A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH

COMMON REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES OF TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL

MINORITY STUDENTS

by

Margeaux D. Kittles

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

Graduation Year

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand which common practices are perceived to be the greatest contributors to the disproportionate representation of 2E, minority students in gifted education programs in north Georgia. The theories guiding this study are the theory of cognitive dissonance and the theory of social cognitive development. The theory of cognitive dissonance asserts that some level of dissonance is unavoidable when individuals are deciding the best course of action for 2E minority students. The theory of social cognitive development describes the influence of peers, adults, and culture on the cognitive development of a child. The impact of culture-infused practices can either be beneficial or detrimental to the experiences of 2E minority students. The research design that will be utilized is a qualitative, transcendental phenomenology. Through the purposeful selection of 12-15 special education teachers in northern Georgia, an exploration of participants' perceptions will be conducted through individual interviews, focus groups, and the review of educational documents. A phenomenological reduction will be utilized to identify emerging themes.

Keywords: twice-exceptional, 2E, minority, gifted education, special education

Copyright Page

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God, my creator, for I am nothing without Him.

To my mother Anita Marshall, who gave me moral lessons on discipline from an early age and truly led by example.

To my supervisor, Dr. Rachel Greene who was supportive and encouraging.

To the memory of my father John Marshall and grandmother Beatrice Ellis.

To my husband, Nicholas, and my children. Ari, Cayson, Caydence, and Cayden may you continuously pursue knowledge throughout your lives and know that I am always here for you.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my committee chair, committee members, peers, professors, participants, and family. Dr. Hernandez, your ongoing support, encouragement, and academic guidance throughout this journey helped me persist and realize this dream. I am grateful for the collegial community formed by my professors and peers, as it has ultimately helped me reach this point. To the participants of this study, thank you for contributing to the body of knowledge surrounding twice-exceptional, minority students.

Finally, I am eternally grateful for all of my family's love and support throughout this journey and beyond. Reaching this point in my academic journey has required a great deal of sacrifice. This sacrifice often impacted those that I love most. These challenging times were met with grace, love, and encouragement; therefore, I must express my indebtedness and gratitude to my husband Nicholas, our children Ari, Cayson, Caydence, and Cayden, and my mother Anita Marshall.

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Twice Exceptional (2E)

Intelligence Quotient (IQ)

Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Twice-Exceptional (2E) students exist as a minority group within the gifted and talented community. Twice-Exceptional students are a heterogeneous diverse group of individuals who possess a natural ability to acquire new knowledge and reasoning in particular domains, all the while having to overcome learning difficulties (both personal and environmental in origin) that impede the expression of their talents (Ng et al., 2016). Students in this subgroup are often overlooked by practitioners and not allowed to receive adequate support for both their deficits and giftedness (Ng et al., 2016). This study seeks to examine the perceived impact of common practices used to identify and assess 2E minority students for gifted education programs and the related effect on placement rates compared to their peers by the practitioners who have served this population. This chapter will provide the background and the historical and theoretical contexts that will be referenced in this study. Further, the purpose and problem statements and the study's significance are provided. Finally, this chapter concludes by presenting the guiding research questions and reviewing relevant definitions.

Background

The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education contexts, such as gifted programs, has emerged as a major issue with international relevance (Hagiwara et al., 2019). Researchers consider the underrepresentation of Black, Hispanic, and Native American students, among other minorities, to be primarily due to the use of traditional methods of identification (i.e., IQ and standardized achievement tests) (Hodges et al., 2018). The lack of equitable representation in gifted programs has been an ongoing concern in the field of gifted education and remains an issue for practitioners (Hodges et al., 2018).

Traditionally, practitioners utilize IQ scores to define giftedness (Hodges et al., 2018). Generally, students scoring above a predetermined cutoff point are automatically extended an opportunity to participate in gifted programming (Hodges et al., 2018). The challenge associated with this singular approach is that IQ tests are verbal and quantitative in addition to any difficulties a 2E minority student may innately experience related to their deficit area. Minority students who may not have had the opportunity to develop their abilities in these areas are not likely to excel on these assessments (Hodges et al., 2018). Given the requirement to meet high cutoff scores needed for gifted program eligibility, differences between minority students and their peers may be widened, making proportional representation challenging to achieve (Hodges et al., 2018). Researchers have attempted to address this concern by creating nontraditional identification methods such as nonverbal assessments, student portfolios, and checklists (Hodges et al., 2018).

Historical Context

For over 50 years, the field of gifted education has recognized and struggled to ameliorate the underrepresentation of students from non-European backgrounds (Peters et al., 2019). Specifically, African American, Latinx, and Native American children have been underrepresented in gifted education programs, while students from European American backgrounds have "been well represented" (Peters et al., 2019, p. 273). Further, disparities in the identification of students who are served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are also a growing concern (Peters et al., 2019). Students in these groups account for a rapidly growing percentage of the American student population: currently 9.4% and 13% of American students, respectively (Peters et al., 2019, p. 273). Despite the prevalence of minority students, disparities continue to exist.

In a 2016 analysis, Peters and Engerrand (2016) classified the research base surrounding the causes of the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted education into two themes. The first theme presented the view that the assessments commonly used to make gifted identification decisions are inherently flawed or biased against certain groups (Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Peters and Engerrand (2016) believed the practice of utilizing traditional assessments has resulted in a disproportional underrepresentation of students with disabilities in gifted education programs. This argument is best exemplified by the popularity of "nontraditional" assessments such as nonverbal ability tests or structured observation protocols such as the Teacher Observation of Potential in Students tool (Harradine, et al., 2014; Peters et al., 2019). Krochak and Ryan (2007) also find IQ tests problematic with populations with unique needs.

Peters and Engerrand (2016) identified a second theme related to the underrepresentation of special education in gifted programs. Peters and Engerrand (2016) suggest that it is how students are identified, rather than the particular assessments that cause an underrepresentation of students with disabilities in gifted education. Harradine et al. (2014) took a similar stance following their study, finding that the perspectives of teachers hugely impacted the identification of 2E minority students. For example, utilizing teacher recommendations as a tool might be an appropriate data source for student identification, but if the recommendation is mandatory before any other data points are considered, their use could, in essence, exacerbate the standing disproportionality (Peters et al., 2019). In the Harradine et al. (2014) study, researchers determined that a formal protocol (TOPS) assisted teachers in recognizing strengths in students from traditionally underrepresented groups. This revelation identifies yet another practice that has historically impacted the learning experience of 2E minority students. Findings

in a study completed by Haines et al (2020) align with this stance. Researchers in this study found that a formal protocol was necessary to avoid the marginalization of 2E minority students.

One issue that was not identified as a dominant cause of the underrepresentation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs by Peters and Engerrand (2016) is the existence of inequitable educational access and opportunities nationwide (Peters et al., 2019). Despite federal, state, and local laws and policies, progress toward inclusive education has not been sufficient in addressing the needs of 2E minority learners (Hagiwara et al., 2019). Progress toward inclusive education that promotes meaningful and intentional access to and progress in the general education curriculum has proceeded slowly, particularly for students with more extensive support needs (Hagiwara et al., 2019). Many scholars, educators, and policymakers assert that underserved students are overlooked for participation in gifted programs due to a variety of issues that prevent them from maximizing their talents (Henfield et al., 2017).

Social Context

Understanding the experiences of 2E minority students requires the consideration of various social contexts. Hagiwara et al. (2019) suggest the social-ecological perspective of disability defines disability as a mismatch between one's competencies and environmental demands. According to Gierczyk and Hornby (2021), useful support models for 2E minority students are centered on the relationship that exists between disability, sociocultural environment, and abilities. Models that highlight the developmental nature of giftedness, or potential for talent or achievement, rather than making achievement the focal point of giftedness are beneficial for 2E minority students (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). By understanding that twice-exceptionality is not defined as having giftedness only in intellectually or academically

based areas, practitioners and researchers can explore and incorporate multiple areas of giftedness (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Hagiwara, 2019).

This problem directly affects the lived experiences of 2E minority students and the practitioners who educate and support them. The schools that educate 2E minority students fail them by not providing an educational experience that addresses their identified needs and exceptional abilities. Without the effective exploration of this issue, 2E minority students will continue to lose the ability to have their deficits as well as their exceptionality supported in instructional settings.

In an optimal scenario, practitioners would provide learning environments that foster positive attitudes toward inclusion and embrace the celebration of diversity (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). For the 2E minority student, this must involve considering and supporting all of their exceptionalities. Often, for 2E minority students, their ability is partially or fully dominated by their disability(ies) (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). Gierczyk and Hornby, (2021) find that, unfortunately, this contributes to the risk of marginalization, stereotypical treatment, and exclusion from groups of students considered gifted and talented. Undoubtedly, 2E minority students are impacted by societal norms and practices within the schools that can be traced back to practitioners' actions (Hagiwara, 2019).

Support systems for 2E minority students must be comprehensive (Park, 2018). Comprehensive programs interlock the following environmental contexts: the chronosystem (environmental events and transitions), macrosystem (cultural context), and microsystem (family, school, neighborhood, etc.) (Park, 2018). Additionally, the interconnections between these systems must be identified and referenced to ensure programs for these students are intentionally designed to meet their needs (Park et al., 2018). Teachers must improve their

professional competencies and be aware of the importance of the school culture and environment in which they practice (Bianco & Leech, 2010; Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021).

Research has consistently underscored the idea that the needs of 2E minority students are best supported when special educators, gifted education teachers, and parents collaborate effectively (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). It is in society's best interest to ensure that all students' needs, despite exceptionality status, receive equitable access to education (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). By ensuring the needs of 2E minority students are appropriately addressed, practitioners provide the opportunity for all members of society to reach their potential.

Theoretical Context

Researchers utilize many theories to explore 2E minority students and the practices that impact their learning experiences (McGrath, 2020). One of the concepts related to this topic that requires immediate exploration through theory is the terms used to describe exceptional students. Gagné (1995) underscored the fact that the words "gifted" as well as "talented" are often interchangeable when used by experts and suggested that giftedness is nothing more than the existing potential within a person, which can be turned into talent (advanced abilities or high achievements) according to the individual's environment (McGrath, 2020). Considering this stance is especially useful in the exploration of the education of 2E minority students (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). How minority students are viewed is undoubtedly impacted by related internalized theories held by practitioners and researchers.

In addition to exploring theories related to the definition and existence of 2E minority students, it is important to investigate theories related to how practitioners support students in this subgroup. The affirmative disability theory offers context surrounding 2E minority students. Like interpretivism, affirmative disability theory views people as active players (Barnes et al.,

1999) in their lives, focusing on disability as empowering part of who these people are rather than focusing on the traditionally dominant medical model of disability. The medical model views people with disability as passive individuals needing interventions and medical care and not necessarily part of a productive society (Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019). Considering the different theories that impact practitioners, 2E minority students, and the practices that are used to support them are imperative.

The idea that determining appropriate instruction and planning for 2E minority students is an uncomplicated task is erroneous. Deciding the best course of action for 2E minority students requires both action and ongoing decisive measures. First introduced academically in 1957, the theory of cognitive dissonance has been used to explore the challenges practitioners face when making decisions that impact students. (Cooper, 2019). Festinger (1957) asserts that some level of dissonance is unavoidable where a person must decide or act. For example, generally, a person will experience a level of dissonance related to a situation that is occurring they perceive to be counter to their beliefs and values. Historically, practitioners who support and educate 2E minority students have struggled with implementing practices they believe are in the best interest of the students (McGrath, 2020).

Additionally, theories and frameworks that focus on a child's cognitive development are relevant to this study. The socio-cultural theory of cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978) describes the influence of peers, adults, and culture on a child's cognitive development and the capability framework. Finally, the capability approach (Sen, 1992) is a framework that suggests the freedom to achieve well-being is a matter of what people can do and accomplish, subsequently informing the quality of life they lead. As it pertains to the study of the

practitioners who support and educate 2E minority students, these theories provide a basis for a better understanding of the impact of their roles and will guide future implications.

Problem Statement

The problem is that there continues to be a disproportionate representation of minority, 2E students in gifted education programs (Ng et al., 2016; Henfield et al., 2017; Park et al., 2018). This historical issue has persisted despite numerous attempts by national, state, and local education agencies (Haines et al., 2020). Issues stemming from inconsistencies in identification, singular reliance on teacher referrals, assessment practices that do not account for ethnic or cultural variances, and ineffective support models have all contributed to the prevalence of 2E minority students being served only in special education without consideration and placement in gifted education (Peters et al., 2019; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019).

Special education teachers need a voice. By giving practitioners a voice, we as an education community can better understand the impact of commonly used assessment and identification practices on the placement of 2E minority students in gifted education. This phenomenon should be investigated due to the historical disproportionality of 2E minority students in gifted education as compared to special education; despite their identified dual needs. Specifically, the size of this student group and practices that affect them demand attention from our field. It is important to recognize that the inequitable representation of minorities such as African American and Hispanic/Latina(o) students in gifted education programs is a longstanding issue of national concern (Henfield et al., 2017). For instance, African American students comprise 19% of the nation's total school population yet represent only 10% of students in gifted education programs (Henfield et al., 2017). Conversely, Hispanic students represent 25% of the total student population and only 16% of students in gifted programs (Henfield et al.,

2017). These percentages are even lower when we consider the number of students in each ethnicity category who are identified as 2E. The results of this study will not only benefit special and gifted education teachers but the education field as a whole.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand which common practices are perceived to be the greatest contributors to the disproportionate representation of 2E, minority students in gifted education programs in north Georgia. At this stage in the research, 2E students will be defined as students who demonstrate the potential for high achievement or creative productivity in one or more domains such as math, science, technology, the social arts, the visual, spatial, or performing arts, or other areas of human productivity and who also manifest one or more disabilities as defined by federal or state eligibility criteria (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). This will be determined by a predetermined status as indicated by the participating school district. Further, Gierczyk and Hornby (2021) suggested that students are considered 2E when they are identified as gifted or talented in one or more areas while also having a learning, emotional, physical, sensory, or developmental disability. This includes students with various cognitive disorders, learning difficulties, sensorimotor disorders, autism or Asperger's syndrome, ADHD, or social maladjustment (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). At this stage in the research, minority students will be defined as students who are not of European descent (Peters et al., 2019).

Significance of the Study

The following sections provide the study's contributions to the knowledge base from a theoretical, empirical, and practical perspective. These sections will describe how the current study contributes to the theoretical foundations of the problem in the study as well as a

description of how the study relates to other research in this field. Finally, there will be an explanation of how the current research may be significant to the setting and population of the study.

Theoretical Perspective

Researchers suggest that 2E minority students are best served in programs that are intentionally designed to support gifted abilities and learning deficits simultaneously, including any associated practices used to determine eligibility (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). This research may give a needed "voice" to practitioners who support and educate 2E minority students.

Building upon the socio-cultural theory of cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978), the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), and the capability approach (Sen, 1985), this study seeks to understand the general experiences of 2E minority students, and which of the common assessment and identification practices is perceived as the greatest contributor to the disproportionate placement of 2E minority students into gifted education programs by practitioners.

Empirical Perspective

The lack of available empirical research on this topic may be attributed in part to the inconsistent opportunities for pre-service and in-service teachers to access gifted education courses and/or professional development, in addition to variations in the understanding of 2E status (Haines et al., 2020). Many studies reference the vast training many practitioners receive related to special education and reference the lack of formal gifted education training (Haines et al, 2020 & Lee et al., 2021). This study focuses on the impact of common practices exhibited by those professionals, given the dual needs of 2E minority students. No documented studies target

this group within the designated geographical area. Therefore, the current study will add to the existing literature.

Practical Perspective

The results from this study may help practitioners, researchers and lawmakers develop effective strategies to address the current disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs. Additionally, these findings may help advance generalized knowledge about the experiences of 2E minority students. Teacher attitudes may influence recognition of exceptional abilities as observed in variations in teacher recommendations for students to access learning support or enrichment opportunities such as gifted programs (Bianco & Leech, 2010; & Haines et al., 2020). Studies that give voice to the practitioners who serve 2E minority students are beneficial to eradicating the present level of disproportionality.

Researchers find that one of the central issues affecting the identification of 2E minority students is the diverse manifestation of characteristics that are not always easily observable by teachers (Reis et al., 2014). The consequent difficulties are commonly evinced by the challenges practitioners experience when they attempt to identify "cognitive processing disabilities" and "nonverbal disabilities" (Haines et al., 2020, p. 23). Compounding the difficulties of 2E minority students being identified are differences in teacher attitudes toward gifted students (McCoach & Siegle, 2007; Mullen & Jung, 2019). This study may add to the practical knowledge of stakeholders' experiences who serve and support 2E minority students. The study's practical significance may help researchers and policymakers utilize the research's results to address the challenges of effectively identifying and supporting 2E minority students.

Finally, the data that will be collected and analyzed may help post-secondary institutions

that provide teacher preparation programs and policymakers draft strategies to solve the social and academic needs of 2E minority students. In addition, data from this study may also provide 2E minority students with strategies for persisting in gifted education programs.

Research Questions

The purpose of these research questions is to capture the perspectives and better understand the lived experiences of special education teachers who currently practice in the north Georgia region. While the central research question is an encompassing inquiry into the lived experiences of these teachers, the sub-questions focus the research and provide an opportunity to better understand the perceived relationship between common practices and the disproportionate representation of twice-exceptional minority students in gifted education programs within the defined region.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of special education teachers' assessment and identification practices for 2E minority students?

Sub-Question One

Which assessment and identification practices do special education teachers find to be the greatest cause of the disproportionate placement of 2E minority students in gifted education?

Sub-Question Two

Which types of assessments and identification practices do special education teachers find to have been optimal for determining placement for 2E minority students?

Sub-Question Three

What are the training and professional development experiences of special education and gifted teachers who support practitioners who are directly involved with the identification, assessment, or evaluation of 2E minority students?

Definitions

1. *Giftedness* - individuals that demonstrate greater aptitude levels and competence in more than one structured area such as math, music, language ,and/or a set of sensorimotor skills like painting, dance, or sports (Feldhusen & Jarwan, 2000).

2. *Minority student* - a student who is not of European descent (Peters et al., 2019).

3. *Supports* - resources and strategies that aim to promote a person's development, education, interests, and personal well-being and enhance individual functioning (Hagiwara et al., 2019).

4. *Twice-exceptional-* students with the potential for significant achievement or creative productivity in math, science, technology, or social, visual, spatial, and performing arts and may manifest one or more disabilities defined by federal or state eligibility criteria (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021).

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Summary

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The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand which common practices are perceived to be the greatest contributors to the disproportionate representation of 2E, minority students in gifted education programs in north Georgia. The inclusion of students with disabilities in gifted programs has emerged as a major issue with international relevance (Hagiwara et al., 2019). Understanding the underrepresentation of minority students with an

identified disability in gifted programs requires the acknowledgment of the impact of many longstanding practices (Hodges et al., 2018).

The problem is that there continues to be a disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs despite numerous attempts by national, state, and local education agencies (Haines et al., 2020). The study examined participants' academic and social experiences related to assessment for gifted education programs. Cognitive dissonance theory, sociocultural cognitive development theory, and the capability approach will be applied to investigate and analyze educators' experiences supporting 2E minority students in northern Georgia. This study may add knowledge to existing literature which may help educators and institutions to examine the challenges and experiences of 2E minority students.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to explore the problem as represented by the disproportional representation of twice-exceptional, minority students in gifted education. Twice-Exceptional students are a heterogeneous diverse group of individuals who possess a natural ability to acquire new knowledge and reasoning in particular domains, all the while having to overcome learning difficulties (both personal and environmental in origin) that impede the expression of their talents (Ng et al., 2016). Further, 2E students are defined as students who present a co-existing disability (i.e., deficit) and giftedness (i.e., exceptional ability) in at least two respective academic areas.

This chapter will present a review of the current literature related to the topic of study. In the first section, the theories relevant to cognitive dissonance, sociocultural cognitive development, and the capability approach framework will be discussed. Next, a synthesis of recent literature regarding the prevalence of twice-exceptional minority students, their representation in special education, the disproportionate rate of evaluation, and subsequent placement in gifted education programs will be presented. Lastly, literature that identifies the various variables which affect the application of the capability approach will be addressed. In the end, a gap in the literature will be identified, presenting a viable need for the current study.

Theoretical Framework

Three theories will be reviewed in this section as they relate to the study. Cooper's (2019) theory of cognitive dissonance, Sen's (1985) capability approach, and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of cognitive development will each be introduced and are related to the

present study. Each of these theories relates to the present study and will be used to explain the target phenomenon.

Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

According to Cooper (2019), the theory of cognitive dissonance was first introduced academically in 1957. McGrath (2020) finds, "Although [the theory of cognitive dissonance] CDT is not traditionally thought of as a theory applicable to teaching and learning, it is a wide-reaching theory that holds implications for education" (p. 85). The theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) describes the relationship between one's beliefs, values, and internalized attitudes and decisions. Specifically, FFestinger(1957) asserted that the term dissonance refers to the discrepancy between cognitions (i.e., issues or occurrences a person may take exception to morally due to contradictory actions that are taking place). Further, McGrath (2020) finds the theory of cognitive dissonance describes the presence "of an inconsistency between cognitions…" and the resultant psychological state (p. 84). McGrath (2020) asserts that said inconsistency leads to an apathetic state, which can only be rectified through intentional action. This conflict in turn leads to psychological discomfort.

Best denoted in situations where a person possesses conflicting attitudes and beliefs and/or behaviors, the theory of cognitive dissonance describes said conflict that in turn leads to mental distress due to the initial inability to reconcile the conflicting cognitions (McGrath, 2020). With its inception in a hypothesis that pairs of cognitions (elements of knowledge) can be relevant or irrelevant to one another, the theory of cognitive dissonance provides a framework related to the process individuals undergo when faced with competing ideas. FFestinger(1957) finds that if two cognitions are relevant to one another, they may be either consonant or dissonant. This theory delineates that idea and provides a rationale that supports how dissonance

impacts one's actions. While far-reaching in relatability among various disciplines, McGrath (2020) suggests the theory of cognitive dissonance has strong implications in the field of education.

Festinger (1957) finds that customary dissonance occurs when all (two or more) established beliefs are relevant to the target cognition but remain inconsistent. Some might equate this to being "conflicted"; where they can find value in two points of view. Considering the duplexity associated with twice-exceptional students, practitioners and stakeholders must grapple with ensuring both the learning and functional needs, as well as the exceptional ability of each student, are met simultaneously. In this instance, customary dissonance is inevitable.

Festinger (1957) asserts that some level of dissonance is unavoidable when a person must make a decision or take action. For example, generally, a person will experience a level of dissonance related to a situation that is occurring they perceive to be counter to their beliefs and values. Festinger (1957) finds, "Other things being equal, the more important the decision, the stronger the dissonance" (p. 37). The idea that determining appropriate instruction and planning for twice-exceptional, minority students is an uncomplicated task is erroneous. Deciding the best course of action for twice-exceptional students requires both action and ongoing decisive measures.

Finally, McGrath (2020) asserts that inconsistency among cognitions leads to an impassive state co-existing with psychological distress. However, Festinger (1957) suggests this issue can be rectified by changing a cognition or behavior, adding consonant cognitions, or by reducing the importance of the inconsistent cognitions. In the practical sense, if practitioners and stakeholders reach an impasse regarding how to rectify the variables associated with the disproportionate representation of twice-exceptional, minority students in gifted programs it is

fair to say that often no action is taken; further adversely affecting students in this subgroup. Levy et al. (2018) find the discussion of dissonance has historically focused on the classic paradigms and the motivation to reduce dissonance; however, recent researchers have noted that this represents a narrow application of Festinger's ideas (McGrath, 2020; Harmon-Jones et al., 2015. While the interpretation of Festinger's (1957) theory may evolve, its relatability to the presented issue remains.

Theory of Sociocultural Cognitive Development

The sociocultural theory of cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978) is a concept that describes the influence of peers, adults, and culture on the cognitive development of a child. Vygotsky (1978) asserts that a child's cognitive development is influenced by other members of their society. Additionally, according to the theory of sociocultural theory, the culture in which a child is emersed impacts their cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). The sociocultural theory of cognitive development emphasizes social interaction and implies that language is a fundamental aid and resource in the learning process. Jovanović (2020) finds it is in "Vygotsky's conceptualization of the relation between the psychic functions of thinking and speech and their unity in a higher mental function of verbal thinking that we find most powerfully a dialectical method at work" (p. 214). Ultimately, this theory provides a framework for exploring the impact of socio-cultural considerations on the cognitive development of children.

The sociocultural theory of cognitive development addresses how cultural beliefs and attitudes affect the way learning occurs. Vygotsky (1978) finds how teachers approach learning can be different resultant of their respective cultures (i.e., emphasis placed on rote memory, formal notetaking during instruction, etc.). The impact of culture-infused practices can be beneficial or detrimental to the experiences of twice-exceptional, minority students.

The Capability Approach

The capability approach is a theoretical framework comprised of two normative claims.

Through the capability approach, Sen (1985) asserts the freedom to achieve well-being is of

primary moral importance and that well-being should be explored in terms of people's

capabilities (Robeyns & Morten, 2020). Essentially, the capability approach (Sen, 1992) suggests

the freedom to achieve well-being is a matter of what people can do and accomplish,

subsequently, informing the quality of life they lead. According to Robeyns and Morten (2020),

the titles 'capability approach' and 'capabilities approach' are both used in the literature to refer

to the same framework. The capability approach is mostly referenced as a fluid, multi-purpose

framework, instead of a precise theory of well-being (Robeyns & Morten, 2020). Due to

philosophical dissent, researchers have generally agreed that the best term to describe this

framework is 'approach'.

Introduced by Sen (1992) and refined by philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2020), the

capability approach is a framework that acknowledges the idea that society is comprised of

individuals with varying levels of abilities and needs. Due to the unique needs of individuals, and

the capability approach's basic underlying premise, Broderick (2018) finds the application of this

framework to disability studies a clear connection. Among other assertations, Sen argued that

neither utilitarian equality, total utility equality, or Rawlsian equality do not sufficiently capture

real differences amongst human beings (Sen 1992, 1997; Broderick, 2018).

Understanding the distinctions offered by Sen (1992) regarding capabilities and

functionings is essential to discerning this framework. According to Sen (1992), capabilities

represent what people can do and become when provided with real opportunities. Sen (1992)

advises that capabilities are not merely the physical or mental ability of individuals but instead

the intrinsic potential of each person to achieve various outcomes. Additionally, Sen (1992) defines functionings as various states of 'doings and beings' (p. 40). In this context, functionings are specified as a "particular outcome or achievement (reading, writing, communication, etc.), while 'resources' are how to achieve the outcome" (Broderick, 2018, p. 30).

Further, Robeyns and Morten (2020) suggest the core of this framework is the ability to conceptualize these two "normative commitments" (np). Functionings refer to doing and being. In other words, these are tasks a person can do. Examples include getting a certification, being smart, and exploring the world. Capabilities are described by Robeyns and Morten (2020) as, "the innate equipment of individuals that is necessary for developing the more advanced capabilities" (np). Examples of such include speech and language. As it pertains to this theoretical framework, theory means that an individual has all the required resources necessary to achieve the function they wish to (Robeyns & Morten, 2020). Freedom in this sense does not refer to formal freedom or legal allowance to pursue an opportunity, but rather, whether an individual has the tools to achieve their intended task.

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the distance between what a student can individually accomplish, and what they can accomplish with the support of an effective instructor (i.e., an instructor with knowledge about the target skill or task, etc.) (Jovanović, 2020). This concept is important to consider as it relates to effective instruction and the unique needs of twice-exceptional students. Vygotsky (1978) asserts that ZPD can be used to measure skills that are in the process of maturing. Measuring one's potential (development skills) is affectively different than attempting to measure their independent ability (i.e., assessments gifted programs).

Related Literature

Meeting the needs of 2E students is confounded with a student's minority status which can create additional challenges practitioners must overcome (Ng et al., 2016; Henfield, 2017). Although not all 2E minority students exhibit lower levels of academic performance, it is possible that when compared to gifted children who do not have identified learning deficits, their abilities are less obvious (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). This literature review presents current research surrounding the prevalence of 2E minority students, disproportionate representation, related legislation, common practices and practitioner preparedness. demonstrating the gap in the literature. Specifically, the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), the theory of sociocultural cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978), and Sen's (1985) capability approach will be used to demonstrate the lived experiences of 2E minority students and recommendations for future practice.

Prevalence of Twice-Exceptionality

The phenomenon surrounding 2E minority students has been explored by researchers for over 50 years (Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019). Renzulli and Gelbar (2019) suggest that many academically talented students have disabilities. Further, it is believed that many students with disabilities have co-existing academic strengths (Renzulli & Gelbar, 2019). Despite these commonly held perceptions, it is unclear exactly how many twice-exceptional students exist (Lee & Ritchotte, 2018). Professionals estimate that 5% to 6% of children with disabilities may also be gifted and talented (National Education Association, 2006). During the 2012– 2013 school year, researchers estimated that more than 3 million students who had a disability were also gifted (Kena et al., 2015; Lee & Ritchotte, 2018). Harwin (2019) finds that while students with

disabilities account for 14 percent of the nation's school population, less than 3 percent of students enrolled in gifted and talented education have been identified with disabilities.

According to Bell (2020) every year, approximately 2 to 5 percent of the student population across the United States qualifies as both gifted and learning disabled. It has become common practice in the education field to refer to these students as "twice-exceptional" (Bell, 2020, p. 847). These twice-exceptional students demonstrate advanced cognitive ability, while also presenting profound weaknesses (Bell, 2020). Supporting the duality needs of twice-exceptional students has historically remained extraordinarily difficult for public school systems across the United States. A central issue affecting the identification of twice-exceptionality appears to be the diverse manifestation of traits that are not always readily observable by teachers (Haines et al., 2020). Haines et al. (2020), refer to the coexistence of various learning disabilities and giftedness as comorbidity and find that it makes it difficult for many practitioners to identify students in this subgroup.

Further, determining the prevalence of twice-exceptional children is difficult due to the challenges associated with identification. Matthews and Rhodes (2020) agree to call the exploration of giftedness among young students a "contentious topic" (p. 411). According to Yaluma and Tyner (2021) "no other special group of children has been so alternately embraced and repelled with so much rigor by educators and laypersons alike" (p. 29). This has led to "either-or" propositions amongst researchers and practitioners alike (Yaluma & Tyner, 2021). Shapiro (2019) provides an example of such, referencing the recent recommendation by a panel of investigators to eliminate all gifted programs in New York City public schools.

Bell (2020), suggest that practitioners must divide students into three general categories: (1) students whose giftedness largely masks their disability, (2) students whose disability masks

their giftedness, and (3) students whose giftedness and disability cancel each other out, making these students appear "average." (p. 851). Doing so allows for the ability to determine which students may be twice-exceptional. The issue of identification is a prevalent variable impacting the disproportionate rate of twice-exceptional, minority students in gifted programs.

Amend (2018) attributes the complexity of the giftedness concept in part to the fact individual states differ in their definitions of the term. Baum et al. (2017) add to the conundrum by asserting there are two subgroups of gifted and talented individuals: those who are exceptional in school-related endeavors (e.g., test-taking, lesson learning), and those "who are extraordinary creators or producers of innovative products or ideas" (p. 105).

Further compounding the existing difficulties is that this student population has been subject to various changes in legislation and administrative rules over the years. To mitigate the impact, professional organizations interested in twice exceptionality have shaped how twice-exceptional students are served. Organizations such as The Association for the Gifted (TAG) and the National Twice-Exceptional Community of Practice (2e CoP) have collaborated to refine related definitions, provide structure, and solicit support (Baldwin et al., 2015; Lee & Ritchotte). To combat the ambiguity surrounding this population and solicit the necessary support, the National 2e CoP created a definition of twice-exceptional individuals (Lee & Ritchotte, 2018). The definition reads:

> Twice-exceptional individuals evidence exceptional ability and disability, which results in a unique set of circumstances. Their exceptional ability may dominate, hiding their disability; their disability may dominate, hiding their exceptional ability; each may mask the other so that neither is recognized or addressed.

> 2e students, who may perform below, at, or above grade level, require the following:

• Specialized methods of identification that consider the possible interaction of the

exceptionalities,

• Enriched/advanced educational opportunities that develop the child's interests, gifts,

and talents while also meeting the child's learning needs,

• Simultaneous supports that ensure the child's academic success and social-emotional

well-being, such as accommodations, therapeutic interventions, specialized instruction,

and

• Working successfully with this unique population requires specialized academic

training and ongoing professional development. (Baldwin et al., 2015, pp. 212–213)

Even though the term twice-exceptional can be applied to a student with a multitude of

disabilities, much of the literature on twice-exceptionality addresses students who are gifted and

have learning disabilities (Baldwin et al, 2015; Cain et al., 2019). Examples of other disabilities

that may be present within a student include behavioral and emotional disabilities, sensory and

physical disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and an autism spectrum

disorder. Many definitions of gifted and talented exist that present problems when identifying

and providing for these children (Gubbins et al., 2021; Ronksley- Pavia et al., 2019). Using

broad labels that differ widely across settings, leads to disparities in how many students are

identified as gifted in different contexts (Matthews & Rhodes, 2020; McBee & Makel, 2019).

Although variances in definitions of giftedness exist, Rasheed (2020) finds that similarities in

characteristics of giftedness exist in the literature. To encourage consistency within the field,

professional organizations have worked to develop definitions.

Theory

Despite over twenty years of empirical research on twice-exceptional students, much about their existence and the influences of related practices used to support them remains unexplored (Townsend & Pendergrast, 2015; McClurg et al., 2021). Carman et al. (2018) agree to find that the under-identification of students in gifted programs continues to be an ongoing issue in the gifted and talented field of research. This challenge can in part, be associated with the difficulty practitioners and researchers have with reaching a common definition (McClurg et al., 2021). According to Haines et al. (2020), "defining twice-exceptionality is challenging because of the absence of a universal definition of giftedness or system of identification" (p. 24). Assouline and Whiteman (2011) and Delaune (2018) assert that despite the best efforts of researchers, reaching a concise definition will remain challenging due to the complex varying rates of development and the manifestation of giftedness and disabilities in children. Additionally, due to the nature of some of the disabilities and/or how the student's giftedness is expressed, these students remain undetected; creating a barrier to reaching a more widespread and inclusive definition (Townsend & Pendergrast, 2015; Rogers, 2012; Silverman, 2009).

Further, because twice-exceptional students may initially present as capable a conundrum exists once practitioners note the student's inability to demonstrate that ability in produced work (Baldwin et al., 2015). Recognizing these students may be challenging, as the disability may overshadow the gift, the gift may mask the effect of the disability, or both remedial and advanced learning needs may go completely unnoticed. Reider (2021) agrees, finding that twice-exceptional students are at risk of mislabeling as gifted underachievers, or "lazy," which in turn may exacerbate other areas of disability.

According to Gierczyk and Hornby (2021) often the gifted ability is partially or fully dominated by the disability in twice-exceptional students. This contributes to the risk of "marginalization, stereotypical treatment, and exclusion from groups of students considered gifted and talented" (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Haines et al., 2020). This reveals yet another variable to consider while analyzing this long-standing issue. The ability of practitioners to proactively identify twice-exceptional students despite misconceptions surrounding stereotypes is imperative, however, it is not consistently demonstrated.

This distinctive spread of giftedness and disability, as displayed in 2E students, causes them to often be overlooked, posing a challenge to their identification (Bell, 2020; Lim, 2020). Further, Bell (2020), finds, that "twice-exceptional students have been described by educators as "the most misjudged, misunderstood, and neglected segment of the student population" (p. 851). McClurg et al. (2021) suggest the unique characteristics of twice-exceptional students challenge practitioners; thus, illustrating a need for a more efficient identification process. Traditional diagnostic criteria often require a significant expenditure of resources and time. An example of this exists in the instance of individually administered cognitive and academic instruments.

According to Matthews and Rhodes (2020), even when twice-exceptional, minority students are formally identified; the absence of consistent identification procedures and criteria causes many gifted students to go undetected. This causes students in the category to be inaccurately classified, and therefore inappropriately served (Dimitriadis, 2016; Hoth et al., 2017; McGowan et al., 2016; Rothenbusch et al., 2016). Stephens (2020) finds that many practitioners are more familiar with policies, practices, and issues about those areas defined under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004* (IDEA; i.e., specific learning disabilities, autism, developmental delays, etc.) than with those related to gifted

learners. The comfortability associated with one's comfort level may impact the effort made to appropriately identify and support minority twice-exceptional learners. Unfortunately, these efforts may not appropriately address the intended need, as traditional assessments may not be the most effective way to measure intelligence and aptitude for students in this subgroup (McClurg et al., 2021).

Historically, giftedness has been defined using a variety of domains including intellectual, creative, musical, sporting, and other domains (Renzulli & Reis, 2002). The most common definition and general understanding refer to the intellectual domain as typically demonstrated by traditional intelligence testing with a resultant IQ score that is well above an average score (Litster & Roberts, 2011; Gagné, 1995; Sternberg, 2000). Barber and Mueller (2011) suggest that up to one in five gifted students may also meet the criteria for twice-exceptionality as described as having a disability that affects learning in addition to their giftedness.

Identification

Typical screening practices for gifted students generally includes standardized tests, IQ tests, and/or a review of student work (Pfeiffer et al., 2008; Ricciardi et al., 2020). Despite the stated controversy surrounding this approach, the reliance on IQ scores for gifted education identification has remained for over 40 years (Coleman & Shah-Coltrane, 2015; Hodges et al., 2018; Ricciardi et al., 2020). Lewis (2021) finds, that often, twice-exceptional children present with various identification and evaluation requirements due to their "multidimensional profiles" (p.194). Luor et al. (2021) add that the critical strengths and weaknesses often displayed by twice-exceptional individuals make diagnosis challenging; further demonstrating the need to utilize comprehensive and multi-dimensional approaches during the identification stage. Not

taking a differentiated approach to the identification, evaluation, and assessment of twice-exceptional, minority students is a negligent approach.

Currently, the two most commonly used nonverbal tests for gifted identification, the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) and the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) nonverbal battery, have not been compared in their newer versions to explore the effects of their use on the identification of underserved populations (Carman et al., 2020). Carman et al. (2020), compared 15,733 CogAT7 nonverbal battery scores and 14,421 NNAT2 scores of kindergartners between 2013 and 2015 from one large urban school district. Researchers explored the differences between how each test relates to major demographic variables and examined the effects on who is selected for participation in gifted programming (Carman et al., 2020 & Ricciardi et al., 202=-). Researchers determined both instruments were less likely to identify students from traditionally underrepresented groups (i.e., minorities) than students from traditionally overrepresented demographic groups (Carman et al., 2020; Matthews & Rhodes, 2020 & Ricciardi et al., 2020).

Meissel et al. (2017) explored the alignment of standardized achievement results with teacher judgments. The results from their study indicated that judgments were systematically lower for marginalized learners after controlling for standardized achievement differences. Additionally, Meissel et al. (2017) found that classroom and school achievement composition is inversely related to teacher judgments. Discrepancies such as these are a cause of great concern as their implications for equitable educational opportunities are great. Possible implications for this study include guidance related to alternative identification measures and possible updates to related legislation that impacts 2E minority students.

Evaluation and Assessment Practices

The nature of the needs associated with twice-exceptional students; both a high cognitive ability and a co-existing disability, often results in the need for assessment, evaluation, and possible placement in federal programs. Bell (2020) suggests that the presence of disability potentially qualifies for special education services under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA), inciting further considerations and support among school personnel. Once a twice-exceptional student qualifies for services under IDEIA, the student is entitled to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). As presented by Bell (2020), "IDEIA defines a FAPE as an education that is "provided at public expense ... meet[s] [state] standards ... [is] appropriate ... and [is] provided in conformity with [a student's individualized education program]." (p. 847). By and large, school leaders can reference and understand the statutory guidance provided to implement FAPE; however, in the case of twice-exceptional students, school districts tend to struggle with the application of standards (Bell, 2020).

It is the responsibility of public education systems to provide effective educational services for learners of all types. Since all students with disabilities have the right to a free appropriate public education, there is no exception for gifted students with disabilities; inclusive of twice-exceptional students (Lee & Ritchotte, 2018). Research on gifted children reveals that the absence of intentional effective personalized educational programs, causes students with extraordinary talent to fall short of their maximum potential (Winsloret al, 2018).

Rasheed (2020) asserts the following:

Definition and identification, in theory, should directly guide the types of services

that are delivered to students within the program, the curriculum instruction,

supporting resources that are used for instruction, and the types of professional

development opportunities offered to program faculty (p. 77).

Placement and Representation

Bell (2020) finds, that "because twice-exceptional students present both disability and giftedness, their educational needs stretch across different educational laws and policy areas" (p. 850). The fields of special education and psychoeducational evaluation have historically focused on the needs of learners at either end of the spectrum (i.e., disabled to gifted), mainly due to how federal and state laws dictate eligibility for services (Lewis, 2021). For this reason, it is important to consider the placement and representation of twice-exceptional students carefully (Haines et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2019).

Related Legislation

To effectively advocate for gifted learners, practitioners must become well-versed in gifted education laws and policies; specifically, those that are most closely related to special education (Stephens, 2020). Examples of education laws include individualized assessment and eligibility determination. Passed by Congress in 1989, the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act is cited by many as the legislation that provided the needed propulsion for researchers to engage in studies and activities aimed at furthering educators' understanding of the complex needs of twice-exceptional students (Baldwin et al., 2015). This act gave funding priority to "identifying students missed by traditional assessment methods (including children who are economically disadvantaged, have limited English proficiency, or have disabilities) and to education programs that include gifted and talented students from such groups" (U.S. Department of Education, 1993; Lee & Ritochette, 2018). The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and

Talented Students Education Act (1989) continued for over 20 years. It was not until the 2004

reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), that a federal

acknowledgment was made regarding the existence of students that have disabilities that can also

be gifted (Baldwin et. al, 2015). Initially defunded from 2011 to 2013 and not restored by

Congress until 2014, it remains the only federal program that supports research, projects, and

personnel training to equip schools for identifying and meeting the needs of underrepresented

gifted students (CEC, n.d.; Lee & Ritchotte, 2018).

Grissom et al. (2019) describe gifted programs like those that provide "enhancements and

supports to academically gifted and talented students whose academic needs may not be met in

typical general education settings" (p. 337). In response to the widely accepted notion that

minority student groups have been historically underrepresented in gifted education, two recent

federal district court decisions defined the lower limits of equitable participation using the 20%

equity allowance formula proposed by Donna Ford (Lamb et al., 2019). In the federal case,

McFadden v. Board of Education for Illinois School District U-46, the school district was found

to be guilty of intentional discrimination against Hispanic and Black students in their gifted

education programs. In *Lohr v. U.S.*, 2015, plaintiffs asserted that minority students were

underrepresented in gifted education programs within the Tucson Unified School District

(TUSD) and petitioned the court to include such underrepresentation in the desegregation plan

which had been in place for several decades (Lamb et al., 2019). As a result of the case, TUSD

developed a proposal, their Unitary Status Plan (USP), using language from the *McFadden* case.

Specifically, the 20% rule was presented as a possible standard to ensure equity in their gifted

programs; with 20% representing the percentage of minority students who would be eligible for

and participate in the district's gifted education programs. As a result of a study completed by

Lamb et al. (2019), the 20% equity rule is most effectively applied when a district has a student population greater than 800 and a balanced representation of ethnic groups.

In the case *McFadden v. Board of Education for Illinois School District U-46,* prosecutors found that although none of the named plaintiffs ever achieved test results that might suggest that they were "gifted," there were legal grounds to challenge how the school district identified gifted students. Plaintiffs spent a large part of their case establishing that the school district's method of identifying gifted students effectively eliminated from consideration many minority students simply because the tests used by the district measured achievement based on verbal skills. These court findings offer the field of gifted education an opportunity to underscore and act upon proposed and stalled programming, policy, and testing approaches that are fair, non-discriminatory, and equitable for all students (Ford, 2014).

List and Dykeman (2021) suggest that even with the recognition of profound differences in cultural and racial backgrounds among students, children living in the United States are screened for giftedness based on how well they have adapted to Western culture and by the degree to which their achievements are consistent with Western ideas and values. This may be a prohibiting practice for twice-exceptional students with minority status. This makes placement and accurate representation challenging as it can be concluded that twice-exceptional students with minority status are not given a fair and equitable opportunity to be initially assessed.

Twice-Exceptional, Minority Students

Underachievement among gifted students is a paradox that is frustrating for educators due to the significant disparity between students' potential and their performance (Cavilla, 2017; Levy et al., 2018). Cavilla (2017) finds that the issue is exacerbated because of the "highly individualized nature of the underperformance" (p. 62). No one student's underperformance may

manifest in the same manner due to a unique combination of factors such as culture, socio-economic status, motivation, and environmental influences ; Owens et al., 2016; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019). Worth explicitly mentioning are the various issues related to the disproportionate representation of twice-exceptional, minority students in gifted education programs. Since the issue is a vast, multi-faceted one, it must be addressed comparatively. First, educators continue to struggle with the concept of twice-exceptionality.

> Cavilla (2017), finds the ambiguity surrounding this subgroup of students is due to the following three factors: (1) an articulate definition of what gifted underachievement does not exist; (2) factors which potentially influence and cause underachievement are multifaceted; and (3) methods for possible remediation and reversal of underachievement among gifted students are not universal and rely on appropriate analysis of the context of the learning environment, a student's culture, and motivational factors (p. 63).

When we add the element of minority status, other implications occur, exacerbating the outlined challenges.

Minorities in Gifted Education

Growing concerns about the inequitable access to gifted education have made the administration of gifted programs a controversial topic in many school districts (Mun et al., 2021; Redding & Grisssom, 2021). There is a great deal of controversy surrounding the field of gifted education as it relates to the underrepresentation of minority students (Renzulli, 2021). Historically, gifted programs have been dominated by white students (Peters et al., 2020). Bertrand (2019), agrees, finding that many minority students are systematically denied adequate access to a challenging curriculum. Despite major and long-standing efforts, a substantial imbalance of membership of minorities in programs for gifted students remains (Donovan &

Cross, 2002; Miller, 2004; Plucker, Burroughs, & Song, 2010). The prevalence of this phenomenon is further demonstrated by a review of the student demographics in the United States. Roughly 40% of the total student population in the United States identify within minority ethnicity categories. The total percentage of students that are identified as gifted are African American is 11% and Latino is 13% respectively (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2018). The demographic report completed in 2016 revealed that nearly 14% or 43.7 million people living in America were born in a foreign country (Radford & Budiman, 2018).

Often associated with excellence, administrators of gifted education programs today face significant challenges in reaching equity as well. O'brien et al. (2021), name the disproportionate underrepresentation of children from Black, Hispanic, Native, and low-income families as a stark indicator of trouble. Underrepresentation within gifted education programs is both "pervasive and pernicious" and is an issue across the United States (p. 578).

Students with disabilities in gifted education programs

Lee and Ritchotte (2018) draw attention to the inequitable representation of students with disabilities in gifted programs. The persistent disproportionality found in gifted education programs across the country exemplifies an incessant need to ensure twice-exceptional students have equitable access to gifted education programs. The underrepresentation of minority students with disabilities in gifted education has been widely recognized (Lamb et al., 2019; Morgan, 2019). Available data illustrates the longstanding and consistent disproportionate representation of certain racial and socioeconomic groups within gifted programs that are projected to worsen if this issue is left unaddressed (List & Dykeman, 2021; Yaluma & Tyner, 2018).

Contributing Factors

Specifically, our national education systems face challenges with the identification of gifted students from traditionally underrepresented, populations such as African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, English Language Learners, and students from low-income households (Grissom et al., 2019; Hunt & Yoshida-Ehrmann, 2016; Matthews & Rhodes, 2020; McGowan et al., 2016). This is exacerbated when we account for minority students with a disability. Many authors have suggested that biased measures may be the primary cause for the underrepresentation of minorities in gifted education; however, another common view is that differences in the ways students are identified, such as through two-phase identification systems that use teacher referrals in their initial stage, may also serve as an ascendant cause (Lakin, 2018; Matthews & Rhodes, 2020; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Peters et al. (2019) support this idea, by attributing the low proportion of Black students in gifted programs in part to poorly designed approaches to determining which students will receive services.

In a study conducted to assess the current state of assessment practices with Black children, Aston (2021) explored the factors that lead to inequitable educational opportunities. School psychologists who practice in urban, suburban, and rural school districts were surveyed regarding their demographic profiles and preparedness for assessing Black students. Further, Aston (2021) examined their current assessment practices including culturally biased test content and disproportionality. As a result of the study, researchers found that training in culturally competent assessment practices is crucial. Lewis et al. (2020) underscore this idea, by asserting that is the district's responsibility to provide meaningful professional learning opportunities for our educators to reverse the disheartening trend of underrepresentation of minority students from gifted programs.

Yaluma and Tyner (2021) suggest that an important theme to consider is that many of the methods and processes used to identify students for gifted education programs may under-identify low-income and minority students who would benefit from acceleration. According to Yaluma and Tyner (2021) teacher referrals and the use of norm-referenced standardized tests or some form of intelligence test for screening, purposes are known to "weed out students from low-income and traditionally underrepresented backgrounds because these tests may not reflect these students' life experiences and cultures" (p. 31). Other identification and screening methods must be utilized to improve the diversity and equity of their gifted programs (Grissom et al., 2017).

A recent meta-analysis of gifted studies, (inclusive of studies from 2002 to 2015), revealed that Black, Hispanic, and American Indian students were about one third as likely to be identified for gifted education as were their White and Asian counterparts (Hodges et al., 2018; List & Dykeman, 2018). Further, Grissom and Redding (2015) found that when compared to their White peers, Black students were 66% less likely to be identified for gifted programs. In the same regard, Yaluma and Tyner (2018) found that among schools with gifted programs, Black students were on average, 15% of the total student population but only represented 10% of the enrolled gifted population. Conversely, Hispanic students were 27.6% of the total student population but accounted for only 20.8% of the enrolled gifted population (Yaluma & Tyner (2018). Yaluma and Tyner (2018) report that these findings are representative of schools and school systems across the nation.

Sufficient evidence shows that there are race-based disparities in gifted identification nationwide in the United States (Peters et al., 2019). A 2020 longitudinal study of urban students revealed that White and Latino students were more likely to be identified as gifted than Black

students (Riccardi et al., 2020). Riccardi et al. (2020) found this ratio to be accurate even after controlling for poverty and early academic performance. Despite decades of criticism, educational systems across the nation have been criticized for the limited recruitment and retention of minority students in gifted education programs (Ecker-Lester & Niileksela, 2017; Williams, 2017). Unfortunately, relatively little progress has been made to alleviate these concerns. Aston (2021) agrees, finding, that minority students across the country are more likely to receive subpar educational services and support.

The issues related to disproportionality in gifted education are not only imagined but documented. The National Association for Gifted Children acknowledged the role of structural and systemic racism as contributing factors to the inequities in the identification of students with gifts and talents in the following statement:

> We acknowledge the injustices of structural and systemic racism and recognize the field of gifted education has historically been part of the problem by promoting these injustices, even if inadvertently. Some early researchers and thought leaders who influenced the field were involved with the eugenics movement, and early gifted identification and programming practices often became vehicles for de facto segregation. The field has made tremendous strides in addressing these historical injustices in recent years, but we have not made sufficient progress" (National Association for Gifted Children, 2020, para. 3).

The United States Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which included provisions to support gifted and talented learners in 2015. This legislation drew national attention to gifted students and provided an opportunity for researchers and practitioners to begin systematically addressing the education gaps that existed for this student population (Kaul &

Davis, 2018). Specifically, Kaul and Davis (2018) find that ESSA enhances the education of gifted students from diverse backgrounds. Kaul and Davis (2018), are optimistic about the future of U.S. public education for gifted students appears given the recently enforced focus on diversity as detailed in ESSA state plans.

Minorities in Special Education

The overrepresentation of minorities in disability categories has been a challenge in the field of special education for over 50 years (Connor et al., 2019). Sullivan et al. (2020) describe the racial and ethnic disproportionality in the United States special education system as an "intractable and increasingly contentious dimension of educational equity" (p. 451). According to Aston (2021), the *Larry P. v. Riles* case highlighted the disproportional representation of Black students in special education and emphasized the need for fair and nondiscriminatory psychological and educational evaluations. Despite this landmark case, and longstanding bans on the use of cognitive assessments with Black children in various states, Black children continue to be overrepresented in special education (Aston, 2021).

Given that special education, identification is generally seen as acceptable; Hughley and Larwin (2021) find that race and disability have become symptoms of exclusion that in turn leads to disproportionality. The overrepresentation of Black and Latino students in special education can be attributed to many factors. Hughley and Larwin (2021) attribute "rigid norms" and their effect on the implementation of special education policies as a leading cause of the persistent over-representation of Black and Latino students in special education. Finally, Hughley and Larwin (2021) cite pedagogy, bias, lack of cultural exposure, and apathy as factors related to the overwhelming disproportionate representation of minorities in special education.

ESSA replaces the former federal revision, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Under ESSA, states were granted increased flexibility in educational planning for students (Kaul & Davis, 2018). ESSA mandates states to submit a plan to the United States Department of Education detailing their goals for servicing and supporting students with disabilities.

In 2016, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) finalized guidance and regulations designed to address racial and ethnic disparities in special education eligibility, placement, and school discipline and the commonly accepted fact that "…children of color with disabilities are overrepresented within the special education population" (Barto, 2021, n.p.). Undoubtedly, there are many laws and regulations related to special education, however, the overrepresentation of certain subgroups has remained (Broderick, 2018; Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Owens et al., 2016).

Lim (2020) suggests the following:

Since the first iteration of P.L. 94-142 in 1975, six major principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, reauthorized in 2004) – Zero Reject, Nondiscriminatory Evaluation, Free Appropriate Public Education, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Procedural Due Process, and Parent Participation have played pivotal roles in organizing special education policies and practices in the United States (p. 570).

It is important to explicitly state all the related legislation because, despite the efforts of federal and state education agencies, issues with the disproportionate representation of minorities in special education remain (Bell, 2020; Levy et al., 2018). In addition to the stated legislation, the Zero Reject principle mandates that school districts do not exclude any students from public education due to the nature or severity of a child's disability (Lim, 2020). Lim (2020) asserts that

the Zero Reject entitles children with disabilities to "equal access to public education [and] the LRE requirement forms the legal basis of inclusive education for these children once inside public education" (p. 570). While we certainly understand the governmental efforts to ensure students receive education, the efforts to ensure the education is appropriate are not as easily understood.

Barto (2021) finds when teachers compare white students and students of color with similar academic and behavioral profiles, they are less likely to consider the difficulties experienced by students of color as potentially the result of a disability. Further, Barto (2021), finds that students of color are less likely than their white peers to be "appropriately identified and to receive high-quality special education services, despite demonstrating similar levels of academic performance and behavior" (n.p.) Conversely, black students have historically been placed in special education at higher rates than their peers (Barto, 2021; Levy et al., 2018). The laws related to special education students are important, however, a challenge remains with an interpretation of how the presence of exceptional ability within a special education student should be addressed.

District Response

How school districts approach gifted education varies widely across the United States (National Association for Gifted Children, 2021; Haines et al., 2020). No provisions, mandates, or requirements for serving students in gifted education programs are provided for practitioners even though federal law acknowledges that children with gifts and talents have unique needs that are not traditionally and typically provided in a regular school setting (National Association for Gifted Children, 2021). Leaving the administration of gifted education to the vices of local leadership increases variability in the quality of services and creates inequities of access for

students in racial and ethnic minority groups and those with disabilities (National Association for Gifted Children, 2021). According to Lewis (2021), The National Association for Gifted Children's position statement on giftedness takes other critical steps by stressing that gifted and talented students can represent racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse backgrounds. Undoubtedly, identifying, understanding, and servicing students with an asynchronous intellectual and learning profile is inherently challenging (Lewis, 2021; Pfeifer & Foley-Nicpon, 2018). This disparity directly impacts the prevalence of twice-exceptional, minority students in gifted education.

Haines et al. (2020) suggest the identification process for gifted education is often affected by the "varying cultural perceptions of success and learning" (p. 23). The ability to innately recognize certain cultural traits and disseminate them effectively has been detrimental to the representation of minority students in gifted education. Peters et al. (2019) find the past trends in disproportionality have continued with a limited number of exceptions at state levels present. The existence of state mandates does not necessarily translate to proportionality among various subgroups in gifted education (Peters et al., 2019; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019). For example, it is well established that Black male students are underrepresented in gifted education programs throughout the United States (Winsler et al., 2018). According to Peters et al. (2019), a variety of possible interventions are available for use in the mitigation of disproportionality in gifted programs, however, they have yet to be deployed due to the need for large-scale studies.

Researchers often refer to the disproportionate representation of minority students within gifted education as the excellence gap (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017). Peters et al. (2019) suggest the stark differences in advanced performance will have far-reaching cultural and economic implications if they remain unaddressed as the subgroups less frequently performing at

advanced levels now account for well over half of the U.S. student population (Plucker & Peters, 2018). Even though the causal mechanisms behind excellence gaps have yet to be adequately explored, Plucker and Peters (2018) suggest that disproportional access to advanced educational services vis-à-vis disproportionality in gifted identification is one of the drivers. Mun et al. (2021) expand on that idea by adding uneven access to resources, overemphasis on standardized assessments and cut-off scores, a lack of culturally relevant professional development, and systemic racism as equally dominant causes of the excellence gap. Finally, Mun et al. (2020) assert that teacher deficit views, varying access to resources, and challenges with funding, mainly due to a lack of associated federal mandates as additional contributing factors as well. Sullivan et al. (2020) find these gaps coupled with disparate treatment are long-standing educational issues that affect proximal and distal outcomes of students from "historically marginalized groups" (p. 450). The presence of disproportionality suggests that many students who remain unidentified would benefit from placement in gifted education programming (Peters et al., 2019). The ability to generalize findings is important if the efforts made to address the past trends in the underrepresentation of minorities in gifted education are to be successful.

Conversely, accurately determining the percentages of ethnicities in all programs is challenging. As the data reported regarding schools is often limited, errors likely exist (Peters et al, 2019). Hodges (2020) finds the greatest difficulty in conducting research is collecting data. Peters et al. (2018) find, "The OCR data does not include identification rates by eligibility for federal meal subsidy, which is especially problematic given what is known about the relationship between poverty, achievement, and likelihood of being identified as gifted" (284). Further, while demographic data should encompass school enrollment and staffing information it varies widely across states. Given this finding, federal mandates require all states to report basic demographic

data. Information about public school districts in the United States can be found on the National Center for Educational Statistics website (Hodges, 2020; NCES; 2018). Peters et al. (2019) agree, asserting that the number of students identified as gifted depends largely on policies developed at the state and local levels. These state policies and their related procedures vary widely across different gifted education models as well as in practice compared from state to state.

It is important to note that two federal laws can lead to public records being masked in demographic student count data: the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) (Hodges, 2020). How states interpret and comply with FERPA and PPRA varies (Greenberg & Goldstein, 2017). For example, states may mandate data granularity floors in their interpretation of FERPA and PPRA. Hodges (2020) underscores the possibility of discrepancies in data, finding that there is no standard across states as to how state education departments comply with FERPA and PPRA. Hodges (2020) offers the following as additional issues that may lead to discrepancies: (a) the threshold at which students are obfuscated and (b) variances in the process of acquiring identifiable data. These examples illustrate an additional barrier to obtaining accurate records related to twice-exceptional, minority students.

In addition to the previously stated issues during the initial phases of gifted education (i.e., identification, assessment, etc.), twice-exceptional, minority students continue to struggle once they are found eligible. Ecker-Lyster and Niileksela (2017) agree to suggest minority students are more likely to drop out of gifted programs than White students. Long-standing issues with recruitment and retention cause data to be skewed and true figures to be distorted. Investigating underlying variables and their relationship to equity issues for minority students is

an integral part of advancing gifted education research and practice (Lamb et al., 2019). This gap in literature points toward a challenge related to obtaining accurate data concerning minorities in gifted education.

The influence of the Capability Approach

The capability approach, developed by Amartya Sen and further refined by Martha Nussbaum, is a framework that focuses on equality and developing human potential (Broderick, 2018, Stella & Corry, 2017). The capability approach is in part a "partial theory of social justice" as well as a normative framework for the assessment of human development (Broderick, 2018, p. 29; Nussbaum, 2009, p. 232). Scholars in the field of education studies have used the capability approach as a reference to investigate the provision of education for students with disabilities (Broderick, 2018; Kramm, 2020). It is helpful to focus on what the student can do, instead of focusing on the student's deficits.

This framework can be used to overcome the historical limitations of inequitable practices. These practices, which have historically harmed twice-exceptional students, only measured resources and outcomes (Broderick, 2018). Yousefzadeh et al. (2018) assert, that applying the capability approach helps stakeholders focus on what children can achieve instead of their shortcomings. Further, Yousefzadeh et al. (2018) find the capability approach provides a framework that assists organizations with a better understanding of the mechanisms that could enable or restrict a student's access to those resources.

Appropriate Instruction and Planning

The following details a federal mandate as present in ESSA regarding the training and preparations practitioners should ensure:

Describe how the SEA will improve the skills of teachers, principals, or other school

leaders to enable them to identify students with specific learning needs, particularly

children with disabilities, English learners, students who are gifted and talented, and

students with low literacy levels, and provide instruction based on the needs of such

students. (U.S. Department of Education, 2017b, p. 17; ESEA section 2101(d)(2) (J))

Despite this and other guidance, most teachers are not trained to formally identify

learning disabilities or potential for giftedness (Haines et al., 2020; Harmon-Jones et al., 2015).

Yousefzadeh et al. (2018) suggest that children's growth could be assessed alongside the

instructors' capabilities that children rely on to achieve their full growth potential. In this way,

the capability approach offers a framework for doing so. Broderick (2018) suggests inclusive

education enables "persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society" (p. 31).

Instruction and planning that addresses the diverse needs of all students are paramount (Lim,

2020; Ng et al., 2016). This enables twice-exceptional, minority students to effectively

participate in their educational experience.

Tension and struggle will ultimately be a part of the process practitioners undergo;

having their dispositions challenged (Gomez & Johnson-Lachuk, 2019). The interactions and

development activities that practitioners encounter will challenge what they know, and how they

support twice-exceptional, minority students. Gomez and Johnson-Lachuk (2019) suggest

service-learning as a way to help preservice and aspiring teachers shift their perspectives on

minority students. Specifically, Gomez and Johnson-Lachuk (2019) find that service-learning

can have long-lasting effects on the participants' perspectives; creating the foundation for them

to resist harmful cultural norms and engage in social action. Further, Gomez and Johnson-

Lachuk (2019) find that this type of training (i.e., service-learning) is aligned with Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation (1991).

According to Gomez and Johnson-Lachuk (2019) Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation (1991) is defined as follows:

> The process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting on these new understandings. (p. 343).

Practitioners who educate and support twice-exceptional students should be trained in recognizing the characteristics of these unique learners. The lack of understanding of the phenomenon of twice-exceptionality and its related implications for learning creates a huge barrier to nurturing the whole student (Lee & Ritchotte, 2018; Subotnik et al., 2011). Grissom et al. (2019) suggest that gifted education programs provide important benefits including (a) improvements in motivation, (b) self-efficacy, (c) engagement with learning, (d) nonacademic self-concept, and (e) overall stress. This in turn can negatively impact the potential of students with disabilities, preventing them from exposure to advanced learning opportunities. Research also suggests that the described positive impacts of gifted programs can be even greater for students of color than for their White peers (Grissom et al., 2019). Lee and Ritchotte (2018) describe the omission of opportunities for this special population to achieve represents a "silent crisis" (p. 69). Chen and Chen (2020) agree to find that the ultimate goal of gifted education programs is to cultivate students' competencies through "challenging, enriching, and engaging

opportunities for talent development" (p. 109). It is important to acknowledge the silent crisis is exacerbated in the absence of the stated critical elements.

Program Design

According to Cavilla (2017), "both the intellectual and affective needs of the gifted underachiever must be examined and supported to try and bridge the gap between known ability and actual performance" (p. 62). Gierczyk and Hornby (2021) find that programs that focus on the developmental nature of giftedness and the potential to achieve instead of achievement itself as the focal point of giftedness lend themselves to appropriately supporting twice-exceptional, minority students. Programs of this stature, assist practitioners with gaining a better understanding of giftedness; in that, it is not limited to the intellectual or academic demonstration but rather the incorporation of multiple areas of giftedness.

In the practical sense, Lee and Ritchotte (2018) find that in addition to an IEP or Section 504 plan that addresses accommodations for learning and testing, twice-exceptional students would benefit from a gifted education plan (e.g., an advanced learning plan). Researchers assert that a gifted education plan would detail and develop areas of strength (Crepeau-Hobson & Bianco, 2011; Lee & Ritchotte, 2018). As presented in the National 2e CoP addressed in its definition, twice-exceptional learners need (a) learning opportunities that develop their gifts and talents while meeting their learning needs and (b) simultaneous support for academic achievement and well-being (Baldwin et al., 2015, Lee & Ritchotte, 2018).

Gierczyk and Hornby (2021) suggest that twice-exceptional students can be taught effectively in inclusive education settings provided they have access to appropriate strategies and programs from gifted education. To do so, Park et al. (2018) d The absence of trained and competent teachers adds to the list of variables affecting the representation of twice-exceptional,

minority students. Further, Baldwin et al. (2015) suggest the following when working to support twice-exceptional students: addressing the student's strengths and interests; providing appropriate and adequate social and emotional support; adapting instructional materials and tasks to support the academic strengths of each student while simultaneously providing accommodations for his or her learning needs; and ensuring their learning environment embodies a culture that is supportive, safe and solution-driven.

Application of the Capability Approach

While it is important to utilize theories to better understand the impact of the learning environment and intrinsic factors that impact 2E minority students, gaining a holistic picture requires the consideration of the dispositions of the practitioners who support and educate them. For many, the personal aptitude that is reached is either stifled or propelled by the opportunities which they are afforded (Sen, 1992). Given that in the instance of 2E minority students, their opportunities (i.e., possible inclusion in gifted education programs) are shaped by the practitioners who educate and support them, it is imperative to explore how this framework can provide context better understand the connectedness of the practitioners' dispositions and their employed practices.

Perceptions of Twice-Exceptional, Minority Students

Human diversity is an integral concept in the capability approach. This is demonstrated by the recognition of it as a "fundamental aspect of our interest in equality" (Broderick, 2018, p. 30). Important concepts related to Sen's (1992) capability approach are agency freedom and well-being freedom. Sen (1992) describes agency freedom as "one's freedom to bring about achievements one values" and well-being freedom as, "one's freedom to achieve those things that are constitutive of one's well-being" (p. 57). To understand the impact of the student

variable, it is important to explore the agency freedom and well-being freedom of a student. These freedoms will be impacted by personal characteristics, traits, and experiences.

According to Ronksley-Pavia et al. (2019), personal interests, negative experiences, support networks, stress/coping/resilience, and sense of self represent the main themes upon initial analysis of children's narratives all impact twice-exceptional, minority students' ability to advocate for themselves. In a study completed by Ronksley-Pavia et al. (2019), eight themes: the stigma of disability, the stigma of giftedness, prior experiences of stigma, stigma and coping responses, the stigma of threatening environments, disconfirming stigma, stigma associated with identifying as twice-exceptional and perceptions of giftedness and disability (twice-exceptional) emerged as the most impactful traits among twice-exceptional, minority students.

Cavilla (2017) determined there is no one way to support gifted students who present as underachievers. More important and impactful is the student's acceptance of the fact they are twice-exceptional and their ability to accept that fact (Cavilla, 2017). Ng et al. (2016) underscore this concept through the results of their study. Researchers determined the personal characteristics of twice-exceptional learners to be an emerging theme when comparing the school experiences of the three participants (Ng et al., 2016). Additionally, Ng et al., (2016) assert that past engagement in the school context and the personal experiences of the student twice-exceptional, minority students) affect the student's ability to proactively participate in their educational programs. In a recent study conducted by Redding and Grissom (2021), it was revealed that Black students do not "see" the academic gains their peers experience when receiving gifted services (p. 80). It is important to note that this may impact how some minority students view gifted education, and the effort they put forth. Twice-exceptional, self-aware minority students are more likely to advocate for themselves and thus can demonstrate their

abilities. The absence of such ability adds yet another variable in considering the

disproportionality rates among twice-exceptional, minority students in gifted programs.

Perceptions of Practitioners

Yousefzadeh et al. (2018) suggests the capability approach requires the reconciliation of

the fact that children may need access to "different types and different amounts of capability

inputs (policies, resources, food, changes in social norms, or infrastructure) to achieve the same

levels of wellbeing" (p. 712). When generalized to the academic setting, we understand that

assessment and evaluation practices that rely on universal instruments that do not account for

these variances place twice-exceptional, minority students at a disadvantage at the onset. Haines

et al. (2020) suggest that teachers must account for variances in the demonstration of gifted

abilities in response to varied cultural experiences. While students undoubtedly require varied

capabilities inputs to be successful, it is widely understood that not all students have access to

those inputs for a variety of reasons. Missett et al. (2016), find that teachers' personal beliefs and

expectations influenced the instruction provided. In a study completed by Missett et al. (2016),

researchers determined this to be true even when the student did not exhibit any needs or cause

for an adjustment of this fashion to be made. Twice-exceptional, minority students are impacted

by this unfortunate but common occurrence. By generalizing this concept to include assessment

practices, we identify one variable that has led to the disproportionate representation of twice-

exceptional, minority students in gifted education programs.

Implications for Stakeholders

There are over three decades worth of literature supporting the notion of the importance

of alignment between identification and programming in gifted and talented education literature

(Gubbins et al., 2021). Despite this finding, institutions have struggled with the practical

application of key ideas that directly influence the educational programming of twice-exceptional, minority students. According to Broderick (2018), "Human diversity plays a key role in the capability approach since, according to Sen, it is 'a fundamental aspect of our interest in equality" (p. 30). The capability approach focuses on "practical opportunities and functionings of healthy growth" (Yousefzadeh et al., 2018, p. 718). As presented previously, functionings are the achieved beings and doings of a person, while capabilities are the "opportunity to achieve a valuable combination of human functionings" (Yousefzadeh et al., 2018, p. 718). In this context, capabilities imply an element of freedom to choose one type of functioning over another. Yousefzadeh et al. (2018) find the same ability to choose can also be considered as a "set of vectors of different functionings" (p. 718).

Truly inclusive education systems must ensure "the full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth and 'the strengthening of respect for…human diversity" (Broderick, 2018, p. 31). Chen and Chen's (2020) study of gifted education programs in Tawain offers the following as inalienable elements that must be present to appropriately service twice-exceptional, minority students: (a) defining the criteria for success or effectiveness, (b) selecting or developing valid and reliable measurement tools and strategies, (c) conducting long-term evaluation plans and follow-up studies, and (d) promoting evidence-based decision-making in gifted education. In an optimal situation, the education programs designed for twice-exceptional children will highlight the relationship between disability, socio-cultural environment, and abilities (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). Wu et al. (2019) add to these findings by asserting that effective programs that service twice-exceptional, minority students should include instructional strategies that are based on learning preferences and special interests; including flexible pacing, and choice of topics, products, and workmates. Renzulli (2021) supports this idea and suggests

that formative assessments provide the opportunity to learn more about a student's interests, instructional style preferences, preferred modes of expression, and other co-cognitive factors. Practitioners can and should in turn use these insights to modify their instructional practices and accompanying activities.

The likelihood of a twice-exceptional student learning effectively and efficiently is dependent upon the nature and the interaction of their disabilities, their academic talents, and interests, and other noncognitive factors (e.g., motivation, executive function, social and emotional traits) and on their ability to learn to compensate for their learning disabilities (Renzulli & Gelbar, 2019, p. 2). To achieve this level of effectiveness, education systems must attempt to develop, nourish, and account for the personality, talents, and creativity, as well as the mental and physical abilities of all students; including that of twice-exceptional, minority students.

Kim et al. (2021) suggest that disparities manifest through "complex interactions between environmental, socioeconomic and system-level factors" (p. 1058). Reducing these disparities requires broader approaches aimed at addressing structural determinants (Kim et al., 2021). Since people are not only included in interpersonal relationships with specific others, and communities, but also in the framework of society it is important to consider the impact on inclusion for twice-exceptional, minority students. Societal inclusion can be elucidated in two ways: as a social precondition for communal forms of inclusion, or as inclusion in social relationships that are not formed on a communal basis (Felder, 2018). Felder (2018) finds that the laws, regulations, and norms within society determine the extent of people's freedoms to a certain degree, and thus also their opportunities for participation and inclusion. Further, education laws and policies guide the way programs and services are implemented in schools

(Stephens, 2020). Due to the inherent overlap that exists between communal and societal relationships, attempting to dissect the two becomes a contrived effort at best (Felder, 2018). Felder (2018) suggests that for students with disabilities the social settings in schools are of particular importance, for it circumscribes the state of inclusion twice-exceptional, minority students will endure.

Stakeholders must consider the difference between an assessment of learning and an assessment for learning. Renzulli (2021) suggests that assessments of learning, also called summative assessments, are used to "evaluate student content learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period" (p 199). Conversely, assessments for learning are formative assessments. Renzulli (2021) describes these as "ongoing, flexible, informal"; inclusive of information that is gathered to modify instruction or for future instructional planning (p.199). Stakeholders must place value on both types of assessment. According to Renzulli (2021), when coupled with appropriate feedback, formative assessment is the most powerful moderator in the enhancement of achievement. Given this insight, districts must begin to include various assessment types during their evaluations of twice-exceptional, minority students.

Finally, Gierczyk and Hornby (2021) suggest that an improvement to teacher preparation programs is needed to address the issues surrounding twice-exceptional, minority students. Haines et al. (2020) find that opportunities for pre-service teachers to access gifted education programs have been historically inconsistent. According to Gierczyk and Hornby (2021), an improvement in initial teacher education and in-service education that addresses the limited knowledge of twice-exceptional students is needed. By providing knowledge and skills for identifying twice-exceptional students, collaborating with colleagues and service providers to

assess and plan programs for them, and working with parents to successfully implement these programs, the disproportionate rate at which twice-exceptional, minority students are identified for and participate in gifted education programs.

Research indicates that building systemic capacity in stakeholders is an integral component to change inequitable policies and practices in gifted education (Mun et al., 2021). This will require district leaders to adopt and embrace equity-focused policies. Further, district leaders must build capacity among practitioners (Mun et al., 2021). This can be achieved by promoting cultural competence and focusing on the strengths of students (Mun et al., 2021). Examples include facilitating conversations about race, ethnicity, and language as it relates to gifted education. Additionally, Mun et al., (2021) assert that districts must establish multiple pathways for entry into gifted programs; thus, removing the problematic barrier associated with traditional avenues. To achieve this level of efficiency and appropriateness requires practitioners to "act with moral purpose and shed their traditional assumptions" (Mun et al., 2021, p. 147). Essentially, it is important to recognize the many benefits of embracing evolved practices and ideas as it relates to twice-exceptional, minority students.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

The problem regarding the underrepresentation of students from non-European backgrounds in gifted education has persisted despite the employment of federal and state mandates related to equitable assessment and evaluation. Additionally, researchers have explored how utilizing the capability approach is both a practical and applicable approach in the design of support initiatives for students in this subgroup. Further, the theories of cognitive dissonance and sociocultural dissonance have also been applied to ascertain the intrinsic and extrinsic variables

that affect the current disproportionate representation of twice-exceptional, minority students in gifted programs.

Explained as the ability to recognize that not all individuals will equally participate in or benefit from education, the capability approach is a framework that can form the instructional practices that have historically negatively influenced the educational experiences of twice-exceptional, minority students. Limited research on the placement of twice-exceptional students in gifted education programs has been conducted but is negligible as it pertains to the placement of twice-exceptional, minority students. Pfeiffer and Foley-Nicpon (2018) suggest that information about twice-exceptional students "lacks a coherent, comprehensive evidence base" (p. 109). DeFeyter et al. (2020) agree, finding a need for more investigation into solutions that address cultural and societal factors impacting the educational programming of twice-exceptional students. For these reasons, practitioners and researchers must be cautious when attempting to generalize findings and characteristics regarding the needs of this population (Pfeiffer & Foley-Nicpon, 2018).

Students in this subgroup encounter additional barriers related to identification, evaluation, and placement as compared to their peers who are of European descent. NAGC specifies the typical gifted identification process as having, first, a nomination phase, followed by a screening phase, and then a placement phase (NAGC, 2018). It is common practice for nominations to be completed by teachers; however, teacher nominations are intrinsically complicated. While teachers can provide a more holistic perspective than testing alone, they can be inherently subjective and can be based on implicit or explicit bias and general feelings and preferences (Ricciardi et al., 2020). Lee et al. (2021) suggest replacing proven exclusionary

practices with research-supported alternatives as a way to increase the identification rates for minority students. A gap exists in the literature about the variables that affect the disproportionate representation of twice-exceptional minority students in gifted education programs. Additionally, recent literature supports the role of sociocultural factors and cognitive dissonance in the educational experience of students.

Investigating the sociocultural foundations as well as the cognitive dissonance in practitioners who instruct twice-exceptional students who are additionally influenced because of their race will assist stakeholders with understanding how to best support students in the future, including not only twice-exceptional, minority students, but all twice-exceptional students. By reviewing the data related to the disproportionate representation of twice-exceptional, minority students in gifted education programs and the implications of current practice, practitioners will be better able to identify and implement support structures that will alleviate the detrimental education experiences of students in this subgroup.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand which common practices are perceived to be the greatest contributors to the disproportionate representation of 2E, minority students in gifted education programs in north Georgia. Chapter Three details the design and rationale for the study. In addition to the procedures and analysis for the study, I will detail my role as the researcher. A description of the setting, participants, data collection and analysis methods will be included. The chapter concludes with a review of trustworthiness and the ethical considerations that might be present.

Research Design

Qualitative research includes in-depth interviewing that focuses on viewing experiences from the perspectives of the participants in a way that is concerned with including a detailed, contextualized description and understanding of events and experiences (Coyne & Wright, 1996; Yin, 2014). Further, Yin (2014) finds that qualitative research focuses on the process provides an opportunity for openness and flexibility, and allows unexpected experiences to be addressed (Yin, 2014). Finally, because human experiences, beliefs, and insights are naturally dynamic, an interpretive, naturalistic approach applied in qualitative research design is necessary for data interpretation.

The phenomenological approach in qualitative research is appropriate when a researcher intends to explore the common experiences of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, a phenomenological approach is appropriate as this approach will provide the opportunity to explore the perceptions of current practitioners about the practices that are perceived to have had the greatest impact on the prevalence of 2E minority students' placement in special

education instead of gifted education programs. As the intended research goal is to present a phenomenon about the topic, it is a suitable design because it lends itself to the reduction of individual experiences following the initial exploration; thus, uncovering the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transcendental phenomenological research is an approach that focuses on describing the experiences of participants instead of the interpretations of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). Originally derived from the Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology (e.g., Giorgi, 1985, 2009) and data analysis procedures presented by Van Kaam (1966) and Colaizzi (1978); the transcendental phenomenological design requires the researcher to bracket out his or her experiences and focus on those of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moustakas (1994) suggests that unequivocally removing one's biases as a researcher is seldomly impeccably achieved, however, he offers the strategy of approaching research with an initial presentation of one's experiences and bracketing them out at the onset as a possible counter step.

A transcendental phenomenological study design will be applied in this study because the purpose of the study is to understand the perceptions of current practitioners related to the impact of inconsistencies in identification, singular reliance on teacher referrals, assessment practices that do not account for ethnic or cultural variances or ineffective support models has had the greatest impact on the prevalence of 2E minority students' placement in special education instead of gifted education programs. The transcendental, phenomenological approach lends itself well to the use of multiple sources of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), good qualitative studies utilize many forms of qualitative data. Therefore, this qualitative study will be conducted using the transcendental phenomenological study approach. The transcendental phenomenological approach will allow

me to consider the phenomenon through an impartial lens. In addition, I will commit to utilizing

an unprescriptive approach in the study. Unprescriptive research describes methodologies that

are concerned with details and focus on viewing the experiences explored through the

perspectives of those under study (Coyle, 2013).

Research Questions

The central research question in this study is designed to give a voice to the practitioners

who have assessed and supported 2E minority students. The subsequent questions are designed

to provide an opportunity for consumers of this research to learn about specific aspects related to

the lived experiences of the participants.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of special education teachers' assessment and

identification practices for 2E minority students?

Sub-Question One

Which assessment and identification practices do special education teachers find to be the

greatest cause of disproportionate placement of 2E minority students in gifted education?

Sub-Question Two

Which types of assessments and identification practices do special education teachers

find to have been optimal for determining placement for 2E minority students?

Sub-Question Three

What are the training and professional development experiences of special education and

gifted teachers who support practitioners who are directly involved with the identification,

assessment, or evaluation of 2E minority students?

Setting and Participants

All participants must experience the phenomenon of the study (Moustakas 1994).

Therefore, the selection of the site should be chosen based on the chosen research design

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is crucial to find participants from various public schools to establish

if all participants experienced the phenomenon in similar ways. This approach adds to the ability

to generalize findings after the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Setting

This study will be conducted with teachers who have identified, assessed, or supported

2E minority students who work in Georgia. Participants in the study are practicing professionals

in the northern region of Georgia. North Georgia encompasses the geographical area from the

north Georgia mountains through the Atlanta metropolitan area.

The rationale for this study is that no known studies have examined the perceived impact

of assessment and identification practices on the prevalence of 2E minority students in the

northern region of Georgia. The region selected for this study includes numerous school districts

with varied characteristics. School districts in this region vary in size and leadership structure.

The smallest school district included in this region includes approximately 935 students. It has a

minority enrollment of 10%. The largest school district included in this region serves over

180,000 students, with a minority enolenrollment80%. Each of the school districts included in

these regions has varied levels of district support and structure and a vast range of minority

student representation. The average district leadership structure in this region includes a school

board, superintendent, and principal.

Participants

The participants in this study will be purposefully selected and snowball sampling methods will be utilized to select additional participants, if necessary. Purposive sampling enables researchers to intentionally sample participants who meet the study criteria and have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purposive sampling method will be used as the initial method for selecting the participants. The subsequent snowball sample method will be employed when I ask participants to recommend other potential participants for the study. According to Etikan et al. (2016), in snowball sampling, "the initial subject[s] serve as "seeds," through which wave 1 subject is recruited; wave 1 subject, in turn, recruit wave 2 subject, and the sample consequently expands like a snowball growing in size as it rolls down a hill" (p. 2). As support personnel for students receiving special education may change from year to year the participants would likely be able to refer other personnel that met the study criteria who were not initially identified by the researcher.

Twelve participants will be utilized for this study. The participants will include certified support personnel who have been directly involved in the identification, assessment, instruction, and/or support of an identified 2E minority student. I desire to have participants who are currently practicing educators. Demographic information, such as age, ethnicity, and gender will not be factored into the criteria for participation. I will choose to study these individuals because I am seeking to understand the perceptions held by this group. I intend to select participants that are out of the introductory phase of certification. In Georgia, educators with 0-3 years of experience are considered in the "induction phase" (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2022). I anticipate twenty participants will fit the specified parameters and be recruited via personal invitations.

Researcher Positionality

I intend to focus on the situations and consequences involving the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs within school districts located in the northern region of Georgia. By focusing on the "what" and "how" of what is occurring, I will demonstrate an interpretive framework that is founded on pragmatism. My approach to this study aligns with the notion provided by Cherryholmes (1992), that rather than ask questions about reality and the qualities of naturally occurring instances; it would be more beneficial to effectively change the subject.

Interpretive Framework

The paradigm focus for the study will be based on pragmatism. Creswell and Poth (2018) find that researchers whose interpretive framework is based on pragmatism focus more on the actions, and situations instead of antecedent conditions. As I am not committed to any particular philosophy related to this phenomenon, I intend to focus this research on the problem itself and the questions used to learn more about it. Further, I plan to utilize multiple data resources to gain an understanding of the true problem at hand. I will ensure that the research design is appropriate for the current research problem and explicitly present the practical implications of my research, thus, demonstrating a pragmatic interpretive framework.

Philosophical Assumptions

Studies are impacted by a researcher's philosophical assumptions, epistemologies, and ontologies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A researcher's belief about the nature of reality, what counts as knowledge, which claims are justified, the role of values in research, and related processes affect the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This section reviews the ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions that impact the present study.

Ontological Assumption

Researchers conducting qualitative research embrace the concept and possibility of multiple realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By utilizing various forms of evidence including individual interviews, focus group responses, and writing prompts, I will approach research from an ontological stance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I intend to report the multiple realities expressed by all participants to create a rich account of the experiences of all participants involved in the study. As the researcher, I will seek to cluster various perspectives and experiences into themes. These will become textural descriptions of these experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Epistemological Assumption

Studies are impacted by a researcher's philosophical assumptions, epistemologies, and ontologies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I will approach research using an epistemological philosophical assumption as exhibited by the documentation of relevant quotes obtain "in-field" with the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 20). By spending time with participants at the various sites, I will be able to close the seemingly elusive gap that can exist between researchers and participants. Creswell and Poth (2018) find that epistemological assumptions assist researchers with getting closer to the participants which are being studied; helping them become an insider which in turn contributes to the ability to accurately account for the experiences of those being studied. My epistemological assumption asserts the importance of building relationships with my participants to better understand their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth,). Building these relationships will assist in understanding the truth and reality of the participants.

Axiological Assumption

Researchers will inevitability bring values into a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Aspects

such as a researcher's gender, age, or life experiences can influence a researcher's position (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By openly disclosing the values and experiences that have shaped this study and by acknowledging my personal bias; I have exhibited my axiological assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Further, it is important to mention that moral realism has shaped this study. Moral realism is defined as a moral doctrine that advances two main contentions (a) first, the claim that meta-ethical matters are ethical matters; and (b) second, the claim that morality is strongly objective in several different respects (Railton, 1986). I believe there are certain aspects surrounding this issue that are simply right or wrong, however, I will bracket my beliefs and assumptions, setting aside my preconceived ideas and biases about the phenomenon so that I may truly describe the experiences of my participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Researcher's Role

Understanding that I am the human instrument in this study, I am motivated to complete this study through my past collegiate and professional experiences. I am currently a district administrator in the exceptional education department in my school district. My undergraduate studies were in finance and computer science. Despite my initial interest and career choice, I became a public-school educator after working in the banking industry for 6 years. Having an out-of-field bachelor's degree, I was able to become alternatively certified to teach special education.

I developed more than a casual interest in the concept of twice-exceptionality during the completion of coursework related to this doctoral program. Once I had the opportunity to review current research related to 2E students, I began to make connections to my professional experiences. I supported many students that excelled in various areas yet demonstrated a deficit in another. One of the most interesting assignments I had was supporting students who are 2E.

Through this experience, I learned that often, even when a 2E student has been identified as gifted, the focus is placed on supporting their deficit (i.e., enrollment and services in special education). The common trend per my professional experience was that these students almost exclusively were served in special education, never also in gifted education. The issues appeared to be exacerbated in situations involving 2E minority students.

My interest in this study stems from my belief that all students deserve an education that is equitable and is focused on their strengths instead of their deficits. Upon the revelation that most referrals for gifted education programs are solely based on a teacher's opinion, I began to understand the problematic nature of current practices. My interest led me to review literature in search of related studies. As a result, I uncovered a gap in the literature. I plan to conduct a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study because I want to explore the topic in multiple distinct yet connected occurrences. My goal is to understand which factor impacting the identification and placement of 2E minority students into gifted education programs support personnel perceived as the greatest contributor to the disproportionate representation of this group. I will not have any professional or personal interactions with the participants or the site other than the interactions that will be part of the study.

Procedures

A phenomenological reduction approach will be used in the study (Moustakas, 1994). Prior to soliciting participants and conducting this study, I sought and obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants in this study must meet specific criteria and will provide data via the following sources: individual interviews, focus groups and journal prompts. The collected data will be analyzed by manual coding for validity (Saldana, 2016).

Permissions

I will seek approval from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A). Upon approval, I will begin to solicit participation through purposive sampling. I anticipate obtaining additional participants via a snowballing effect. Once all the participants have been selected, I will begin to collect data and analyze the information. To ensure the interview questions are coherent, I will conduct a pilot study using the intended interview questions with a small sample of educators who otherwise fit the selection criteria. Pilot study participants will be able to provide feedback on both the questions and techniques utilized by the interviewer. After completion of the pilot study, purposeful sampling will be conducted to recruit participants for the study. There is no specific site in which to gather permission as I am seeking to explore the experiences of various teachers across north Georgia.

Recruitment Plan

I plan to send a recruitment email to those who met the qualifications for study participation. Informed consent letters (Appendix B) will be e-mailed to potential participants. The consent letters will explain the purpose of the study and detail the type of involvement required for study participation. After I collect the informed consent letters, I will utilize purposeful sampling to obtain a heterogeneous group of participants. I intend to obtain a sample that includes participants with varied experiences and backgrounds. I will identify 12 participants and since all participants must have experienced the same phenomenon, criterion sampling will be utilized (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By establishing specific criteria before selecting individuals, I will ensure that all participants selected meet the needs of the study. Following the initial selection of participants, the snowball method will be used to identify additional cases of interest from participants who know other potential participants with information-rich experiences

(Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Collection Plan

This transcendental, phenomenological case study will include the review of multiple sources of data to answer research questions about the three study focuses: (a) educators' perceptions of the impact of common assessment and identification practices on 2E minority students' placement into gifted education programs, (b) educators' perceptions of the implications of the current practices used to support 2E minority students and (c) school- and district-level training and professional development regarding 2E minority students (see Appendix C). The types of data collection approaches and the accompanying analysis method are described below.

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

Individual semi-structured interviews and follow-up questions will be used to gather the instructional support personnel's perspectives about their experiences related to the identification, assessment, and support of 2E minority students (RQs 1 and 2), perceptions of the impact of current practices on 2E students' placement in gifted and education programs (RQ 3), and organizational changes made to support 2E initiatives (RQ 4). I anticipate that each interview will last 40– 50 minutes. I anticipate the interview conducted with exceptional and gifted education administrators will last approximately 50 minutes, respectively. Interviews will likely be conducted online via a teleconferencing system to allow for flexibility in scheduling.

Individual Interview Questions

1. What describes your main professional responsibilities? RQ1

2. What is your employment status? RQ1

3. What grade(s) do you currently serve/support? RQ1

4. What type of school do you currently teach/support? (i.e., elementary, middle, high school, alternative)? RQ1

5. How many years of teaching service do you have? RQ1

6. How many years have you been in your current role? RQ1

7. How many years have you worked in your current school district? RQ1

8. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed (e.g., bachelor's, master's, specialist, doctorate, post-doctoral)? RQ1

9. Describe your formal education programs that had an emphasis on special or gifted education? RQ2

10. Which courses have you completed during your major, or minor, had a special emphasis in either special or gifted education? RQ2

11. Describe the formal professional development programs that support the work you are currently doing (e.g., special and or gifted education) you have completed since serving 2E students? RQ2

12. Can you tell me more about your school district's policies regarding 2E students? RQ3

13. How are students referred for gifted education in your district? RQ3

14. In addition to teacher referrals, what other methods are used to identify 2E students? RQ3

15. Which evaluation tools are you most familiar with that are commonly used in your district to assess students that may be 2E? RQ3

16. What issues or challenges can you identify that relate to singularly relying on teacher referral? (If appropriate) RQ3

17. What are the most appropriate ways to assess students after they have been referred to gifted education? RQ3

18. Can you describe the team members that are typically a part of the evaluation team? RQ3

19. Can you describe the team members that are typically a part of the decision process (following the evaluation)? RQ3

20. In your experience, have the team members remained consistent at each opportunity? For example, has the number of team members remained consistent during each evaluation and consideration of a possible 2E student? RQ3

21. Can you describe the procedures that should be followed if a parent has a concern related to their child's referral, identification, or assessment for gifted education? RQ4

22. How can you improve upon the current procedures in your district? RQ4

23. To what extent have you been able to observe the benefits, success, or challenges associated with the current process? RQ4

24. How might you modify or adapt the current process of identifying and assessing 2E minority students in your school district? RQ4

25. Can you describe the components that should be present in a comprehensive professional development program that would be designed for teachers and support personnel of 2E minority students? RQ4

26. What did you experience when you discovered your school would be reopening for face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? SQ4

These interview questions are aligned with the research questions to gain an understanding of the teachers' experiences through their lived experiences. Interview Questions 1-7 are designed to explicitly present the participants qualifications. The specified qualifications were designed to ensure that participants included in this study can appropriately describe the lived experience of the target demographic intrinsically. Interview Questions 8-11 relate specifically to professional

development and preparedness to serve and assess 2E minority students as perceived by the

participants. Interview Questions 12-21 offer the opportunity to learn more about the common

practices used to assess 2E minority and the perceived impact on the disproportionality of these

students in gifted education. Interview Questions 22-25 provides the opportunity for participants

to offer a suggestion related to improving practices that affect 2E minority students at a district

level.   Interview Question 25 focuses on recommendations for professional development for

teachers who support 2E minority students. Finally, question 26 contributes to this study's

relativity by giving participants an opportunity to provide perspective of this topic as it relates to

the present-day challenges often associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

All interviews will be video and audio-recorded and transcribed. The initial analysis will

include reviewing transcripts and listening to the audio files concurrently to ensure accuracy. The

interview protocols are presented in Appendix D. Interviews are intended for data triangulation

about administrative support. Follow-up questions will be used to understand the current

initiative within the school district to address concerns related to the identification and

assessment of gifted students.

Following this step, I will reduce the data into themes. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest

that detailed descriptions and themes be developed to describe, classify, and interpret the data

First, I plan to utilize a third party to transcribe the audio recordings. Second, I will verify the

transcriptions by listening to audio recordings concurrently. Third, all transcriptions' data will be

uploaded into NVivo 10 for coding. Next, I will read transcriptions and (a) remove any

identifiable information; (b) assign completers into Group 1, partial completers into Group 2,

special education administrators into Group 3, and gifted administrators into Group 4; and (c) highlight interview questions, including follow-up questions in NVivo and excel.

Phase 1. I will apply open coding by sentence or paragraph. I will use Lee and Ritchotte's (2019), theoretical proposition to inform the development of the initial categories. Lee and Ritchotte's (2019) evaluation framework of the implementation of 2E professional development contains eight focuses: (a) increased knowledge and skills, (b) evolved attitudes, (c) recurring challenges, (d) utilizing a team approach, (e) improved performance, (f) difficulty in measuring impact, (g) improved school culture, and (h) planning for the future.

Next, I will enter the first stage of the constant comparative method by comparing incidents applicable to each category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). When reading a transcript, I will categorize responses and expand the categories concurrently. This will be done when responses do not fit in existing categories or when there is a need to be more specific. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest not developing more than 25–30 final categories of information. Therefore, I will ensure that I do not develop more than the recommended number.

Phase 2. The second stage of the constant comparative method will take place in Phase 2. I will integrate categories and their properties. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) "earlier stages do remain in operation simultaneously throughout the analysis and each provides continuous development to its successive stage until the analysis is terminated" (p. 105). For this reason, I will intentionally complete phase 2 to ensure I am aligned with the constant comparative method.

Phase 3. During this phase, I will develop themes. By reading the research questions and collapsing categories into themes I will ensure the recommended number of categories is not exceeded. Second, I will examine the connections between research questions and categories and

make notes. After examining the relationships among research questions, categories, and possible themes, I will develop the initial themes that address the perceived practices that impact the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education.

Focus Groups Data Collection Approach

A focus group interview will occur following the individual interviews. Online focus groups will allow me to interact with the participants at one centralized time and place with the ability to be flexible in scheduling. It is believed that giving the option to participate via an online platform will accommodate for potential logistical challenges. The focus group interview will allow for the exploration of complex, multilayered concepts from the perspectives of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The use of a focus group interview will allow me to disseminate preliminary findings and obtain feedback that will inform the refinement of the framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The focus group interview prompts will be used to probe further into the shared experiences of novice elementary teachers. One focus group of 3-4 participants will be chosen after the one-on-one interviews.

Focus Group Questions

The focus group interview questions are as follows:

1. Please tell us your name and how many years you have served in your current position. RQ1

2. Please reflect on your classroom teaching experiences. Describe your familiarity from the initial phases to the most recent experiences with 2E students. RQ 1

3. Please reflect on your classroom teaching experiences. Describe your familiarity with the varied approaches to the identification and assessment of 2E minority students. RQ 2

4. What changes did you make to the way you supported 2E minority students after your initial experiences? RQ3

5. Please describe how districts and/or states can support the movement toward equitable representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs? RQ 4

6. How might teacher education programs improve the preparedness for teachers who will identify, assess, and support 2E minority students? RQ 4

7. Are there any other thoughts you had about this topic that you would like to share?

The focus group interview questions aligned with the research questions to gain a deeper understanding of the teachers' experiences. Focus Group Question 1 is designed as an icebreaker to get the participants familiar with each other. Focus Group Questions 2 and 3 will be used as a probe to find out how well prepared the participants felt when they first entered the classroom as teachers. Focus Group Questions 4 through 7 will center around the progression of the participants' efficacy for identifying, assessing, and supporting 2E minority students RQ 3 and RQ 4.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis in qualitative research includes: (1) organizing the data, and (2) reading and memoing. Memoing is a process used during the development of theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers write ideas and data to be later analyzed. Memoing will be an important process during this study because it helped me reflect and learn from the data. Through memoing, I will have the opportunity to look back at the records and transcripts to review emerging concepts and begin to make connections.

Additionally, in this transcendental phenomenological study, I will exercise "case-quintain dialectic" throughout the analysis process (Stake, 2013). While acknowledged, the

issues of the individual cases will be initially set aside and revisited at critical points in an ongoing manner (Stake, 2013). This approach enabled me to focus more attention on the individual cases instead of merging cases quickly into the overarching research question.

Journal Prompts Data Collection Approach

Participants will be asked to respond to three to four writing prompts (three mandatory with one optional). The intent of the writing prompts is to provide an opportunity for clarification and reflection on the part of participants. Writing prompts provide the opportunity for participants to expound on their answers and provide additional context. Kelley et al. (2003) suggest that while open-ended questions are more demanding for participants, they offer the opportunity to obtain useful insight into the topic being studied. This is the third data source being utilized the study. Utilizing multiple sources provides the opportunity for data triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach will help me present the essence of the participants' perspectives related to their experience identifying, assessing, and supporting, 2E minority students (RQs 1 and 2), their perceptions of the impact of current practices used to support 2E minority students (RQ 3), and their proposed organizational changes that can be made to support 2E initiatives (RQ 4).

Journal Prompt Questions

1. What challenges do you encounter while identifying or assessing 2E minority students as compared to 2E students who do not identify in an established minority group? Do you see challenges appearing in the future and if so, what are they? (RQ1 & RQ2)

 2. Describe your feelings regarding the district's policies and procedures when it comes to identifying or assessing 2E minority students. Have these practices impacted the prevalence of 2E minority students in gifted programs? Why or why not? (RQ4)

3. By whom and how do you feel supported in this endeavor of supporting (i.e., identifying, assessing, etc.) 2E minority students in your current setting? How does this compare to previous settings (if any)? What steps do you feel you have to take to effectively improve or sustain the practices that are currently in place? (RQ3)

4. Are there any questions or prompts presented in this study that you would like to expound upon? (optional)

Journal Prompts Data Analysis Plan

These questions will provide the opportunity for participants to reflect in an open format. Kelley (2003) suggests that open-ended questions such as those included in the journal prompts are suitable in instances where the answer(s) are unknown and are typically too numerous to precode. As it relates to this study, the answers to these questions are undesignated and will likely vary from participant to participant as the characteristics or their experiences and work settings are diverse.

Data Synthesis

The goal of this study's data analysis plan is to determine the common themes that emerged from the interview focus groups, and the writing prompts. I plan to enter all of the interviews and focus group transcriptions along with the responses to the writing prompts were entered into the NVivo software program and excel to aid in the identification of themes. All information will be filed on a computer that is password protected. The computer will not be accessed by another user.

Knowledge originates from four core processes (Moustakas, 1994). This will be used as a guide during the data analysis process in this study. Epoche the first core process refers to the ability to refrain from judgment (Moustaks, 1994). Further, it relates to oone'sability to abstain

from the influence of one's perceptions. Creswell and Poth (2018) underscore this idea by asserting that bracketing is useful in this sense. By bracketing my perceptions and ideals, I will be able to approach this study with an open mind while exploring the experiences of the participants.

Moustakas (1994) names "Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction" as the second core process. According to Moustakas (1994), this process relates to overcoming the initial stage related to one's first encounter with something and the related premature perceptions. This process supports a researcher's ability to provide full and rich descriptions. The goal is to present ideas as if the researcher had no prior experience with them.

Imaginative Variation is the third core process named by Moustakas (1994). This describes how researchers might attempt to describe the structural attributes of an experience. In this step, a researcher should list the steps leading up to and following a particular experience. Moustakas (1994) refers to this practice as the ability to capture the "essence" of a particular experience.

Finally, Moustakas (1994) cites synthesis as the concluding step in the core process. At this step, the researcher should concentrate on presenting the essence of the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) describes this as a coalescence of the preceding three steps. Ultimately, transcendental phenomenology is an approach to research that focuses on the phenomenon without the convulsion of the researcher's biases.

Transcendental phenomenological reduction will be utilized to derive the essence of the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). By focusing on the relevant phrases, and the construction of similar groups followed by the congregation of similar themes, I will establish core themes. Using thick and rich writing, I will erect individual descriptions (Creswell & Poth,

2018). Following this step, I will synthesize the information and prepare to code the data.

Following the use of the NVivo software and excel, I will combine the codes into significant

themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Finally, once I have identified all essential themes, I will

reference the indicated theoretical frameworks as a guide while presenting the essence of the

participant's experiences.

Trustworthiness

Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability are all terms related to the

trustworthiness of a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Addressing these four constructs constitutes

the rationale for this study to be deemed trustworthy. These constructs support the various

models of research that are appropriate for the qualitative design. This study utilized the

validation strategies outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018). Validation strategies such as

triangulation, peer data review, rich and thick descriptions, and member checking contribute to

the trustworthiness of a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Credibility

Credibility is established through various constructs such as vividness, thoroughness,

congruence, explicitness, and sensitivity (Whittemore et al., 2001). The fundamental concepts

within a study that demonstrate credibility are (a) authenticity; (b) criticality; and (c) integrity

(Whittemore et al., 2001). Lincoln and Guba (1985) cite member checking or seeking participant

feedback as the "most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Creswell and Poth

(2018) suggest that member checking provides the opportunity for participants to collaborate

with researchers on how the data is interpreted and represented in the study. In this study, I will

collaborate with the participants to interpret the collected information and ensure accuracy.

Further, triangulation of data sources will be used to support credibility. By using different sources, methods, and theories, I will work to corroborate the evidence obtained (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition to triangulation, peer debriefing will provide the opportunity for an external party to check the research that has been completed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this instance, the peer reviewer will provide opportunities for reflection by asking me challenging questions related to my approach to research, methods, and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, by proactively clarifying my position, assumptions, and experiences at the onset of research, I have reinforced my credibility as a researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 1988).

Transferability

Utilizing rich and thick descriptions allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this way, researchers should provide detailed descriptions of the participants and settings that are being explored (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). According to Lincoln & Guba, (1985), transferability relates to the ability of readers to show that the findings from the study may have applicability in other contexts. The conditions for transferability will be established in this study. Detailed open-ended interview questions and related records allowed me to thoroughly explore the lived experiences of the participants to provide thick, rich descriptions of those experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participant demographic data will be provided as well as detailed information about the multiple sites used in the study. Despite research and discussion that is conducive to transferability, the reader must determine the feasibility to do so.

Dependability

Dependability is established by auditing the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Dependability refers to the ability of readers to feel a study's findings are consistent and could be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Researchers can demonstrate dependability through the employment of a detailed description of the procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability for this study will be accomplished through an inquiry audit of the process and the products of the research by the dissertation committee and the Qualitative Research Director at Liberty University. Further, dependability for this study will be ensured through the exploration of various perspectives to present a detailed, multifaceted description of the phenomenon (Reid et al., 2005).

Confirmability

An accurate interpretation of participants that excludes researcher bias, is referred to as confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Despite the inherent presence of researcher bias, I will utilize audit trails to mitigate the impact of such in the present study. Researchers can use audit trails as a strategy to document their thinking process throughout the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Further, audit trails help articulate how a researcher arrives at their current thought or idea (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The triangulation of multiple data sources and data supports the confirmability of the study as well (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Further, Creswell and Poth (2018) refer to reflexivity as the "presence" of the researcher throughout the presented work (p. 45). The ability to appropriately position myself as an effective researcher given my background, work and personal history, cultural identification, and experiences is imperative as it relates to the confirmability of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While I am cognizant of my position and will be explicit in my presentation of such, consumers

of this research will benefit from hearing the voices of the participants as it relates to the described phenomenon at the forefront.

Ethical Considerations

Creswell and Poth (2018) assert that ethical issues can arise during the various stages of research. In the case of this study, negative or critical responses could potentially impact the school districts. While the risks associated with participating in the study are minimal, pseudonyms will be used to describe the participants and their workplaces. I intend to protect participants' privacy as much as possible at every stage of research.

As the participants must be made aware of the nature of the study, all participants will receive a consent form. In addition to providing the consent form, I will offer to explain the contents. This offering will be made to help establish trust and avoid any ethical issues that could potentially arise relating to recruitment and participation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition to IRB approval of the study, I will obtain permission from the sites and informed consent from all of the participants.

Participants' interview transcripts, focus group discussion transcripts and journal responses will be kept in a confidential location. All data and records relating to this study will be stored on a private, password-protected computer. The laptop that will be utilized to collect and analyze data for this study will be equipped with double-layer access for the protection of the related information. A unique password will be required to access the laptop and the file where the raw data about the study is located. The data will only be accessible to the dissertation committee and the researcher. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the confidentiality of the participants and related school districts. Participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Summary

The research design I will utilize in this qualitative study and the corresponding steps that I will take to explore the perceptions of staff that identify, assess, and/or support 2E minority students were presented in this chapter. The participants in this study will be purposefully selected. By exploring participants' perceptions by analyzing interview transcripts, focus group discussion notes, and journal records, I will be able to describe the phenomenon of the impact of various common practices on the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs. These three forms of data will provide the opportunity to triangulate data that was multifaceted. These data sources will enable me to provide a detailed description of the experiences and perceptions of the participants. All participants will be treated with respect and gravity throughout the study. The data collected will be obtained, analyzed, and stored deliberately.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the perceived impact of common identification and assessments used for placement in gifted education programs for 2E minority students in the northern region of Georgia. Common referral, identification, and assessment practices such as teacher referrals, traditional assessments, and reliance on or practices that are resultant of a lack of training may have significantly impacted the representation of 2E minority students in gifted programs (Haines et al., 2020; Harradine, et al., 2014; Peters et al., 2019 & Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Using a phenomenological design, the researcher focused on the experiences of 13 certified educators in the northern region of Georgia. The 13 participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling, having all experienced the phenomena under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This chapter presents the research results of data analysis and will include a description of research participants and responses to the research questions with developing themes. Individual interviews, a focus group, and journal prompts were used to collect data. During the process of collecting and analyzing data, bracketing and member checking were utilized. These practices reduced researcher bias and predispositions that would have influenced the study results (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The chapter concludes with a summary intended to encapsulate the information contained.

Participants

Participants included certified support personnel who have been directly involved in the identification, assessment, instruction, and/or support of an identified 2E minority student. The

13 participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling. The participants were initially recruited with an introductory e-mail that described the study and pertinent information. Following their agreement to participate in the study, qualification was verified a second time to ensure eligibility. Once verified, the participants and researcher reached a mutually convenient time to interview via Zoom or Microsoft TEAMS. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to protect confidentiality in this phenomenological study. The demographic data of each participant are shown in the following table:

Table 1

Participants Professional Experience

Participant	Gender and Ethnicity	Years of Teaching Experience	Current Role	Years in Current Role	Special Education Certified	Gifted Certified
Beverly	F/B	15	Instructional Coach	5	Yes	No
Cheyanne	F/W	15	Assistant Special Education Director	1	Yes	No
Cindy	F/W	19	Teacher: General Education	19	Yes	No*
Evelyn	F/B	24	RTI/SST Specialist	1	Yes	Yes
Gloria	F/B	15	School Improvement Coach	4	Yes	Yes
Hosea	M/H	12	Instructional Coach	3	Yes	No
James	M/B	9	Instructional Support Teacher	3	Yes	No
Jessica	F/W	12	Coordinator	4	Yes	No
Nikki	F/B	12	Assistant Principal	4	Yes	No

Romie	F/B	14	Instructional Coach	3	Yes	Yes
Shaundra	F/B	15	Special Education Director	1	Yes	No
Tara	F/W	16	Exceptional Education Specialist	5	Yes	No
Tina	F/B	23	Instructional Support Teacher	7	Yes	No

Currently pursuing state endorsement in this area

The participants in the study are certified educators who have been directly involved in the identification, assessment, instruction, and/or support of an identified 2E minority student. The participants' ages ranged from 28-54. This dynamic group of participants collectively represented 14 school districts located in the northern region of Georgia. All the participants have been employed in at least two different school districts in the target area. Additionally, they have worked in similar fields (i.e., special education, gifted education, response-to-intervention (RTI), or student support team (SST) during their entire education tenure. In Georgia, the stated roles and fields are typically associated with identifying, assessing, and supporting 2E minority students.

Beverly

Beverly is a 45-year-old Instructional Coach. Her main responsibilities include supporting teachers' instructional practices in the interrelated setting at four different middle schools serving 6-8 grades. Beverly serves as a mentor for incoming Instructional Coaches and provides professional development aimed at developing and supporting Specifically Designed Instruction (SDI). Beverly has assisted in identifying and assessing 2E minority students by providing support for the classroom teachers and during her time as a special education teacher.

The demographics of her assigned schools are diverse and include mostly minorities (Beverly's Interview, November 4, 2022).

Cindy

Cindy is a 54-year-old first-grade teacher. She is the only participant who provides daily direct instruction to general education students. While she has over 19 years of experience, she has been at her current school for three years. She stated that this school has required her to "adjust instructionally." Her current school is designated as a district-supported charter, therefore granting access to support (i.e., guidance, policies, procedures, etc.) at the county level. Cindy shared that she has had the opportunity to participate in the referral process for 2E minority students. Cindy is currently enrolled in a state-approved endorsement program that will add the gifted in-field certification to her teaching license. She has worked in similar positions in two districts in the northern region of Georgia (Cindy's Interview, October 20, 2022).

Cheyenne

Cheyenne is a 37-year-old special education leader in her district. Before her newly assumed role as an assistant Special Education Director, she served as the special education department chair at a high school located in her current school district. Cheyenne is one of three participants that have earned a bachelor's degree in education and has been in education her entire career. Cheyenne's primary professional responsibilities include overseeing and providing guidance to all the exceptional education programs within the county. These include Special Education, Gifted Education, English as a Second Language, and Deaf/Hard of Hearing. She also carries a caseload as she only person in her district with a certification in Deaf/Hard of Hearing (Cheyenne's Interview, October 20, 2022).

Evelyn

Evelyn is a 52-year-old Response-to-Intervention (RTI)/Student Support Team (SST) specialist in a moderate to large size school district. Before becoming an educator in Georgia, Evelyn worked as an educator for 15 years in New York. She has been in her current role for less than a year. Evelyn has held many leadership positions in both Special and Gifted Education over the span of her career and was an Instructional Coach for three years before her current role. Evelyn holds a dual certification in both Gifted and Special Education. Her current responsibilities include ensuring that schools are supported while serving and remediating the needs of learners before eligibility for exceptional service (i.e., Gifted Education, Special Education, English as a Second Language (ESOL), etc.). This is generally accomplished by providing professional development and direct modeling for classroom teachers. She currently provides district-level support for two clusters of schools, which totals 27 schools (Evelyn's Interview, October 20, 2022).

Gloria

Gloria, 43 years old, has been a School Improvement Coach for four years. She is assigned to buildings that serve students with exceptionalities in program classes (i.e., Autism or Intellectually Disabled) that use a cluster-based model. In her district, this model is designed to support similar classes (i.e., several Autism Support classes) within one building. Her experience spans both primary and secondary levels. Before this position, Gloria worked as a special education teacher in a neighboring school district. Her former school district is also located in the northern region of Georgia. Gloria has experience with this phenomenon both as a professional and as a parent of a 2E minority. The answers provided for this study were centered on her professional experiences (Gloria's Interview, October 17, 2022).

Hosea

Hosea is a 35-year-old Hispanic male who currently works as a School Improvement Coach. He now supports the instructional practices of inter-related special education teachers at three separate middle schools. Before this role, Hosea worked as an exceptional education leader in the county just northeast of his current school district. Both districts are included in the northern region of Georgia. Hosea is a formally trained educator, having earned his bachelor's degree in education and a master's in Spanish (Hosea's Interview, October 19, 2022).

James

James is a 30-year-old Instructional Support Teacher who has been in his current role for three years. Before this role, James was a classroom teacher for nine years. James was a formerly trained teacher who has been in education for the duration of his career. He has worked in two school districts that are a part of the northern region of Georgia. This is his second tenure in his current district, as he previously resigned because he felt the school district was "unfair." He returned to the current school district because he was offered his current leadership position. His current role is considered a promotion, making him eligible to transfer districts and assume his new position. His primary responsibilities are to provide school-based leadership to the special education teachers in his building, conduct fidelity checks of related special education paperwork and provide professional development as needed (James's Interview, October 24, 2022).

Jessica

Jessica is a 42-year-old practitioner with a varied background in education. While she currently serves as a coordinator in the exceptional education department of her school district, she has also served as a classroom teacher, a behavior interventionalist, and an instructional coach. Jessica has been involved in identifying, assessing, and supporting twice-exceptional

minority students in three moderate-sized school districts in the northern region of Georgia. Jessica is a 'career-changer', having first worked as a journalist. She completed an alternative state certification as part of her preparation to become a teacher. Her primary professional responsibility is to administratively support the instruction components of exceptional education programs for students who receive services in a designated program setting. Some of these settings include Autism levels 1 and 2 classrooms, Autism levels 3 and 4 classrooms, mild intellectual disabilities classrooms, moderate disabilities classrooms, and severe/profound disabilities classrooms (Jessica's Interview, October 18, 2022).

Nikki

Nikki is a 52-year-old assistant principal at a school in the largest school district in the state of Georgia. The school district where she is employed is currently the most diverse in Georgia. While she has served in this role for four years, this is her first year at her current location, an elementary school that has been deemed a 'turn-around school'. Initially, Nikki studied Psychology and worked in the social work field before entering education. While pursuing a master's degree in special education, Nikki worked as a substitute teacher and paraprofessional. Once certified, Nikki served as a Special Education classroom teacher for 12 years. Nikki currently serves as the special education and gifted administrator in her building. Nikki has experience with 2E minority students in two districts located in the northern region of Georgia (Nikki's Interview, October18, 2022).

Romie

Romie is a 41-year-old Instructional Coach. Her primary responsibilities include supporting the instructional practices of teachers in the interrelated setting at three different schools. Her caseloads consist of middle schools, which in her district include 6-8 grades.

Additionally, she provides professional development aimed at developing and implementing Specifically Designed Instruction (SDI). Romie has assisted with identifying and assessing 2E minority students by providing support for the classroom teachers and during her time as a special education teacher. All her assigned schools have a fair representation of minorities. However, the student bodies at each school are mostly Caucasian (Romie's Interview, October 20, 2022).

Shaundra

Shaundra is a 42-year-old Special Education Director at a charter school. State charter schools are recognized and treated administratively as separate school districts in Georgia. However, Shaundra's schools receive "limited" oversight from the school district where her school is located. Shaundra has experience teaching 2E minority students directly and supervising and supporting teachers tasked with identifying, assessing, and supporting 2E minority students. Her experience doing so spans three districts, all located in the northern region of Georgia. Shaundra also works as a professor at a state university in the teacher preparation department (Shaundra's Interview, October 20, 2022).

Tara

Tara is a 39-year-old specialist in her district's exceptional education department. Before this role, she worked as an Autism teacher for students identified as level 3 or 4 at an elementary school. She is responsible for providing compliance support for two clusters within the county. These clusters are comprised of approximately 28 schools in total. Tara is often asked to be a district representative in IEP meetings, acting as a facilitator when parents and schools do not agree with the services or settings being offered to a student. Both her teaching experience and leadership experience were completed in clusters that are often described as 'affluent' and

typically have a demographic that is dissimilar to the southern portion of the school district (Tara's Interview, October 18, 2022).

Tina

Tina is a 51-year-old educator who currently serves as an Instructional Support Teacher (IST) at her school. Her professional responsibilities include supporting ISTs by leading the administration of special education services at the school level. Her school has received several accolades from the district for improving test scores measured by end-of-year assessments. Her routine tasks include supervising special education staff (teachers and paraprofessionals), ensuring the accuracy of state report records, and providing guidance regarding compliance components. Tina became an educator after first working as a manager. Her undergraduate degree is in business; however, her master's and specialist degrees are both in education (Tina's Interview, October 19, 2022).

Results

The purpose of this qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how inconsistencies in identification, singular reliance on teacher referrals, assessment practices that do not account for ethnic or cultural variances, or ineffective support models may have an impact on the prevalence of 2E minority students' placement in special education instead of gifted education programs in the northern region of Georgia. The data were analyzed using individual interviews, a focus group, and journal prompts to compile data. No participants withdrew from this study. While all the participants completed an interview, three were invited to participate in a focus group based on their ability to provide rich and thick responses (Moustakas, 1994). Nine participants completed a journal prompt. Using the epoché and phenomenological reduction methods data collection and analysis were completed

(Moustakas, 1994). The size of the study, coupled with the researcher's inclination and expertise of the researcher made manual coding an appropriate choice for this study (Saldana, 2021).

The transcribed interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts were read twice to ensure accuracy and validity. Member checking was used when the response was unclear, or the researcher needed further clarification. This technique reduced researcher bias presuppositions (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction reduced the presumptions associated with the initial data collection process (Moustakas, 1994).

The statements provided by participants were examined for relevant phrases, then the construction of similar groups, followed by the congregation of similar themes, allowing for the establishment of core themes (Moustakas, 1994). The constant comparative method allowed me to compare incidents applicable to each category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Responses were categorized, and categories were expanded simultaneously and concurrently. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Moustakas, 1994). As a result of the analysis of the interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts, initial codes were developed into open codes. Following the establishment of open codes, axial coding was used to determine which codes are most important (central to the main idea). Connections were made between the codes (Moustakas, 1994). A total of three primary themes and six subthemes emerged from open and axial coding. Table 2 presents the themes and subthemes for all triangulated data sources.

Table 2

Themes, Subthemes, and Codes for all Triangulated Data Sources

Theme 1: Bias	
Subthemes	Codes
Practitioner Perception	Teacher Referrals, unawareness, awareness, favoritism, behavioral compliance, stereotypes

Institutional Barriers	Behavior, no collaboration, separate professionals, co-existing, considering various displays of giftedness, creative, advocate, collaboration
Theme 2: Culturally Responsive	
Traditional Assessments	Bias, cultural considerations, accommodations, best practices, inherent bias, perspective, unfamiliar, inappropriate, universal screener, vocabulary, exposure
Equity	Accommodations, intentional scheduling, context, multidisciplinary, dynamic manifestations,
Theme 3: Training/Professional Development	
College Preparation	No mention, Career-Changer, Alternative Certification, how students learn, training
District Provided Professional Development	Not offered, Not advertised, Awareness, Data, Examples, psychological reports, social-emotional, accommodations, training, best practices, intellect vs. how students learn, the impact of COVID-19

The codes listed involved aspects of exclusionary factors (i.e., the presence of a disability automatically excludes the potential for giftedness), behavior (i.e., making the student 'inappropriate' for referral), and cultural considerations (i.e., teachers that may have different cultural norms than potential 2E minority students, thus impacting expectations). The participants' responses and codes indicate that the common practice of teacher referrals is grounded in this theory of cognitive dissonance (Dimitriadis, 2016; Hoth et al., 2017; McGowan et al., 2016; Rothenbusch et al., 2016). Due to a perceived absence of relevant training and professional development regarding 2E minority students, participants found that these factors' effect was exacerbated through their experiences (Lee & Ritchotte, 2018).

Participants' responses to the interview questions that focused on their perception of the identification practices within their district revealed many codes. As shown in Table 3, two codes, teacher emotions and impacted by perceptions and feelings appeared across responses provided by all teachers.

Table 3

Codes to the Participant's Perception of Identification Practices

Codes	Student(s)
Teacher Emotions	All Participants
Parent Input	Cheyenne, Gloria, Jessica, Tina
Impacted by Perceptions/Feelings	All Participants
Subjective	Cheyenne, Evelyn, Hosea, James, Nikki, Beverly, Romie, Tina
Impacted by Cultural Awareness	Evelyn, Hosea, James, Jessica, Nikki, Romie, Tara
Compliance Based	Shaundra, Tara, Tiffany
Dissonance	Cheyenne, Shaundra, Romie, Beverly
Impacted by Behavior	Cindy, Evelyn, Nikki, Shaundra, Tiffany
Completed in Isolation (Separate and apart from other departments such as special education)	Cheyenne, Evelyn, Hosea, Jessica, James, Nikki, Romie, Tara, Tina, Tiffany, Beverly
Inconsistent Process	Evelyn, Gloria, Nikki, Romie, Beverly
Exclusive Access	Evelyn, Gloria, James, Romie, Beverly

Bias

The theme of *bias* emerged from an analysis of the individual interview questions, focus group questions and journal prompt responses. This research defines bias as the act of allowing one's feelings and perceptions to control their professional practices, whether intrinsic or extrinsic (Ricciardi et al., 2020). This theme was formed from the following subthemes: feelings, emotions, and perception. In the interviews, the participants were asked to share their perception of common identification methods (i.e., teacher referrals, universal screeners, etc.) and other

relevant practices used, such as universal screeners. Table 4 describes the overall perception of

the current of identifying 2E minority students. All 13 participants cited perception either on

behalf of the teacher, parent, or both as an impacting factor on referrals for 2E minority students.

Table 4

Descriptions of the Participants' Professional Settings and Perception of the Process

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Demographic of School(s)	Perceptions of Current Process*
Beverly	African American	Majority Minority	Unfair/Not Equitable
Cheyenne	Caucasian	Equal Representation Of Caucasian and Minority Students	Unfair/Not Equitable
Cindy	Caucasian	Majority Minority	Unfair/Not Equitable
Evelyn	African-American	Majority Caucasian	Unfair/Not Equitable
Gloria	African American	Majority Caucasian-4 schools Majority Minority-1 school	Unfair
Hosea	Hispanic	Majority Caucasian-1school Majority Minority-2 schools	Unfair/Not Equitable
James	African-American	Majority Minority	Unfair/Not Equitable
Nikki	African-American	Majority Minority	Unfair/Not Equitable
Romie	African-American	Majority Minority	Unfair/Not Equitable
Shaundra	African-American	Majority Minority	Unfair/Not Equitable
Tara	Caucasian	Majority Caucasian	Fair/Equitable
Tina	African-American	Majority Minority	Unfair/Not Equitable

Relates to the current process of identifying 2E minority students for gifted education

Practitioner Perceptions

The subtheme *perceptions* describe the dynamics that relate to the perceived impact of one's sentiments on their practice and professional actions. This subtheme was derived from participants' experiences. In this study, participants were asked questions that allowed them to indicate whether they perceived the practitioners' emotions and/or feelings had a detrimental effect on the identification, assessment, or support of 2E minority students. Participants were able to describe the connection between a practitioner's actions and their perceived emotions and feelings. Exploring the participants' experiences in this way allowed for the delineation between the perceived impact of all the investigated aspects. During the interview and journal prompt, participants were asked about their perceptions of common identification practices such as teacher referrals. The provided responses allow for the application of feelings and emotions through the subtheme of *practitioner perception*.

Questions that centered around practitioner autonomy were presented to further explore participants' perceptions of commonly used methods to identify 2E minority students. The varied description of the identification process led to the required research questions being extemporized, making them meaningful concerning the participant's experiences. Information was gathered about teacher referrals, evaluation practices, stakeholder involvement, and consistency of practice.

All of the participants explicitly stated the term 'bias' at some point during the data collection process. While all the participants mentioned that teacher referrals could be biased, Cheyenne, Hosea, Tara, Evelyn, James, and Romie also related the term to the assessments that are used. Shaundra, Gloria, and Jessica stated that they believe the absence of formal district policies and practices encourages bias across the clusters of schools they support. Gloria, who

has related experience in two school districts that are in the target geographical area of this study, described her experience as follows:

> It [referring to 2E minority students for gifted education] can be based on just bias. It could just be looked at as like, you know, hey, I like this child. So, let's test this child without really looking deep into the data. (Gloria, Interview, October 17, 2022).

Nikki recalled an incident that was directly impacted by bias. She shared the following encounter in which practitioner bias directly overrode the common practice of using scores on universal screeners to identify students for gifted education:

> We did have several instances where the gifted teacher would say, hey, I noticed this kid's score is showing that he's in the gifted range and the teacher was like, oh no, but he's not motivated; he doesn't complete his work in my class. So, I know he's not going to complete his work in a gifted setting (Nikki, Interview, October 18, 2022).

Nikki later added that this often occurred for 2E minority students. Cheyenne, who is charged with supporting the practices of special education and gifted teachers, shared the following:

> The problems that I can see with that is you're gonna have that implicit bias of the teacher; it's gonna have, you know, their idea of what a gifted child is, what that looks like, how that translates to the academic achievement in their classroom. They're [teachers] gonna have a perception of that student, and in their mind, does it fit into that gifted box? It's gonna be a question (Cheyenne, Interview, October 18, 2022).

At times the responses offered did not contain the word 'bias'; however, given the description of the participant's experience, one could reasonably infer that it occurred due to apparent subjectivity. This was especially true when participants described experiences that appeared to be based on a single method of qualification. Despite clear eligibility criteria for

gifted placement as provided by the Georgia Department of Education, participants shared

experiences that detailed a reliance on singular measures for qualification into the respective

gifted education programs (Georgia Department of Education, 2022). Table 5 provides the

eligibility criteria for gifted education currently used in Georgia.

Table 5.

Eligibility Criteria for Gifted Placement as Stipulated by Georgia State Regulations

Category	Option A	Option B
	Student must have a qualifying score in the mental ability AND achievement categories.	**Student must qualify in <u>three of the four</u> categories.**
Mental Ability	➤ Grades K-2 99th% percentile composite score on a nationally age normed mental ability test ➤ Grades 3-12 $\geq 96^{th}$ percentile composite score on a nationally age normed mental ability test	➤ Grades K-12 $\geq 96^{th}$ percentile composite OR appropriate component score on a nationally age normed mental ability tests
Achievement	➤ Grades K-12 $\geq 90^{th}$ percentile Total Reading, Total Math, or Complete Battery on a nationally normed achievement test	➤ Grades K-12 $\geq 90^{th}$ percentile Total Reading, Total Math, or Complete Battery on a nationally normed achievement test ➤ Grades K – 12 Superior product/performance with a score ≥ 90 on a scale of 1-100, as evaluated by a panel of three or more qualified evaluators
Creativity	➤ Evaluation data required	➤ Grades K-12 $\geq 90^{th}$ percentile on composite score on a nationally normed creativity test ➤ Grades K-12 Rating scales used to qualify student creativity must equate to the 90th percentile ➤ Grades K-12 Superior product/performance with a score ≥ 90 on a scale of 1-100, as evaluated by a panel of three or more qualified evaluators
Motivation	➤ Evaluation data required	➤ Grades 6-12 Two-year average of a 3.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale in regular core subject of mathematics, English/language arts, social studies, science, and full year world languages. (See pg. 30 for add'l information) ➤ Grades K-12 Rating scales used to qualify student motivation must equate to the 90th percentile ➤ Grades K – 12 Superior product/performance with a score ≥ 90 on a scale of 1-100, as evaluated by a panel of three or more qualified evaluators

Georgia Department of Education (2022)

Institutional Barriers

Many participants offered their experiences specifically related to the perceived impact of institutional barriers that appear biased. So much so that it emerged as a subtheme. Examples include the enforcement of exclusionary factors and teacher referrals. Nikki's response offers an example of a 2E minority student's eligibility for special education being used as a disqualifier for a 2E minority student:

> I've come across three or four students during the time that I served as the AP over gifted services that were twice exceptional and what I was told, and I don't know if it was right or wrong, but what I was told by my principal was that special education services trump gifted services. So basically, if the student was found eligible for special education services, there really wasn't enough time in the day to serve special education and gifted at the same time. (Nikki, Interview, October 18, 2022).

The idea that an educational institution will immediately eliminate a student based on the feasibility of the school's master schedule to accommodate dual services is a practical example of the institutional barrier. Another barrier relates to exceptional education departments working in silos. All the participants stated that their district's special education and gifted education departments work in isolation. Cheyenne shared that she would, "like to see more collaboration between the two [special education and gifted education]." She continued stating, "ideally it would be great if we could all be the same team, but in reality, having collaboration between the two teams would be something that I think would be very beneficial to support the student and the whole Child, a 2E minority specifically" (Cheyenne, Interview, October 20, 2022).

The discussion during the focus group revealed another institutional barrier related to fiscal responsibility. The participants in the focus group stated that the full-time equivalent (FTE)

associated with various service models is often considered when determining the opportunities affordd to students. This finding aligns with the experiences of other participants in which they shared that special education services "trumps" gifted services and that there "is not enough time left in the day." Essentially, institutions are concerned with being compensated for all services offered to students, in turn impacting the presence of 2E minority students in gifted education (Pas et al., 2020).

The rich responses provided by participants clearly illustrated the perceived impact bias as it relates to teacher referrals. When asked, Tara who was the only participant that shared she felt the process was of identifying students for gifted qualification was "fair" for all students. Despite her initial stance, when asked directly about the impact of teacher referrals as a singular identification method, she answered that it could be "A little subjective." (Tara, Interview, October 18, 2022). Shaundra, immediately responded, "so it's subjective, but that's how we do it" (Shaundra, Interview, October 20, 2022).

Due to her apparent displeasure with the identification process, Shaundra was asked to expound on her response. When asked about any potential issues surrounding the practice of singularly relying on teacher referrals to identify 2E minority students, Cheyenne offered the following:

> So when you rely only on teacher referrals, you're kinda gonna limit yourself, you know, looking through the eyes of that particular educator who already has their own preconceived ideas about what gifted students look like, what services they [2E minority students] should be offered. So when you're not using multiple sources of information, you are gonna kind of run into some problems that way." (Cheyenne, Interview, October 20, 2022).

Conversely, another participant shared her experience with the utilization of referrals that tend to serve as barriers. Cheyenne shared:

> We also have the ones [2E minority students] who are automatically reported based on their test scores when they score incredibly high percentiles meaning they should be automatically referred, but in general, it's usually a teacher recommendation reaches out to the parents or a parent might reach out to us if they believe their child needs gifted services. (Cheyenne, Interview, October 20, 2022).

This finding illustrates that often an objective practice of using test scores to refer 2E minority students can succumb to a subjective practice. Inconsistencies in practices serve as institutional barriers that 2E minority students must overcome. The detailed experienced gave valuable insight regarding the phenomenon under study and how institutional barriers can often create additional hurdles for 2E minority students to clear.

Culturally Responsive Practices

As a result of the responses given during individual interviews, the focus group, and journal prompts, a second theme, *cultural responsiveness,* emerged. Like bias, all the participants mentioned this theme at some point in their responses. In this study, cultural responsiveness refers to an acknowledgment of the disconnect between the culture of practitioners and the students; and the resultant negative effect it has on the representation of 2E minority students in gifted education.

Traditional Assessments

This study intended to focus on the impact of common assessment and identification practices on 2E minority students in gifted education. In this study, minority refers to all underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. It is important to note that other factors could impact

the experiences of practitioners attempting to appropriately identify and assess 2E minority

students. Without prompt, practitioners offered experiences that were based on the identification

of 2E minority students but also included the consideration of other needs. For example, in the

case of a student who is a minority and an English Language Learner (ELL), the issues can be

confounded (Owens et al., 2016; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019).

Cheyenne offered the following perspective:

> So not just like an ethnicity, but maybe ELL. Also, maybe socio-economic,
>
> anything that would make them exceptional, but how might you modify or adapt
>
> the current process of identifying and assessing students that fit that category? For
>
> students who would be twice exceptional, sprinkling in the idea that there are
>
> some considerations that may be related to their minority status as well
>
> (Cheyenne, Conversation, October 20, 2022).

Many participants felt that using traditional assessments has been problematic and

detrimental to an equitable representation of 2E minority students in gifted education.

Participants' experiences aligned with prior research that suggests that traditional assessments

are not culturally responsive and contain an inherent bias; which contributes to an inequitable

representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs (Yaluma &Tyner, 2021;

National Association for Gifted Children, 2021). Jessica provided an example of how traditional

assessments have excluded some students based on variances in culture:

> There are gonna be things that they're [2E minority students] not aware of. I can just
>
> think of one example of when a student was tested for gifted services when he moved
>
> from Detroit here to Georgia. He came from a very impoverished background. I
>
> remember him telling me one of the questions on his gifted assessment was something

about a saucer that you put under a coffee cup. He said he didn't have that growing up. I

think he was maybe like eight years old. Once the person who was giving the assessment

explained, you know, it is you put your coffee cup on it. I remember he was just like, oh

so you can put little snacks on the plate as you can drink and eat. And I think that's one of

those things where it's just like at least, you know, if we're looking at kids who are

minorities and who are lower socioeconomic status, just being fair in the assessment

process" (Jessica, Interview, October 18, 2022).

James's journal prompt response offered a similar stance. He shared his experience with the

impact of traditional assessments and 2E minority students.

It is my belief that a two-pronged assessment should be utilized to assess students'

academic achievement and intellectual abilities in effort to effectively identify twice-

exceptional students. Oftentimes, when you assess a child with a standardized academic

achievement test, you are administering a norm-referenced assessment that ultimately

compares them with their same-aged peers on a national level. However, since the United

States is a melting point with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, this tends to

create racial and cultural basis when results are being interpreted (October 26, 2022).

The focus group provided an opportunity to delve deeper into this theme. In addition to

the recognition of various traditional assessments as problematic for 2E minority students, school

culture surfaced as a contributing factor. All the participants in the focus group found that the

culture within their schools is not accepting of 2E minority students. This finding helped clarify

that in addition to assessment tools, most cultures within schools are not accepting. Romie

provided the following example during the focus group:

I think we need to have the conversation about inclusivity. All of our schools make a big

deal about *Exceptional Children's Week*. Isn't giftedness an exceptionality? Why are they

not included? It gives the perception from the onset that the two can't co-exist.

Equity

In addition to this consideration, participants in the focus group explored the disparities

that many 2E minority students experience relating to testing practices. Romie, Beverly, and

Gloria each shared instances in which they have encountered various subgroups of students

being afforded the opportunity to access test preparation courses prior to being assessed for

gifted services. Romie went in depth about her experience, sharing that many families would pay

for Saturday test prep courses. As this opportunity is not generally extended to all students before

taking assessments for gifted programs, many 2E minority students become increasingly

suspectable to inequitable practices such as biased assessments and referrals. For this study,

these considerations will be included as the need to institute and follow culturally responsive

procedures and practices.

Training and Professional Development

After a review of the participant's responses, it became apparent that participants

perceived the lack of training and professional development as a significant factor causing the

disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education. This finding leads to

this component becoming a theme. Participants used phrases such as awareness, training issues,

and lack of professional development to describe their experiences with this theme. The impact

of inadequate training and development was prevalent across all three data sources.

College Preparation

A subtheme of *college preparation* emerged as a result of data analysis. In this study, the term training refers to pre-service training and relates to experiences during one's preparation to become a teacher. The phrase professional development will be reserved for opportunities afforded after the participant becomes employed as a practitioner. Despite the professional responsibilities and scope of work the participants represent, none had any formal training before assuming their roles. None of the participants were trained in the area of 2E before assuming their roles. Most were career changers and did not have an opportunity to explore this topic before being responsible for the identification or assessment of 2E minority students.

The three participants that did receive their undergraduate degrees in education indicated their education did not include any courses or training related to 2E. Participants shared experiences that illustrated an emphasis on special education but excluded gifted education. Romie shared that she "had no idea about it" (Romie, Interview, October 20, 2022). James shared a similar experience stating, "it just wasn't talked about" (James, Interview, October 24, 2022). Given these and other similar responses, the experiences of practitioners were impacted by a lack of training in the area of identifying, assessing, and supporting 2E students.

District Provided Professional Development

Despite pre-service training that was devoid of pedagogy about 2E minority students, participants experienced another missed opportunity to gain an understanding of 2E minority students. When asked about the professional development she received in preparation for her current role as an administrative leader assigned to support the gifted and special education programs in her school, she described it as follows, "we had like a one-day workshop, and I was kind of told that I was the gifted AP [assistant principal]." As a follow-up to her answer, Nikki

was asked to describe the one-day training. According to Nikki, "The gifted training that I received was pretty much talking about the different ways that students could qualify for gifted services." When asked if there were any other topics explored, Nikki responded "no" (Nikki, Interview, October 18, 2022).

In addition to asking about their training and professional development experiences, participants were asked what components should be present in a comprehensive professional development program designed to support practitioners responsible for identifying, assessing, and/or supporting 2E students. In response, Cheyenne stated that there should be a "focus on probably changing a mindset of an educator because they do have, you know, that dissonance, but if you're gifted, then you're not struggling, that is not necessarily the case." (Cheyenne, Interview, October 20, 2022).

Shaundra offered a similar sentiment, sharing that a good starting point for training and development in school districts is to first focus on awareness. She expounded, stating:

> I think we're still at the stereotype of your either this or that. So this idea that I can be gifted and have a disability does not enter the minds of most administrators. Most wonder what we do with him [a 2E minority student] now that he's a fish out of water (Shaundra, Interview, October 20, 2022).

All the participants expressed a need to influence the culture surrounding 2E minority students in their district. Hosea shared the following in his journal prompt response:

> Perhaps, there should be a re-examination of making a more comprehensive and inclusive way to ensure that all schools are pushing students to reach their full potential. Another place to start would be for staff to receive diversity and cultural awareness training. This might educate those who are not fully aware of how to reach minority students effectively

and truly understand the entire spectrum of what gifted education entails. (Hosea, Journal Prompt Response, October 24, 2022).

Building upon the idea that awareness must be established, it is clear that participants want to tackle the issues straightforwardly. Shaundra finds that asking practitioners about their apprehensions will be helpful. She posed questions such as, "What's your frustration with these students? Do they affect your test scores?" She continued sharing that an intentional effort must be made to "deal with their emotions and what they're reacting to because everybody's bringing something and they've had an experience" (Shaundra, Interview, October 20, 2022).

It is important to note that several participants alluded to the inadequacies that pertain to their settings. In Georgia, there are approximately 115 charter schools, with many located in this study's target region. These settings are required to provide equitable and appropriate educational services to all students regardless of disability status. Despite this requirement, charter schools are often given autonomy to waive state-required teacher certification requirements. Shaundra, an employee at a charter school located within a local school district, expressed her concern about the ability of those she supports to train and develop employees appropriately and subsequently service 2E minority students.

Shaundra shared the following:

Charter schools in this climate are not dealing with the most skills or training who will be able to see through that. They're getting the teacher who is getting on-the-job training, so they're not even, they're not even going to pick up on it" (Shaundra, Interview, October 20, 2022).

Outlier Data and Findings

This section contains three astounding findings. The first of which is behavior. Nine of the 13 participants explicitly stated the word "behavior," with each of them offering rich descriptions of experiences in which a 2E minority student's behavior clearly impeded their referral and/or assessment process, which was needed for a gifted education program. The literature review included studies that alluded to such by way of perception; however, none presented it in an indubitable manner (Baldwin et al, 2015; Cain et al., 2019). The number of participants who shared experiences of 2E minority students being denied access to gifted services because of their behavior was surprising. For this research, over 75% of the participants recognize student behavior as a leading cause for the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs.

Student Behavior

During the interview, Nikki interjected and stated that she wanted to "tell it like it is." After a pause, she offered the following:

> They felt like those kids [2E minority students], many of them were not motivated to do the work, so that kind of just squashed any chance of them going for gifted classes. I distinctly remember a student, and he was a special needs student, but his behavior kept him from being allowed to go to the gifted classes. The teacher just said that "no, I've seen his behavior; he's not going to come to my class and disrupt the class and keep the other kids from learning." So, he wasn't allowed to go to those gifted classes.
> He pretty much was served in um special ed in resource (Nikki, Interview, October 18, 2022).

Shaundra offered a similar perspective. During her interview, she mentioned the impact of a student's behavior, offering that teachers often focus on "Things that have nothing to do with intellect but more to do with how they're learning." Shaundra continued finding that instead, practitioners should focus on their efforts by asking, "are they [2E minority students] bored and not intellectually stimulated? That question never gets asked" (Shaundra, Interview, October 20, 2022).

Nikki finds, "if the student's behavior is not good, they're going to automatically feel like that kid is not going to get in the gifted class and work up to their potential" (Nikki, Interview, October 18, 2022).

Parent Dissonance

The second surprising finding was the mention of the impact of dissonance on the parent's behalf. Jessica, Evelyn, Cindy, Gloria, Nikki, and Tina mentioned the negative ramifications of a parent of 2E minority student being unaware of the process or rights that should be afforded to them. In her journal prompt response, Nikki shared, "Many parents, especially parents of color, don't understand twice exceptional. I have had parents tell me they didn't realize their child could be gifted if they were in special education" (October 26, 2022). Jessica offered the following similar experience unsolicited:

> When I was a classroom teacher, I met two students who were minorities, and you know, being a teacher and assessing them, I'm just like, "this kid's got something special." But in talking with the parents, the idea of gifted gets shot down. Then working, in my previous district, working with our guidance counselor on getting these students tested, but when I approached the kids' parents about being twice-exceptional, they had no idea, and they were just under the impression of, well, my child's in Special Ed, so this can't be possible.

I had to explain, you know, what it was and that kids can be many things (Jessica,

Interview, October 18, 2022).

Jessica went on to share that consent to evaluate was never obtained because the parent

could not understand how her child could be gifted if there was indeed already a disability

identified. In this instance, parental dissonance served as the main barrier for the 2E minority

student to be served in gifted education.

Shaundra recalled a similar but contrasted experience where parental dissonance

impacted the inclusion of a 2E minority student in special education. She described the instance

as follows:

> Even during the gifted process, I've struggled with parents because somehow,
>
> when children are twice exceptional, they don't want to touch the I.E.P. part. The
>
> parent was scared to talk about the disability part and only wanted to focus on
>
> gifted eligibility, like the parent only wanted the [gifted] specialist to talk
>
> (Shaundra, Interview, October 20, 2022).

In this instance, where the parent of a 2E minority student was aware of eligibility for

both gifted and special education, the parent chose to only focus on the gifted, not the offering to

support the student's deficits. Even though this example does not necessarily serve as a barrier to

the students participating in gifted education, it does provide an example of how practitioners

face challenges when working to serve the dual needs associated with 2E minority students.

Researchers find that an unsupported deficit can impact the success of a 2E minority student in a

gifted education program (Ng et al., 2016).

To help alleviate the issues associated with working with and supporting parents of 2E minority participants suggested that awareness training may be beneficial. Jessica offered her idea of how to best support parents:

> I think definitely building that awareness, we have parent workshops a couple of times a year. I know special ed is a part of that, but I don't know if gifted education is part of that, and I think that would be a good start to kind of get out in the community and let parents be aware that this is something that's out there and these are profiles of these kids, and you know, here's the process if, you know, if you feel your kids a fit and here's how to talk with your [student's] teacher (Jessica, Interview, October 18, 2022).

Colvin (2008) suggests that a contributing reason for the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs is a missing parental partnership and advocacy between the school and home as well as student and family choice. This view aligns with the experiences presented by participants who find parental dissonance to be a factor impeding the equitable representation of 2E minority students in gifted programs.

Romie's journal response aligns with Colvin (2008):

I do know from experience that having conversations with parents and fellow teachers about the possibility of dual exceptionality is helpful. Educating parents about this possibility can lead to the parents asking questions and advocating for their children when the teachers/school does not push the envelope in identifying these students, especially for those students who exhibit significant behaviors (Romie, Journal Prompt Response, October 25, 2022).

Impact of COVID-19

The final outlier was found as a result of the robust responses that cited the COVID-19 pandemic as a major contributor to the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education. Researchers find that most school districts are experiencing an extreme shortage of teachers as a result of COVID-19 (Cormier et al., 2022). As it relates to the identification, referral, and assessment of 2E minority students, the issue is further compounded given an even smaller pool of qualified staff (Cormier et al., 2022; Haines et al., 2020 & Harmon-Jones et al., 2015). Participants shared experiences that emphasized how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the already evident issues. It is important to note that practitioners felt that the enforced restrictions, such as remote learning that resulted from the pandemic, "leveled the playing field" and eliminated bias related to how various 2E students (e.g., the impact of social awkwardness was mitigated).

Shaundra shared the following experience:

For my teachers and students, I think it made the process easier because now you can cut down on some of the stuff like ruling them out because of how they act. Like, everyone is on the computer, so what's causing them not to be referred now? (Shaundra, Interview, October 20, 2022).

Despite the positive experiences shared by participants, many shared how the COVID-19 pandemic has further widened the gap of opportunity for 2E minority students. Jessica shared:

I think with the pandemic, we're probably gonna see even more challenges because there were a lot of kids who were at home, and maybe they did make gains in Reading, but then they fell behind in other areas. So I think we really need to look at how can we

provide services to these students and hit both of these areas and not what feels like penalize them as a result of the pandemic.

Summarily, the participants that offered their experiences on the topic feel that the focus on identifying and assessing 2E minority students may become even weaker in the coming years. Shaundra shared that she has seen a decline in the identification and assessment of 2E minority students as a result of the pandemic stating that it is "because we're just trying to get these kids to meet the bar, never mind surpass it." James agreed, saying, "we have to make up for lost time" (Shaundra and James, Individual Interviews, October 20 and 24, 2022, respectively).

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Research Question Responses

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In this study, I examined the perceived impact of common assessment and identification practices on the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs. This transcendental phenomenological study consisted of one central research question and three research sub-questions. The research questions were intended to describe the participants' experiences related to factors that may have negatively affected the representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs. The three themes identified during data analysis were (a) *bias*, (b) *cultural responsiveness,* and (c) *lack of training/development.* Each of the themes supported the participants' responses to the research questions below.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of special education teachers' assessment and identification practices for 2E minority students?

Among the participants, identification practices, assessment and evaluation practices, and training and professional development opportunities varied across the represented school districts. According to all the participants, utilizing teacher referrals for identification purposes is

a subjective practice. Of the thirteen practitioners interviewed, one participant stated that the current process of identifying 2E minority students described her district's procedures as positive. She used terms such as "fair," "straight-forward," and "procedure." The remaining eleven participants described experiences that were obstructive to improving the representation of 2E minority students. Adjectives used by participants to describe their experiences included "tone-deaf," "subjective," "not fair," "ignorant," and "unaware."

Sub-Question One

Which assessment and identification practices do special education teachers find to be the greatest cause of the disproportionate placement of 2E minority students in gifted education?

The perceived impact of assessment and identification practices varies greatly among participants. Participants that had been in the same districts at some point in their careers tended to have a similar outlook and perspective. As all the participants have previously worked as special education teachers, their perceptions are constructed from that position and any additional leadership positions in which they are currently working. All but one of the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the assessment and identification practices in place within their district.

Participants' perceptions varied greatly depending on their unique experiences. While all participants have a different experience related to the explored phenomenon, the varied backgrounds and district dynamics appear to have interrelatedness to the provided responses. Without a standardized approach to identifying and evaluating 2E minority students, it is virtually impossible to determine a singular most impactful determinantal practice. Given the observed dynamics described by participants, it is essential to note that best practices and

components for consideration can be applied in various settings (i.e., rural vs. urban, availability of trained personnel, district norms).

It was necessary to inquire about the existing procedures and policies related to identifying and assessing 2E minority students for gifted programs. It is important to note that when explicitly asked about the assessment and evaluation practices that occur in the district, nine out of thirteen participants were completely unaware of any moral policies or procedures that relate. Jessica responded, "Can I google it? It is not really common knowledge" (Jessica, Interview, October 18, 2022). Gloria responded, "To be honest with you, I don't know of a policy." Jessica agreed, stating, "I would say in our district there's, not that I know, of any trainings that particularly target students who are twice exceptional, which I feel that there needs to be because we do have those students out there." According to Cheyenne, "Right now, there are no specific policies. We do have our special education manual and a gifted manual as well, but there are no specifics about it."

Romie's journal response offered a summary approach to the topic:

I believe that the biggest barrier is a lack of awareness that dual exceptionality exists and that there are different barriers depending on the community. In majority-minority communities, I think a lot of educators approach services as being dichotomous (special education vs. giftedness) and may not commonly view the two exceptionalities as existing together. In majority-majority communities, of course, an obstacle might be conscious and subconscious racial and socioeconomic biases and discrimination (Romie, Journal Prompt Response, October 25, 2022).

Sub-Question Two

Which types of assessments and identification practices do special education teachers find to have been optimal for determining placement for 2E minority students?

Responses to prompts related to this sub-question varied greatly. Additionally, all participants were unclear about the specific assessments used in the identification process. When asked, Tara responded, "I believe they're given a separate test, not an exhaustive test, so it's not like a special eligibility, but they do get a test to determine if they qualify or not" (Tara, Interview, October 18, 2022). Despite its ambiguous nature, Tara's response was more informed than most, as other participants used phrases such as, "I'm not sure" or "You know, I really don't know."

Despite the fact participants struggled to state the names of the assessments explicitly, one finding was clear, that they felt the current instruments limited the ability of 2E students to demonstrate giftedness. The essence of the answers centered around an overwhelming need for a dynamic approach. Eleven out of the thirteen participants responded in ways that demonstrated a need to utilize alternative measurements in addition to traditional evaluation tools. Tara offered the following, "I definitely think that that there does need to sort of mind shift with people in realizing that kids are dynamic. You know, their minds are dynamic, and because they're struggling in one area, doesn't necessarily mean that they aren't shining in another" (Tara Interview, October 18, 2022).

Questions relating to this sub-question provided the greatest variance in answers, as it provided the opportunity for participants to interject recommendations that are derived from their experiences and individual perspectives.

Gloria stated the following:

I think it would be a good idea to have like a panel or a team that can actually complete

the process. A team that actually takes a look into these students. Like a deeper dive.

Looking into data for example, maybe coming up with other criteria besides the one that's

currently in place to identify students. Professionals such as teachers, psychologists, and

maybe even someone that's from outside of the district to be a part of it. Just to try to get

a fair, you know, analysis of students. (Gloria, Interview, October 17, 2022).

Cheyenne agreed sharing the following experience:

I think gifted education should be approached like special education by

a multidisciplinary team. Having different people at the table, various data points

because, you know, one test score is not going to give you the picture of that child, and

sometimes gifted students do poorly on tests because they don't see the value in them.

Also, look at all of the different elements, academic achievement, intellectual ability,

creativity, and motivation. All of those pieces would probably give you a better picture of

who would truly qualify for gifted services. (Cheyenne, Interview, October 20, 2022).

Sub-Question Three

What are the training and professional development experiences of special education and

gifted teachers who support practitioners who are directly involved with the identification,

assessment, or evaluation of 2E minority students?

At some point during their education tenure, all of the participants pursued a special

education program. None pursued a degree in gifted, however, 3 participants have obtained a

gifted endorsement. Nikki shared the following in her journal response:

Teacher education programs are not doing a great job of preparing teachers for students

who don't fit in the "gifted" or "special education" mold. In isolation, students are

served, but many teachers and administrators don't clearly understand how to help this barely recognized population. (October 26, 2022).

From the responses provided, participants have stated that even when professional development is offered at the district level, they did not feel an emphasis was placed on gifted education. According to Gloria, "I have not participated in this [gifted] training. And to be honest with you, like I really like to see it being advertised. I didn't really see that there's much emphasis on it" (Gloria, Interview, October 17, 2022). Cheyenne shared her training experience, describing it as, "I've done a lot of training on special education, and gifted has been somewhat embedded but not, you know, an endorsement or anything like that."

All the participants mentioned that training either through formal degree programs or at the district level must first address awareness. Shaundra shared, "To be honest with you, I don't even think that most people even think that Children can be twice exceptional."

Summary

This chapter detailed the findings of this transcendental phenomenological study on practitioners' perceptions as it relates to the impact of common practices on the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs in north Georgia. The findings reflected the experiences of 13 participants using the cognitive dissonance theory, sociocultural cognitive development theory, and the capability approach of practitioners practicing professionals in the northern region of Georgia who have been directly responsible for the identification, assessment, or support of 2E minority students. The collected responses were organized according to three themes *(bias, cultural responsiveness, and training and professional development)*, three outliers, one central research question, and three sub-research questions.

Through their experiences, participants have formed perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes surrounding the explored phenomenon. Narrative responses as well as direct quotes were used to address each of the research questions. The uncontrived quotes from participants were used at integral points throughout this chapter. The inclusion of frank responses supported the three themes that surfaced during the data analysis process: (a) bias, (b) cultural responsiveness, and (c) appropriate training and development. The results from the individual interviews, a focus group, and journal prompts revealed that through normed identification methods, culturally responsive assessments and evaluations, and adequate training and development, an equitable representation of 2E minority students in gifted programs can be realized.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand which common practices are perceived to be the greatest contributors to the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs in north Georgia. Chapter five includes interpretations of the findings, policy and practice implications, theoretical and methodological implications, limitations, and recommendations for further research. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Discussion

This study described the participants' lived experiences, the impact of common identification practices and assessment practices, and their perceived effects on the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs in north Georgia. Exceptional education practitioners in chapter four shared their experiences through triangulated data sources such as interviews, a focus group, and journal prompts. The findings were categorized into the following themes: (a) *bias,* (b) *cultural responsiveness*, and (c) t*raining and professional development*. The study's findings are discussed in this section. The themes are supported by empirical and theoretical literature and narrative evidence from the participants. Interpretation of results, implications for policy or practice, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research are discussed in the chapter.

Interpretation of Findings

This section summarizes the thematic findings, followed by an interpretation of those findings. The results from the individual interviews, a focus group, and journal prompts revealed

that through remediation of practitioner bias, culturally responsive practices, and adequate training and development, practitioners can mitigate the effects of historically harmful actions toward 2E minority students.

Participants felt increased confidence that the common methods of identification and assessment used to recognize 2E minority students would lead toward an equitable representation within their district's gifted education programs when there could explicitly state measures put in place for that effort. This led them to perceive that 2E minority students are best assessed when competent, 'culture-aware' practitioners take a dynamic approach toward the assessment process (Aston, 2021 & Lewis et al., 2020). Conversely, when the practitioners experienced instances where the identification and/or evaluation of 2E minority students for possible inclusion in gifted programs 1) singularly relied on teacher referrals, 2) included one data source, 3) excluded various forms of giftedness, or 4) was based on assessments that have been proven to be biased toward various groups, their confidence in the established policies (i.e. formal and informal) diminished significantly. This leads them to be perceived as detrimental to 2E minority students. Those perceptions appeared to create feelings of disappointment and resentment. Participants shared experiences that uncovered one outlier; behavior. Many participants explicitly stated that student behavior is a significant factor that has contributed to the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students, as the participants' perception that disruptive behavior causes practitioners responsible for referring 2E minorities to gifted programs to become indifferent.

Summary of Thematic Findings

As a result of data analysis, three basic themes emerged: *bias, culturally responsive practices,* and *training and development*, which aligned with the theory of cognitive dissonance, and the theory of social cognitive development, the theoretical frameworks used in this study.

The theme of *bias* focused on the perceived impact of practitioners' thoughts, feelings, and emotions on the employed practices that are used to identify, assess and support 2E minority students. The theme bias included the subthemes of practitioner perception and institutional barriers. Practitioners' perceptions are often driven by their personal biases. Consequently, institutional barriers exist because of intrinsic bias within school districts.

The theme of *culturally responsive* included the subthemes of traditional assessments and equity. This theme relates to the impact of a practitioner's bias on their ability to employ culturally equitable practices as it relates to 2E minority students. For this study, the practices relate to utilizing assessments that allow students to demonstrate their giftedness regardless of minority status and ensuring that any needed accommodations or modifications are utilized. Participants describe settings with these characteristics as "culturally responsive."

The theme of *training and professional development* included the subthemes of awareness, training, college preparation, and policies and procedures. All participants indicated a need for training and professional development that is intentionally designed to help practitioners select and utilize equitable practices that are culturally responsive and that mitigate the impact of biases.

Moving Away from the 'Good Ole Boy' System. In Georgia, the "good ole boy system" is an expression often used in the field of education to describe processes that are perceived as antiquated and rely heavily on the perceptions and, consequently, the recommendations of a select group of individuals (Gloria, Personal Conversation, October 28, 2022). While one participant, Tara, felt the process of predominantly relying on teacher referrals was "fair" it is important to note that her practice of supporting 2E students is in an affluent northern portion of the school district where the demographics of students are most closely

aligned to that of the practitioners. All other participants, including those in the same school district as Tara, shared a differing opinion. Studies have shown that the reliance on teacher referrals is a detrimental practice and further exacerbates the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education (Yaluma & Tyner, 2021). Every participant acknowledged their experience with this practice. Despite her stance, Tara eventually added that teacher referrals could be "somewhat subjective."

It is important to note that even when test scores were included and used as a universal screener, participants experienced the abandonment of a seemingly unbiased process. Nikki, Gloria, Shaundra, and James all shared experiences that despite qualifying test scores, gifted education teachers were allowed to serve as gatekeepers and thwart the identification process for 2E minority students. Cheyenne shared the following, "And then we also have the ones [students] who are automatically reported based on their test scores, but in general, it's usually a teacher recommendation for gifted services" (Cheyenne, Interview, October 20, 2022).

Participants' Insistence on Dynamic Assessments. While it was not the intention of this study to explore the various definitions of giftedness, several participants offered examples that closely align with previous research (Hoth et al., 2017; Lewis, 2021). Cheyenne offered the following, "giftedness is a dynamic concept; it can show up in multiple ways" (Cheyenne, Interview, October 20, 2022). Participants repeatedly stated that students' creativity should be considered in addition to test scores.

Romie's response, "we need to be using assessments that are appropriate and that are normed to consider different ethnic groups, races, genders, disability categories, choosing assessments that are non-biased and that are gonna give our students of fair representation of their abilities." is in keeping with previous research. McClurg et al. (2021) suggest that

traditional assessments are not the most effective way to measure intelligence and aptitude for 2E minority students.

No More Gatekeeping. The descriptor 'dynamic' was applied not only to the assessments used but also to the participants involved with identifying and assessing 2E minority students. Several participants mentioned that a diverse approach should include professionals with varied perspectives. Gloria stated, "I think it would be a good idea to have a panel or a team in lieu of one person in charge." The experiences of participants included instances in which one individual is responsible for who "gets in." Renzulli & Reis (2002) find that giftedness can be defined using a variety of domains, including intellectual, creative, musical, sporting, and other domains. This research underscores that concept and presents a need to utilize a dynamic approach to assessing giftedness.

Intentional Training and Professional Development. Practitioners require specialized training and development to effectively identify and evaluate 2E minority students (Haines et al., 2020 & Lee et al., 2021). The shared experiences of practitioners clearly demonstrate the impact that training and development have on the ability of practitioners to begin addressing the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted programs. None of the participants had an opportunity to study 2E during their teacher preparation program. Despite the proactiveness of some participants, most described experiences devoid of professional development dedicated to servicing 2E minority students.

No Guidance Equals Misguidance. In addition to specialized training and professional development, participants made it abundantly clear that the lack of formalized policy and procedures impacts the equitable representation of 2E minority students. All participants stated that they were unaware of formal district policies. This was true regardless of the size of the

district, district designation (i.e., charter, school district, and demographic (i.e., majority-minority or majority Caucasian). When asked about an implemented district policy, Gloria stated, "To be honest with you, I don't know of a policy." Shaundra shared the sentiment, stating, "To be honest with you, I don't even think that most people even think that Children can be twice exceptional, let alone a policy."

According to Cheyenne, "there are no specific policies" in her district either. Practitioners must be given adequate guidance if we are to see a positive trend surrounding this phenomenon (Bell, 2020). A challenge unique to Georgia and states that do not include gifted education under the umbrella of special education is that these two departments tend to operate separately and apart from one another, making mutual benefit virtually impossible. Bell (2020) finds that due to the duality of 2E learners, the laws and policies that affect them are stretched across two areas. Bridging the gap between the two appears to be an appropriate solution.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this phenomenological study have significant practical and policy implications for the identification and assessment of 2E minority students and the training and professional development opportunities afforded to practitioners. These recommendations are intended to support practitioners' development and add to the related body of literature pertaining to identifying and assessing 2E minority students. Various stakeholders will find these recommendations beneficial as ensuring that any student group is appropriately supported is beneficial to a system's overall welfare.

Implications for Policy

This study has several policy implications for educational institutions that are legally required to provide a free and appropriate education (FAPE) to students with exceptionalities.

Practitioners are better prepared to serve 2E minority students given appropriate training and development (Haines et al., 2020 & Lee et al., 2021). Further, 2E minority students benefit from culturally responsive practices that are devoid of evident bias (Cavilla, 2017; Grissom et al., 2017). This study illustrates the dire need to intentionally infuse practices that impact the identification and assessment of 2E minority students with indiscriminative and prejudiced-free perspectives. Practitioners who utilize informed dynamic approaches provide an equitable opportunity for 2E minorities to realize their full academic potential.

As a result of this study, it is evident that there is a critical need for districts to develop policies that are dedicated to the identification, assessment, evaluation, and support of 2E minority students. All 13 of the participants indicated that there is no a policy in place that is dedicated to this subgroup of students within their respective school districts. While there are policies dedicated to gifted and special education separately, none of the 14 school districts has a dedicated policy that addresses the idiosyncratic matters that innately impact 2E minority students.

The first policy implication is that each school within a large school district should have a dynamic team comprised of practitioners with varied backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives that are dedicated to overseeing the identification and assessment of 2E minority students. If this is not feasible due to the size, resources, or homogenous state of practitioners within a district, the district should seek an outside source either through state-supported counsel or through a contract with an education agency with the needed capacity. The point of this group is to address the need for culturally responsive and competent professionals that can advise and oversee equitable identification and assessment practices.

Twice-exceptional minority students benefit from practitioners that are aware of and enact practices related to the various nuisances associated with twice-exceptionality (Baldwin et al., 2015). To effectively service this subgroup of students, practitioners must be able to suppress their biases and avoid allowing their perceptions and stereotypes to create dissonance in the place of their professional decisions (Ricciardi et al., 2020). Since implicit bias is unavoidable, utilizing a panel of practitioners with varied perspectives to identify and assess 2E minority students can serve as an effective solution.

The second policy implication is for school districts to ensure that all practitioners who serve 2E minority students are adequately trained and prepared. While there is certainly an opportunity for this issue to be addressed during teacher preparation programs in traditional post-secondary institutions, districts must recognize and take ownership of the inadequate training. Most of the participants were career changers; having completed alternative certification programs to become eligible to serve as teachers in the state of Georgia (Baldwin et al., 2015) describe these certification pathway programs as "condensed" and "fast-tracked." These types of programs will not necessarily delve into the distinctive needs associated with 2E minority students.

ESSA, IDEA, and FAPE are federal mandates requiring school districts to provide appropriate and equitable services for all students (Bell, 2020). Despite applicable legislation, colleges and universities have failed to develop programs that address the unique needs associated with 2E minority students on a large scale. For this reason, districts must develop or obtain professional development that is tailored to 2E minority students. Further, there must be a partnership between school districts and teacher preparation programs to develop both

competence and awareness among upcoming professionals. Teacher preparations would benefit from understanding the ever-evolving pedagogy needs of practitioners.

Third, school districts must give equal weight to the various displays of giftedness. By adopting a universal definition of giftedness and recognizing that the manifestation of such will present in myriad ways, an increased number of 2E minority students in gifted education programs will be realized (Bertrand, 2019 & Redding & Redding & Grissom, 2021). It is clear that willfully allowing a narrow vision of how gifted "looks" to persist is harmful. Continuing to do so will have deleterious effects on opportunities afforded to 2E minority students (Hagiwara et al., 2019; Henfield et al., 2017; Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Adopting inclusive definitions of giftedness will lead to an increasingly equitable representation of 2E minority students in gifted programs.

Implications for Practice

Practitioners must engage in collaborative practices that provide the opportunity for thought-partnering with professionals that may embody different perspectives. Individual bias is a naturally occurring trait (Lee et al., 2021; Ricciardi et al., 2020). Despite this fact, practitioners must allow the commitment to equitable and fair practices. These practices must override any negative and hindering beliefs toward any student group. A teacher's ability to refer gifted students to gifted education programs is impacted by bias.

A related but second practical implication is that practitioners must proactively seek training and professional development that will help them better understand and service all of the student populations they serve (Pfeiffer & Foley-Nicpon, 2018). Passively relying on school districts to design or supply professional development and training opportunities that apply to each teacher's practice is a dangerous practice that is rooted in ignorance at best and bigotry at

worst. Of course, most practitioners do not relate being untrained as an intentionally harmful act; however, not taking a proactive approach and learning more about those you serve inadvertently creates an injurious education experience for all impacted.

Finally, there must be a concerted effort among practitioners to seek to understand and accommodate cultures outside of their own. Collaborating with other professionals who have varied perspectives provides an opportunity to ensure one's biases and perceptions of others does not impede his or her ability to provide equitable opportunities to all students. Essentially every aspect of one's practice is impacted by their culture, the culture at their school, and the culture in their community (List & Dykeman, 2021; Yaluma & Tyner, 2018). A 2E minority students' educational experience can be distressing and even injurious when their culture does not align with those in charge of their educational programming (Aston, 2021; Grissom et al., 2019). For this reason, an intentional effort must be made first to understand, and address needs specific to 2E minority students.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This study examined the perceived impact of common assessment and identification practices on the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs in the northern region of Georgia. This section presents the theoretical and empirical implications of the study. Thirteen participants provided perspectives as practitioners who are primarily responsible for the identification, assessment, and support of 2E minority students within the target geographic area. The theoretical and empirical implications are mentioned in the subsections below.

Theoretical

The theoretical framework guiding this phenomenological research study is Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory, and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of cognitive development. The theory of cognitive dissonance describes the relationship between one's beliefs, values, and internalized attitudes and decisions (Festinger, 1957). Within this theory, the term dissonance refers to the discrepancy between cognitions (i.e., issues or occurrences a person may take exception to morally due to contradictory actions that are taking place) (Festinger, 1957). The theory of cognitive dissonance describes the presence "of an inconsistency between cognitions…" and the resultant psychological state (McGrath, 2020, p. 84). The findings of this study align with the stance taken by McGrath (2020), as the researcher finds this 'inconsistency' leads to an apathetic state, which can only be rectified through intentional action. The data collected in this study confirm that idea. This theory helped research describe the fundamental issues impacting 2E minority students.

Participants shared various accounts of professionals displaying apathy. Apathy is defined as a lack of interest, enthusiasm, or concern (Merriam-Webster, 2022). When practitioners do not know how to appropriately assess or identify a 2E minority student, they do nothing at all. Participants' experiences align with previously conducted research related to this phenomenon, sharing numerous experiences in which the educational needs of a 2E minority student went unmet due to uncertainty and indecisiveness. In many instances, this led to 2E minority students not being identified, referred, or assessed for gifted education.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of cognitive development asserts that other members of their society influence a child's cognitive development and that the culture in which a child is emersed impacts their cognitive development. The sociocultural theory of cognitive

development addresses how cultural beliefs and attitudes affect the way learning occurs. Since this theory addresses how teachers approach learning and that it can be resultant of their respective cultures, there is an inherent impact of culture-infused practices that, if inappropriate, can be detrimental to the experiences of 2E minority students. The findings of this study confirm Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of cognitive development and prior studies that have explored this phenomenon. This theory, in conjunction with Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory, helped this research recognize the components related to practitioner dissonance and the absence of cultural responsiveness measures.

The representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs is negatively impacted by culturally infused practices. According to List and Dykeman (2021), 2E minority students' education trajectory is based on their ability to acclimate to Western culture's ideas and values. Conversely, the presentation of their giftedness and disabilities has been proven to be impacted by cultural and socio-culture factors (i.e., economic status, environmental factors, etc. (Cavilla, 2017; Owens et al., 2016; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019). Participants perceived the dissimilarity between 2E minority students and practitioners as a significant reason for the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education.

The culture that 2E minority students experience is impacted by the training and development opportunities afforded to the practitioners that are responsible for their identification, assessments, and support (Bell, 2020). Participants describe positive socio-cultural settings as those that include practitioners who are aware and trained to appropriately identify and assess 2E minority students in ways that account for the varied ways in which disabilities and giftedness can present (Cavilla, 2017). The ability to overlook cultural differences and focus on the individual needs of 2E minority students creates a culture that can

provide a meaningful education experience, including appropriate and equitable identification and assessment practices.

Practitioners must have both an awareness of 2E students and an understanding of the challenges and efforts associated with minority learners to effectively identify these students for gifted education programs. Further, like Vygotsky's (1978) socio-culture theory, Park et al. (2018) finds that the socio-cultural implications of 2E minority students must be addressed if a school district is to successfully eradicate the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs.

To assist school districts with achieving this goal, they must shift their focus to what the student can do instead of focusing on the student's deficits. Sen's (1992) capability approach is a framework that can be used to overcome the historical limitations of inequitable practices within school districts. Utilizing this framework during the design of professional development and training will help school districts better understand the policies and procedures that both enable and restrict 2E minority students' access to needed resources (Broderick, 2018 & Yousefzadeh et al., 2018). Sen (1992) states that capabilities represent what people can do and become when provided with real opportunities. In this instance, the real opportunities relate to equitable consideration for gifted education.

Empirical

Empirically, few studies have investigated the identification and assessment experiences of practitioners charged with serving 2E minority students (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). While there is a gap in research surrounding the perceived impact of practitioners' practices on 2E minority students' identification and assessment, there is research that explores 2E and minorities' access to gifted education, respectively (Lamb et al., 2019; Gierczyk & Hornby,

2021). This research aimed to understand which common identification and assessment practices impacted 2E minority students' ability to access gifted education. To understand the perceptions of practitioners who service 2E minority students, it was necessary to capture the experiences of these professionals (Creswell, 2013). This study provided rich and robust descriptions of participants' perceptions and experiences. Through an analysis of the participant's experiences, it became evident that, like previous research, 2E minority students have been denied equitable access to gifted education as a result of biased practices that are not responsive to the various cultures represented in this subgroup (Ford, 2014; List & Dykeman 2021).

Further, as revealed in previous research, participants placed an especially high emphasis on the lack of training and professional development opportunities. Participants find that the unpreparedness of practitioners to appropriately identify and assess 2E minority students, coupled with an unawareness of equitable practices, creates a challenge that is virtually impossible to overcome (Lewis et al., 2020; Haines et al, 2020 & Lee et al., 2021).

Like the studies presented in Chapter Two of this study on the prevalence of 2E students, participants in this study shared experiences related to the impact of unawareness among professionals regarding this subgroup (Yaluma & Tyner, 2021). According to participants, this component made attempts to advocate for 2E minority students challenging. As presented in prior research, participants in this study described their experiences with adjectives such as "contentious" and "ambiguous" (Amend, 2018; Matthews & Rhodes, 2020). The findings of this research could help school districts address the long-standing issue surrounding the equitable representation of all student subgroups in gifted education.

Limitations and Delimitations

This qualitative phenomenological study had several limitations and delimitations. The limitations include potential weaknesses of the study that cannot be controlled. Delimitations refer to the intentional desire of the researcher to limit or define the study's boundaries.

Limitations

Like all research studies, there were limitations to the present study. First, due to the setting of this study being restricted to a specific geographic location, a relatively large area geographically, it is a reasonably accepted fact that school districts that are in the same vicinity experience similar challenges and have like areas of growth. This could be attributed to common characteristics such as similar demographics, shared teacher preparation programs, etc.

It was challenging to find participants that could share their experience with the phenomenon in one district. Twelve of the thirteen participants have been employed in a position similar to their current role in at least two of the school districts that are located in the geographic area. Despite the limited number of participants, saturation was reached for each of the presented themes, which indicates that the number of participants in this study was adequate.

Another limitation related to the participant was the difficulty finding participants that met the criteria of the study. The requirement to be certified and have at least three years of teaching experience was not easily attained. Ten of the thirteen participants received their training and teaching credentials through an alternative preparation program. This ratio depicts the likelihood that many practitioners that may have been able to offer rich responses relative to the phenomenon under study were exempt from the onset.

Delimitations

The most emergent delimitation for this study was the requirement that every participant must have experience identifying, evaluating, and supporting 2E minority students. Identifying a group of participants whose professional responsibilities and experiences allowed them to encounter the explored phenomenon was essential intrinsically. Second, this study was limited to practitioners currently employed in public school districts. Many private schools can identify, assess, and support 2E minority students without the obligation to adhere to state rules and regulations. This hinders the ability to compare substructural components, such as district-enforced policies and procedures, and required teacher credentials. These settings with larger school districts could become indecipherable. The generalizability of the study could be increased by including various education settings such as private schools, residential/boarding schools, and online academies.

Recommendations for Future Research

Three recommendations for future studies will be presented as a result of the study findings, limitations, and delimitations. While saturation was reached, the number of participants and the homogenous nature of their professional settings included in this study equates to a relatively small sample size. It is recommended that further research might consist of a larger sample size. Not only could the number of participants be increased, but future studies could include a larger geographical area and other educational settings. All of the participants in this study were employed within public school districts in the northern region of Georgia. This included charter schools that are considered a part of a larger school district. Future studies could include various settings such as state-charter schools (i.e., these schools are not considered part

of a larger district), private schools that do not have state oversight, and home schools such as learning pods.

Second, future research should consider a quantitative approach. Utilizing state quantitative data about the representation of 2E minority students in gifted programs compared to the number identified and tested is believed to improve the reliability and generalizability of the study's findings (Powell, 2020). Powell (2020) finds that while many researchers disagree on the appropriateness of using quantitative research to address social problems, it can be especially useful given the needed framework.

As a third recommendation, future research should focus on one perceived impact. One of the three outliers realized through data analysis in this study pertains to student behavior. Since many participants cited student behavior as obstructing the equitable identification and assessment of 2E minority students, a study focusing solely on this impact would be beneficial. An alternative, such as a case study design, might be beneficial as "student behavior" can present in a multitude of manners; implications and recommendations may need to be tailored to the various manifestations (i.e., withdrawal, physical aggression, etc.).

The second outlier, parental dissonance, was not anticipated but worthy of future exploration. Gierczyk & Hornby (2021) finds that practitioners often appease the requests and wishes of parents. It would be helpful for stakeholders and consumers of this research to understand the vastness of these occurrences better. Further, data from this study would inform policies and procedures relating to the inclusion of parents in identifying and assessing 2E minority students.

As a fifth and final recommendation, this study could be completed in a state where special education and gifted education are not treated as separate entities. Many states have

adopted an inclusive approach, instead calling the departments that house these programs *exceptional education*. While Georgia is one of only four states nationally recognized for fully funding gifted education, it became apparent as a result of this research that the separation of the two departments contributes to the extensive prevalence of this phenomenon. Many participants suggested that separating these two departments increases the likelihood that the 2E minority students will not be identified or assessed appropriately. The findings from future research that explores this phenomenon in settings where both gifted and special education have a well-established partnership may provide a theoretical framework for districts that aspire to utilize that educational model.

Conclusion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand which common practices are perceived to be the greatest contributors to the disproportionate representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs in north Georgia. The theoretical frameworks guiding this transcendental phenomenological research study was Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory and Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory of cognitive development, which applied the central question and three sub-research questions. Individual interviews, a focus group discussion, and journal prompts were used to answer the research questions. Of honorable mention is Sen's (1992) capability approach. While this framework is not a formalized theory, its' components relate to best practices and recommendations for policy and practice implications. Thirteen experienced practitioners who currently work in school districts located in the northern region of Georgia were selected using purposive and snowball sampling methods to participate in this research study. Each participant

recounted their shared experiences with identifying, assessing, and supporting 2E minority students.

An exploration of the findings of this study led to the construction of three themes and six subthemes. Moustakas's (1994) data analysis and synthesis processes were followed in this study. The guidance provided by Saldaña's (2021) framework informed the manual coding approach utilized in this study. As a result, three themes and six sub-themes were revealed. The primary themes were *bias, cultural responsiveness*, and *training and professional development*. The subthemes were *practitioner perception, institutional barriers, traditional assessments, equity, training (college preparation), and district-provided professional development.*

This study found that special educators and gifted educators in the northern region of Georgia do not perceive any one identification or assessment practice as having the most significant impact on 2E minority students' representation in gifted education programs. Instead, practitioners point toward dissonance routed in bias and ignorance and differences in culture as the fundamental issue as these elements are related to all the initially presented practices and other factors. Participants shared experiences that appear to involve what Festinger (1957) describes as customary dissonance. In customary dissonance, two or more established beliefs are relevant to the target cognition but remain inconsistent within one's mind. The findings from this study reveal that when practitioners are charged with supporting both learning deficits and functional needs, as well as the giftedness a student displays simultaneously. With 2E minority students, customary dissonance becomes unavoidable and most often stifles the process related to qualifying for gifted education.

The cognitive dissonance theory undoubtedly helps researchers better understand the phenomenon related to 2E minority students. However, the argument can be made that it does

not necessarily account for the concerns that often arise because the student is a minority. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of sociocultural cognitive development informed the exploration of participants' experiences and the related impact on the identification, assessment, and support of 2E minority students. The sociocultural cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978) describes the influence of peers, adults, and culture on a child's cognitive development. It asserts that other members of their society influence a child's cognitive development.

In this study, participant responses provided evidence that practitioners connect school and district culture with the opportunities afforded to 2E minority students. The participants described the impact in various ways; however, the overall arching theme was that generally, when a student's culture is different from that of the practitioner who is charged with facilitating their educational experiences, in most instances, there is a disconnect. This study revealed that culture impacted not only the perceptions of practitioners but also the protocols they followed concerning identifying, assessing, and supporting 2E students.

Finally, the findings of this study reveal a need to develop training at both the post-secondary level (i.e., teacher preparation courses) and district-provided professional development. Sen's (1985) capability approach is a framework that informs the offering of practical implications. The capability approach is a framework that acknowledges the idea that society is comprised of individuals with varying levels of abilities and needs (Sen, 1992; Nussbaum, 2020). The reference to this approach is essential due to Sen's (1992) delineation between capabilities, the intrinsic potential of each person to achieve various outcomes and functionings, as various states of 'doings and beings.' This study revealed a need to utilize training and professional development to create awareness and competence. The findings from this study may have a profound impact on the trajectory of 2E minority students.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval

[External] IRB-FY22-23-287 - Initial: Initial - Exempt

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 13, 2022

Margeaux Kittles
Rachel Hernandez

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-287 A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH COMMON REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES OF TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL MINORITY STUDENTS

Dear Margeaux Kittles, Rachel Hernandez,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) 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(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Consent Form

Title of the Project: A Transcendental Phenomenology of Teachers' Experiences with Common Referral and Assessment Practices of Twice-Exceptional Minority Students
Principal Investigator: Margeaux Kittles, School of Education Graduate Student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a teacher or support personnel staff employed in a school district located in the North Georgia region. Participants must be certified and have been directly involved in the identification, assessment, instruction, and/or support of an identified twice-exceptional minority student.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand which common practices are perceived to be the greatest contributors to the disproportionate representation of twice-exceptional, minority students in gifted education programs in north Georgia. This study is being done to better understand the contributing factors behind this phenomenon.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
1. Participate in an audio- and video recorded-interview. It is estimated that this interview will take approximately 30 minutes.
2. Participate in an audio- and video-recorded focus group discussion. It is estimated that this discussion will take approximately 30-45 minutes.
3. Complete a journal entry in response to a specific prompt. It is estimated that this interview will take approximately 30 minutes.
4. Participants will have the opportunity to review their interview transcripts to ensure accuracy.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include contributing to a better understanding of how to eradicate the current disproportionality associated with twice-exceptional minority students that are represented in gifted education. Additional benefits include informing revisions and improvements related to current practices, strategies, and policies that affect twice-exceptional minority students will be realized.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports 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 records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Interviews/focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. All data and records relating to this study will be stored on a private, password-protected computer. The laptop that will be utilized to collect and analyze data for this study will be equipped with double-layer access for the protection of the related information. A unique password will be required to access the laptop and the file where the raw data about the study is located. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Is study participation voluntary?

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 without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide 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 choose to withdraw, data

Liberty University
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Approved on 10-13-2022

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.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Margeaux Kittles. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Rachel Hernandez, at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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 audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix C

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of special education teachers' assessment and identification practices for 2E minority students?

Sub-Question One

Which assessment and identification practices do special education teachers find to be the greatest cause of disproportionate placement of 2E minority students in gifted education?

Sub-Question Two

Which types of assessments and identification practices do special education teachers find to have been optimal for determining placement for 2E minority students?

Sub-Question Three

What are the training and professional development experiences of special education and gifted teachers who support practitioners who are directly involved with the identification, assessment, or evaluation of 2E minority students?

Appendix D

Individual Interview Questions

1. What describes your main professional responsibilities? RQ1

2. What is your employment status? RQ1

3. What grade(s) do you currently serve/support? RQ1

4. What type of school do you currently teach/support? (i.e., elementary, middle, high school, alternative)? RQ1

5. How many years of teaching service do you have? RQ1

6. How many years have you been in your current role? RQ1

7. How many years have you worked in your current school district? RQ1

8. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed (e.g., bachelor's, master's, specialist, doctorate, post-doctoral)? RQ1

9. Describe your formal education programs that had an emphasis on special or gifted education? RQ2

10. Which courses have you completed during your major, or minor, had a special emphasis in either special or gifted education? RQ2

11. Describe the formal professional development programs that support the work you are currently doing (e.g., special and or gifted education) you have completed since serving 2E students? RQ2

12. Can you tell me more about your school district's policies regarding 2E students? RQ3

13. How are students referred for gifted education in your district? RQ3

14. In addition to teacher referrals, what other methods are used to identify 2E students? RQ3

15. Which evaluation tools are you most familiar with that are commonly used in your district to assess students that may be 2E? RQ3

16. What issues or challenges can you identify that relate to singularly relying on teacher referral? (If appropriate) RQ3

17. What are the most appropriate ways to assess students after they have been referred to gifted education? RQ3

18. Can you describe the team members that are typically a part of the evaluation team? RQ3

19. Can you describe the team members that are typically a part of the decision process (following the evaluation)? RQ3

20. In your experience, have the team members remained consistent at each opportunity? For example, has the number of team members remained consistent during each evaluation and consideration of a possible 2E student? RQ3

21. Can you describe the procedures that should be followed if a parent has a concern related to their child's referral, identification, or assessment for gifted education? RQ4

22. How can you improve upon the current procedures in your district? RQ4

23. To what extent have you been able to observe the benefits, success, or challenges associated with the current process? RQ4

24. How might you modify or adapt the current process of identifying and assessing 2E minority students in your school district? RQ4

25. Can you describe the components that should be present in a comprehensive professional development program that would be designed for teachers and support personnel of 2E minority students? RQ

26. What did you experience when you discovered your school would be reopening for face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? SQ4

Appendix E

Focus Group Questions

1. Please tell us your name and how many years you have served in your current position.
    RQ1

2. Please reflect on your classroom teaching experiences. Describe your familiarity from
    the initial phases to the most recent experiences with 2E students. RQ 1

3. Please reflect on your classroom teaching experiences. Describe your familiarity with the
    varied approaches to the identification and assessment of 2E minority students. RQ 2

4. What changes did you make to the way you supported 2E minority students after your
    initial experiences? RQ3

5. Please describe how districts and/or states can support the movement toward equitable
    representation of 2E minority students in gifted education programs? RQ 4

6. How might teacher education programs improve the preparedness for teachers who will
    identify, assess, and support 2E minority students? RQ 4

7. Are there any other thoughts you had about this topic that you would like to share?

Appendix F

Journal Prompt Questions

1. What challenges do you encounter while identifying or assessing 2E minority students as compared to 2E students who do not identify in an established minority group? Do you see challenges appearing in the future and if so, what are they? (RQ1 & RQ2)

 2. Describe your feelings regarding the district's policies and procedures when it comes to identifying or assessing 2E minority students. Have these practices impacted the prevalence of 2E minority students in gifted programs? Why or why not? (RQ4)

3. By whom and how do you feel supported in this endeavor of supporting (i.e., identifying, assessing, etc.) 2E minority students in your current setting? How does this compare to previous settings (if any)? What steps do you feel you have to take to effectively improve or sustain the practices that are currently in place? (RQ3)

4. Are there any questions or prompts presented in this study that you would like to expound upon? (optional)