aren't at home. **Janice:** I think possibly their home life and backgrounds have contributed to their performance. I don't want to judge. I can make an example where I have African American male students who are also English second language learners. I could teach them all day long, six hours, seven hours a day, teaching in English. They are learning in English, becoming familiar with the English language, and then going home and hearing nothing but a different language. So are they taking what they learned with them? Then, there are other African American male students who are not second language learners. Their parents work, so they might be busy, have other children, have two kids being on the One Laptop at the same time, or have to share. So, there are many factors at home that can contribute to their lack of performance in school.
The curriculum designs and Delivery of Content	Theme 3	**Marlon:** Giftedness presents in a myriad of ways. Some students could be verbally gifted but need support in math, whereas others are quantitatively gifted but avoid reading and writing. It is our job as teachers to design meaningful lessons that approximate the work of real historians, scientists, and the like so that we open up the world to our students, such that they find what they are motivated to work on and pursue. **Deon:** Using read aloud with students is a powerful literacy strategy. I have made a conscious effort to have books with diverse characters. Characters that students can relate to with themselves, especially if they look like them.

		Michelle: The way we deliver our content and what requirements we have of our students to show mastery may also contribute to the low representation of African American males in gifted programs. Teacher centered classrooms, where we dispense the information and have one way for students to demonstrate understanding, will not allow opportunities for giftedness to shine in our students. **Angella:** We have to teach what is in the curriculum. However, if the students do not learn what we teach, we have not done our jobs to get students to learn. We must plan our lessons to meet all students' needs, including ensuring that African American students can connect what they learn to real-life experiences. Then and only then will they begin to learn and show mastery of content. But we have to remember that not all teachers have mastered planning good differentiated instruction lessons and connecting them to real-life experience. Training teachers to do this is important, and that is where I think the school division comes into play. They need to provide training specifically for meeting the teachers' needs so that teachers can meet students' needs.
Provide training in gifted education	Theme 3	**Dawn:** I did not get any training in my teacher preparation program. I did not get it until I had started teaching, and then the county provided it. **Kathy:** Again, I didn't receive any training in my teacher preparation program. I had been teaching for six years before I received training from the county. And then it was like one of those things that you're required to do it. I mean, not that I mind doing it, but it's one that I feel because it's a requirement and checklist sort of thing. Yeah, time for discussion or was just for we're going to throw that information at you. So I still feel that's an area that's my biggest weaknesses with gifted. I'm comfortable working with them in the classroom, but I feel like just my understanding of the program is probably my biggest weakness. **Michelle:** I didn't receive any training to teach gifted students in my teacher preparation program. I receive some training from the county, but I don't think that's enough. I still need some training. It is embarrassing to say that I wasn't sure if I was gifted certified by the state or the county, and I can't say exactly what I took to be certified now. But I definitely think that training is needed to identify and find different ways to identify my students

		that are gifted or that just have that ability to shine in a different way.
		Kenzey: I honestly don't know if I even recall a class where it was training. I think most of my training has been through the county. And that's when I began teaching. I don't believe I was given any training when I was in college.
		Angella: I think the teacher should have some sort or type of certification in the understanding of gifted intelligence in students. So many kids who are under identified are in the minorities groups because teachers aren't trained. So, I do think they should have some sort of training.
		Marie: No training in my undergraduate program, but I got some training from the county. I can't remember all the courses, but our county provides gifted sessions in the summer to get you to qualify for recertification. I think it's every five years you have to get recertified.
		Janice: I did not receive any training in gifted education in college.
		Daniese: Honestly, I don't remember in my actual teacher prep program. I mean, since then, we've had to get trained so that we're certified to have gifted students in the class. And it's really more training on what it looks like, the characteristics of gifted.
Most teachers did not receive training in their teacher preparation program in cultural responsiveness.	Theme 3	**Karen:** I'm like thinking through the different classes I had to take, like 36 credit hours. And I don't remember having a class on anything that focused on cultural responsiveness. The only class I received as a teacher was through the online module when someone in the county made a very inappropriate comment.
		Michelle: I think I receive some sort of training on a surface level. It really was because it was a multicultural class. And it was kind of like, a little bit of this, here's a little bit of what you might see in this culture, a little bit what you might see with this race, but not enough to make me feel like I was ready for the classroom, especially now in the way that the world is right now to make me feel like I've had enough training.
		Marlon: I received none. But I would advocate right now for training. The climate is right to have even more training in cultural responsiveness.
		Marie: Honestly, I can't remember receiving any cultural responsiveness training in college because I went to an HBCU. So, most of the schools I work in are Title One schools. So, we weren't necessarily taught cultural

		responsiveness because most of us have had to deal with it all.
Connect and build relationships with students	Theme 4	**Marie:** Many young African American males feel that most educators, especially some White teachers, do not care about them, so it is hard to get to know or connect with them. **Marlon:** When you are of different gender, race, or culture than African American male students, you need to let these students know that you care. **Michelle:** Our students need to be invested in learning through the connection we make with them. Unfortunately, some White teachers are unable to make those connections with African American students.
Teachers set both high and low expectations for African American male students	Theme 4	**Daniese:** There is just a certain way that African American boys are expected to behave. They are expected to perform at a low level. And so, they live up to that expectation. **Kathy:** Well, I'm a firm believer in high expectations and pushing them along, teach them that they're going to fail. And if they do fail, that's okay. Because that's how you learn, but let them know that you will be supporting them all the way. We just have to help them see that they are capable and bring it out. When this is the expectation, they perform. **Deon:** Everybody can do the work, and let's have high expectations for everybody. And let's start them early. Let's get them going. And let's say you can do it. Maybe it's hard, but I'll help you. We'll be right there. But we'll get through it together. **Marlon:** Sometimes, it boils down to having developmentally appropriate expectations or high expectations. And sometimes, too often, what we think are developmentally appropriate expectations for African American males in our class is, in fact, they're really low expectations. They see that at even at a subconscious level, they're not getting the same rigor, challenge creative stuff that this guy, this person's is getting. They perceive that something is not fair, or you're not being fair.
African American male students have the intellectual ability to be included in gifted and talented programs as	Theme 4	**Karen:** Oh, I'm just going based on my own experience; I realized there's a difference. We're talking about African Americans. And again, this is my experience and their scholarly identity. My students from Ethiopia, my kids with parents from Nigeria or Ghana, my kids from African countries, or had parents with strong African roots. They had high expectations for themselves and believe they are just as smart or smarter than the other students in the class.

students of other races.		And those are the parents that were writing to me about the gifted program. **Kenzey:** I think everyone is capable of being able to be in the gifted services program and receiving no extended services. Absolutely. **Janice:** I think they have the same ability as anyone. **Angella:** I think they're intellectually capable. They could do it. I've had African American male students who were extremely smart, and they could easily be in the program, so they should be. **Janice:** I don't think color or ethnicity or race has anything to do with their levels of learning. **Marie:** Again, a lot of times, young African American males don't want to show how intelligent they are because they're scared it's going to be expected of them. So, I think a lot of those that are gifted are overlooked because of their behavior in the classroom or because they don't turn in their work.
African American male students are often stereotyped as being less capable academically.	Theme 4	**Karen:** Why do we see a Black male and think, oh, he's probably good at basketball, but we don't think the same about a White male? It's just that there are stereotypes in place that need to be broken. And I love that right now the summer is much as sad as it is and terrifying it as it is, it's really caused us to kind of look at ourselves and how we view things. And I think that in the past, you're just less likely to look at African American males sometimes and think they are brilliant, gifted thinkers. And I'm not saying any of us in this group think that way. But I think that that is a general reflection in our society.

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Appendix Q: Worksheet Six

Worksheet Two - Used to create the conclusion for the study

Theme One:
What are the educators' perspectives on African American male students being the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

Students of all races, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds can be included in gifted and talented programs since giftedness occurs at the same rate for all students. Since giftedness occurs at the same rate for all students, there should be no reason why African American male students should not be included in the gifted program. It is perceived that African American male students have been the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs because some educators refuse to acknowledge their own biases and negative attitudes. In addition to teachers' biases and negative attitudes, the identification process is heavily flawed, relies on standardized assessments, and favors students with a middle-class background.

Theme Two:
What are educators' perspectives on the factors that cause African American male students to be the least identified and represented in gifted and talented programs?

Many educators believed that African American male students are the least identified and represented in gifted programs because the assessments used favor students with a White middle-class background and the lack of African American teachers, especially males. African American male students are also viewed as being troublemakers or problematic. This stereotype poses a challenge because they are often overlooked for the gifted program because of behavior rather than academic abilities.

Theme Three:
How can educators motivate African American male students to engage and persist toward being represented in gifted and talented programs?

Educators must connect with African American male students and plan lessons to cater to their needs rather than delivering content to which students cannot relate. For educators to meet African American male students' needs, they need to receive cultural responsiveness training. African American male students also experience challenges at home, which often affects how they perform academically in school. Therefore, educators need to find a way to bridge the gap between home and school to ensure that parents are provided with the support they need to help their children achieve academically at a high level and be included in the gifted program if they are indeed gifted.

Theme Four:
What are educators' perspectives on African American male students' self-efficacy, scholar identity, and the gifted and talented programs?

Educators should not see African American male students as less academically capable because of their skin color. African American male students have the intellectual ability to be

included in the gifted and talented program as students of other races. However, educators
must have high expectations for all students, including African American male students.

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isbn: 978-1-59385-248-1
author: Robert Stake
author_yesno: yes
chapter: Chapter 3 - Cross-Case Analysis
pagenum: 43,45,51,59,73
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